

Capturing Serendipitous Moments in the Life/Work of an  
Artist/Teacher

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

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## Abstract

The artist/teacher identity is often a contentious site in which the two roles are perceived of as in opposition to one another, rendering relationships between the two challenging to negotiate. I began this thesis with the goal of achieving a deeper understanding of how identity transformations are navigated. Specifically, I have investigated what it feels like, looks like and means to practice as an artist and a teacher in terms of how I have been able to assimilate the role of teacher into my personal conception of self. Culminating in an art exhibition, my work takes the shape of an autoethnographic, arts based inquiry framed by the methodology and renderings of A/r/tography placed within a five phase creative process proposed by Barone and Eisner. This inquiry involved making art work that was provoked by acts of (re) membering and (re) making as I engaged with a lifetime of photographic images while looking for persistent patterns and themes that in turn would illuminate aspects of my fragmented identity. In the data/art making phases, I used the a/r/tographical renderings of *living inquiry*, *openness* and *excess*, *metaphors* and *metonymy*, *contiguity* and *reverberation* to bring self-consciousness to the process of creating my artwork. In the analysis of my data/artwork I considered how *memory*, *serendipity*, and *dialogue* generated ways to reflect on new understandings related to the creative processes I undertook. Working on this thesis, has allowed me to reflect on and renegotiate previously held conceptions of my artist/teacher roles, discovering that various interactions of the everyday serve to propel forth new configurations of self in a cyclical and continuous process. My identity is dependent upon juxtaposition, in each new context I renegotiate meaning and transform.

*Keywords:* artist/teacher, identity, arts based research, A/r/tography, transformation, memory, serendipity, dialogue

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my undying gratitude and love to my daughter, Veronica for her patience and understanding as I have worked to complete this thesis. She is a strong and beautiful girl. I am further grateful to her for allowing me to use her images in my artwork. Since her birth we have come to use the camera as a means to enjoy our time together. I also want to thank my partner for his continued interest and support of my work. Many of the images created for this thesis emerged out of our holiday times together. With our children we have spent many hours experimenting and capturing amazing images that sometimes make us laugh to the point of crying. I owe so much of the direction I have taken to my parents Lorraine and Larry who are ever so proud and supportive in my educational and artistic endeavors. I would also like to thank all the inspiring artists and teachers that have impacted and influenced my thinking and contributed to the development of new understandings generated in this research project. Additionally Dr. Francine Morin and Sharon Alward, my advisory committee, have directed me to make work that has been both personally challenging and coherent. I am so grateful to them for their guidance. Last, but certainly not least, I would not have been able to achieve this work without the ongoing and relentless support of my advisor, Dr. Joanna Black, who continually propped me up, supported, encouraged, and guided me to always do my best work. Thank-you with all my heart!

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Note: View all images and video online at: <http://allisonmooredotnet.wordpress.com>

## Chapter I: Reason for the Research

### Preamble

Knowledge and intelligence as free exploration become wings by which we take flight, visit other worlds, returning to this one to call others, especially our children, to futures more life affirmative and just than the world we inhabit now. When we sink, submerged in those roles conceived by others, we become aborted possibilities, unable to realize in everyday life, in our relations with others, the politics of our individual and civic identities, the educational dynamics of creation and birth. (Pinar, 2003, p. 9)

Pinar's use of the word 'wings' conjured up in my imagination pictures of giant mythological-type birds flying up into sunlit skies on fanciful migrations to far off places. I thought I might like to hear their return call and imagined how they might move others to places of re-conception. My research has largely been motivated by my own personal struggles to take flight and inquire into and remake the roles that have sculpted and defined me. Pinar's prodding requires that flight be taken, guided by knowledge and intelligence to visit other worlds, to experiment, inquire and play. This journey has required, myself, the researcher to return, to engage with others and to do so in ways that have elaborated, enriched and enlivened the daily act of living. This sharing of this research is intended to be emancipatory, setting us free from unexamined positions we default to when there is nothing to challenge the social constructs that define and dictate our roles. Working on this thesis has allowed me to experience a transformative flight as I set out to visit new worlds as an artist and teacher and researcher. This paper will endeavor to not only share my personal journey but also will offer encouragement and opportunities for transformation to my multiple and varied communities of artists and researchers, teachers and learners.

## Introduction

As an artist I have always been an introspective person and have consistently questioned myself and my relationship to and within the larger world. I have done this through art-making for as long as I can remember. With the addition of teacher to my moniker, questions and doubts about the legitimacy of my artistry began to surface. Susan Goetz Zwirn (2002) writes that within her dual careers as artist and teacher she has encountered concerning issues about the nature of these roles, specifically:

How could I both teach and paint? Did I have to be a good artist to be a good teacher? If I taught full-time, would I ever be able to develop into a good artist, a real artist who exhibited and sold her work? Would the rules and routines of schools squelch an artistic sensibility? Would my role as a woman inhibit me from being single-minded enough to carve out time to isolate myself, to develop great ideas, to make a contribution? Could I actually claim the title of artist? Were others as conflicted as I was? How have others combined or isolated these pursuits: creating art and teaching art? (p. 14)

I too have questioned the legitimacy of my art-making in relation to being a classroom art teacher. When Zwirn questions if she could be a *real* artist she is no doubt referring to and measuring herself against a stereotypical checklist, a social construct where the artist is expected to show and sell work in order to receive a title, an identity of artist. My research addresses these social constructs, working towards dissolving and (re)forming the limiting preconceived notions and checklists that attempt to define how I understand myself. Surfacing out of this critical autobiographical investigation of my various practices as an artist and a teacher, I have discovered new models of being and becoming.

In considering his identity, Patrick Slattery expresses that he resists “the urge to define himself as artist, educator, or researcher...” (2003, p. 194) in any way that privileges one role above another. He refers to himself as being holistic. My research has been guided by this desire to encounter places where fragments of experience and identity come together to shape and (re)form new understandings of myself in relation to various communities of belonging. In continual interactions of lived experience, my identity is fluid, continually shaped and molded through action and response. At the same time there remains a need for a sense of wholeness. Engaging in this research has allowed me to closely examine the meaning of my life’s work and identity as they relate to those with whom I am engaged; students, colleagues, friends, and family.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research has been propelled by a number of questions that have surfaced out of my practices as teacher and artist. Specifically my work takes the shape of an autoethnographic, arts based inquiry that investigates what it feels like, looks like, and means to be and practice as an artist and a teacher simultaneously. It has been important to this research to make connections between aspects of doing and being as ways to generate knowing. The act of doing manifests itself in being or becoming. Springgay and Irwin (2008) quote Carson and Sumara writing, “Who one is becomes completely caught up with what one knows and does” (p. xxiii). Through engaging in a process that incorporates making (poesis), doing (praxis) and knowing (theoria), I have investigated how I as an artist/teacher have been able to allow for new identities to emerge as I defined and created new spaces for reciprocal relationships to flourish between my fragmented selves.

As an artist, I have worked at many interesting jobs, teaching being the latest addition to my long and varied resume. Each new placement involves a renegotiation or reconstruction of self that takes into account the protocol, skills and procedures inherent to specific communities. Consequently, I am always caught off guard and rendered momentarily mute as I struggle to answer the question *What do you do?* This question implies that what one does professionally relates in some way to who one is. Replying with *I am a teacher* or *I am an artist* has the potential to conjure up stereotypes such as that of the *old maid* teacher or the *flakey* artist. In the case of responding with *I am an art teacher* one risks re-surfacing the old adage *those who can, do. Those who can't, teach.*

The nature of what I do can change from year to year or even from moment to moment and so a single or simple definition is insufficient to encapsulate the complexity of my identity. I would prefer to answer the question *who are you?* which seems to me to be a more honest question that begs a deeper more considered answer. Asking, *who are you?* allows the respondent to consider the complexities of multiple selves: identities merging and bubbling together. Complex selves emerge out of and are negotiated between identities. When identities are hybridized such as when */artist* is attached to any other identity (mother/artist, teacher/artist, engineer/artist) it complicates or troubles the other role, setting up relationships in between that allow movement out of stereotypical shells and encourage the building of new places for ourselves. Like tectonic plates deep under the earth's surface, here, identities shift and collide and reform themselves as hybrids, full of fresh possibility.

Maria Robinson-Cseke writes that, "It is in conflict that our identity is negotiated" (2007, p. 105). I first became interested in the topic of identity because of an internal conflict I felt upon becoming a teacher. Like Goetz Zwirn, (2002) I was concerned about being able to continue

making art, but even more importantly I wondered if or how I could continue to conceive of myself as an artist if I was working as a full-time art teacher in a school.

William Pinar (2003) notes that identities are co-constructed between our life histories and ways in which society conceives us. It is therefore not only worthwhile to investigate how we see ourselves but look at what it means to be conceived of by others in relation to our experiences in order to empower the move to a position of reconstruction. Pinar sees the category of identity as emergent in curricular theory discussions. He understands that exploration of identity occurs through an autobiographical reflexive process that through (re)interpretation of the past and an imagining of the future one is ultimately able to situate oneself in the present ready to act. This reconstruction of the self establishes solidarity of the intellect, the body, the spirit, and the cosmos, as well as an intrinsic coherence of time, place and meaning (Slattery, 2006, p. x). He dubs this process the synthetical moment. The poet Samuel Menashe (2005) captures this temporal synthesis in his poem *Voyage*:

*Water opens without end*

*At the bow of a ship*

*Rising to descend*

*Away from it*

*Days become one*

*I am who I was*

There is a recursive tension in the author's realization of being or returning to who he once was despite or because of his journey. Who he is, was and is going to be exists between rising and descending, between moving towards and away from as time is forged into a synthetical moment. It is these serendipitous awakenings that allow us to glimpse cosmic

connections that underpin who we are, giving our life both mooring and meaning. Art-making, be it painting, film making or creative writing, allows for new ways of knowing and understanding to emerge; new perspectives to surface. Through this arts based inquiry I have sought to illuminate undiscovered constellations that connect my disparate identities, all the while, becoming who I once was. This exploration has involved a process of (re)visiting and (re)making a lifetime of photographic images. I began this research by sorting through a personal collection of well over 2000 photographs looking for patterns and themes that could be used to illuminate aspects of my fragmented identity. My thoughts were that I would then begin to digitally alter a select group of these images with the intention of establishing a holistic understanding of self from the many fragments while considering the many transitions and shifts my identity continues to traverse. For the final research and exhibition of my artwork, I constructed a series of digital images that grew out of my archived collection; photo collages, short videos, stills that capture transitions, soundscapes, and written narrative and poetry which addressed various connections and relationships. My personal art-making process as well as the resulting artwork have both been used to generate meaningful data that speaks to what it means to practice as an artist and teacher. I will discuss this process and resulting artwork in detail in the Methodology section of this paper.

In conducting my literature review for this research, I have discovered that I am not alone in my identity negotiations. Numerous scholars who consider themselves practicing /artists have traversed similar grounds with the intention of establishing a deeper connection to and knowledge of their identities.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

“...we cannot be found until we are lost” (de Cosson, 2004, p.162).

One must be willing to move in and between identities of teacher, artist, and learner...All participants in the learning and teaching process need to be willing to let go of their roles and who they think they are in this ‘space of emergence’. (May, 2013, p. 167).

### Introduction

For the purposes of this literature review, I have searched out arts based research that focuses specifically on themes that examine complex and fragmented identities of artist/teachers. In places of tension and conflict these researchers were stirred into negotiating or re-conceiving their identities though the use of arts based methodological approaches and autobiographical writing. Similarly these artist/teachers needed to become vulnerable in order to reconceive of their identities as hybrid. Making/doing and living their art has supported personal investigations that have allowed for these transformations of self.

### Negotiating Identities between Artist and Teacher

Currently various branches and factions of arts based research are beginning to flourish in the academic world, progressively gaining ground as legitimate methodologies in many disciplines including arts education (Suominen, 2003). For instance, since it’s early stages in 1994 to over a decade later, 2004, more than 30 arts-based dissertations were produced at the University of British Columbia alone (Sinner et al., 2006).

Alfonso Montuori (2005) proposes that literature reviews in themselves can be creative inquiries or conversations that serve to situate the researcher within pre-existing dialogues ready to participate in and “...explore the underlying assumptions of the various perspectives we encounter...” (p. 378). One such dialogue I have become engaged with is in the conversations of

those who practice an emerging arts based research methodology entitled A/r/tography. A/r/tography, defined and refined at the University of British Columbia has evolved out of various autoethnographic and art-based research practices and is underpinned by four commitments: “a commitment to a way of Being in the world; a commitment to inquiry; a commitment to negotiating personal engagement within a community of belonging; a commitment to creating practices that trouble and address difference” (Irwin, 2008, p. 72). Further, Carter and Irwin (2014) write, A/r/tography pays attention to the in/between and as such “...allows one to consider how various identities impact the others through processes of inquiry and self-awareness” (p. 6). I have considered ways in which these commitments are woven into my own research and have provided a structure for me to investigate the relationships between my identities. I will discuss this in greater depth further in the Methodology section of this paper.

### **Vulnerability**

Negotiating an artist/teacher identity has been of interest to numerous researchers over the last few years, who themselves practice multiple careers as artist/teacher/researchers. As I read through relevant literature, I am aware of a consistent familiarity and vulnerability that appears in these writings. The authors’ lived experience; childhood memories, self doubt, isolation and a need to find and make connections to community is often at the heart of their research, opened up and examined for all to see.

Lace Marie Brogden writes that autoethnographers “...bare some aspect or aspects of her or his being...offering a story and taking a risk” (2010, p. 370). These works have an openness to them that easily allow for and invite me to engage with the accounts of these artist/teachers in their varied experiences of teaching, art-making and researching.

Angela Zimmerman (2011) accredits her vulnerability to her attachment to her art and art-making processes. She is reluctant to allow her ego to step down and be open to new approaches. In her research she addresses this reluctance by pushing herself to work with materials that she is uncomfortable with thus addressing her vulnerabilities directly. In addition she shares her work with her students, allowing for them to critique and discuss her process. Zimmerman finds that she is as much a student as she is a teacher in this relational process. Being humble in front of children who potentially look to you, the teacher for answers, can be interpreted as a role reversal, an exchange of power and as such leaves those involved to adapt to new ways of being together. Sarah MacKenzie (2011) writes, “Teaching is vulnerable work where the self and other enter into intimate encounters that can change one’s sense of self and purpose with the world” (p. 1).

Vulnerability is increased when one’s work requires a struggle against the mainstream or cultural norms. This conflict is often apparent between the goals and processes of the artist/teacher in relation with the outcomes based expectations of administrators. As MacKenzie (2011) writes, the teaching world holds a “...culture of evaluation...(p. 4) which decries a perfect performance/best practices paradigm that is challenging to achieve, yet expected. Sameshima (2007) notes that “...the idea of not knowing is a foreign idea for teachers who feign competence, often to gain control of behavioral and management issues, and who are expected by students, parents and administrators to “know” (p. 37). There is pressure for the teacher to know, where as this way of working is in conflict with the artist whose artistic process lays in the realms of ambiguity and relies on not knowing and coming to know through doing and making. Belluigi’s (2013) research into creative practices finds that risk and allowance for ambiguity are important features in art-making that are often counteracted by a focus on assessment. A

tolerance for anxiety and uncertainty allow for an artist to work through places of *not knowing*, take risks and trust in their process.

In her arts based thesis Karen Schaller (2007) a writer and teacher, spent countless months in a state of anxiety and not knowing as she waited for the moment of inspiration to congeal all the preliminary reading and writing she had been doing in preparation of completing her thesis. At one point she thought her writing was near to complete, but then realized a startling absence of her own voice in her work. She knew that this work was not written in the way she had intended. She had been writing in a voice that extolled "...authoritative composition over artistic inquiry..." (p. 243). Being truthful required Schaller to become vulnerable to the notion of inspiration guiding her work. "As scholarartists, we find ourselves at odd angles to those students who can predict their methodology with the sureness of their traditions" (p. 243). This sentiment is echoed by Kamanos Gamelin who also struggled to expose an authentic voice in her writing that speaks to her experience as an artist, researcher and teacher. She writes of transforming academia, the origins of preconceived voice, stating, "...by revealing the relationship between the author, the work, and her circumstances we re-accentuate the connections between art and life and break the silence of the realities of gender, class, and creative destinies" (p. 183). Arts based researchers acknowledge the importance of exploring the meaning of their lived experience and how it infiltrates other areas of their life. They are aware of the need to tell their stories in honest and truthful ways. Carl Leggo (2007) writes in an introduction to Pauline Sameshima's didactic novel, "I live in fear...I am afraid of upsetting others. I am afraid of insults and criticism and rejection...I am afraid of speaking and writing the truth." He continues, "Pauline teaches me to be less frightened of the "boo" in "taboo" to know

that research and education are always about seeking the truth in order to avoid betraying ourselves” (p. xv).

Interestingly, artist/teacher Mark Rees (Graham & Rees, 2014) has a stenciled sign at the front of his art room that reads, “I AM BRAVE ENOUGH”. He recognizes the requirements of risk taking and possible exposure of vulnerabilities inherent to and required in the process of art-making. He too has struggled with conceiving himself holistically in terms of his dual career as teacher and artist. He comments that at art openings he avoided discussing his role as a high school art teacher. Conversely at school he felt a need to distinguish himself as artist. He writes, “After all, serious artists do not aspire to be teachers” (p.16). In his article, *Pick Up Sticks Art Teacher-Interconnectedness and Fragility: Pedagogy as Artistic Encounter*, Rees uses the metaphor of pick up sticks to describe how relationships in teaching and art-making are fragile; in pulling out one stick the entire structure requires a readjustment; each part is dependent on the whole. After experiencing the relational and performative artwork of numerous contemporary artists such as Alberto Aquilar, Tino Seghal and Niki S. Lee, whose work explores identity and develops meaning out of everyday experiences, conversation and performative role-playing, Rees calls for artist/teachers to revision their classroom practices as such. “This is a relational art that considers how the presence of the teacher alters the students and how their presence alters the teacher” (p. 23). As it turns out through a reconceiving of self through an adjustment of practice he is brave enough to be a teacher, to be himself and to be an artist.

The truthfulness, or opening up of vulnerabilities within these writings easily facilitates personal connections. I have found this reading intensely interesting, often emotional or sentimental, and even at times, very witty. Richard Hickman tells of his “drifting” into teaching as “...a way out of the tedium of having to save for things like soap and food” (2010, p. 3).

Reading this, I couldn't help but think of my own passive entrance into the world of pedagogy where upon one spring day a friend offered me a summer job teaching art camps at the Art Gallery of Ontario. I was somewhat intimidated by the idea of teaching but she assured me I could do it, and so, I hesitatingly agreed. At the time I was at the end of a maternity leave from a job I would not be returning to and had nothing else lined up. Consequently, at the beginning of July 2000, I found myself in the midst of a group of *painty* little children, becoming a teacher. From this point onward I felt the urge to reflect on and question my developing teacher self; an identity that is often considered at odds with the life and work of an artist.

### **Relationality and Reciprocity**

Susan Goetz Zwirn's (2006) research studied the experiences and understanding of identity in both men and women who fulfilled the dual roles of artist and teacher. She discovered that the male participants were much more confident in identifying themselves as artists despite their being productive in relation to creating and showing their art. They seemed to need little or no outside validation, whereas the female participants revealed varying degrees of struggle in their attempts to form an artist identity. They discussed issues of empowerment, and a need to feel respect or validation from teachers and colleagues in order to consider identifying as an artist. It seemed that for many, strong female role models helped to establish the women's conceptions of artist identity. The author concludes that it is important then to understand these differences and to be aware of the impact teachers can have through their teacher/learner relationships in the classroom in terms of developing capacity for identity development of students.

Rae Anderson notes that "...career paths for artists and ... teachers are quite distinct" and even, at times, considered a "...hindrance..." to art-making (Anderson, 1997, p.37). Alan

Thornton (2005) and James Hall (2010) acknowledge the differing and often conflicting agendas and requirements of the artist and the teacher and how this dichotomy in turn poses an identity crisis. Carter and Irwin (2014) refer to this identity conflict as “...role stress...” (p. 6). To develop an increased awareness and self-understanding of identity and to begin to deal with these complex issues, both suggest that in order to be an effective artist/teacher it is helpful to be a reflective practitioner. Based on Schon’s 1983 book entitled, *The Reflective Practitioner*, Thornton describes the practice as “...a continuous responsiveness to experience...” (p. 172). This responsiveness requires both a reflection in action and on action; one being spontaneous (in) while the other examines what has occurred (on). Hall advises that artist/teachers need to “...continuously reappraise their art practice...” (p. 103) which will influence and inform their teaching. This confirms an existence of a reciprocity between teaching and art-making, with the art-making being the anchor from which the teaching is informed.

Hickman writes, that there is something very strong in identifying as an artist. It is “...a way of being” (2010, p. 9). This strong sense of self is unsettled when artists enter into teacher education programs. Zwirn and Graham (2010) have found that artist/teachers need to practice their art in order to feel “...validated...” Further, their art-making informs and inspires their teaching and vice versa; there is a reciprocity or relationship between the making and the teaching that supposes the significance of an art teacher who produces their own work. Carter and Irwin (2014) refer to a 2006 study by John Scheib who hypothesizes “...that making art as early as possible during one’s transition to teaching may in fact help new arts-teachers adjust to teaching” (p. 7). As revealed in Carter and Irwin’s study of a pre-service teacher working in conjunction with her co-operating teacher, a reciprocal relationship developed between the two women through collaborative art-making as they worked together on their own

work as well as with and for their students. Here they were able to share techniques, learning from one another while developing prototypes that they would use to help their students devise and learn new techniques or experiment with new ideas. Their collaborative art-making became a place “...to discuss teaching philosophies and pedagogical practices...” (p. 1). The authors were interested in aspects of being and becoming, and the relationships that support these transformations. They refer to this as *Becoming Relational*, which means, “...being attentive and attuned to creative processes such as making art, conversations that emerge from teaching, as well as the relationships that one has on a personal level to others and the objects or tools that are used to create works of art” (p. 17). Within these relationships one remains in a state of becoming, continuously responding to the stimuli of their environment.

To continue with the notion of how relationships influence art-teaching practices, Gray and MacGregor (1991 b), in a review of Canadian art teachers’ practices state, “To hire a teacher is to hire a curriculum” (p. 286). Curriculum emerges from the relationships had in between the teacher’s art practices and interests as it does in between the interests of the art students and the teacher. A study of community college artist/educators by Gibson & Murray (2009) concluded that “...artist-educators whose identity is more closely aligned with the discipline of art perceive themselves as effective educators” (p. 344). Because of his own strong connection to his artist identity, Hickman writes that he has felt a “muddled tension” between being an artist and educator, finding conflict between his personal and professional identities (2010, p. 2). Through a reflective recount of his formative years as a young artist, Hickman’s awareness of the reciprocity between artistic thinking and knowing and teaching has been personally realized, transforming tension into mutually enriching relationships.

## Identity through Community

Identity appears to be a topic of interest for those who have felt or do continue to feel some form of difference or isolation from any number of communities. There is a need to belong, but an uncertainty as to how to connect. In James Haywood Rolling Jr.'s (2004 b) poem, *Recesses*, he talks about having asthma as a child and resultantly being 'restricted' from activities that involve running and playing (p. 553). He is also *distanced* from his fellow students and teachers by the colour of his skin. He feels an outsider. In another article he makes note of how this his struggle to make connections has continued into adulthood manifesting itself in uncertainties about his academic stance. He writes that throughout his life he has found himself not quite acceptable. He goes so far as to declare, "I am a deviant. Artists and other anomalies have long been called so" (Haywood Rolling, 2004 a, p. 881). He has spent a lifetime trying to assimilate into various communities and now, as he seeks a place, a home, as an academic he continues to question whether or not he will be accepted. He searches out a "...reorganizing image..." (Haywood Rolling, 2004 a, p. 874) that can only be had through a combination of "...memory, present experience, and prognostication" (Haywood Rolling, 2004 a, p. 871).

Alison Shreeve (2009) in her research of part-time art tutors' dual teacher/artist identities, believes that how we come to understand ourselves is largely reflected back to us by the communities with which we associate. She writes that we negotiate our identities through social associations. When working on a part-time basis, in numerous and varied settings, social associations are loose at best. The artist/teacher in this case is isolated and without a community. Shreeve (2009) writes that in the event that we are unable to see images of ourselves in our communities it is difficult to form identities. She notes that in order to pass on not only the technical skills that the artists engage with, but also a sense of what it is like to be an artist,

identity formation is of the utmost importance. Shreeve concludes noting that identity is a complex issue, yet plays a central role in teaching art.

Carter and Irwin (2014) understand the concept of identity as evolving (p. 5). Who we are is subjectively linked to who we think we are in ways that are informed by our experiences that can be both emotional and physical. They note that although a group of people may identify with being a teacher, each individual will hold a unique perspective of themselves in relation to their individual experience. The authors advise "...teachers need to look at their experiences and subjectivities in order to then exercise agency in their teaching and lives. It is only once teachers develop this ability...or agency, that they can empower their students to do the same" (p. 5).

### **Reorganizing Self Image through Making Art/Doing Research**

Numerous artist/teachers find their research ignited by their art practices; art is at the heart of their thinking and doing and knowing. In her art/teaching practice, Sylvia Kind (2008) understands art-making not only as "...a place of inquiry..." but also as a way to "...negotiate life's passages" (p. 168). Kind's engagements in art-making originate with undefined questions; personal images and materials guide her into a process of inquiry allowing for new relationships and knowing to emerge. In this book chapter she intertwines stories of coming to terms with her parents' deaths with her teaching practice. Kind understands art-making not only as an analogous process for teaching (she is drawn to emergent, spontaneous, and open practices that value children's inquiries and mimic her approach to the creation of her own artwork) but also as a release, a way to work through inevitable moments of trauma and transition. She notes the importance of incorporating practices of listening, patience and waiting in one's work as a teacher and as an artist. Being attentive even when one is unsure just what one is waiting for, allows the space for meaning to take shape.

Carabine's (2013) research also addresses this notion of waiting, living with the anxiety of nothingness and not-knowing. She eventually comes to understand these empty times as a place of "...reverie..." (p. 40), a state where ideas, thoughts and visions percolate, and eventually boil over in creative acts of making. In this respect Carabine understands that art-making and creative acts require both unconscious and conscious processes (p. 36). These two seemingly dichotomous forces act together in a reciprocal relationship to produce new understandings. Similarly in identity explorations numerous forces and self-conceptions juxtapose one another, sometimes in harmonious ways and at other times in conflict.

In experiencing conflict between her role as artist and teacher, Maria Robinson-Cseke's (2007) arts-based inquiry into questions of identity began with the writing of a poem, *Where I'm From*, a work that evokes the author's identity through childhood memories that establish a contextual basis for her research. The poem instigated a video project that she writes "...is an effort to unpack the continual formation, recognition and changing identity of an art educator" (p. 101). She questions ways in which identity is structured through our own experiences in combination with societal perceptions of who we are. Notably she says she "...struggled with [her] desire to make art and the conflicting societal negativity toward artists as being "hippies", "self-serving" and "flakey" (Robinson-Cseke, 2007, p. 103). Framing her work within the psychoanalytical writings of Jacques Lacan, Robinson-Cseke encourages the viewer to examine their own notion of the gaze that results in biases and notions of what it means to conceive of or be conceived as a teacher or an artist. Our identities are not shaped in isolation from but in dialogue with community. She comes to understand her identity as formed through stories that emerge out of relations between her own desires and societal perceptions. In her own inquiry into a developing identity as academic, Lace Marie Brogden (2010) concurs stating "We are the

producers and the produced” (p. 372). That is to say, we make ourselves not in isolation from, but in negotiations with others.

Tara Page’s (2012) research findings concur. She believes that through performing an identity you build a capacity to construct it. It is necessary to *do to become*. Page further proposes that pre-existing narratives influence these performances and hence our definition and understanding of self. Beyond performing a role it is then necessary to reflect on our understanding of these roles we are to assume and ultimately critique and internalize new understandings of self in order to transform one’s identity (Carabine, 2013). Further our performances require what Carabine refers to as *tacit knowledge*, which comes from repeated use of materials and practice of skills and techniques. To learn from experience and thus to transform, the artist/teacher needs “...to be able to wait for meaning to emerge and then to be able to think about the experience” (p. 38). In acts of doing and reflection one develops the capacity to live with the anxieties of waiting for serendipitous moments that require facing the unknown, thus undergoing a metamorphosis of self conception.

Critical contextualization of childhood stories are essential components of any thorough self-portrait. Anita Sinner (2008) engages memories of childhood through her use of a collection of artwork produced as a child to offer “... a different lens to understand historical conditioning and socially constructed perspectives...” She notes further that what happens in childhood can “...continue to influence adult life” (Sinner, 2008, p. 259). Themes and motifs that appear in her early art work can serve to illuminate the “...curricular orientation of the day...” (p. 257) as well as reveal in the author interests that have contributed to her identity as a teacher and artist in the present. Sinner concludes her paper with the knowledge that perhaps through this reflective

process, which makes aware the various aspects of self, this new understanding can be utilized to inspire children to learn about self through artistic practices.

In self-exploratory examinations, many artist/teachers admit to behaving, thinking and feeling contrary to society's expectations of what 'normal' or acceptable conduct is. Rule-breakers (artist) turned rule-makers (teacher) can lead to tensions and conflicts that provoke reorganizing images of self. Like Haywood Rolling's understanding of the artist as deviant, Alex de Cosson (2004) also sees the artist as behaving in ways that are contrary to the rules. Subversion has consistently attracted him; he is a rule breaker, living outside of the norm. His non-linear dissertation composed of a spectrum of fonts and images, poems, thoughts, and readings is evidence of the unique perspective of a rule (re) maker. Hickman (2010) too expresses a number of personal stories that situate him as a *subversive deviant* throughout his life from his early years where he played out a scene from *The Lone Ranger* by bringing his brother's knife to nursery school and holding it to a child's throat to a time in his teens years where his art club was expelled from their headquarters for causing a fire hazard.

Jennifer Paziienza (2001), without aid of fire or knives, also shunned the societal expectations and conventions of her Italian/American upbringing by getting a BA in art education rather than staying home and making "...babies and meatballs" (p. 46). In this reflective piece of writing she also admits to having had strong connections to her childhood that influence her way of doing things in the present. Paziienza reflects on her identity as artist/teacher through revisiting her own life stories in relation to her dual practices of art-making and teaching. In a series of paintings she discusses entitled, *Landscapes of Childhood*, Paziienza acknowledges a "...persistence of memory" (p. 50). Like Sinner (2008), Paziienza understands that what happens in our childhood influences who we become as adults. She believes that

teachers need an informed philosophy or theoretical grounding from which to teach. Through a reflective and critical examination of her personal art practice in relation to her teaching she comes to understand that “What I make in my studio can have direct consequences for what I do in my classrooms...and my theoretical beliefs certainly can have implications for what I do in my studio (p. 54). The relationship between teaching and art-making for Paziienza is reciprocal; with each practice having the potential to inform and strengthen the other.

Nicole Porter (2003) comments on art-making as a means of learning and discovery (p. 2). In her classroom she has tried to create non-hierarchical relationships with her students by placing her own work up for scrutiny. She, along with her students, makes and talks about her art in her classroom. Here she connects her teaching and art-making practices through place and in doing so allows for this reciprocal relationship to develop new ways of practicing. Zimmerman (2011) adapts a similar stance in that she finds herself as much a learner as a teacher while working with unfamiliar art materials and processes in her research. She writes,

Even if I felt a shift during my research between artist and teacher, I was a learner throughout each stage. To answer one of my research questions, how may this research promote growth in me as an artist and an educator?, is to realize that I will continue to grow if I conceptualize myself as learner. My artist ego or expectations with an art medium may block creative potential. My teacher expectations should reside in openness to learning from my students. (p. 54)

Like most of the artist/teachers in this literature review, Porter (2003) and Zimmerman (2011) discover that their artist selves inform their teacher selves. Through collaborative art-making practices they are able to better understand themselves as continually changing.

In her study that explored concepts of artist-teacher-learner, Tara Page (2012) works with pre-service teachers who have pre-existing identities as artists. She writes "...as beginning teachers they have to undergo an identity transformation..." (p. 70). At the beginning of this project these new teachers understood teaching and learning as being in conflict with one another and were aware that they wanted to create learning experiences that differed from their own. Through a community art project which took students outside of their regular classroom/learning environment they were able to establish collaborative creative experiences that blurred the previously conceived of hierarchical identities. Page concludes, "...these learning communities enable an exploration of the identities of teacher, artist and learner, in that they are more flexible and in a state of flux, not fixed or predetermined" (p. 75). Here blurred identities are constructed through examinations of dialectical conceptions of teaching and learning. Learning together breaks down the struggle between previously conceived of opposing identities.

To shed light on his identity, de Cosson (2004), a sculptor/teacher/researcher, understands that a *shifting gaze* or *change* can serve as a catalyst to re-conceive or (re) organize understanding. In his doctoral dissertation he uses writing and journaling as a metonymic device for sculpting; the writing becomes the sculpture. This allows for him to shift his gaze, exposing aspects of his artistic process, which in turn have come to compose his research process. The writing process becomes parallel to his sculptural work as he both build(s) and tear(s) "... into the he(art)" of his praxis (p. x). He sets up a friendly, intimate dialogue with the reader; "Dear reader..." (p. xvii), collaging together blurred photographic images, bits of journaling, and readings he (dis) assembles over a six month period. He is building, through his writing, new understandings of self.

Lace Marie Brogden (2010) also takes advantage of construction-based metaphors in her understanding of ways in which we build our beliefs. In writing autobiographically she observes that it seems as though you are putting together a strong, solid structure, held in place with mortar and then in an instant there is some sort of “...narrative slippage...” and “...the story falters...” (p. 372) rendering a need for reconstruction, a new way to approach the building, a new way to re-conceive of oneself. This account suggests the fragile, fluid and ongoing nature of identity work. As we strive to erect and solidify our stories through the collection of supportive evidence and critical awareness, we are caught by the unexpected, and required to begin again. As with art-making, there is a need to be flexible and open to finding meaning in serendipitous happenings.

As with many other ‘artists/’, de Cosson finds that art is what he does and how he retains a sense of balance; it is the heart of his practice (2004, p. 55). In his research that he refers to as a “...meandering journey...” (p. xi) he delves into artistic processes as they relate both to his writing and to his art-making. In doing so de Cosson discovers that he has (re) learned that art is learned through making art and as a teacher he (re) learns that without the learner he is nothing, and moreover he (re) learns that it is in letting go that we learn; it is not something that is pre-known or preplanned (p. 162). de Cosson forefronts lived experience as the source of his coming to know. In writing his stories, he allows himself to become vulnerable. This writing force together otherwise unconnected observations and thoughts “allow(ing) for new hybrids to form” (de Cosson, 2004, p. xv). This hybrid space where fresh perspectives are brought to light is also referred to as a third space (Ghecevici, 2010) or the “...in/between...” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xx) with the ‘/’ representing places/spaces that open up, unfold and reveal new meanings.

Like de Cosson (2004), Alexandra Cristina Ghecevici's (2010) research is also framed within the methodology of a/r/tography and plays with concepts or renderings that emerged within her research process. Multiplicity, layering, vulnerability and repetition become modes with which she explores the stories and work of three artist/teachers, one being herself. She and her participants use the creation of art work and interviews to develop a non-linear dialogue that, while in attempts to understand how these various practices inform one another, discovers a third practice that exists between art-making and teaching, where each self informs and enriches the other. This third place or the in/between is found in meaning-making that surfaces between making art and writing text, between theory and practice. "When moving from a familiar place to other there is a deep and strong necessity to re/form" (Ghecevici, 2010, p. 61). The third place is situated where "...binaries dissolve..." (Ghecevici, 2010, p. 61), a place of negotiation and reconstruction which allows for a transformation that binds fragmentation of self together. As Ghecevici examines photographic images of herself reflected in a window she gradually comes to see herself as being in a new place (the place in the reflection), newly positioned through an act of reflecting.

Ghecevici's (2010) understanding concurs with the understanding of other artist scholars, (Haywood Rolling, 2004; Hickman, 2010; Kind, 2008; Paziienza, 2001; Sinner, 2008; Suominen, 2003) that lifelong contextual issues stemming from family, culture, and society serve to ferment complex concoctions of self that are reflected back to us in multiple images by the communities we are associated with. Ghecevici asks her participants when it was that they were first able to call themselves an artist. One of her participants revealed that it wasn't until others around him had referred to him as such was he comfortable to call himself an artist.

In an autoethnographic inquiry Anniina Suominen (2003) negotiates identity between an established artist self and emerging identities. She uses personal photographs and writing to understand how her Finish heritage continues to shape her in relation to who she is becoming in an American university, speaking and writing in English and required to learn and conform to unfamiliar cultural contexts. She writes, "Writing narrative in a constantly changing relationship to my images has become a powerful tool for self-examination" (p. 163). Stories and memories are important to Suominen's work as she delves into her family history to better situate herself as a developing academic in the present. She begins her dissertation with an image of a curtained window followed by a short poem that delineates what her story is about, setting the stage for her inquiry into struggling with a new language and culture. For Suominen, as is the case for many artist/teachers, it was in conflict that a need to find a reorganizing image materialized. Also, like others, it is her "...artistic behavior that is at the core of [her] intellectual thinking..." (p. 169). As a consequence of her research, Suominen has found that her ability to listen to and engage with her students' stories has increased and now allows for the "...building [of] trusting and comfortable relationship[s]" (p. 170).

### **Identity through Process**

Many artist/scholars discuss their art-making or creative process as being integral to developing understanding of their identities. Zimmerman (2011) asks, "How do I learn through the process of making art?" (p. 9). Her arts based research explores identity through place. She uses collage and layering to transform the subject matter she works with, photographs of buildings in Plymouth, Wisconsin. Zimmerman writes, "The places I will create in the artwork will also be liminal for they represent a dream-like memory, an attempt to detach, distort..." (p. 11). Although this way of working is unfamiliar to her as she was trained and is more

comfortable working as a printmaker, she finds that playing with new materials and processes is an important part of her development. Through play she experiments with new art media and processes such as the collage and layering techniques so she can best achieve the aesthetic results she imagines.

Employing a/r/tographic methodologies in her research, Karinna J. Riddett Moore (2011) also experiments with the use of techniques and art materials that reside outside of her comfort zone in order to place herself in the position of learner, thus adapting an empathetic stance with her students. Riddett Moore's study began with the intention to develop an ethics of caring in her students through their art-making. She weaves her personal experiences into her research as she simultaneously struggles to rebuild and reconstruct herself after a traumatic marital dissolution. Her art-making for this study reflected her state of transfiguration as she photographs the cutting apart of her wedding gown. As she deconstructs this once married self, she is rebuilding a new identity through her art-making and reflection. Understanding the ways in which art can support a reconstruction of self, Riddett Moore engages her students in ways that allowed them to experience transformations, or ruptures in their knowing. She eventually came to ask what it was that caused students to come to "...moments of disruption/deconstruction" (p. 99)? In one project with students, Riddett Moore had them choose a conceptual word to illustrate without the use of obvious symbolism. One such project was entitled, *Happy isn't a Smiley Face*. This was a challenge to many students. She writes about one student in particular who comes to understand that happiness is more than just smiling and that there is a perception that we should always be happy even though that is not true. Her work with her students centered on bringing them to new precipices of self-understanding.

Riddett Moore began her research with the intention of exploring how middle school children develop an art of living, but as the work evolved her own lived experiences crept in and became woven into her developing understandings. “But in working through the art, in thinking through the art, in all the time spent writing, sewing, photographing, there emerged a new idea...” (p. 156). Riddett Moore states that one of her intentions is to have this research be a record of her praxis as she creates meaning through creative acts.

Andrea Eis (2013) discusses her artistic process in her research paper, *Silent Conversations in the Labyrinth of Artistic Research and Practice*. Eis uses the metaphor of a labyrinth to describe the process of art-making. In her comparison she writes that there is not only a discovery to be had in the artistic journey but additionally in the attainment of the end product. In this work Eis brings together diverse fragments of found writing and imagery, creating layered photographic images. This project was initiated when Eis came across a collection of books once owned by an American woman scholar from the early 1900s named Meta Glass. These books had found their way to a library in Greece where Eis happened upon them. She began by photographing over one thousand pages of the books. Although at first she was unsure as to what she might do with them she kept them and remained fascinated by the various marginalia written by the original owner/writer. Eis collected and saved these visuals until after a period of waiting, inspiration struck. Previously Eis herself had been interested in the conversations she had with authors, in particular Susan Sontag, in the margins of her own readings.

For her final artwork Eis combined a selection of photographed images of Greek statues with the marginalia writings along with additional Greek phrases, layering these dispirit components, thus bringing together different times and places and people into new dialogues and

conversations. Her intention was not only to explore and give voice to these long silenced voices but also to note the labyrinth like qualities that the art-making process reveals in the various moments of inspiration and chance occurrence. “Through this work I am finding a way to make both the Greeks and Meta Glass speak again, though with my voice and inflictions” (p. 21). As with other artist/researcher/teachers, Eis experienced periods of waiting for inspiration in between working on her art and researching ancient Greek texts. She comments, “...so I just kept pulling books from the shelves. I read and researched to find my way rather than knowing my way ahead of time” (p. 7).

Belluigi (2013) also investigates the role uncertainty plays on creating art. Her proposed creative triad refers to a three-part connection between the artist, the process, and the final work. Just as Eis (2013) conceived that the process of making and the final work have equivalent status, Belluigi finds that the artist’s self conception plays a role in either enabling or constraining creative acts. It is therefore imperative to examine and deconstruct places of subjectivity in identity formation. How do we come to understand who we are through our lived experiences?

## **Conclusion**

If, as Montuori (2005) proposes, a literature review is a conversation between colleagues then I understand my research as a response and addition to the above artist/teachers’ understanding of their identities. Each of these practitioners is compelled to negotiate their varied and fragmented identities between various communities of practice and throughout times of personal upheaval. Arts based research practice establishes spaces to make meaning of self in relation to others through inquiry into the meaning of our day-to-day living (Carter & Irwin, 2014). The above investigations denote that identity inquiry is compelled and propelled by a

perceived conflict (Anderson, 1997; Belluigi, 2013; Hall, 2010; Hickman, 2010; Page, 2012; Robinson-Cseke, 2007; Sameshima, 2007; Suominen, 2003; Thornton, 2005) in a process that demands patience, periods of waiting (Kind, 2008; Carabine, 2013) and engagements in ambiguous processes. Arts based research seeks no defining answer but often generates more questions than the researcher began with (Riddett Moore, 2011). It is also required that the researcher be willing to engage in risk taking in the sense of exposing vulnerability to a reader (Brogden, 2010; MacKenzie, 2011; Zimmerman, 2011). Without vulnerability there is little chance for empathy and caring to grow (Riddett Moore, 2011). Having the courage to face personal truths and speak in an authentic voice (de Cosson, 2004; Kamanos Gamelin, 2008; Leggo, 2007; Rees, 2014; Riddett-Moore, 2011; Schaller, 2007) allows for the researcher to connect empathically and in caring ways with others thus broadening and complicating the scope of conversation in/between reader and writer.

Through and within practices of writing and art-making these relationships in turn allow for new understandings of self to emerge. Artists become teachers and teachers become students. This in/between space of active becoming (Carter & Irwin 2014; Gibson & Murray, 2009; Ghecevici, 2010; Hickman, 2010; Pazienza, 2001; Porter, 2003; Riddett Moore, 2011; Sinner, 2008; Zimmerman, 2011) allows for a resolution of conflict between identities where the artist/teacher is able to reconceive the self as a whole where once discrete identities now support and enrich one another.

Sameshima's (2007) words aptly sum up what this literature review has revealed. "Wholeness is thus living inside and outside-living a subversive esthetic, moving with conviction, away from the safety of conformity and standardization, and the fear that holds us

there, to the unknown, to the new, and to the open connective spaces where the impossible becomes possible” (p. 33).

### Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss the various methodological processes used to frame this arts based research project. I will further expand upon the nature of autoethnography and arts based research as these methods pertain to my work and more specifically describe how and why I have aligned my work with the methodological practices of A/r/tography. The final section of this chapter will examine my progress through a five-phase process that I have used to bring awareness to the process inherent in creative inquiry practices. In each *phase* I will discuss the resulting work and ideas that emerged and how eventually there came to be a completed body of work that has become a visual representation responding to my research questions.

#### Background

The metaphor of the camera is ripe with possibilities in respect to exploring identity issues. Research itself uses photographic terminology in terms of *lens* and *framing* to *focus* the researcher's position. While trying to build my focus for this thesis I re-read a paper I had written that told the story of my first camera and how, in my attempts to be creative, I had taken pictures of myself in the mirror. That same afternoon I had been examining some recent photos I had taken on my digital camera. These images captured my daughter and myself in the mirror with facemasks on, our beauty evening. They were funny and playful and not only a reflection of our close relationship, but also an attempt to make something artistic, images with a degree of aesthetic consideration. In discovering this reoccurrence of imagery, I instantly reconnected with my twelve-year-old self. I understood this as a syncretical moment when the past intersected the present in a sudden moment of clarity offering me a glimpse of something previously obscured. In this coalescent moment I realized how I could approach my thesis. I would begin my inquiries using my ever-expanding photography collection as a data source. Within these images I

believed there to be rich opportunities to explore the many re-occurring themes inherent to my development as an artist and teacher.

Cameras and personal photographs have long played a huge role in my life; capturing and documenting both profound and incidental moments, at times with artistic intentions and at other times with the impetus to remember and document an event or person or place. Individually and as collections these personal images hold multiple meanings. Today my camera provides me with a sense of personal empowerment and aesthetic pleasure. Curiously and despite my strong connections to the images I have created, I had never truly considered my photographs to be representative of my art-making aside from serving as models for painting. In working on this thesis I have been able to begin to shift this conception, and now understand my photographic images as an aesthetic extension and interpretation of my lived experience. It is this burgeoning shift that I find compelling and worth further consideration and development.

### **My Cameras**

When I was twelve I received a simple point and shoot Kodak camera from my father; I think it was for my birthday. I don't have the camera now, but I remember how it looked and how the flash bulbs burned out in a melting, bubbly kind of way, one by one. Depending on the film purchased, there were either twelve or twenty-four opportunities to take a photo on each roll of film. Each shot was precious. I began some artistic experimentation with this camera, taking pictures on jaunty angles and smearing the lens with Vaseline for a *romantic* effect. I continued to use that camera into my early twenties. The pictures document family vacations, my first summer camp experience, my work as a camp councilor, teenage fun with friends at the lake and my first trip to Europe. There are a number of sunsets, shadows of myself against white walls and snow and a few images taken in mirrors. These last images were intended to be artistic and

were provoked by a desire to see myself. Ironically the camera and flash blurs out the face and so I was unable to achieve my goal at this time.

Later on in my life, I was given another camera, also by my father. This camera, received after I attained a B.F.A from Concordia, was a Konica, SLR and came with three lenses and a battery operated flash. I used this camera all through the 1990's, up until 2006. I took photography classes at George Brown College in the evenings and learned how to develop my film and print my images in the dark room. It was a magical experience watching the images appear as the developing fluid sloshed back and forth in waves over the photographic paper.

As I learned the technical aspects of picture taking (as opposed to the artistic conventions); developing, printing, knowing how to adjust depth of field, and when and why to work with different speeds of film, I felt a strong feeling of accomplishment and even power. Up until this time, the world of technical appliances, applications and devices was outside of what I previously understood I was capable of as a girl and now woman. At least this was how it had been in my family. When we were growing up, my younger brother had his own dark room and an SLR camera. The *technical* was the realm of the men in the family, my grandfather and father and brother. In breaking through this threshold my picture taking habits blossomed. I used slide film to document my paintings, I brought my camera with me and recorded images of events such as a large political demonstration in Toronto, a Monster Truck show and a Good Friday parade in Little Italy. I used a lot of black and white film. I took a lot of pictures of glassy skyscrapers, of storefronts and the contents in their windows. Many of these images are etched in my brain and easily and pleasantly recalled as I sit here and write. As time passed I had a daughter and moved to the Ontario countryside where my focus of interest shifted. I took roles of film that featured her as subject, capturing her as she played and ate, slept, and grew. I also

began to reconnect to nature; trees, plants, water and wilderness featured prominently during this time period and continues to be a focus for my photography today particularly in juxtaposition with manufactured or human subjects.

The camera I use today is digital, also given to me by my father after graduating with a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Manitoba. It has a 35mm lens and takes good quality images. I like not having to worry about film costs and limiting the number of pictures I take, although I rarely have anything printed now-a-days and I miss the anticipation of arriving at the developers and waiting for the envelope full of twenty-four images that I desperately hoped were everything I had imagined. Downloading images onto the computer has it's own set of excitement and if the images are not everything I imagined, I can edit them instantly. With this camera I continue to explore the themes and imagery that have held interest for me over a lifetime; reflections, shadows, storefronts, architecture, nature and my ever growing and changing daughter and our tangled relationship in images.

The technical aspects of working with a digital camera are somewhat different as well. Familiarity with computer software is essential. The work is less hands on, less tactile. The options to manipulate are now unlimited, but the process is a purely visual rather than visceral experience. There are no smells, or liquids or darkness as I sit in front of the computer cropping, adding effects, and adjusting saturation. When I do take my images to the printer I have a pretty good idea how they will look, but there is still the excitement seeing the prints emerge from the giant printer. I get home with the images, take them out of their packing and have a flash back memory to the film days.

## **Focus**

This thesis uses my photographic images to explore my identity through an arts based autoethnographic inquiry. In the following paragraphs I will describe these methodologies as they have influenced and framed this research. Through adapting a series of five procedural phases as outlined by Eisner and Barone (2012) I have been able to identify various themes inherent to my art- s an artist and teacher simultaneously. In establishing the self as ethnographic resource (Collins & Galliant, 2010) I tell/share and (re) create a visual narrative that is provoked by and through interactions with a variety of artifacts, my photographs, and a dialogue had with both self and others.

## **The Autoethnographic Self**

“We research who we are in the same way that everything else we do is an expression of who we are” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 48).

Autoethnography is a written inquiry, which uses the self as a starting point to investigate larger contextual/societal issues. Writing autobiographically is instigated by a quest for deeper understanding of the self in relation to others. Laurel Richardson writes, “Writing is a method of discovery a way of finding out about yourself and your world” (2001, p. 35). Cole and Knowles define autoethnography as placing the “...self within a sociocultural context” (2001, p. 16). Tami Spry adds, “Autoethnography can be defined as a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (2001, p. 710).

Autoethnography proceeds out of the ethnographic practices used in the field of anthropology. By the 1970’s anthropologists became more interested in the relationships between the self and other rather than trying to isolate and objectify the world of the other (Collins & Galliant, 2010). An anthropologists’ position/relation to the other could not be

neutral, but instead was informed and shaped by their own cultural practices. In postmodern fashion "...anthropologists felt obliged to confront the uncomfortable fact that they were always already implicated in 'the field'; that they were, inevitably, constructing what they came to represent" (Collins & Galliant, 2010, p. 3).

Stemming from this increase in self-awareness is a growing body of autoethnographical work, which contributes to the ongoing revolution in qualitative research (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). This emerging and somewhat alternative approach allows for previously muted voices to be both heard and valued in the subjectivity of personally lived experience.

Cole and Knowles acknowledge that research is unequivocally autobiographical in that it originates from and intersects with ones own myriad of experiences; be they personal, familial, educational, or social. "To research is to reveal the autobiographical-the self or elements of the self" (2001, p. 45). In her paper entitled, *Getting Personal: Writing Stories*, Richardson (2001) encourages "...writing-stories that situate your work in sociopolitical, familial, and academic climates". Writing autobiographically not only allows the author opportunity to place her stories within a larger socio-historical context but also allows for a personal (re) shaping or (re) structuring of self.

Gannon (2006) understands the self to be in a constant state of becoming resulting in the writing of the self becoming a subjective endeavor as the self is multiple, fragmented, unsettled, in flux, and situated. Writing ones self is an act of folding the "...past and present selves...mixing together complex and contradictory fragments, images, theories and cultural artifacts" (Gannon, p. 488). Richardson (2001) suggests that when we write about our lives poststructurally we need to consider that we are "...writing from particular positions at specific times; and second [that we be freed] from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone, a text

where the complete life is told” (p. 35). Our lives are composed of moments situated within time and place. Interpretation of experience is dependent on a present perspective and is prone to mutations. As life is lived we are able to reflect and elaborate on past meanings; there is no complete telling of a life, as there is no life that is complete. Autoethnography allows for a creative and personal process of pulling together incomplete lives in moments and memories of self in relation to others, into meaningful strands that will continue to form and (re) form as they are written and (re) written over time.

Suominen writes, “I live surrounded by my images, the evidence of previous stages of inquiry” (2008, p. 26). These images continue to speak. “My images have a suggested continuity of time...” and further, “...there is a sense of being able to visit and return, a layered presence of the past, present and future...” (p. 27). The image and the stories it provokes remain alive for (re) interpretation. Ardra Cole (2001) insists that life stories be revisited and retold in acts of reinterpretation. “In the process of reconstructing aspects of my life, in an attempt to make meaning of those experiences and their relation to my professional practice, I experienced moments of revelation, confusion, sorrow and joy” (p. 41).

Autoethnographic writing lends itself to identity explorations. After the death of his namesake and father, James Haywood Rolling Jr., searches to re-establish an identity or “...a reorganizing image” (2004a, p. 874). In (re) negotiating his identity, Haywood Rolling comes to understand that naming oneself is a process that considers memories of the past, present action as well as imaginings of the future. Our lives are lived in complex and complicated layers. In (re) examining who we are and how we live in the world we have the potential through renaming and rewriting, to transform the world and ourselves. Haywood Rollings says, “We are each more

than we appear to be; we rewrite ourselves as we restate the case. [Repositioning ourselves allows for]...movement into new territories of identity” (2004 a, p. 882).

Through valuing different ways of perceiving, knowing and meaning making, an artist-researcher can contribute holistic and intimate perspectives to research. Researcher self-studies that involve the making of visual imagery while engaged in educational research are one way to extend knowledge of the potential contribution of arts to qualitative research. (Jongeward, 2009, p. 251)

As with most identity-based research, part of the goal is “...to communicate the data in such a way as to challenge stereotypes, build empathy, promote awareness, and stimulate dialogue” (p. 13). Another benefit of arts-based research is that it can be disseminated in ways that allow for a greater and more diverse audience. For instance, I was able to exhibit my resulting artwork for this thesis at a gallery in downtown Winnipeg. Additionally I created a blog to showcase my work as it developed. This blog site includes writing and imagery created over the period of time that I have been working on this thesis. The inclusion of a public audience outside of the academic world and/or the typical school/teaching setting has the capacity to expand upon and extend the dialogue around this arts based inquiry.

## **Images**

Images are powerful receptacles of information, be they personal, or collective. Leavy gives the example of how when thinking of the twin towers in post 9/11, New York, images spring to mind along with shadows of the emotional responses to the event. Images evoke “...emotional and visceral responses from their perceivers; they are typically filed in the subconscious...” (Leavy, 2009, p. 215). A realistic image has the capacity to engage empathetic responses. Annette Kuhn (2007) encourages placing oneself as the subject in a photograph when

conducting memory work in order to “...bring out the feelings associated with the photograph...” (p. 284).

In referring to Roland Barthes’ autobiographical work, Roland Barthes, (which is comprised of photos and text), Gannon (2006) writes, “Photographs are provocations for traces of embodied sensory memories” (p. 482). That is to say, they have the ability to evoke, in the viewer, a visceral response, an emotional connection. In this work Barthes uses photographic images to open up personal memories and connect them to larger narratives and in doing so, distances his own self from the imagery, “The individual self, the biographical details particular to Roland Barthes, are dispersed as the photographs become texts to be read as discursive spaces” (Gannon, 2006, p. 482). Gannon describes a picture of Roland Barthes and his mother in an embrace found within his autobiography. As described earlier in the text, rather than speaking to that particular moment in time with those specific people, Barthes entitles the image, *The Demand for Love*, thus distancing or erasing himself from this image/text while simultaneously situating this memory into larger themes allowing others to be provoked and informed by the image (Gannon, 2006). The viewer is allowed even required, to participate in the story. Douglas Harper (2002) in reference to Roland Barthes’ work deems that straddling a dual role of subject and researcher in explorations of emotionally charged photos, that additionally communicate sociological information, is one of the most experimental areas of visual sociology. It is here that possibilities exist for the merger of art and sociology. As Barthes chose emotionally charged photographic images that spoke to and provoked an embodied sensory memory in writing an autobiography, I too have explored and considered my photographic collection in relation to the individual images’ larger visceral significance as well as in conjunction with their relationship to

my identity as an artist and teacher. These interactions served as a jumping board for further production and manipulations as I created the artwork/images for my exhibition.

Barthes names photographic images the “...That-has-been...” (1980, p. 77). The subject in the photo is not unlike the subject in a dream. Although we may have familiarity with that subject, the dream or photographic representation is not that person or place. Barthes comments that he dreams of his mother but he is unable to dream her (p. 66). Hagi Kenaan quotes Jean-Luc Nancy saying, “...the image is neither the thing nor the imitation of a thing” (2010, p. 64). A photograph represents a moment divorced from the present and yet is able to hold onto or provoke in the viewer a longing or desire for the *that-has-been*. Similarly, Kenaan tells a story of the first image-maker, a woman who traces her lover’s face before he leaves for war. The image is created out of love and desire, not to hold on to a replica of her leaving lover, but to have a reminder, to keep her desire, her passion and longing alive during his absence. She has created a story in an image. “Painting as such, originates at an intersection: it takes place at the crossroad of desire and the experience of loss, of wanting to hold on to what one loves in a familiar way and of letting go” (Kenaan, 2010, p. 73). The image, be it a painting or photograph, personal or collective, is infused with charged emotions of longing and desire for that which is remembered.

### **Telling Stories in Image and Text**

We are compulsive story makers, constructing our stories to make sense of our experiences in the world (Collins & Galliant, 2010). Through our storytelling we (re) member and (re) shape our lives. Sharing our stories is a way of making ourselves known to one another, exposing aspects of identity to be reflected back to us. “Generally, we tell stories to certain people, in certain ways, in order to give them a certain sense of the way we wish them to perceive us” (Collins, 2010, p. 238). Our stories can be told in a multitude of ways depending on

the audience and what we want them to understand. In story-making and telling we are able to (re) shape ourselves, attribute meaning to our experiences and allow our (re) configured identities to be acknowledged.

The compulsive quality of storytelling is reiterated by Annette Kuhn (2007) who writes that “...even outsiders will weave stories around [photo] albums, stories which embody precisely the epic, anecdotal quality that marks the memory text” (p. 285). The act of looking is, like writing, a process of inquiry that involves a certain level of interpretation as we come to an understanding that resides in our own stories. Our assumptions are based in our own time and place. Tamara Kohn (2010) comes to understand this when, in giving a gift to a young girl she learns that the girl sells it rather than, as she had anticipated, treasures it. Kohn, although at first, upset, recognizes “...the child’s actions caught the anthropologist slipping into his or her own cultural expectations about the conventions of gift-giving...” (p. 188). And so it is the same with the visual; we cannot look at an image without attributing our own understanding to what we see. We are implicit in making meaning of others’ experience as they are in making ours.

Patricia Leavy (2009) begins her chapter on the visual arts in arts-based research noting the power that an image holds. She then reminds us of the popular saying, “...*a picture is worth a thousand words*” (p. 215). This ubiquitous statement assumes generative connections between imagery and writing/speaking; in engaging with an image we search for worded stories just as when listening to a story images are generated in the mind. My research involves both acts of visual storytelling, inherent to my artwork, as well as linguistic explications, describing the process and lived experiences of undergoing this project in all its complexities. Additionally I have written and recorded spoken texts as soundtracks in a number of my video works in order to complicate the perceived meaning that can be interpreted in these moving images. Through this

interweaving of image and text, I have sought to both describe and invoke new understandings of my inhabiting the dual identity of artist and teacher. Suominen (2003) believes (as do I) that Richardson's thoughts on writing as inquiry "...can be extended to visual and artistic visual production" (p. 5). Writing/storytelling and the making of images are equally valid ways to engage in questions of identity.

Text and image do not have to exist in isolation from one another, but instead can be used in tandem to support and inform the other. Visual artists have long used text in ways that trouble or complicate their images; from Marcel Duchamp in the time of the Dadaists and Surrealists, and the pop artists of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, to present day practitioners. In western culture we are exposed daily to the text/image combinations inherent in advertisements. Without conscious effort we are able to decode the message that forms between text and image. Patricia Leavy describes a third or hybrid space that exists between the image and the text where images can illustrate the text or the text can illustrate the pictures or they can be connected "...intertextual..." and "...associative..." or in dialogue with one another (2009, p. 232). Conceptual artists, such as Joseph Kosuth have explored this notion of defining an object through the use of various representations. In his artwork *One and Three Chairs*, he presents the chair itself, a life-size photograph of the chair along with a dictionary definition of the chair, offering the viewer three interpretations of a chair. The chair's meaning is to be found somewhere in between these various interpretations; it is neither one thing nor another, but instead is fluid and fragmented. Multiple perspectives co-exist in our day-to-day interactions with the world and so exploring varied definitions through inter-textuality is a valid and rich process to engage with, expanding on and acknowledging the many approaches we can engage in when considering the world around us and our place within it.

In considering the relationship between image and text in the analysis of photographs in ethnography, Collier and Collier (1980) write that, “Decoding or translation serves as a bridge between the visual, which in Western culture we associate with intuition, art, and implicit knowledge, and the verbal, which we have come to associate with reason, fact, and objective information” (1986, p. 169). In a hybrid relationship between image and text, the subjective exists with the objective, the art with the science. Binaries inform one another rather than oppose (Gouzouasis, 2008).

### **Arts Based Research**

As arts based and autoethnographic research methodologies continue to emerge, researchers struggle to establish criteria that will legitimize or validate their work. To address issues of legitimacy and rigor I have considered Patricia Leavy’s interpretations of assessing arts based research. She writes, “...the aim of these approaches is resonance, understanding, multiple meanings, dimensionality, and collaboration” (2009, p. 16). She further requires the researcher to evoke emotion, understanding, and empathy as they incorporate others as a way to represent multiple perspectives (2009, p. 18). Some newer forms of arts-based research require “...new, flexible methods of assessment...” (Leavy, 2009, p. 16).

Leavy notes that, “...arts-based practices are often useful in studies involving identity work” (2009, p. 13). Further, visual images can “...evoke particular kinds of emotional and visceral responses...” (2009, p. 215). Using visual art in identity work can expose additional information that is potentially unavailable in written text. Graeme Sullivan (2004) argues that “...if art education is to establish a theoretically robust foundation, then the research approaches deployed should not only be informed by what the social sciences have to offer but also must be grounded in practices located within the domain of art” (p. 796). In using methodologies from

arts based research practices to inquire into my identity of artist and teacher I believe that my discoveries will add to this growing theoretical foundation, and engage with the generation of alternative ways of knowing, in pursuit of hybridized understandings of the relationships between artist and teacher, teacher and student, and between image and words.

Barone and Eisner (2012) have recently completed an introductory text on arts based research. It serves to define various aspects of aesthetic inquiries from definitions of what arts based research is, who can become arts based researchers, why one might consider it as a methodology, finally, they include criteria to assess it's degree of worth. In defining arts based research the authors state, Arts based research is the utilization of aesthetic judgment and the application of aesthetic criteria in making judgments about what the character of the intended outcome is to be. In arts based research, the aim is to create an expressive form that will enable an individual to secure an empathic participation in the lives of others and in the situation studied (2012, p. 9).

Arts based research relies on an engagement with the emotions; it provokes a felt response. Both the audience and the researcher are affected or transformed in some way through their engagements with the work. As an artist, I have continually experienced my art-making process as a means to understand and facilitate my own transformations. My interest in exploring personal identity as it pertains to the spaces between being an artist and teacher lends itself to this form of research. In conducting this research I have not sought to supply definitive answers to my inquiry question, but rather I have sought out emergent patterns and themes that suggest new ways of thinking about myself in relation to others. "In the arts symbols adumbrate; they do not denote" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 2). Arts based research opens up conversations rather

than answers questions; it allows for surprises, and is open to the “...possibilities of alternative perspectives on the world” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 16).

As there is an ever-growing body of arts-based research approaches I have considered and utilized various approaches employing what seems to make sense for my own investigations. I have found considerable inspiration and resonance with a methodology called A/r/tography, a branch of arts-based research that has developed out of the University of British Columbia. Its open framework allows for the spontaneity required of an arts-based autoethnographic inquiry into identity. Specifically, I was intrigued by a number of aspects of this methodology. Firstly, the four commitments I referred to earlier in this paper, “a commitment to a way of Being in the world; a commitment to inquiry; a commitment to negotiating personal engagement within a community of belonging; a commitment to creating practices that trouble and address difference” (Irwin, 2008, p. 72), resonate with my inquiry approach that is ignited by my personal lived experiences as an artist and teacher. In the process of working on this thesis I have been able to connect my own lived experiences to larger communities of practice through my connections to other teachers, artists, and my readings. Thus meaning has been generated out of the experience of art-making and writing and through connection with others.

This notion of a coming-to-know or understanding through writing and art-making is what defines A/r/tography. A/r/tography is described as “...an arts and education practice-based research methodology dedicated to acts of inquiry through arts and writing” (Springgay & Irwin, 2008, p. 205). As such, it is concerned with self-study, particularly as it relates to those who practice in the various fields of art, research and teaching. A/r/tography is a process of unfolding art and text together, where understandings emerge from the associative relations among complex interactions. That is to say; meaning is found between text and image, artist and teacher,

“...audience and social, cultural, economic and political contexts...” (Springgay & Irwin, 2008, p. xxvi).

My own artistic process operates within and considers the concepts of the various renderings proposed by those who have engaged in the research practices that A/r/tography propose. Renderings allow for a focus on process and concepts rather than methods. Springgay and Irwin (2008) write, “ Renderings offer possibilities for engagement and do not exist alone but in relation to one another” (p. xxviii). Following is a tentative list of these renderings: *Contiguity* relates to relations in-between, in between image and text, in between various identities or in between people. *Living Inquiry* encourages positioning oneself and work in the world; it is meaning making in action. The use of *metaphor* and *metonymy* allows for the researcher and others see the world in different and varying lights. Exploring experience through metaphor has the capacity to alter perception thus allowing for new meaning to emerge. The concept of *opening* invites sharing between self and others or between aspects of self. It allows for new juxtapositions and new meanings to be uncovered. *Reverberation* also carries a sense of sharing or reciprocity but in a way that is reflected back. It carries a sense of movement and also repetition as concentric rings of sound or meaning move outwards and then are bounced back. Finally the rendering of *excess* encourages us to look at what is left over, what we have ignored or discarded and (re) integrate it back into the equation in order to complicate and deepen our understanding. These renderings allow for deep and multi-perspectival investigations that both (de) and (re) construct experience and meaning, providing both anchors and provocations for inquiry. I will discuss these renderings and how they relate to my own work in the following section, which organizes my process into five phases.

### **Five Phases: My Arts Based Research Approach**

My arts based research has employed a five-phase process as proposed by Barone and Eisner (2012) to frame and examine the creative process that I engaged in while developing a body of artwork. This discrete yet flexible set of stages anticipates and identifies places/spaces that the arts-based researcher traverses in creative research practices. In the following five sections I will discuss the specifics of how my research progressed through this set of fluid benchmarks.

Eisner and Barone (2012) suggest that in engagements with arts based research there are no defined linear processes to be followed, rather, they have determined a set of five phases that many practitioners traverse as their arts based research develops. In an inquiry project completed as part of my graduate program in 2010 that inquired into art teachers and their collections, I determined the existence of a tri-part process that began with selecting a body of materials to work with and then developed towards an organizational stage where these materials were juxtaposed with one another until connections became clearer and relationships emerged. The process concluded with a meaning-making phase in which I was able to write and reflect on my new understanding of the data. Eisner and Barone add an *empty canvas phase* to the beginning of this process along with an additional phase at the end, in which the work is turned out, disseminated to the scrutiny of others. In my research, I have considered these five phases as a guide to structure and reflect on the progress of my work.

In the following paragraphs I will describe the various phases as they have pertained to my research process. Furthermore, I will incorporate a discussion of pertinent renderings inherent to A/r/tography. These concepts have supported and guided my developing

understanding in relation to my research question, allowing me to elucidate my developing thesis.

**Phase I.** Phase I is described as the *empty canvas* (Eisner & Barone, p. 49) phase. The authors note that this is a time of remaining open to possibilities. In this phase it is important to consider serendipitous happenings that offer possible and previously unconsidered directions. In relation to a/r/tographic considerations (Springgay & Irwin, 2008) this is the phase of *living inquiry*, of *openness* and addressing *excess*.

A/r/tography offers a body of renderings that can be considered as a kind of provocative check list in this phase that allows inquiry to unfold; a kind of remedy to the empty canvas. The a/r/tographical rendering of *living inquiry* encourages positioning oneself and one's work in the world; it is meaning making in action. Above all, the a/r/tographical rendering of *living inquiry* has been a place to return to and to become grounded in throughout the totality of this inquiry. This thesis work is a part of my life as is my art-making and teaching. My lived experience is the source for all that I do and know and hence is the place of origin for this inquiry into identity. What I know is what I do and what I do is how I come to know.

The a/r/tographical rendering of *opening* (Springgay & Irwin, 2008, p. xxx) invites sharing between self and others or between aspects of self. It allows for new juxtapositions and new meanings to be uncovered. As I worked through the selection process or Phase I, openness to surprise and serendipitous moments was important. I did not want to close down, or make early judgments and decisions that would cut short potential knowing opportunities. I remained aware, attentive and most importantly, willing to wait.

*Openness* has been an ongoing and essential stance for me throughout the entire process of this thesis, from establishing a research question, to writing my proposal, to making artwork

and now, to analyzing my data. I have remained open to possibilities all the while waiting for new relationships to form between what I have done and what continues to occur. Even at this point I know there is no finite moment that concludes my work; it is ongoing and openness is a stance I live with. My living experiences continue to merge with what I have learned in this inquiry enriching ongoing experience and adding to the continuum of enriched understanding.

*Excess* was yet another important rendering that came into play during this initial phase. Only a small selection of imagery was used to create the artwork in this thesis and I remain with an excess of hundreds of unseen, unused images that continue to be integral parts of my psyche. The writing of this thesis has also produced its fair share of excess as I have struggled to remain focused. In this regard it is interesting to consider the generative qualities of research. In the excess I am left with many future opportunities to engage with the ideas and imagery not used here.

**Phase II.** Phase II is a refining or editing phase. Eisner and Barone (2012) write, "...the trouble becomes more defined...a set of potential themes...begins to emerge" (p. 50). Working with images and various processes in a way that rejects seeking concrete outcomes, the researcher is able to play with the juxtaposition of imagery and ideas, setting up new tensions and possibilities. Likewise the researcher becomes better able to determine excess through trial and error. In Phase II, I began to see how my process of image making had the potential to synthesize meaning through the desire to generate understanding out of the positioning of fragments. Anastasia Kamanos Gamelin (2008) writes about how her arts based thesis journey transformed whom she was/is and what/how she knows. When her supervisor asked if transformation should be the purpose of the thesis, she thought and replied that it should be the reward. For me visually capturing moments of transformation, as evidence of the impact of our

living has been the goal of my thesis, how do I move in between or take on new identities? How and where can this be seen?

With regard to the a/r/tographical renderings that applied to my work in this phase, *contiguity* (Springgay & Irwin, 2008, p. xxviii) was a useful consideration in establishing connections and identifying relationships. A contiguous approach supported my experimentation with various mediums and processes, while simultaneously drawing from a select body of photographic imagery. *Contiguity* is a place of collision where neighboring, fragmented ideas and processes touch, it is the imaginary space that exists in-between photographs, between photo and text, between process and media and further, between identities, between comfort and discord. Contiguous relations have played a large role in determining how to best express the emerging understandings of what it means to practice as an artist and teacher. These identities touch one another, run parallel and borrow both procedural and attitudinal ways of being from one another. By placing the same set of images into various mediums; painting, video and fabric, I was able to present multiple, contiguous forms of the same event. In doing so these fragments come together in a multitude of ways thus remaining open to multiple meaning. As the artwork I made for this thesis increased in scope and size through a great deal of experimentation and trial and error, additional contiguous relationships formed.

**Phase III.** Phase III begins with a long awaited *ah ha* moment; when the data begins to reveal itself and the researcher is able to begin refining, carving out and elaborating meaning. It is the point of “...crystallization...” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 50).

This non-linear process has lead me to these *ah ha* moments again and again, from the initiation of this inquiry when I serendipitously ‘chanced’ on my thesis topic, to the development of a research question, to the piecing together of the final artworks, writing my artist statement,

and now, in this reflective writing I am engaged with, as I process the meaning of my work in relation to how it describes and reflects an identity shift between artist and teacher. Rose Barg (2004) quotes Kolb, writing, “At the personal level, change involves a cyclical process that includes experience, reflection, conceptualization and action” (p. 28). Engaging in this arts based research has allowed me to witness and visually record these changes and in doing so I have been able to experience the moments of discovery that Eisner and Barone (2012) refer to.

With regard to the a/r/tographical renderings that apply in this phase, I considered how the uses of *metaphor* and *metonymy* (Springgay & Irwin, 2008, p. xxx) have served to develop and elaborate my story in image and text. The use of metaphors both in imagery and in the creative process have had the potential to deepen, enrich and communicate my thoughts, feelings and experiences through a kind of translation that has allowed for multiple interpretations of my work.

Barone and Eisner state, “...the achievement of Phase III in an arts based research project represents a moment of great relief and enables the researcher to move on to Phase IV...the onset of the actual writing process...” (2012, p. 51). As I work, I think in metaphors, of shards and quilts, specters and layers and transitions that, like our sometimes seemingly disjointed experiences, connect various images and materials together generating a holistic vision of the world around me. Each metaphor allows for new understandings and relationships to occur in between people, places, times and events.

**Phase IV.** Phase IV is described by Eisner and Barone (2012) as the actual writing process where themes become increasingly evident. It is the phase where the artwork is completed and likewise the important editing decisions of the written aspect of this thesis are

negotiated. It is both an exciting and overwhelming space to inhabit with the anticipation of new understandings close at hand.

Andrea Eis (2013) writes, "...an artist's working process, research and practice, are not necessarily aimed at getting to one point, to a center. In the reality of artistic practice, moving forward also requires a doubling back, a move in the opposite direction from the original path" (p. 2). This has proven true for me in both my art-making and writing. As I worked through Phases I through V, at times doubling back, I began to uncover patterns that were both ongoing and cyclical, as ideas and images (re) emerged, took shape, evaporated and reappeared in ways that were at times surprising, intriguing, and haunting. Remaining in a flexible open state throughout these phases allowed me to work without preconceived expectations or destinations.

In this phase I considered the a/r/tographic rendering *reverberation* (Springgay & Irwin, 2008, p. xxx). I understand reverberations to be both personal and relational in nature. A reverberation can first occur between myself, the artist and a subject or visual interest. The reverberation is a persistence of a particular set of images and/or thoughts that return in waves provoking action/art-making. The resulting artwork is then carried outwards for others to encounter and interpret. Depending on the receiver the story or meaning can be understood in various ways. Meaning is situated, contextual and therefore interpretation is ambiguous. The artwork resonates but does not direct the viewer to a single understanding or a particular point of view. A degree of ambiguity allows for the audience to connect with the work on their own terms, accessing and connecting their own lived experiences to those presented by the artist in the form of the artwork. Andrea Eis writes of her own experience with arts based research stating, "Artistic research is an exploration of ambiguity not a determination of fact, an opening up of possibilities, not a pinning down of definitive knowledge" (2013, p. 2). Reverberations in

artwork allow for individual connections and interpretations to be made with the art on the part of the maker and the receiver.

**Phase V.** In Phase V the completed research awaits submission to an audience or in this instance an exhibition in a gallery and an online blog. Eisner and Barone (2012) state that research is never truly finished as audience members will take the work and continue to make meaning of it. In this phase the work is judged with a view to “...produce a disequilibrium in the reader or viewer-that is, to enable someone to “get a feel” for a set of phenomena that calls into question previously held perceptions and understandings of that phenomena” (2012, p. 51).

#### Chapter 4: Data/Making Art, The Back Story

In this chapter I will discuss the process and development of my research/artwork in relation to the various phases and a/r/tographical renderings that pertain to the ways in which I proceeded to build understanding while in the process of creating the artwork for this thesis. In reflection I found that attending to my process was integral to developing meaning. It has been through the living, the in between moments of nothingness, the waiting and tentative making and doing that the *ah ha* moments emerge.

When faced with writing about my artwork I was instantly frozen as I considered the cavernous divide between the finished artworks and the long, arduous journey to *arrive* at the end. The end or completed pieces would not exist without the process and the process is where a significant portion of insights and learning occurred for me. I have therefore come to understand the importance that process plays in creative inquiry. Kamanos Gamelin (2008) also arrived at this realization after reading a book of Alice Walker's in which the author discussed her writing process during the creation of her famous book, *The Color Purple*. Walker explains that it is not about arriving at a point or creating an artwork that is apart from the making, but the movement in between; how did you get there?

Sameshima (2007) understands this separation between journey and arrival as a mind/body split evidenced in schools as a separation between teacher and curriculum and in art as a disconnect between the artist and artwork. She paraphrases Jan Jagodzinski, "...since then [the late Renaissance] sensuous knowledge has been separated from the body and transferred into the art object which is put on display. The separation between maker and product produces an inanimate object which can then be easily sorted and categorized as a commodity" (2007, p. 29). It exists on it's own, unstoried and becomes the only form of worthiness. This way of

understanding the world does not allow for relationality; connections between maker and object; between being and becoming. It assumes a discrete finality to life, rather than a flow. When we are only allowed to witness a final product we are robbed of the opportunity to see and experience the "...preconceptual knowledge that is had in interactions with our bodies and the world, we come to know before we come to tell" (Sameshima, 2007, p. 31). Life becomes compartmentalized and fragmented.

Sameshima encourages an approach to education that combats fragmentation and celebrates an embodied wholeness "...weaving the daily into reflexive understandings of continuous heartfelt living, learning, and teaching. Artful, tactile, and multi-sensory epistemologies are thus more strongly supported as the researcher/teacher/learner takes on a reflective way of being" (2007, p. 32).

### **Phase I**

Phase I is referred to as the empty canvas phase. At this time I began collecting and scanning old photographs and placing them in tentative groupings, all the while remaining open and aware of what I was looking at, what I would keep and what I would delete; essentially I was waiting for the story I wanted or needed to tell to emerge somewhere in these images. What does it look like, feel like and mean to be both an artist and a teacher?

The work literally percolated over a two-year period as I read, wrote, examined images and made new artwork. It was a time of play and experimentation as I looked for something that resonated, something to obsess over, attach or connect to. I reflected on the past by examining and categorizing older archived photographs, but I also continued to make new work. I placed images in envelopes labeled with titles such as *friends*, *family*, *holidays*, *daughter* and *self*. On the computer I created folders with other titles; *architecture*, *store windows*, *still life*,

*destruction/decay, shadows and silhouettes, reflections, playground, nature, elements.* I had literally hundreds of images that I examined and considered in this empty canvas stage. I looked at them, played with them, created some videos with them by placing them in various configurations and juxtapositions until patterns began to emerge. It was at a Canadian Society for Education through Art (CSEA) conference where I showed my first video, *Two Steps Forward, One Step Back* containing these images. One of the conference attendees pointed out that my daughter featured prominently in my imagery. Seeing my work through another's eyes, served to enlarge my own gaze. Being a mother herself as well as an artist and educator, this focus resonated with her and consequently illuminated a part of my work I hadn't considered as particularly prominent.

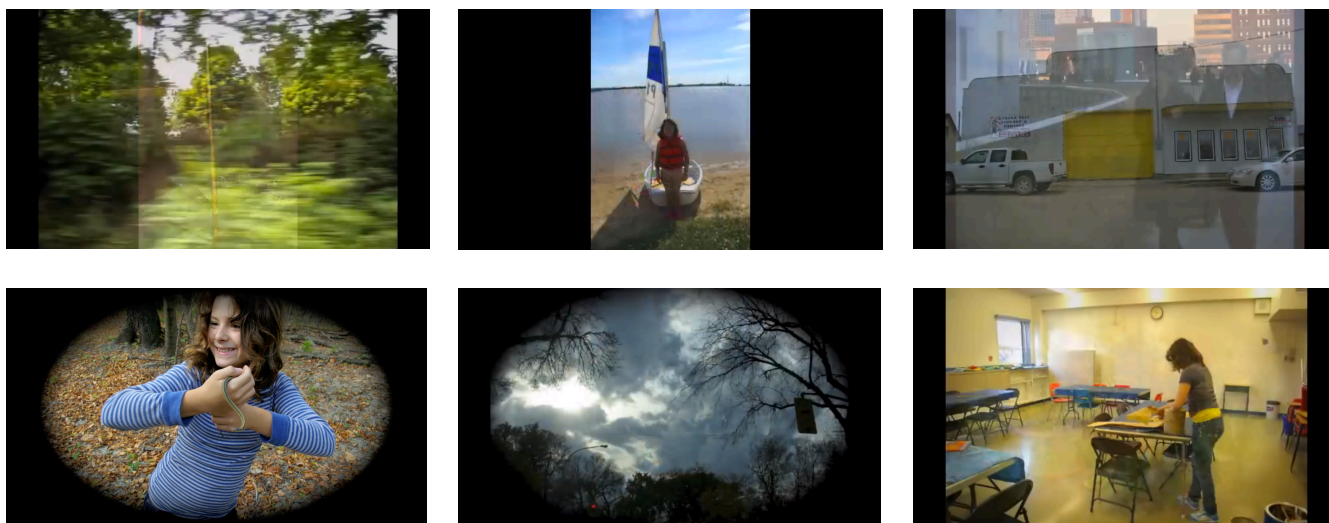


Image 1: Stills from *One Step Forward*, 2012

Despite the emotional connections, I had to not only radically edit the selection of images, but also was required to come to a decision about how I would use the chosen images in creating artwork. I wondered if I would leave them as is or if I would somehow manipulate them. I asked myself, what have I ignored or discarded and why? Is it possible or desirable to (re) integrate some of the images or categories back into the equation in order to complicate and

deepen understanding? It is potentially as interesting to inquire into that which we deem unacceptable, forgettable or unimportant as it is to become wrapped up in images we are passionate about. I ask myself why there are certain stories I am drawn to and want to tell and share while others are easily forgotten or suppressed. I may have a more detailed memory of some images, names and places, emotions. I may find some more aesthetically pleasing while other images may seem to be less important, unclear or embarrassing even shameful. Playful experimentation, reflection and writing have helped me to make these decisions and be assured of the reasoning and meaning behind my selections.

Carabine writes, “To learn from experience it is necessary to be able to wait for meaning to emerge and then to be able to think about the experience” (2013, p. 38). Chaos and anxiety experienced in art-making require what Carabine describes as an ability to make meaning out of internal discord through a patient openness. In this respect Carabine’s experience concurs with Eisner and Barone’s proposed phases and with my own experience in phase I as I waited for serendipitous occurrences to point me in the right direction. Carabine talks about nothingness in art-making. It is a processing time. Carabine notices these moments of nothingness were as important as doing and making. In phase I there was a lot of nothingness, although this state punctuated each phase to varying degrees. It was in these times that I would run or clean or sleep or cook: live my life. (As it turned out these daily chores and activities came to play a substantial and unexpected role in the artwork that I developed for this thesis.) There is a need in artistic processes to be comfortable with the anxiety of nothingness, understanding it within the context of a larger process.

Carabine learned that she had to develop her own techniques with the materials through a process of trial and error. She needed to remain open to everything that emerged whether

positive or negative, incoherent or chaotic all the while sustaining her belief that transformation is possible. In my own experience I came to be consciously aware of the necessity that perseverance and play fulfilled in Phase I. I worked and played and experimented with a large and diverse selection of images, materials, and processes. It seemed that as I worked, the pile of materials and imagery grew. I saved everything in piles and in files and waited in a state of anxiety and nothingness; the excess, bits of paper cut outs, transferred photographs soaked in nail polish remover, bits of embroidery thread, wax candles, the negative shapes of paper that remained from my cut outs, scribbles and writing, I even purchased a piece of furniture to house this artistic ephemera.

Kamanos Gamelin quotes Caroline Forché writing, “What keeps you from your work becomes your work” (2008, p. 23). This phrase could not better describe how my work for this thesis has unfolded. The notion that daily requirements, interruptions, and distractions become your work relates to the a/r/tographical rendering of living inquiry. In this early phase I needed to establish that I, the researcher, was not and am not an empty canvas, rather the direction I was to take was going to be influenced by my current self in the moment, including whatever might keep me from my work. To contextualize or position myself at the beginning of this research it is important to admit or describe that my understanding of self was/is that I am above all an artist who is a teacher and is influenced by the mundane and extraordinary tasks inherent to artistry and pedagogy and to the daily tasks I perform.

One such daily *task* coincidentally (or not) began in the spring of 2011, while simultaneously beginning work on this thesis. I became an avid runner. As a significant part of my living, running has also managed to seep into this thesis visually, metaphorically, and as an important piece in the process of my thinking. In identifying as a runner I have had the

opportunity to experience an additional reframing of myself from non-runner to runner. Becoming a runner parallels other *becomings*, such as becoming a teacher. As part of my process in this thesis, running has been a kind of moving meditation that has allowed me to create blocks of time in which to think and steep thoughts, in a state of willing waiting/moving. Running has made me stronger and more determined in body and mind as well as attentive to the sensual and seasonal experiences of the world outdoors. Sameshima (2007) writes that body knowledge is connected to the intellect; when the body is flexible the mind is open (p. 54). She further observes, "...I feel connections I don't understand" (p. 264). Through movement and tactile encounters with the world our bodies and hearts come to know things our minds take longer to grasp. After a run one day in the early stages of this work I came home and wrote this poem. Running has impacted my life, and in doing so it has influenced and inspired my artistic interests, appearing in my writing and imagery.



Image 2: Still from *Running*, 2013

### End of Summer

I am looking for signs  
the end of summer  
cool, frosty mornings  
car windows coated with ice  
and me scrapping my initials or a heart  
geese are flying over fields and I think about Joni Mitchell  
root vegetables and sweet crimson beets  
boiled into soups served with sour cream  
mustiness settles into the air  
as flora dissolves and crumples into brownness  
darkness falls early  
it's closing time on summer  
  
it's back to school  
back to work  
wake up  
spring into action  
alarms  
sound  
early  
in the morning  
shopping

running

grabbing

buying

picking up

packing bags

packing lunches

getting haircuts

swimming lessons

piano practicing

homework

This year summer refuses to retreat

instead

sultry evenings keep us awake

the fans whirling

I can't concentrate

I touch the back of my neck

my skin is sticky and salty

I go for a run and imagine how it will be different when it is cooler

I will go farther and faster

my feet hit the gravel

over and over

throbbing and burning

a thin trickle of liquid drips down my inner arm and off the end of my bent elbow

I run the tree lined path between giant old homes

searching out shadows and breezes

my heart pounds

my head feels larger than it should be

I close my eyes

and the path disappears

I smell the sweet rot of apples

their plump liquid filled skins fall along the curb

attacked by hovering angry wasps

and bicycle tires

my thighs rub and swish together

rub, swish, rub, swish

and I breath

in/out, in/out, in/out

and wait

all the while

moving

forward

anticipating renewal

beginnings in endings

seasonal cycle metamorphoses

another completion

another beginning

over and over

While creating the artwork that composes the data for this thesis, I also made artwork for a number of additional exhibitions that were connected to and developed out of collaborations and discussion with an artist/mothers group I attend that runs out of MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art). We meet on a monthly basis where we critique each other's work, make art and plan exhibitions. This strong and supportive community of practice has greatly influenced my artistic explorations in terms of subject matter, art media, process, and confidence. My connection to this group of women and my exposure to new ways of working and experiences have allowed me to consider dialogues between my art practice and the world of being with children; specifically my students and my daughter.

In this research the disorienting dilemma I am inquiring into is the tension that resides in negotiating the transformation of an identity from artist to artist/teacher. I have experienced past success in terms of identify negotiations by engaging with artist practices and thus I understand my art-making as a way to struggle through difficult places. This is why I believed that an arts based inquiry would open up and allow for new understandings of the various roles that inform one another as I venture to move towards positions of wholeness, strength, and wisdom. As an artist, my practice serves as a translator of these experiences; it becomes a medium of exploration and deepens understanding of self in relation to others.

In this empty canvas stage I looked, examined, thought, wrote, and experimented with images, with writing, and ideas. As a kind of practice, I wrote one of my first poetic responses to an image I had taken inside a cabin my daughter and I had rented a number of summers ago. The walls, which were coated in orange shellac, ignited other shellac-like memories. I was compelled to think of my own childhood summers, of my grandfather and his yearly shellacking of the cottage, the warmth of the colour and my own use of shellac in my first occupation as scenic artist, the texture of shellac and it's ability to hold the past for ever. I was given an amber (shellac) ring on my wedding day, by my now ex husband. Shellac can't hold everything apparently.



Image 3: *Shellac*, 2008

**Shellac**

the she lac bug

secrets her sticky resin onto far away trees

secrete secrets

deep dank tangled stories

wrinkles and folds bind secrets in sheets

of golden yellow and pure damp white

lifting and shifting and exposing the blue floral mattress in the morning

a cup of coffee steams

rays of morning sun pass through the burnt bread aroma

marmalade gleams it's sticky sweetness at the table with crisp toast

it is going to be hot today

amber golden sun shellac and marmalade jam

bits of bodies held within

suspended in time and place

long ago an insect

a fruit

a particle of dust from another world

we too are held

do hold

onto  
moments  
that resonate with our souls

What is poetry? I told my students poetry is the snapshot whereas prose is the film. Poetry distils emotion and tactile sensations in an immediacy that is both quick and packs a punch. This poem, or fragment of interpreted memory thus begins my journey into Phase II.

## **Phase II**

In Phase II, I was able to establish a selection of images and ideas to work with, and develop; essentially the fragments that would be utilized to evoke meaning and understanding around identity transformations.

In this refining or editing phase, I began to do just that, build a collection of fragments that I would cut and edit, pair and discard, and remove. In this phase relationships began to form, images and words began to speak with one another, which directed my decision-making. Early that summer serendipity intervened when my daughter and I went for a bike ride down to the river. There we found and collected numerous fragments of old pottery, china and glassware that had been swept up onto the shore with the rush of spring runoff. Amongst it all was an arrowhead. Here in this blending of fragments was a story of Manitoba told in the mix of the shards of China and the stone arrow, all soaked in the mud of the Assiniboine River. We took our treasures home, cleaned them up and placed them to mingle in a large bowl that remains on display in my living room. Because of this event I was able to understand my artwork in terms of *image shards*, congregating in a similar way; their intermingling creates a feeling, a sense of who I am, was and am becoming.



Image 4: *Shards of Manitoba*, 2012

In Phase II, themes began to emerge from the collections of images I sorted through. Patterns and stories surfaced and a course of direction was considered (which shards I choose to put in the bowl depends on what story I am telling) (Barone & Eisner, 2012). During this phase I began to work with a series of images that I photographed during spring break in 2013. This series of sixteen images depicting my daughter running out of a sauna and into the snow in her bikini became a central focus for the work I was to complete. Initially I printed these images out in black and white and placed netting over them. I then began painting the image onto the netting and layering the netting in the attempts of creating a layered sense of depth and movement, not unlike the idea of animation where one transparent layer is placed over another suggesting motion.



Image 5: *Into the Woods*, work in progress, 2013

Through playful experimentation these pieces were transformed and eventually became connected to other larger fabric based pieces in my thesis exhibition. Additionally the same photographic images were manipulated into various artistic formats from fabric-based work, to video to encaustic/collaged paintings. At this time however I remained uncommitted to how or even if they would be included. I needed to play and experiment more.

In *Curricular Conversations: Play is the (Missing) Thing*, the author, Margaret MacIntyre Latta (2013) encourages teachers to consider the act of aesthetic play in the classroom as a means of learning that is meaningful and responsive. Latta draws on the philosophy of John

Dewey and his notions of experience. Learning becomes authentic and meaningful when approached in playful ways. It offers a sense of freedom and thus allows for individual engagement. In each of the chapters Matta discusses an artist's work, mining it for the aesthetic processes, interactions and ways of working (playing) that can be applied in pedagogical situations: specifically for both teaching and learning. She believes that learning is embodied. Teachers need to be aware of opportunities and potential in situations for "As we create meaning we create ourselves" (p. 104).

In her book, Latta writes about a visit that her students made to view the film work of Leighton Pierce. She describes his work as having multiple images that cycle continuously and are supported by an audio track of familiar sounds. Although it is extremely fast paced the viewer attempts to make meaning through establishing a narrative. Latta writes, "...the installation positions them [the viewers] to confront how time as past, present and future movement is co-opted in their curricular practices" (p. 52).

I was reminded of the Leighton Peirce work when I was recently lucky enough to see the film, *The Clock*, by Christian Marclay, another serendipitous coincidence that caused me to ponder the way in which we are compelled to make meaning of what we see. This twenty-four hour montage of literally thousands of films each include a shot of a clock or a timepiece. The film progresses in real time with each clock recording a new minute of the day/night. The film clips are edited together in such a way that despite a lack of narrative the viewer becomes caught up in this nonlinear, storyless, story. I was amazed that through this clever editing the artist was able to elicit emotional response and maintain the interest of the viewer. The constant focus on the concept of time created a sense of tension, of waiting, of expectation as film characters from

one time and place entered the films of one another thus establishing never before considered connections and relationships.

Like the above examples, my first video project placed numerous photographs, *shards*, from a vast time and subject range, in quick succession. I had a good deal of difficulty deciding on an order; should they be sequenced temporally or thematically, or somewhere in between. Although I didn't include this earlier piece as such in my thesis, it remained in my head somewhere and became the foundation for another video piece that I did use in my thesis work. I recently re-examined the original as I recalled that I began the video with a very old photograph from the year 1913 that pictured a woman and her daughter facing one another. The little girl looks up at her mother as she hands her a flower. Both are smiling at one another.



Image 6: *Mother and Daughter*, 1913

As it happens I am in possession of the long deceased daughter's life's excesses, such as letters, furniture, jewelry, clothing, linen, and figurines. In turn these items have found their way

into my artwork over many years in the form of paintings, collages and photography. Despite this established pattern, it remains somewhat surprising to me that her ephemera or left-over collections of objects have infiltrated this thesis work. It was this daughter's old linens and quilts that came to form two of the large wall hangings I eventually created for this project and here she was, in an image within the video work as well; all of this without conscious intention. Its discovery for me was not only delightful, but also reassuring. To me it seems as though my unconscious self is continually operating and from time to time, when I pay it attention, wondrous connections and understandings are clarified. Because of the non-discrete nature of this seepage of subject matter and process I have to understand this thesis work not as contained unto itself, but as a continuation in an ongoing sequence of lived experiences and art-making. This work is not separate from my life or my previous artwork or even separate from others who touch my life, but rather a bracketing or a temporary diking, walling off, of a flowing stream of continued life long explorations.

During Phase II, I had been sewing paper works together for another art project outside of this thesis. The stitchery, however, began to seep into my thesis work as I began to dis-assemble a very old quilt once belonging to the above-mentioned woman. On some of her linens, which I used to compose the body of the quilt, I embroidered words and transferred photographic images. I placed the entire quilt into a dye bath, and then added some encaustic squares onto it. Despite my enthusiasm and the immense amount of time I had spent, I eventually had to admit that it was not working. Upon turning it over and seeing the backside, I perceived some redeeming potential. Although devoid of the majority of the imagery I had worked so long to create, the back had a mysteriousness to it that seemed to fit with the photographic images I had been creating. Although it was difficult for me to do, I had to relinquish the excess, and proceed with

what was working, as was the case with much of my video work. In this experimental and evolving process I witnessed a constant and ongoing transformation of imagery through various modes of play and juxtapositions of fragments. I was creating bits and pieces, which in turn were to be connected to other images in the subsequent phases III and IV. Phase II allowed me to plant the image seeds while I continued the process of culling the relevant and casting aside the excess.

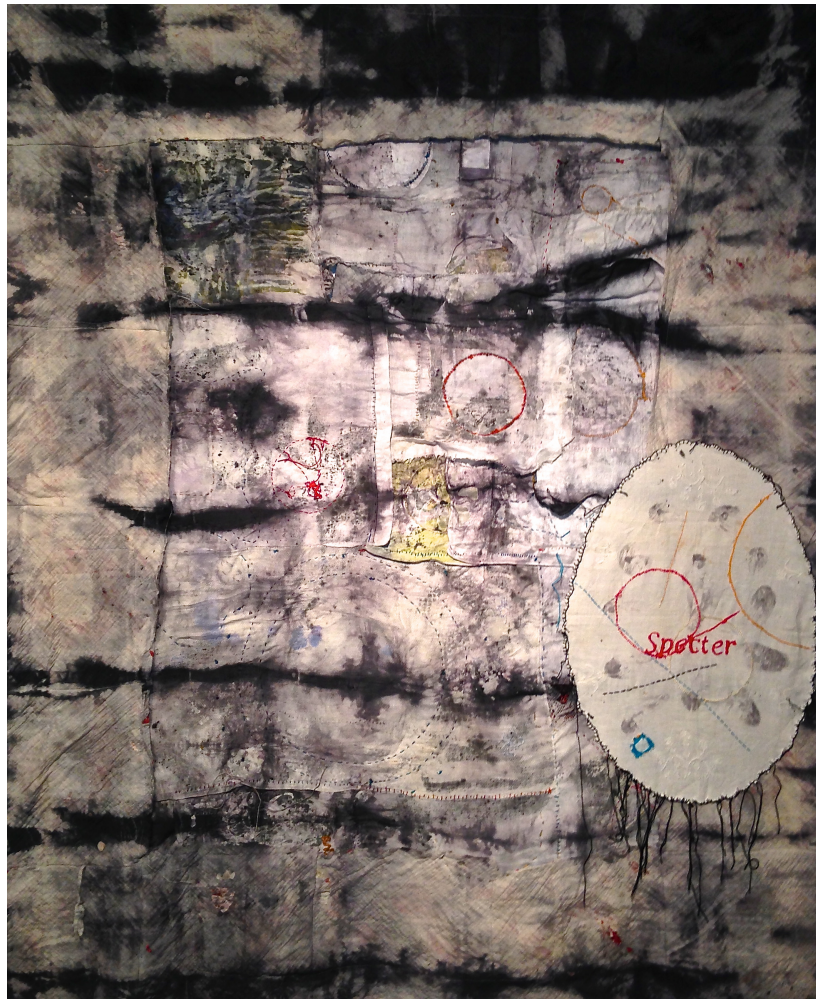


Image 7: *Specter*, 2013

As an example of this ongoing editing process in Phase II, I began to make a number of drawings of large-scale hands, cutting them out, sewing and collaging them with fragments of

paintings. Although the imagery of the hands disappeared in my final work (excess), I continued to explore the process of sewing, stitching and embroidering. I came to know that at times I returned to places of comfort in this process when faced with uncertainty. Carabine's self study focuses on fundamental learnings that occur in developing artists with particular attention to psychological developments and attitudes such as a capacity to work with "...not-knowing and uncertainty..." (2013, p. 34). In this study Carabine witnessed herself returning to places of comfort or processes and subject matter she knew had been successful for her in the past. This was, I believe, an issue for me as I worked through the art-making aspect of this investigation. Feeling under pressure, I was focused on the final object, which was the exhibition of my artwork. Because I could rely on painting to produce this for me I resultantly continued to return to this medium and to familiar imagery, in this case, the hands. Meanwhile I was simultaneously working with video editing programs, a place of discomfort. The medium of video is relatively new to me and as such I had never used it seriously in my art practice. In a short time, my video work and still photography became enmeshed with painting and multi-media collages, one media and process informing the other in a contiguous relationship.

In writing up the analysis of my artwork created for this arts based thesis, I have found myself faced with constructing additional contiguous relationships. I (re) visit Phase II as I consider how best to write about my creative process and how it speaks to my research question. I have created a body of artwork that is primarily visual, augmented with both auditory and poetic components. Daria Loi (2008) reflects on the challenges of creating an arts-based dissertation and how she understood that there was a perceived distinction between the written word and the visual component of her thesis, "...my senior supervisor starts concentrating only on the written text-what is in words seems to be what really counts" (p. 92). I have also come to

question what really counts in relation to the visual representation of my work and the written analysis. My artwork was displayed in a gallery for two weeks and now rests in various locations in my home and in digital form on my computer and on my blog site. Essentially the exhibition was a temporal moment that has now passed and I am left to write words to give form and validity to my visual work. The words seem to hold more authority, more presence and a greater degree of permanence than the artwork. Resultantly, I need my words to contiguously express the journey or process I have traversed on this educational/artistic pilgrimage. I want my words to matter; a thesis in images first and then in words.

### **Phase III**

In Phase III, moments of crystallization are anticipated. In this *ah ha* phase, I was able to resolve and establish a firm direction in terms of how my artwork was going to develop. I made decisions as to what imagery needed to be included, what remained to be created, and what would have to wait for another project. Although I continued to create a large amount of work in a variety of media, I was now increasingly able to be more selective. The a/r/tographic renderings of metaphors and metonymic devices were useful in establishing frameworks for my progress and thus new ways of understanding what I was doing.

**Metonymy.** The concept of metonymy was of valuable consideration to my work in Phase III; it literally means a change of name, substituting one thing for another. This substitution opens up new possibilities as one thing is renamed and thus re-seen and re-constructed. In terms of my artistic process and indeed my chosen media, metonymy can be understood in relation to substituting painting for digital artwork; utilizing editing transitions to capture and represent transitions of identity; and layering images to signify compilations of lived experiences.

For example, by making still images from my videos that hold transitional images of myself and my daughter in/between various moments of activity I metonymously am able to represent the self in an in/between state thus capturing a moment of becoming. My portrayals of becoming a runner, a cleaner, a tree pruner, a car washer, enlarge the conception of what it means to be and become, to perform a series of roles. In my artwork I have used numerous effects to change and distort these images of our activities. The more I intervene, the greater the distortion or movement away from the original. In this sense, these physical interventions serve to visually recount transformation. Images of running and exercising are mirrored and repeated, and imposed with kaleidoscopic effects; no longer am I just a runner, but the activity, the role becomes complicated and abstracted. These various activities and their visual complexities can then be seen as metonymical in that the transitional images of running, pruning, and mopping, offer parallel ways to consider the identity of teacher and artist. These images have the potential to open up new definitions and understanding of the roles we fulfill and how we move into them.

**Mixed Media.** Up until I began this thesis process, I had always considered myself primarily a painter rather than a photographer. In my research I considered how my concept of self could be renamed in a move from painter to photographer and even digital artist. As I had anticipated this metonymic substitution produced new understandings in relation to being an artist and teacher allowing me to capture transitions in a different way. Using a new or unfamiliar medium required that I push myself harder and further and redefine how I understood myself as an artist as well as allowing for insights into my teaching practice.

Alex de Cosson (2004) used metonymic renderings in his research as he replaced sculpture, a place of familiarity, with writing. His writing became his sculpture. In doing so he slightly shifted his practice and through this was offered fresh perspectives into his working

process. I understand my photographic images and video work as new to my art practice. Largely due to my experimentation in a new medium, I was able to notice that my approach to much of what I do, be it art-making, teaching, researching, etcetera, is very similar; there is contiguity, a certain flow back and forth with one practice leaving its residue in another. I approach my teaching and art-making, regardless of medium, in what may appear to be a haphazard way. That is to say there appears to be little preplanning or consideration of a preplanned outcome. I understand this approach as responsive, I respond to the properties of the media and my work develops out of this move-and-respond tactic. I cook in much the same way, noting what ingredients I have, rarely measuring, and without too much forethought I piece things together. Teaching too requires a constant response to personal interactions as I am pressed to consider how I can best support my students' needs while at the same time not compromising the trust of and care in our relationships.

**Transitions.** The beginnings of this research were motivated by a realization that both my daughter and myself, as young people, took, and continue to take, pictures in the mirror. The images sparked a serendipitous awareness in me that these reflective examinations had been a life long activity and now my daughter was part of this. There was a curious repetition between the generations that resonated with me. What began as playful silliness combined with an artful attitude allowing us to act out our relationship in front of a camera turned into a serendipitous discovery where I was to become aware of patterns that have repeated unconsciously over years and now have infiltrated the habits of a new generation. In these double portraits, my daughter and I present ourselves in performative ways that are self-promoting, reassuring, and perhaps play out social narratives, essentially expressing our identities to ourselves and extended at times to an audience.



Image 8: *Masks*, 2009

Early in this phase, I placed these reflective images into a video program with hundreds of other images I deemed significant in terms of expressing something about my identity. I worked at organizing the images both temporally and thematically. At one point I decided to insert transitions, a simple dissolve. Watching how one image faded into another became somewhat fascinating as I began to make visual connections between each image. Having placed a transition in between the images I began to notice that there was a moment when adjacent images crossed over. In particular I was captivated when an image of greenery (with a kitchen sink) passed over the image of my daughter's and my face. This was a turning point in the direction of my work as I realized this could be a way to visually capture connections in/between, a transition; a moment of becoming. With the video editing program I was able to manipulate images through the use of various effects, transitions and layering and freezing what I determined to be, moments of drama, of transition where one image merges with another; an in-

between place that does not exist in real life but can allow for a moment between two divergent times and places.

Sameshima (2007) states “Artful research is the act of focusing the camera lens to still a moment in time for others to “see” an iteration, to make the consciousness visible for others to interrogate, judge, and edit” (p. 284). Here in these images I could see the potential to visually communicate and explore relationships in terms of identity.



Image 9: *Us*, 2005-2012

During this time, I took a short seminar on the history of feminism in the visual arts where we discussed amongst many topics, the notion of women's experiences being associated with nature (such as our monthly cycles being connected to the moon) as opposed to culture. In this paradigm worldview, culture supersedes nature and thus allows for the legitimizing of an argument by males for the superiority of the male; they being cultured and beyond the forces of the natural world. The above photos, I believe, began what was to become a more conscious exploration of this connection between the feminine and the natural world, thus considering not only what it means to be an artist and teacher, but also what it means to experience these roles as a woman.

From this point on I began to purposefully use editing transitions to look for and capture moments of transformation in my photographic and video work. When I found what I was looking for I would take a screen shot. Guided both by instinct and by the desire to consider my identity inquiry from a feminist perspective, I looked to the places and activities that I engage in (remembering, *what keeps you from your work becomes your work*) when not working on my art, my teaching or my research. Activities around mothering, cleaning, exercising, and shopping became a focus of photographic interest. I tied my iPhone onto myself as I went for a run and mopped the floor and took my daughter to the doctor. To support this avenue of exploration I found an article on the topic of *Girl Power*, by Olga Ivashkevich (2011). She questions whether *girl powers* are in fact available to everyone and asks if traditional female roles can co-exist with the emancipated attitudes of power girl behavior. In her research she observed the drawings of two young girls at a summer program. The one girl drew three dogs that were dressed as women, a worker dog, a shopper dog, and a workout dog. I was somewhat shocked to realize that my own recent images coincided with these categories. The author states, "These three images

symbolically summarize the contemporary female roles, and beliefs about womanhood...” that the young artist held (p. 18). These activities are necessary to daily western life, but are often engaged in (by me) as modes of avoidance in times of creative waiting, but they also exist as cultural imperatives; I am expected to work out and thus look good, have a career, and be a mother who through tactical shopping and takes care of and nurtures a family.

With a heightened awareness of these cultural expectations, I continued to photograph and video my daily activities, a drive through the carwash, mopping my floor, gardening, work out sessions and running excursions. Holiday photos from Halloweens past, trips to the lake and of course the series I had already been working with of my daughter in her bikini in the snow were not exempt from the higher purpose of becoming art research or research art. Eventually and incrementally images of and writing about these chores became my art; life and art wound together. What I do in my daily life impacts how I teach and what becomes my art and ultimately creates the foundation of my being and acting in the world.

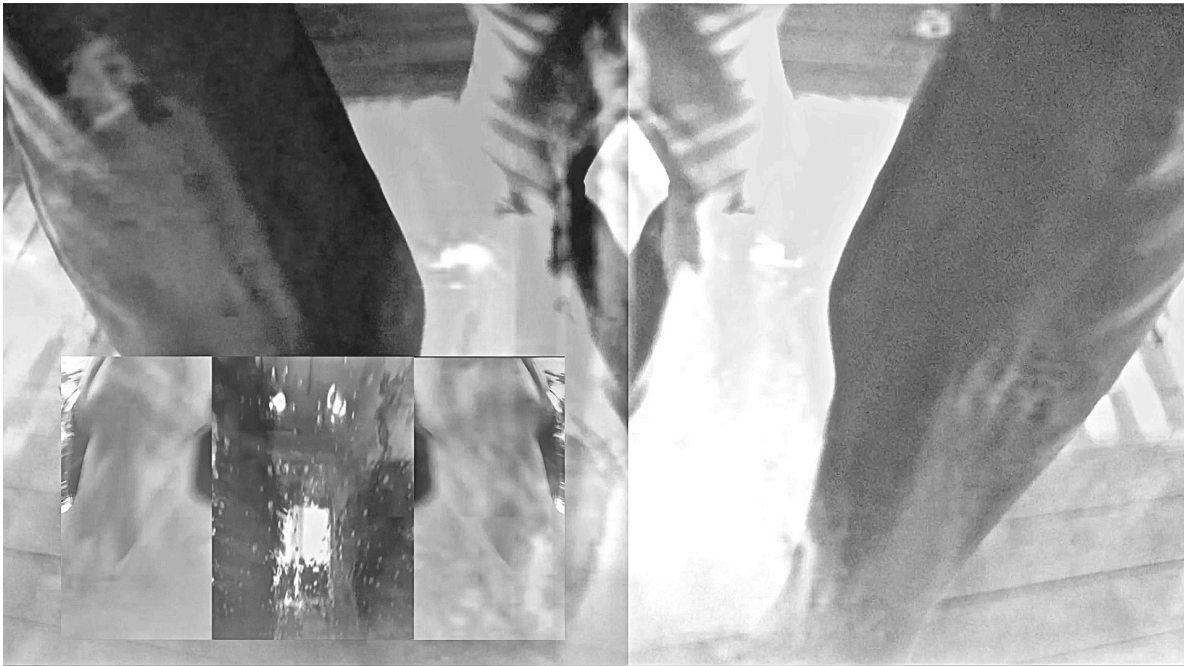


Image 10: Still from *Mopping*, 2013

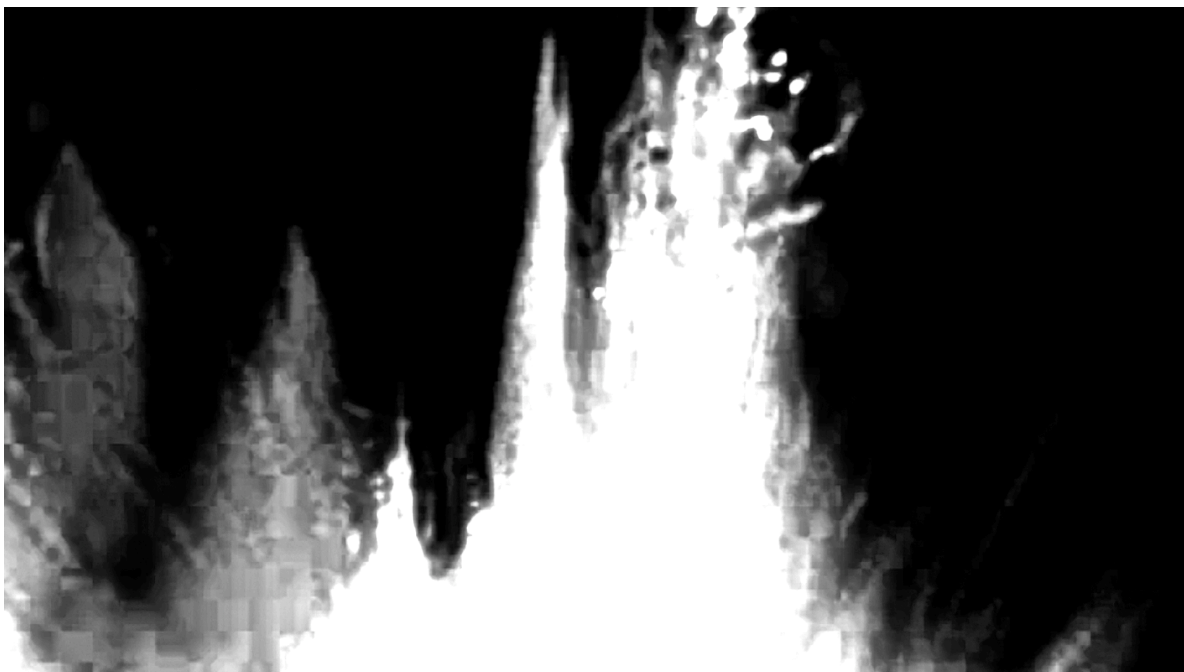


Image 11: Still from *Carwash*, 2013



Image 12: Still from *Doctor's Office*, 2013



Image 13: Still from *Exercising*, 2013

**Layering.** Layers and the process of layering have been a consistent and long time consideration in my creative practice. I think about how layering can serve as a metaphor for lived experience; the physical act of putting one thing over another, obscuring but not erasing what is underneath. Further, layering can also express a physical expression of remembering and forgetting; what seeps through to the top is remembered, what is covered over is there but forgotten, repressed. In a journal I kept while making my art I wrote:

Journal Entry: April 16, 2013.

*I like to layer my images. I understand this layering as a way to mimic the unconscious, the hidden, and the forgotten; each layer is capable of hiding or highlighting what is underneath. This way of working originated when as a scenic painter I was required to age the sets. A newly built set is not convincing when the audience wants to believe in the authenticity of the characters and their connection to this place. I had to apply layers of 'dirt' to the scenery to mimic a lived-in feel. I would touch the door handle and lights over and over with paint, scuff the*

*walls and baseboards with backs of chairs and drip dirt behind a garbage can. On other projects I remember beating up cars with sledgehammers and tires and splashing trains with buckets and sprayers filled with 'dirty' paint mixtures. A month of lived-in dirt created in an afternoon with paint. Illusions...*

I found that through the process of layering I was able to create a similar approach in my artwork, building connections, elaborating and complicating meaning through the juxtaposition and compiling of imagery. I notice now that this is what I do in preparation of making art, I collect piles of things and images that I find provocative and then play and wait for the *ah ha* moments of Phase III.

Throughout this phase I continued to experiment, but now with more of a direction. I had mostly chosen the imagery I was going to be working with and was now making decisions about media. I was making small, layered multi-media works with the images of my daughter in her bikini. I cut out the background around the trees and placed these cut outs over top of other photographs. In some I used pieces of fabric to obscure or focus on a particular area. The photo cut outs were painted over and retained a texture of the netting that I had painted on over top of the images. Process wise these works were connected. I was using the excess of one activity to create another set of images. This, I felt provided cohesion and also emphasis of imagery and theme.

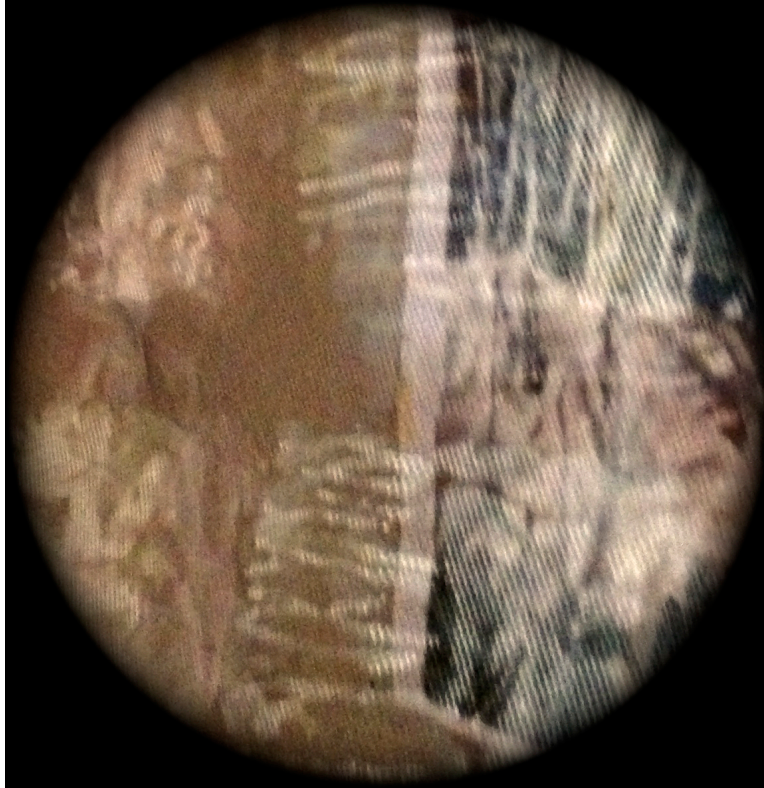


Image 14: *Untitled*, 2013

At this point I had set aside the layered paintings I had done on the netting, but had not totally dismissed them as of yet. I tried photographing them (refer to image 14) with thoughts of referring to their original format, but this didn't seem right, so I had to wait and know that in this phase I was creating a series of building blocks that in the next phase would come together to create the finished artwork; fragments of images waiting to be incorporated into larger works. In my journal I reflected on my process during this time:

Journal Entry, April 23, 2013

*I have begun painting, despite all the beautiful and exciting photographs I have. Painting allows for slowing down, for obscuring, which I connect to forgetting, lost memories. I am now playing with a series of images of my daughter running out into the snow in a bikini after having been in a sauna. I have printed the images onto paper and painted over them through a layer of*

*screen. The ghostly image sits on the screen and on the paper. I have photographed the paper again to add further distance from the original image and ultimately from the 'real' experience. It is a separation from the real over and over. At the same time, in working with this image or series, it is focused on thirty seconds of an afternoon together. It is fun to watch my brave daughter run out into the snow like this. She is courageous as this event represents; she is near to naked and facing harsh elements. In her real life she has faced harshness in other forms and so I enjoy the metaphoric opportunities the images offer.*

The act of painting allows for different things to emerge. The process is slower, more visceral and clutters up my house, providing physical evidence of creative acts, thus assuring me I am making art. The digital work is neat and tidy and concealed behind the black screen on my tidy desktop. Moving back and forth between the creative mess and the creative invisible allowed me to make and witness the similarities in my process that I may not have otherwise noticed.

I came to understand that regardless of the media I was working with, my approach and artistic process were similar. As with the painting and collaging, I began to impose various layers, effects and a greater variety of transitions into my videos and still images thus increasing visual complexity and allowing for new connections to be made between images.

The audio components that accompany the video also began at this time and likewise adapted a similar process as I built up various layers in the Garage Band program. I was experimenting with different sound effects, recorded text, dance beats as well as the original audio that was recorded along with the video. Again at this point I was creating the building blocks, pieces of sound without an image that would all, I trusted, be connected in Phase IV.

The soundscapes contain elements that are musical, poetic, narrative and at times accentuated by various mechanical sounding outbursts. Overall they have an absurdity to them that is both dreamlike and haunting. The following is a poem I wrote well before beginning work on the video of the same name, *Pruning Trees in the Dark*. I noticed, as I looked through my photographs that I had a number of images of my garden and in particular there were a number of images taken of the underside of the cedar trees. I chose to develop these disparate pieces into a video for this project as it seemed to express the same concerns and issues that were simultaneously developing during this phase such as the ties between myself and nature, issues of nurturing, and of growth.

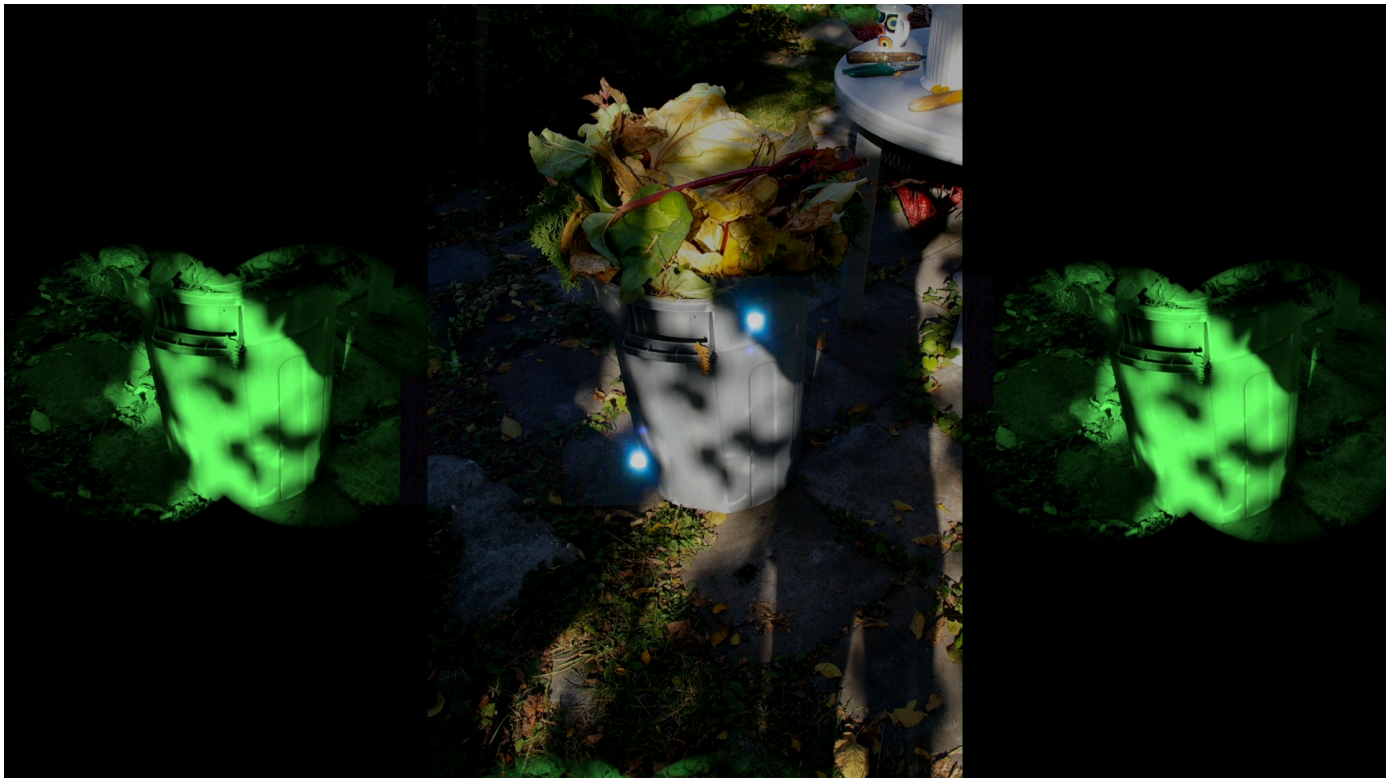


Image 15: Still from, *Pruning Trees in the Dark*, 2013

### **Pruning Trees in the Dark**

There is something delicious about plants at night

they lay awake in the dark

living

and breathing

and growing

no eyes to close

no rest to indulge

in late September

the sun slips below the horizon earlier and earlier

but still the day's requirements remain the same

and I am home after work and driving to lessons

I have to make dinner and then remember

I need to take care of the plants in the yard

it is getting dark

cold

I woke up this morning to fog

the radio announcer said it was due to the extreme difference between the daytime

and night time temperatures

frost warnings!

I need to get my geraniums inside

and so after supper  
I head outdoors  
scissors in hand  
I trim back the flowers  
the spindly growth  
and lament not having watered more

I traverse the yard  
and already know that the cedars in the front are so overgrown  
the postman must detest the stings he gets trying to reach my mailbox

and so  
in the dark  
I slip under and behind crisp dry tangled branches  
look into their eyeless forms  
neither awake nor asleep  
but breathing in the earth  
processing beams of sun  
sucking moisture  
and pushing out tendrils

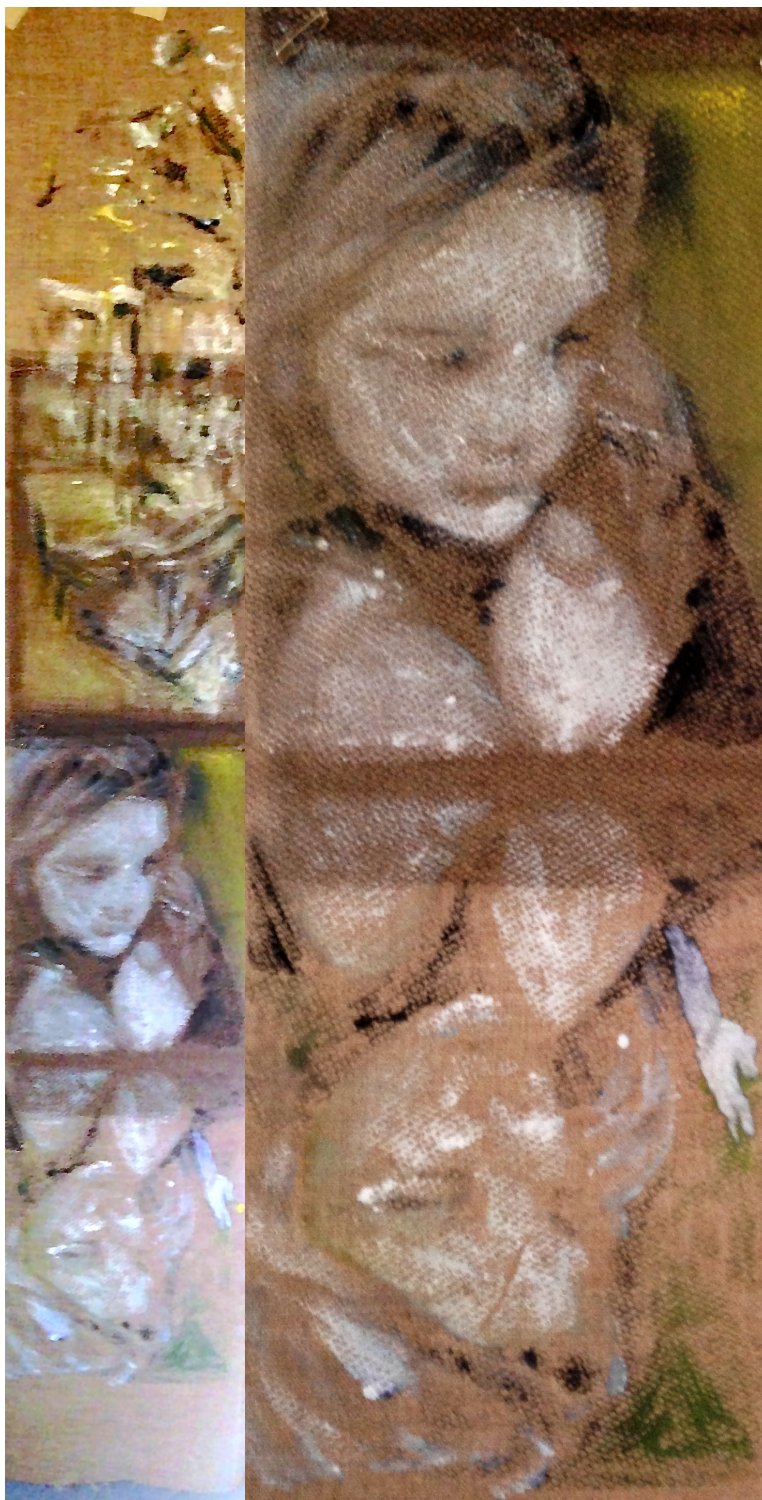


Image 16: *Untitled*, 2013

**Metaphors: Specter.** During Phase III, the gallery I was to show my work at required a title and images for my upcoming exhibition. Although I was still uncertain at this point, the necessity to provide this information required a timely decision thus pushing me forward but ultimately aiding in the focus of my work. After an assessment of what I had created to date I was particularly struck by the netted images of the snowy woods that were layered on top of each other with a haunted almost invisible image of my daughter. They seemed somewhat shroud-like, the way the image was not quite there, faded and changing depending on the light and angle it was viewed at (refer to image 16). Because of the persistence of and continual transformation of this set of images I entitled the exhibition *Specter*. A specter is defined as an apparition, a presence or a vision and not quite of this world. In the context of my artwork it refers to a persistent of appearance, a haunting or a reverberation of what has passed that continues to emerge and shape the future. It made me think about faded memories that cling to the outer recesses of our thoughts, reappearing at various times causing emotional reactions when conjured up. From then on my work focused on making these emotional connections known through acts of capturing and mutating the performances of daily life using transitions, layering, and (re) membering.

Serendipitously, on December 21, 2013, two months after my exhibition, I read an article published in the Globe and Mail entitled, *The Therapeutic Value of Ghosts*, by Peter Scowen. In this article Scowen writes about having purchased a book by Stephen Grosz, a psychoanalyst, who uses Dickens's, *A Christmas Carol*, when teaching psychotherapy courses. He says that Scrooge transforms not because he is frightened but because he is haunted and there is a difference. "Haunting makes us alive to the world, some piece of information, that we are trying to avoid." (p. F3). Scrooge, through three visitations; past, present and future, is forced to

confront his past, examine his present and look into his potentially empty future. He is required to make connections between his way of being in the world and the consequences that are to follow. This temporal confrontation exposes the unseen, the hidden, the forgotten and the suppressed. In this self-analysis we simultaneously become vulnerable and open to transformative experiences. We have an opportunity to confront our ghosts and reshape ourselves in conscious ways.

After reading this I began to consider how past, present and future relate to the stories that become our lives; we have a beginning and a middle and an end; a past, present, and future. Our beginnings impact our actions in the present and ultimately our future and our end. In personal hauntings we can be moved into transformation as we openly confront our lived experience, our reaction to pain and trauma, joy and beauty.

In an article by K. Tavin, (2005) he refers to a concept he dubs hauntology, or *ghostly* ideas and adherences that without examination continue to proliferate and influence present belief systems. In particular he is interested in the long time prejudice against popular culture in art education. Tavin calls for art educators to confront fossilized views of the terrors of popular culture and not deny students the ability to take from their own experiences in art-making. As we confront these ghostly ideas in our pedagogical practices, or I would argue in our daily living, we need to be open to our own hauntings asking ourselves what is preventing us from change.

#### **Phase IV**

**Fragments Coalesce/Final Selection of Imagery.** Achieving the goal of Phase IV means that the artwork coalesces. With my research question in mind and using *Specter* as a connecting point for all of my work to attach to both thematically and visually, I made my final selections as to what I would keep and develop for the exhibition and what I would discard as excess, or set

aside for another day. In this phase the body of imagery becomes one, settling into a meaningful and cohesive configuration ready for an audience. I began to assemble the bits and pieces of images that I had been creating throughout the first three phases, both physical pieces such as cutouts, small paintings, stitchery and the digital bits, soundtracks and selections of video clips and still photographs.

In this later phase, my goal was to carve out what was truly the most tenacious in terms of thematic reverberations. Throughout the previous three phases I had been working with a selection of images of my daughter. Her picture continued to resurface in my artwork as a strong presence, a persistent reverberation, a *specter*. My final selection of artworks for the upcoming exhibition therefore included a significant amount of imagery that was associated with my daughter. The sauna/bikini or *Snow Run* series, a set of sixteen images was now reinterpreted through various art media, from video to painting, collage cut outs and sewn onto the larger fabric pieces. Also selected was a series of my daughter swimming with friends in a lake; their images are pixilated while hers remains untouched, reminding me of a surreal video game. This set of images has been animated in a video called *Pixies* as well, but also appears in the exhibition as printed, colour stills. A further set of images I used for the video *Witches*, portrayed my daughter dressed up as a witch year after year for Halloween. Until I looked back through my photographs I was not aware of this annual occurrence that was documented each October 31st. Serendipitously and during this time period, I had a dream about flying on a broom as a witch. This dream inspired me to write a poem and thus became the soundtrack for the video featuring my daughter in her yearly witchery. Black and white stills from this video were printed out to display at the exhibition. In the gallery space it was decided that three of these layered images would be placed in a line bookended by stills from another video called *Clean*. The photos on

each end of this five-image tableau appear as black and white flames when in reality they capture floods of water climbing up the windshield of the car (refer to image 17).



Image 17: *Dress-Up*, 2013



Image 18: *Dress-Up*, detail, 2013

A further set of images included in the exhibition and worked on in this final art production phase were not of my daughter but of myself performing various activities such as mopping, lifting weights, and running. Using video editing software I was able to layer the

images with additional video clips as well as add effects such as a kaleidoscope look that further abstracted the form and accentuated the feel of a continual almost mechanical and patterned repetition.

A final set of photographs that were developed in this phase emerged out of my initial video experiment and can be seen below. This video, discussed previously in this chapter in Phase II, began with the 1913 image of the small girl with her mother, was incorporated into and layered over a Santa Claus Parade film recorded in Winnipeg in 1947. The images were then manipulated so that the central image was now round and mandala-like with a square parade border around it. I chose twelve stills from this video to print in colour for the exhibition. The video was also included. Called *Still Moving, Farewell*, it's soundtrack included circus music, which was overlaid with an eerie space vacuum sound and periodically punctuated by loud machinic kinds of interruptions.

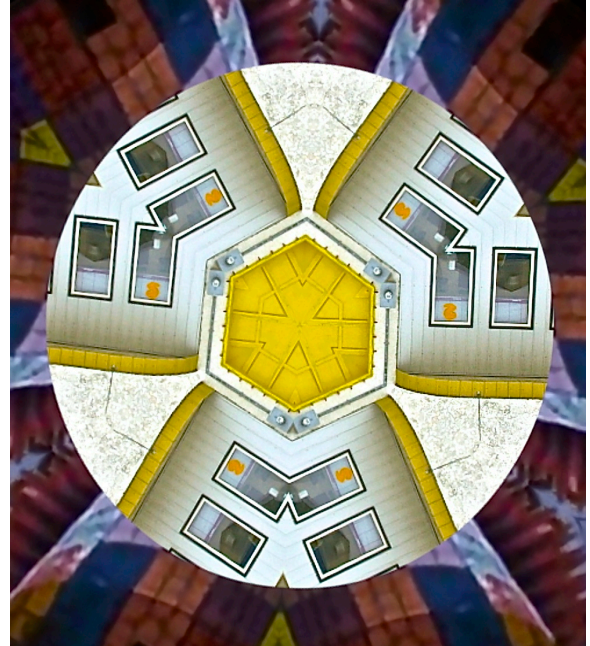
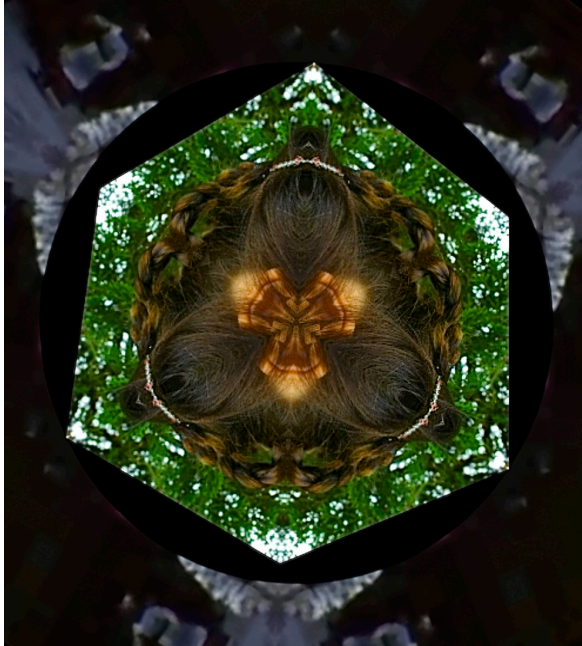


Image 19: Stills from *Still Moving, Farewell*, 2013

In terms of time spent, this phase was perhaps the fastest or most direct. It was somewhat frantic and at times quite physical. My body seemed to work without hesitation sewing together the fabrics and images that had been piled up for so long. Impulsively I dyed a crocheted tablecloth black in a pot on the stove. Using the aforementioned tablecloth as stencil, I sprayed a piece of canvas with black ink, making a mess of my kitchen floor and eventually my bathtub, which became a rinsing tank. This is the stage where flow takes over, the creative juices are churning and regular logical thought and care are replaced by a knowing in the body. At this point I realized that I needed more cohesion with the small multi-media works and I instinctively and impulsively coated them in white wax (more of a mess on the floor). It was important for me in this phase not to hold onto anything or have it become too precious. Completing the video work in this phase was like completing a sliding puzzle as I moved and layered and separated and exchanged one clip or soundtrack for another until I felt content with each resolved configuration. This final burst of creativity was all about moving and acting and reacting until the pieces fell into a compatible resting place. This is an exhilarating stage, particularity when it works; when it becomes evident that there is something special there, worthwhile, meaningful, or beautiful; something created that in the end resonates and reverberates. I have to trust that this will be the outcome and that self-assurance allows me to take these risks.

At the completion of Phase IV, I was ready to hang and project my work in the gallery space. I had created three large scale fabric-based wall hangings, eight videos, colour photographs (five in one series, twelve in another, and a pair), black and white photographs (ten in one series, five in another and four in a final grouping) and the series of sixteen small-collaged images coated in wax.

**Thematic Emergence.** In Phase IV, themes become increasingly evident through the creation and completion of the art-making. In my images I began to identify themes of cleaning, bathing, and purifying through making various visual references to the connection between myself, my daughter and nature; woods, water and fire. Issues of power struggles became intertwined with these themes as I considered the vulnerability represented in some of these artworks. Personal exposure is unavoidable if this kind of self-inquiry is to be successful. In the process of inquiring into aspects of my identity in this research I began to question my autonomy to make choices about who I am and how I am perceived. I began to understand the necessity for developing my own definitions of what it means to teach and make art.

In the journal article I referred to earlier, Olga Ivashkevich (2011), inquires whether *Girl Power* offers girls a viable model to achieve independent and powerful identities as these identities are closely tied to consumerist agendas and follow somewhat rigid scripts. Reading this article provided me with a pivotal *ah ha* moment in Phase III, and continued to resonate with my work in this phase. I was struck that many of my own images adhered to representations of these daily and often mundane, but necessary activities represented in the drawings of the girls in this study. Essentially the author writes that women perform our routines and our selves for the benefit of others, framed within a consumer culture that tells us what to shop for, what to eat, to do, and ultimately who we should be. With a quick change of clothes we are transformed. These roles are easily identifiable, prescribed and performed and when adhered to provide the performer with a sense of accomplishment; I am doing this right and therefore I am a successful worker, shopper and woman. This article not only clarified the direction of my art-making, but also made me consider my own experiences of times when I have been made to feel vulnerable, powerless, and even a failure in relation to living within the external expectations established by

society. Indeed my research has been propelled by my own insecurities around my identity. I have needed to redefine the role of artist and teacher for myself in order to become artist and teacher.

Additional experiences of vulnerabilities related to being a woman also influenced what I made for this research. One such moment occurred while I was out running in my neighborhood during this time period. A car of young men drove by and yelled at me, *I hate you!* I was completely taken aback and felt somewhat fearful and ultimately angry. That afternoon I had my daughter and myself yell a retributive, *I hate you!* into the voice recorder on the computer over and over. This recording became part of the soundtrack for my video *Carwash*, which plays as the car is propelled through the foam and brushes and out into the dark night. Here again themes of re-establishing power are explored through acts of cleaning and washing and screaming.

In this phase themes of rebirth, renewal, growth, and purification began to surface; *becoming* through repetitive and cyclical acts of doing. The use of images which depicted scenes of burning fires/cleaning/mopping/car-washing/bathing/swimming/running/exercising were repetitive and even at times retributive acts that demonstrated a vulnerability and exposure. A pervasive anxiety penetrated the work as I attempted to address these acts and themes and find allowances for new places of becoming in these forests and on these beaches and in the gym.

In the following poem, derived from a dream I had and that plays as the sound track for the video *Witches*, there is evidence of an intergenerational relationship that supports feminine power through activity that is associated with stereotypical woman's work. The ending of this dream for me was very powerful. As I recall it took a good deal of courage and risk to defy the authority that I perceived to be holding me back in the dream. The *defiant gesture* referred to at the end of the poem was a flash of my exposed genitalia, the ultimate exposure.

## Witches

This is a dream

The living room was bright and cheery with purple and yellow features

The dining area around the corner is black and filthy

I go in to the dark and pick up a mop

the handle gives me an electric shock

I understand this current as residual energy left over the ladies who used to live here.

I think they are long dead and yet I feel them through this action of sweeping

of cleaning

As I push the broom around I experiment with flying

I sit on the broom, witch-like

I breath and begin to rise

I inhale deeper and deeper

and I rise higher and higher

the broom flying up to the corner of the room

circling the room

with a defiant gesture

I end my ride

I decide

I will do as I please

behave as I want

make my own decisions

live between dark and light

and receive strength and conviction from feminine energies in other realms

As I moved through this final phase of creation, I continued to consider the notion of power and what it means to be a girl, a woman and further how it feels to be vulnerable, powerless and in a state of not knowing. While working on this thesis my integrity as an ethical researcher was questioned when it was made evident that the artwork I would be making for this research would portray identifiable images of my daughter. The emotions evoked by this harsh questioning re-ignited past trauma in relation to a long and harsh custody battle where again my ability to be a good, loving, supportive and responsive parent was interrogated. In predictable fashion my response was to write a poem, combative and restorative art:

### **The Case**

When my application found its way to your desk

I imagine

you began reading

I want to make art

you ask “Is this research?”

your face reddened as your eyes followed my sentences

I want to use photographs that reflect and pinpoint moments of transformation

“I am struggling to understand...”

I am struggling to understand

fear began to build in your chest  
I want to use the images that ignite and unite me  
causing my selves to gravitate together  
multiply  
dancing orbits  
hula hoops

manifesting as irritation, growing into anger  
some of the images will be of my daughter  
she is thirteen  
she is my northern star,  
a magnetic force

a slight pain in your left shoulder required you to grasp it and squeeze for a few minutes  
you ask, "Is there a case for involving the researcher's own child in her research?"

Images of thirteen-year-old girls  
naked-soft-bodied-beauties out in the woods waiting for the big bad wolf  
your petrified imagination stirs  
and then  
is extinguished by indignation

Picking at your scalp and drinking a sip of cold coffee you conjure up your powers

plot your attack

“I will not approve this research”

although I cannot see your face as you write to me

I can feel your contempt

bleeding out your dry fingers as they peck at the letters

that form the words

art belongs in a gallery

which make the sentences

research is composed of words and numbers

benefit/risk ratios, evaluations, triangulations and validity

that hold your assumptions

children and their images should be clothed and out of site

In this one quick and tidy email you flex your authority

Rendering my relationship with my daughter risky, dangerous and coercive

Despite what you know to be true

I know of other truths and stories

stories of mothers and their daughters

of love and sacrifice

I also know that  
you do not know me and you do not know my beautiful girl  
you do not know the depth of trust we have in one another  
what we have been through together  
how the symbiosis of our day-to-day existence breathes life into me  
how I see in my daughter moments that trigger memories of my own childhood  
a generational daisy chain

My daughter has an ebb and flow voice  
she struggles to be proud  
she should not feel the shame of an old man's fears  
nor endure the sexual intimidation of a school boys' need to brutalize  
breaking her spirit  
as a young woman my daughter hasn't a choice about how others behave towards her  
she can only re-act and reform herself  
as an older woman I have been remade over and over  
sculpted in relation to fear, shame, guilt,  
benevolence and beauty

Aware of the world's complexities  
it's inequities  
my daughter lives in the grey areas between right and wrong  
happy and devastated

everyday  
 she knows as well as I do that life is not easy  
 there are times when we fight to continue  
 in better circumstances we sleep deeply, drinking in stars and curling up under our comforters  
 assured that serendipity will bless us just enough

And so  
 you ask me, “Is there a case for involving the researcher’s own child?”  
 I reply that there is no other case

**Performing Identity.** In a poignant book chapter, Ugena Whitlock reveals the pain of loss she has experienced in her role as mother and as daughter. Whitlock believes that the role of mother, like artist or teacher, is provisional. As with any identity, artist, teacher or in this case mothering, roles can be understood as “...in-the-making” and therefore transformative, “...beyond an identity fixed by historical, social, and religious construction...” (2012, p. 197). Whitlock concludes sharing a story of her daughter driving away, her mother and herself left in the driveway watching and waving good-bye. Although Whitlock is desperately saddened, her mother tells her to smile, perform. As a mother myself I have experienced similar societal pressures to conform to conventional behaviors in order to believe in my performance. Further I have tried to conform or perform to the conventional norms in my roles as teacher and artist. As such I have experienced the sense of sadness and failure when the role I play is out of sync or inconsistent with my expectations. This sense of inadequacy is the driving force behind this inquiry. In these instances external expectations are riddled with the possibilities of failure and

the feelings of loss. Whitlock writes, “Because I did not adapt to conventional notions of mothering as I understood them at that time, I felt then, as now, that I failed at it...” (2012, p. 199). In a continued cycle of perceived failure, trauma results. In this instance it is the author’s belief in her failure to provide what was conventionally understood as a nurturing environment for her daughter that has caused her to doubt and question her successful fulfillment of performing the role of mother.

In Phase IV I considered how this concept of performing roles could be extended and applied to those of artist and teacher. I wondered firstly about the origins of the expectations; how do we come to know what kind a performance is expected from the roles we attempt to assimilate? How do we recognize what a good or authentic performance is and after some practice in these roles how do we question and challenge the external expectations and conventions that society perpetuates? How are we able to internalize these roles so our work, our doing, and our being, our identity become fused, whole? This research was ignited by these questions as I have pondered the inconsistencies between my performance of what I had believed constituted an artist and a teacher and what other potential exists. I am reminded here of Tavin’s (2005) concept of hauntology and his encouragement to confront long held perceptions that may no longer serve a meaningful purpose. In the case of acting a role it is necessary to understand the origins of its parameters in order to transgress boundaries and stretch possibilities of being and becoming.

In her article, “Motherwork Learning: An Art Informed Inquiry into Mothering as a Site of Adult Learning”, Rose Barg (2004) writes, “Personal transformation begins with a disorienting dilemma...” (p. 7). She argues that our day-to-day lived experiences are the foundation of transformational goals. In her study she employs the creation of poetry as a means

to investigate her students' experiences. My artwork and poetry in this thesis use images of the day to day with the goal of developing and deepening self-knowledge and ultimately transformation through confronting and transgressing boundaries. Through the artistic documentation of my daily routine, I have the capacity to question the performance of the roles of artist and teacher that I inhabit and further question who sets the dramatic standards for acceptable performances.

Barg (2004) shares common experiences with her adult students. These women appear to have suffered tremendous trauma in relation to their role as mothers. One has had custody taken away from her when proclaiming herself lesbian, while another has seen the end of an abusive relationship and has had to struggle with the legal system in order to retain custody of her children. This article resonated with me as I too recognized that I have endured considerable trauma with respect to issues of care and control around my own daughter. I was stripped of the power to make what I believed were the best decisions for her at a time when she was very young and terribly vulnerable. Today she is older, but we continue together to endure the repercussions of those times. Our loss of one another that Whitlock expresses (2012, p. 199) is a necessary phase in maturation, was out of our control and came too early which in turn caused a great deal of anxiety for both of us.

My personal experience in this area has contributed to the art I make and therefore to the way in which I understand my artist/teacher self and the artwork I make. Because of my own experiences with times of turbulent family life I am very aware of the potential conflict has to compromise developing identities of students and teachers. As a teacher and an artist I see the value in using art to address and thus make sense of conflict and trauma.

**Trauma.** In Phase IV I have found that writing has been both a form of inquiry and discovery for me (Richardson, 2000). Through writing about my creative process I have been able to identify that this body of art, which began as an exploration of what it means for me to practice as a teacher and an artist, has taken on an expression of the residue or specter of trauma that questions power relations in performing one's identity. The images I created of my daughter running out into the snow, into the lake, driving into the carwash somehow purify the both of us, remove or transform past pain and reunite us. And yet the specter remains; repercussions or reverberations of powerlessness are lessened through the making of this art but they persist.

As a child, teenager, and young art student I knew that drawing and painting were ways for me to make sense of the dark side of life, ways for me to address disappointment, anger and pain. I have observed (surprisingly) after creating this body of work, that this habit or propensity continues into my present day art practice.

After her grandmother died and her mother was diagnosed with cancer, Sylvia Wilson Kind (2003) "...turned to art making as a way of dealing with and expressing turbulent emotions" (p. 17). She notes that art-making is a way to make sense, make meaning of what was going on and she quotes Naomi Remen who writes that meaning "...heals us..." (p. 17). I didn't begin this journey with healing in mind, but I did intentionally set out to make sense of the conflict I felt between my identity of artist and teacher. Anastasia Kamanos Gamelin (2008) writes of how her thesis journey transformed who she was/is and what/how she knows. When her supervisor asked if transformation should be the purpose of the thesis, she thought and replied that it should be the reward.

I will end the discussion of Phase IV with a poem that accompanies the video entitled *Mopping*. The video depicts a number of layered images that include washing the floor, the car

wash, and running through the park. The soundtrack has a relentless beat that echoes the urgent action verbs in the poem. The poem records a moving into action that is required when transforming from the slow speed of summer into the beginning a new school year. Here the act of cleaning becomes a preparation for a changing mindset. Cleaning has been a developing metaphor throughout this inquiry related to preparing spaces for new ways of being.

### **Running and Washing in Between**

the floor  
 needs cleaning  
 a knee jerking  
 bubbling, boiling  
 candy coated  
 snap the dragon  
 end of season  
 repetition  
 haircuts and clean nails  
 new clothes and opportunities to fail  
 or succeed  
 time to shake the sleepy heat of summer  
 shift  
 into action  
 acing  
 “ING”  
 breathing,

crawling, walking, running, packing,

panicking,

now evolving, changing,

becoming

shedding one skin for another

the bell rings

good-bye shorts, hello sweaters

it's all behind me now

and in front of me

catching up and on the horizon

hovering and straddling over

distant perspectives

drowning threats

paranoid palpitations

frowning, blowing, sucking

spending,

giving,

wanting and taking,

pushing, limits,

limitless

just keep walking,

running

washing in between

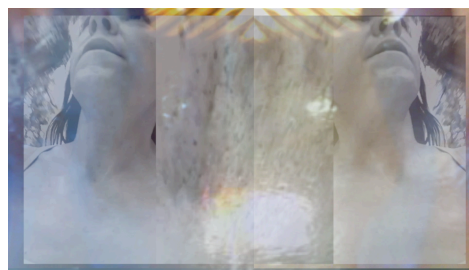
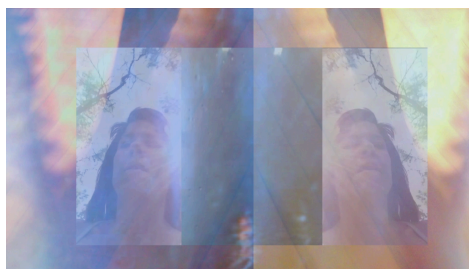
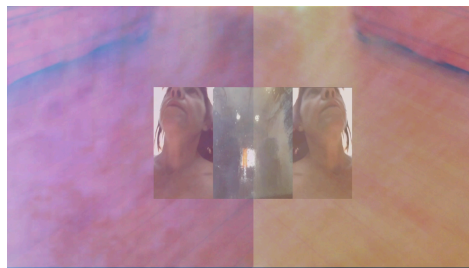


Image 20: Stills from *Mopping*, 2013

**Phase V**

Image 21: Interior Views of Gallery Installation, Specter, 2013

In this phase my final artist statement was written and the photographic work was printed out and all the artwork was taken to the gallery to be hung. I printed out many black and white stills and sorted through the piles making tentative choices as to how the images might be

configured in the gallery space. I grouped them into like piles, all the layered images of myself were in stacks, all the fragmented images were together, there was a miscellaneous pile of stills from the carwash and some stills taken from the video *Dress-Up*, of my daughter dressed as a witch in Halloween costume. It wasn't until I actually stood in the gallery with the work that I made final choices about what would go on the wall and how it would look. These decisions were assisted by and insisted upon by the configurations of the gallery space and in collaboration with the gallery owner. This alliance proved to be helpful and allowed for me to make some connections I hadn't previously considered. In particular I was excited about how the stills from the *Dress-Up* video appeared with my costumed daughter in the center and the still from *Carwash* flanking each end (refer to image 17).

The one disappointment I had was in relation to the way the video works were displayed. I originally envisioned them being projected, ideally on large fabric surfaces. Due to various restraints in the gallery and availability of equipment, this was not a possibility. I ended up using a small TV screen in a dark room off the main gallery to show them. However, I was pleased that the soundtrack penetrated the entire gallery.

In addition to holding the exhibition, I wrote this thesis and anticipate sharing my findings at various future educational conferences. To add an online component and a way for future interested parties to view my artwork, I have posted images of the exhibition and all the artwork online in a blog format. I first created the blog site in September, 2012; concurrent with the work I began in Phase I of this inquiry. In one of my first postings I used text and ideas taken from a presentation I gave at a CSEA (Canadian Society for Education through Art) conference. It contains nine images, each of which becomes a visual representation for a theme relating to my art teaching experiences. As I look through the various postings I can see in the written and

visual components of this blog a strong connection and persistence of themes. It has become a way to track my process and progress over this time period and determine a degree of veracity or an overall sense of coherence and focus. As I have continued to strive for a high degree of rigor in this self-study, I consider the words of Tami Spry: “Reflecting on the subjective self in context with others is the scholarly sagaciousness offered by autoethnography. Good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory” (2001, p. 713). Barone and Eisner (2012, p. 163) state that arts-based research needs to “...ring true...” and that there are no set rules or criteria for determining the validity of arts-based research. Rather deliberations need to occur that serve to give the work credibility and ultimately strive for the effect of a “...profound experience...” (p. 163). The authors make suggestions to the reader as to criteria that could be useful in judging arts-based research. This six-fold set of recommendations includes such considerations as *Incisiveness*; does the work get to the heart of the matter? A second proposed factor is *Concision*; is the author concise or effective in saying the most with the least amount of unnecessary clutter? *Coherence* is a third quality and asks whether the work presents as a whole. *Generativity* a fourth aspect of assessment considers whether the work reshapes or generates new ideas. A fifth consideration is *Social Significance*, which refers to the importance of the work in the context of connecting to a greater society. The final aspect of criteria suggested by these authors is *Evocation and Illumination* or does the work provoke emotion and understanding in the reader/audience? Arts-based research is less about conforming to an established set of regulations and is more about generating new forms of knowledge through the theorizing of art-making.

As I have worked through these five phases I have considered these guidelines and have endeavored to produce work that is relevant, provocative and aesthetically communicative, as

well as emotional. In a process of continuous reflexive questioning I have attempted to ensure that both my artwork and written text attain standards that are simultaneously of interest both visually and literally, with the goal of contributing my arts based research study about issues of artist/teacher identity to a larger body of knowledge in the realms of art education.

My final artist statement hung on the wall in the gallery, contextualizing the work for the audience and appears below:

**Artist Statement, October 2014**

*The word 'specter' is meant to serve as a metaphor for how our identities are dependent on and shaped by the persistence of a clinging shadowy past; wobbly memories both personal and collective. I began this work a number of years ago in an attempt to explore my identity as an artist and a teacher. My intention was to allow my photography collection to provide insight into ways that my art and visual interests have guided and assisted me to move into new places and understandings of who I am and who I continue to become in relation to the world around me.*

*Through ongoing explorations with film editing programs, and a long saved collection of linen, my imagery has expanded in many unexpected directions, connecting past concerns and interests with more recent fascinations. This temporal convergence has established a tension that has become my thematic focus; capturing places of transition in between fluid self-understandings. I have combined multiple layers of imagery using processes that strive to mimic and synthesize the complexities of my lived experiences. The resulting artifacts capture an aesthetic essence of the many moments in time that touch and come together through our present living and our memory; past, present, and prognosticating an ongoing continuance.*

*In making this work I have discovered that memory, ritual, repetition, and patterns are integral aspects to these negotiations. Through engaging with a life long collection of my photographs I have discovered patterns that exist intergenerationally, between my daughter and myself. It was through serendipitous encounters with my daughter's visual interests in her own photography activities, that I recalled my childhood fascination with the camera as I set up 'artful' poses with my Kodak instamatic. In spending time with my collected images, many memories were stirred and a more holistic notion of self began to take shape. The themes that emerged; shadows and reflections, con/de-struction, play, the elements, all revealed a long-time preoccupation with the cycle of life and death, a being in and of the world.*

*The images I have found most compelling place my daughter in various interactions with nature; in the sand, in the earth, buried in snow and climbing high in the trees. This body of work really began to take shape with the creation of two of these images that I manipulated to push a connection between myself and my daughter and the natural world. I took a pair of portraits and overlaid them with a transparent leafy pattern. These portraits influenced my choice to use a particular set of images, which are repeated over and over in this body of work; those of my daughter running out into the snowy woods after a sauna. This cyclical set of movements, of sweating and cleansing, and then running into the woods suggests a ritual of purification and renewal, an essential component of forming and understanding a transitioning self.*

*Additional imagery in this body of work relates to my own personal practices of opening places for clarity. I, like many others I know, employ cleaning, exercising, and sleeping as transitional activities or demi-rituals that allow for meditative moments of calm and a settling of my knowing. Within these practices a space opens that allows for a shift to occur. As the body is*

*occupied with repetitive movement or utter and complete stillness, the mind is free to play, debate and determine. This process of coming to know is tri-part and cyclical; reflecting, moving/thinking, and making. In this cycle the residue of the past resurfaces, reforms and is reconfigured, revealing what was, what is, and what is about to be. It is within the recursive pauses that layers of memory are simultaneously embraced and forgotten, connections are revealed, patterns take shape and once again I am transformed.*

Throughout this process of making art and writing I have drawn upon and considered the ideas proposed in the various writings by those who have developed and practiced A/r/tography (Irwin, de Cosson, & Alex, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008). Additionally as my work has developed I have considered the three actions I discussed earlier in this paper: memory, serendipity and dialogue. I have framed my process using the five phases proposed by Eisner and Barone while simultaneously considering the various renderings of A/r/tography as provokers that allow for metaphors and thus new meanings to emerge and multiple perspectives to (re) consider my identity of artist/teacher.

In the following section, Chapter 5, I will address and discuss my research findings in relation to the question, *What does it feel, like, look like and mean to practice as an artist and teacher?* I will organize this information thematically and couch it within a discussion of *memory, dialogue, and serendipity.*

## **Chapter 5: Analysis: What Does it Feel Like, Look Like and Mean to Practice as an Artist and Teacher?**

“Pursuing an ongoing state of ‘becoming pedagogical’ requires a commitment to learning, inquiry, curiosity and the courage to change” (Gouzouasis, Irwin, Miles, & Gordon, 2013, p. 8).

I began this thesis with the goal of achieving a deeper understanding of how transformations of identity are navigated, essentially I considered what thoughts, feelings, and resulting understandings occur in the ongoing process of becoming. How can art-making facilitate and demonstrate this ongoing remaking of self? In this arts based thesis I have investigated what it feels like, looks like and means to practice as an artist and a teacher and more specifically how I have been able to merge or assimilate the role of teacher into my personal conception of self, *becoming pedagogical*.

Like James Haywood Rolling Jr. (2004 a), I have often felt an outsider at various times particularly in relationship to transitioning into new roles. “I believe all our quests for identity and belonging are longings to know we fit into the mainstream, the main storyline we have been acculturated to believe” (Sameshima, 2007, p. 287). In telling our stories we enlarge and elaborate that storyline to incorporate and accept diversity. This thesis has allowed me the time to do just that, create the space in my personal storyline for new perspectives that allow for shifts in self-conception to occur.

Prior to beginning the artwork for this thesis I considered and proposed three actions. Firstly, is the action of engaging with *memory*, secondly, is assuming an attentive stance allowing for guidance from intuitive and *serendipitous happenings*, and thirdly, the action of creating *dialogue* or a series of connections. I used these conceptual processes in conjunction

with one another to think about and make my artwork and ultimately consider what understandings I have gained from engaging in this arts based research. In this chapter I intend to use these actions as headings under which the various emergent themes will be discussed in terms of how they relate to what it feels like, looks like and means to practice as an artist and teacher. I have found these concepts to be suitably ambiguous and flexible in that they offer a wide spectrum of possibilities in terms of both reflecting on the creative process and the analysis and interpretation of my artwork. Additionally these concepts easily connect to and support the a/r/tographical renderings (Springgay & Irwin, 2008) I worked with as I progressed through the five phases discussed in the previous chapter such as *living inquiry*, *openness* and *excess*, *metaphors* and *metonymy*, *contiguity* and *reverberation*.

Art-making for me has involved the production of considerable excess as I worked through and processed a plethora of materials and imagery, editing and leaving behind the unwanted, the unnecessary and the superfluous. The process of working through this disarray of material became a place where understanding developed. In her arts based research, Andrea Eis (2013) discovered that while the practice of art does usually end in a physical product, art is a process not a goal – or, perhaps more usefully, she quotes Barthes' words, “the path would be equivalent to the goal” (p. 2).

Process can be understood as the experiences and phases leading up to and during art-making, prior to a decided completion. As such process is evident in the recorded and photographed acts of cleaning, swimming, exercising, burning, pruning, and running. Like gessoing a canvas prior to painting, I am *doing*, performing these activities in earnest, while preparing for art-making and writing. These daily activities, mundane as they are in themselves, became the building blocks to a thematic understanding of how I process and make meaning of

my life. Acts of cleaning, or running become almost ritualistic engagements that are required to prepare myself for the prolonged sitting and thinking needed, as I process experience through writing and art-making. My lived and daily experience becomes the fuel for my research and my art. Moreover, my working process metaphorically reflects my interior state, spiraling in between chaos and preparedness as I use these activities to create spaces of calm and order.

During this inquiry I have found that the imposition of boundaries between my art-making and life is both stifling and unreasonable. Just as it became challenging to isolate or separate my artwork for this thesis from previous and subsidiary creative projects so it is unethical to consider the detachment of living from art-making. There remains a flow back and forth and in-between that cannot be contained. Isolating life from work (art-making and teaching), or one piece of work from another is an impossibility as I have come to understand that my living is the source of my work and my work is the source of creative pursuits. There is a reciprocal flow from moment to moment; nothing ends or begins in a vacuum-it is all touching and touched by other events, people, and experiences. Daily work becomes my research, the raw material for my art, as I respond to and question my various roles of artist, teacher, researcher, runner, and mother.

In working on this arts based thesis, it has been important for me to acknowledge the connection between knowing, doing, and making as ways of generating new understandings. (Springgay et al, 2008). In considering my data through acts of reading, making, remembering, and writing, I am aware that many of the dominant themes emerging out of my own research coincide with other artist/teachers' experiences. As noted in the literature review, themes and concepts of vulnerability, reciprocity, repetition, and identity through community all touched these researchers who struggled to define relationships between their own fragmented identities

as artists, teachers and researchers. These themes have come to play a critical role in my own understanding of what it means to acquire and perform new and unfamiliar roles.

In this chapter I will discuss the above-mentioned themes as they pertain to my research. In Part I, I will speak to ways in which memory has served to develop new understandings. In particular I will focus on embodied memory, tacit knowing and repetition; essentially what it feels like to practice as an artist/teacher. Part II will cover themes developing out of what it looks like to practice as an artist/teacher. Specifically I will reference and discuss the serendipitous moments that make artistic process possible in terms of remaining open to play and surprise. Finally, Part III will address what it means to be practicing these various roles simultaneously. There is a requirement to perform oneself in ways that insist on exposing one's vulnerability in connection to other; be it self, audience or classroom.

### **Part I: Memory: What it Feels Like to be an Artist/Teacher**



Image 22: *The Artist in front of Her Work*, 1996

Collier and Collier (1986) refer to the camera as "...the mirror with a memory..." (p. 7). It has the capacity to capture and reflect our performances of self through time.

I feel like an artist. For as long as I can remember I have identified with being an artist. As a small child I would visit my grandparents' home. The first thing I would do when I got there was run up to my grandfather's office, find a pencil and a pad of paper, and begin drawing. He showed me how to draw horses. I remember how to make the ears, one behind the other in a side view, the chest puffed out, and the back curved in. Unfortunately I have no images from this time, but only the memory. However I do retain many photographs that provide visual evidence of my artist identity, images of myself posing in front of my artwork and my paintings. These are indications or witnesses that I have continually identified as an artist. So when I try to answer what it feels like to be an artist I have to say it feels like who I am. I cannot remember anything else. There was never a choice of becoming anything else because I have always been an artist. Unlike the role of teacher, my artist self was there, it didn't need to develop or be assimilated.

In my proposal for this thesis I wrote, *In acts of (re) membering and (re) making I hope to come to new understandings of myself*. These understandings relate to creating openings that allow for the development of a more complex and diversified understanding of self.

Memory is complex and is understood as having various characteristics and types. Of interest to this study are the notions of episodic and embodied memory. Episodic memory is autobiographical and as such requires storytelling. It "... involves the ability to recall personal experiences..." through the stories we construct in order to remember (Collins & Galliant, 2010, p. 11). Collins describes these memory aides as scripts or stories we devise so we can participate in various activities such as grocery shopping, playing a game of soccer or participating in a

birthday party. Story and memory are entwined, as are the multiple socio-cultural discourses that are remembered between one another as they shape these scripts.

Embodied memory is a physical, sensual recollection, experienced by the body that can subsequently inspire artistic response. It is ignited when images, music, smells or other sensual, bodily stimuli provoke an emotional response that can be physically felt (Haywood Rolling, 2004; Kohn, 2010; Skinner, 2010; Sameshima, 2007). For instance, in certain lighting conditions I am instantly connected to piano practices as a child. The piano room was on the west side of the house where I practiced after school in the glow of the setting sun. The anxiety associated with this rigorous and non-negotiable practice time is palpable. At other times, I've noticed that when I paint or draw I find my hand moving seemingly on its own accord, without any cognitive intervention. These are both examples of a kind of memory or knowing that resides in the body emanating from both a deep understanding of, and longtime engagement with, in this case, music and art-making.

**Episodic Memory.** I understand much of my artwork for this study as having episodic qualities. In the first phases of this research project memory played a significant role in determining my direction as I looked at and (re) membered the stories held in old photographs and in the various collections of art materials I considered in the creation for this thesis. I was able to sort these images into various categories and consider how or if these categories held meaning for this inquiry. As the work progressed, so too did the editing until I was left with a handful of more recent images. This was surprising to me, as I had originally thought the answers to my questions were embedded in the distant past. I imagined finding a distant memory held in an image from long ago that might provide an *ah ha* moment akin to the serendipitous instances described by Eisner and Barone (2012) in the third phase of their proposed arts based

research process. In reality the historical images created a kind of fluid support, a persistence of imagery, for moving forward and creating new work that both spoke to and created connections between the past, the present and lead to the future. Following are a selection of images that demonstrate this visual continuum.

As a young artist with a camera I attempted to create *artistic* images such as misty flowers and unusual perspectives such as a view of my feet.

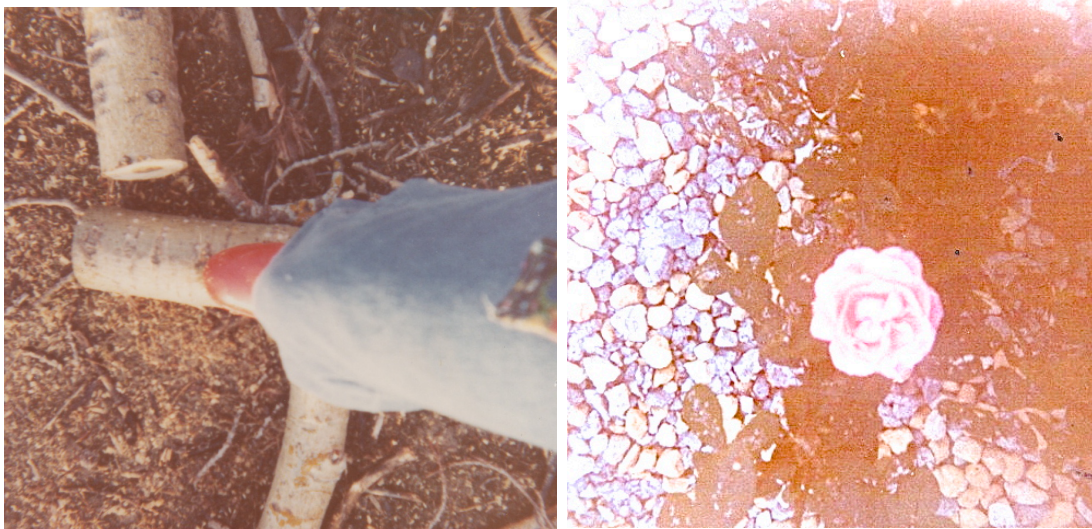


Image 23: *My Foot and A Rose*, approximately 1977

These sorts of themes and visual images have persisted into the present day as repeated unintentionally in the following images.



Image 24: *My Feet and Flowers*, approximately 2009

The recent images of feet and flowers (refer to image 24) were taken during an artist's residency in Matheson Island where I worked to create a mural with the students at the small school. The feet were taken in front of an ice fishing hole cut into the lake while the flowers were used to create shadows, which in turn the students traced to make a kind of silhouette painting. Again and in a connected way, silhouettes/shadows have been a long time interest of mine as depicted in the following images, the first from 1977 and the second from 2011. It is also interesting to note the overlap of my art practice and interests with my teaching practice as I have used silhouettes as a focus in my teaching and in my own artwork.



Image 25: *Silhouette*, 1977



Image 26: *Silhouette*, 2012

In addition to the silhouette/shadow, the repetition of the mirror photograph began with the 1978 version of me in my bedroom mirror wearing my favorite Adidas jacket. I was thirteen at the time. This reflected self-exploration continues into the present day as seen below.



Image 27: *Mirror*, 1978



Image 28: *Mirror*, 2012



Image 29: *Untitled*, 2012

Exploring mirrored reflections has not only continued to play a role in my imagery but also in my thinking in terms of art-making. In this particular study I have created doubled or reflected images to highlight the in between places and forms that emerge when two of the same image meet or touch.



Image 30: *Untitled*, 2013

The same could be said between the camera and the reflection in the mirror. These images provide a mediated space to examine one's self image or identity in a semi-objective way. As Annette Kuhn suggests, using the concept of memory, I can look at these reflected self-portraits assuming a third person role to uncover new understandings about myself. She writes about using photography to uncover cultural stories, "The power of this combination stems, I would argue, from the very everydayness of photography – from the ways photography and photographs figure in most people's daily lives and in the apparently ordinary stories we tell about ourselves and those closest to us" (2007, p. 285).

Although taken within the confines of the everyday, my images often have had an additional intention in that I have consciously considered artistic aspects of my photography. In examining the photos included here, I can see that I have long been a person who likes to play and experiment and test the limits of my art media. I do remember these early photographs with

fondness and a certain pride in my ability to achieve a level of what I determined to be at the time, artistry.

A final set of repeated imagery that impacted this study and surprised me in terms of persistence or connection to past experience, were the images of a summer camp I worked at from the age of fourteen through to sixteen. Three marvelous memory-filled summers were captured in the photographic imagery of working and playing with children. Until I found these buried treasures it had not really hit me that in fact I had been in the role of a teacher for far longer than I had initially conceived.



Image 31: *Untitled*, 1980



Image 32: *Untitled*, 2013

**Repetition/Persistence of Imagery.** Many artist/teachers see memories, relationships and issues from their childhood affecting their adult artist selves (de Cosson, 2004; Ghecevici, 2010; Haywood Rolling, 2004; Hickman, 2010; Kind, 2008; Robinson-Cseke, 2007; and Sinner, 2008). As children, art-making held meaning for them in a variety of ways that continue to

resonate with their present day practices. Alexandra Cristina Ghecevici (2010) expresses this phenomenon in her research by engaging with themes of repetition. She sees the connections between what she made as a child and what she continues to make. Porter (2003) recognizes the importance of reflecting on issues that resurface or repeat. She writes, “I realized my work had a cyclical and spiraling relationship nature. What I thought was new was an extension of a continued dialogue between myself and my art” (p. 23). Anita Sinner (2008) engages with her childhood art insisting that there is a continuum from our childhood to our adult lives. My research is also inspired by the serendipitous discovery of the repetition of various themes that thread throughout my own lifelong art practice.

Repetition plays a large role in the work created for this research. It can be witnessed in the multiple black and white stills taken from the video *Running, Pulling, and Lifting*. It is also seen in the repeated imagery of my daughter running into the snow in video, collage, and on painted fabric. Additionally there are a set of twelve repeated mandala like images taken from the video *Still Moving, Farewell*. The title itself suggests a forward momentum through leaving something behind, *farewell*. This video features the 1947 Santa Claus Parade playing in the background while images that span the time period of my photography collection are superimposed (altered to the degree that they are challenging to interpret) ovetop of the Santa loop. The ritual of the annual parade suggests a returning, a repetition, a reliance on reoccurrence and thus repeated opportunity to revisit and renegotiate understanding and meaning. This too is represented in the video *Dress-Up*. Here images of my daughter dressed in yearly Halloween costumes (mostly witches) are paired with a burning fire and a poem that recalls a dream. As my daughter tries on various costumes I understand this video to represent aspects of growth and transformation through play. She is experimenting with various identities in terms of costume

play. Fire, as a symbol, burns away old and dead growth and in doing so prepares the foundation for new beginnings, thus, in this context, allowing for opportunities to recreate the self. The poem that forms the soundtrack to this video reiterates this urgency to achieve a way of being in the world, *in my dream I decide I will do as I please, behave as I want, make my own decisions, do as I please, behave as I want, make my own decisions* (refer to page 98).

In this inquiry I have seen evidence of repetition, of remembering and forgetting. I think I have travelled far away, found something new or different and then, upon closer inspection I see it is the same, but in a different place. For instance, I found an old book of Eadweard Muybridge's in my school's library that was being discarded. I had completely forgotten that I had already been interested in his work in relation to what I was trying to achieve with my photography. Working with selections of still photographs and placing them into motion through introducing them to the video editing software bears resemblance to Muybridge's work both in intention (capturing the subtleties of movement), theme (performing and recording athletic actions), and in format (frame by frame recordings of movement). Again, there remains a persistence of interest and imagery despite what I had determined to be a conscious selection. It is important to pay attention to the resurfacing of ideas and imagery in order to deconstruct and understand what it means in terms of self. In this instance I believe that it is a fascination I have had with transition, becoming, the movement in between ones present self and the reforming of a new self. Here we have still photographs placed in sequence that when played together allow the viewer access to the particulars of this activity. However there remains a small gap in/between the images and places where they come together or overlap through a transition. To me this serves a metaphoric place of becoming; movements from one point in time to another, from one

self to another where both places remain visible and united. In this space there is an opportunity an imperative to continue, to connect past and present.

Journal Entry: April 17, 2013

*I was reading more about Louise Bourgeois last night. Her work seeks to surface the unconscious. The book discusses Bourgeois' use of repetition and how this is a therapeutic practice. I think about my own repetitions and wonder, how do you repeat and yet grow, become? With each repetition is something new understood? Is there a change, a shift? Just when I think I am changing, growing, evolving I (re) encounter an idea, experience or interest. It is a tight circle (I am reminded again of Samuel Menashe's final line in his poem Voyage, 'I am who I was'). Returning, remembering reflexive acts.*

*As with Bourgeois' repetition of particular shapes and images I have found in my own work a selection of motifs and interests that continue to re-appear despite a conscious awareness. It is like when you wake up from a dream and begin to describe it out loud and you instantly know that the scenario is closely related to events that have occurred in waking life. Subconsciously the feelings and experiences of the daytime have been (re)discovered and reinterpreted in another format, the dream. The dream has the capacity to distill waking life in ways that the conscious mind is unable to and therefore it is closer to creative acts. Art-making translates and communicates lived experience into non-verbal forms that take into account holistic experiences of the body and the mind.*

Through this inquiry I have found that this resurfacing or repetition of interests and images can also apply to identity. My artist self continues to return, called upon by new situations, times of destabilization that require transformation of self-perception and new ways of acting, behaving and being. When faced with new roles or imperatives to take on a new identity

or re-invent myself, I look to my art practice to make sense of and facilitate required shifts. My artist self is stable, always present. In order to keep this sense of stability nourished it is imperative to continue to create the space for an active art practice. During my teaching career others have echoed this sentiment in various places of employment and commit to producing work for exhibition. The artist/teachers at the Winnipeg Art Gallery hold an annual art exhibit of their work. Part of the success of this program in terms of authenticity depends on the teachers being practicing artists. I remember from my own experience as a child taking art lessons at the Winnipeg Art Gallery that the environment, which included artist/teachers, led me, the student, to feel like an artist.

**Embodied Memory and Tacit Knowing.** Memory, emotional longing and embodiment are intimately connected. Memory or the act of remembering, has the capacity to evoke emotional and visceral sensations; touch, taste, smell, and sound “...memory is observed to be embodied, that is, felt directly, rather than understood cognitively” (Spry, 2001, p. 11). Cathy Brooks (1980) notes that experiencing memory “...might be a sensation of inner pressure in my chest, a sense of swelling in my throat, or a tingle in certain muscles” (p. 4). In Jonathan Skinner’s (2010) ethnographic inquiry into salsa dancing, he notes “...that dancing can precipitate a powerful sense of longing-the recovery of past pleasures and past times, to feel desire and feel desired...” (p. 118). In this instance emotion is triggered through movement, through the remembering of the body. Barthes speaks about embodied memories that surface in acts of looking at photographs of place, “This longing to inhabit, if I observe it clearly in myself...is fantasmatic, deriving from a kind of second sight which seems to bear me forward to a utopian time, or to carry me back to somewhere in myself...it is as if I were certain of having been there or of going there” (1980, p. 40).

In the process of remembering, the imagination is stirred, bringing the senses to attention, which in turn stimulate emotions of desire and longing for that which has passed. Barthes refers to the “...melancholy of photography...” (1980, p. 79). A photograph preserves and records a time, a place, an event or person that is no longer available, producing in the viewer a desolation or desire for something that now is unobtainable. An intention I had in creating work for this study was to elicit this sense of longing through temporal displacement, an eternal presence of the past repeating that continues to ignite reflexive meditations on relationships between past and present. I hoped that interactions with my work would be both emotional and physically experienced as the viewer contemplated the making of the work, the stories and experiences underlying the work and listened to the soundtracks and stories that narrate the exhibit. I hoped for the audience to connect their own embodied memories to mine thus provoking self-reflection on their own identities in connection to my artwork.

Embodied memory allows one to access and feel memories stemming from sensual experience. These physical memories evolve or develop through practice, or a repetition of the body’s actions in conjunction with emotional experience. Stephanie Springgay (2003) states, “Body knowing is tacit knowing. It is intuition, an unconscious construction of ideas. Body knowing is knowing through our senses, synesthesia resonating impulses with the visual world. Body knowing is kinesthetic; it is an active exploration of text. Body knowing is separate from the mind, but is not exclusionary of the mind” (p. 93).

Knowing and remembering through the body have played a key role in terms of the ways in which I have engaged in making my art. Bodily, physical experience has sparked my creativity as I try through poetic expression to record in text and poetry what I have felt and smelled and touched during the times I run, as I create, as I teach, and dream. These intuited texts

have become significant aspects of my research working alongside with the visual. They read as a contiguous exploration to my visual work, translating embodied experiences into a written form. Further remembering through the body has provided me with insights into aspects of shifting identity. For instance, I know that many years ago the bicycle was my main mode of transportation. I literally rode miles everyday, to work, to shop, and to go out with friends. The other night I decided to ride my bike to a friend's place in the rain. I had to portage my bicycle across some train tracks and through the mud. As I rode and lifted and felt the cold wet wind burn my face, I experienced the memory of my long ago and younger self. This embodied form of memory is very powerful and demonstrated to me that perhaps there is a record of all of our past selves living within us that has the potential to be triggered by physical experience. When I make art I feel that comfortable reconnection to all my past artist selves but when I teach, it is different. I don't have the same life long associations with teaching. I did not always want to be a teacher as I did an artist. As a teacher, embodiment for me vacillates between my memories of being a young student myself, and those of being a nurturer or mother figure as I am now. Essentially I move in between the past and present, piecing together a new sense of self out of these divergent experiences. In this instance I come to form new understandings of self through my embodied memories in connections with my present day encounters with the world.

Nicole Porter (2003) in her arts based thesis writes about working in a state of not knowing while simultaneously trusting that new understanding will emerge. She felt a sense of urgency as she created, the physicality of the work over the intellectuality-it is tacit, a body knowing, where the senses are engaged and emotions heightened. Because of my longtime engagement with art-making, tacit knowledge has allowed me to have the confidence and trust in myself, regardless of the anxiety of having to wait and the not consciously knowing that

something will happen. As described in Phase IV, I too experience these physical moments of creation where the body seems to take off and the intellect automatically concedes. In my art-making process there is a struggle and then a mark is made, an image is placed next to another, then the smell of rotting fruit on a hot autumn day or a dream inspires a resolution and I am in a position to tie up the loose ends.

Springgay (2001) understands tacit experience as the creative process of *flow* that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi identified and for which he is renowned. Tacit knowledge is not always communicable in words and implies that we know more than we can tell. She gives an example that we may through explicit knowledge know particulars about a work of art, who painted it and when, but to know, to feel how it was made is in the realms of tacit knowledge. I recall a professor I had while studying Theatre Design at Concordia University. She had us engage in a process to develop a tacit knowledge in order to design a set for Anton Chekov's, *The Cherry Orchard*. We were to reproduce many copies of artwork from Chekov's period, listen to the music, read the literature, and essentially become immersed in this time and place. Resultantly I was able to create what I believed to be an authentic design that flowed easily from my fingers and onto the page. Through tacit knowledge I came to inhabit the place of the early 20th century in Russia. In this study I have worked similarly in that I have immersed myself in my own history keeping in mind my research question at all times. This has allowed for those *ah ha* moments to reveal themselves as I wait for serendipitous directions, inspiration.

Because I have been making art for the entirety of my life, I just seem to *do it*. It is both obsessive and compulsive. There are periods of lucidity, of consideration, but, as with Eisner and Barone's Phase III, once the *ah ha* moment is evidenced; there is a kind of switch or trigger that allows for the body to take over the process. It is this moment that the artist, myself, waits for

and knows (in the body) will come. In terms of teaching I have experienced moments of flow which occur not in lecturing, lesson planning or marking, but when my class and I are all caught up in our work, making things.

Haywood Rollings (2010) writes that arts-based research grounded in pre-structural theory, that is informed by tacit knowledge, "...manifest themselves as lived experiences, a variation of self-study that conceptualizes research as a life praxis..." (p. 107). This paradigm holds that there is a relationship between experience and knowing that is intuitive and emerges in advance of a symbolic manifestation such as language, images and numbers. Rollings concludes that a prestructural approach may see the arts and education in the arts "converted once again to their primal purpose as a tool for transforming lives..." (p. 111). My research stems from the unspoken knowing of my lived experience and in turn has been reinterpreted into artworks, that once created, have the capacity to speak to or connect with both myself and an audience. It is not until the work is complete that I am able to use words to interpret or translate the process. It is in this looking back stage, the writing of this thesis that a fuller comprehension emerges.

In these interactions with my personal images I have engaged in acts of (re) membering, (re) writing, (re) shaping and (re) forming; continually (re) contextualizing my past experiences in order to give meaning to present understandings and to witness and mark transformation. In acts of looking back, I have exhumed and (re) experienced the that-has-been from a present perspective. Brooks writes, "I am more myself for the understanding of who I have been" (1980, p. 8). Echoing Brooks, Suominen comes to understand that "...it was impossible to deny the deep influence past experiences and memories had on my perception and understanding of my new life situation and myself" (2003, p. 80). In acts of (re) membering and (re) making I have created

a body of artwork that responds to past experience, acknowledging a continuousness of being and becoming.

Gannon affirms that, “A poststructural autoethnography would proceed in part from understanding that memory is enfolded in the body but, the lived body is a discursive and multiple but very present space where we do not go looking for any *sacred originary* but for traces and unreliable fragments” (2006, p. 483). We can come to new understandings of self through remembering, but these understandings are subjective and ever changing. Collins discovers that “...the self is multiple, socially embedded and emergent...we all draw on our own memories in efforts to understand each other” (2010, p. 14). From this perspective, there is no true self that can be accessed through acts of remembering. There is no reconnection to an original identity or an object that holds memories to connect one to essential truths of the past (Brooks, 1980, p. 2). Instead our memories connect us in emotional ways to one another in an ever evolving and emerging dialogue. Kohn explains that, “Truly memorable experiences are ones that slap us in the face with personal embodied senses of pain, grief, hilarity, disgust, etc., and then, instead of crumbling away until only remnants remain, the memories become reworked due to continually extended dialogic relationship the ethnographer has with her maturing self through her experiences with others” (2010, p. 197).

In *Camera Lucida*, (as cited in Barthes, 1980) Kafka comments, “We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds” (1980, p. 53). We can then return to look, to see what was in our minds from a new and future perspective. Over time patterns are created and images or themes become apparent and so even though my mind may forget, my eye or instinct is drawn to certain visuals and they re-appear. Becoming aware of these patterns is key to creating a deeper understanding of self.

## Conclusion

Memory is a subjective and ongoing process that morphs through our lived encounters. In relation to what it feels like to be an artist/teacher, memory can be understood as consisting of remembered episodes. These stories we recall through reflective practices, tell us who we are and subsequently allow for us to share ourselves with others. In this study, I have become aware that in fact, I am who I was, an artist. It is my artist self that informs my teacher self. When I feel like a teacher it is the same as when I feel like an artist. In examining my photographic collection in anticipation of finding evidence relating to identity, I have discovered that there exists a strong and enduring persistence of visual interests dating back to my earliest images. It seems for me that the past has had a considerable impact on my present day self. Through the visual provoking of both tacit and episodic memory, I have become aware of ongoing patterns in my life that have served to establish my understanding of self as ever shifting and layered.

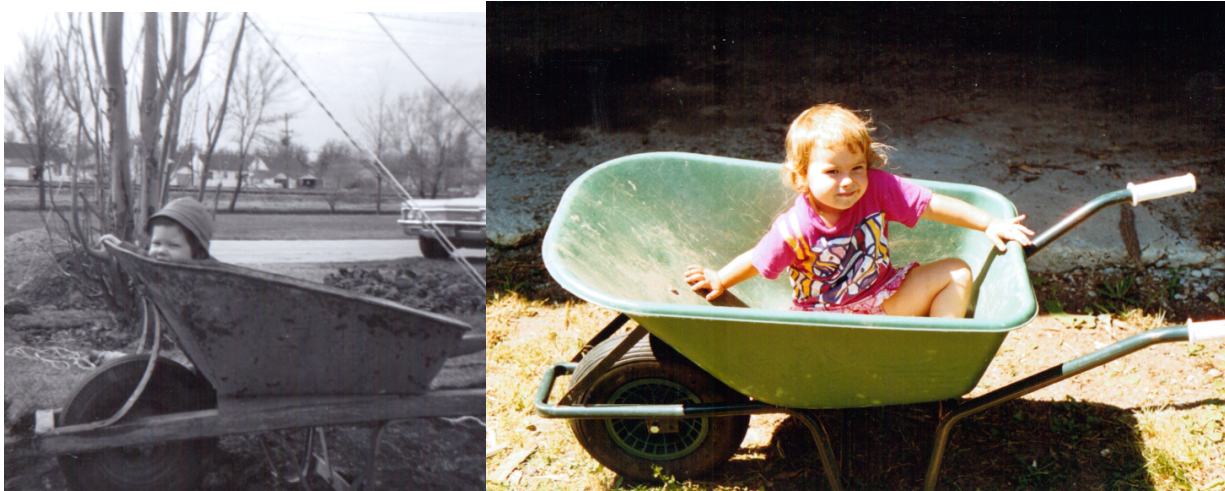


Image 33: *My Daughter and I in Wheel Barrows*, 1968, 2001

## **Part II: Serendipity: What it Looks like to be an Artist/Teacher**

“Mostly I strive to be attentive to the details of everyday. And I wait” (Suominen-Guyas, 2008, p. 26).

Vered Amit (2010, p. 201) reminds us of the words recorded by Louis Pasteur when long ago he remarked that *chance favors the prepared mind*. Serendipitous moments require patience and attentiveness. Sylvia Kind (2008) writes that the act of waiting is not passive but rather expectant, receptive attention...” where we “...make time for the unexpected” (p. 169). Cole and Knowles (2001) write, “Researchable moments are serendipitous. By their very nature they are happenstance. They cannot be predicted. They present opportunities to connect with others, to see into the inner reaches of the meaning of a life” (p. 79). They continue, noting that in day-to-day life, collisions with the unexpected “...often become turning points or moments of transformation” (2001, p. 79). When, in our everyday lives, we wait for and are prepared to make meaning out of chance encounters and poignant moments by bringing them into larger dialogues with our interests and concerns we are inviting the magic of serendipity into our inquiry, allowing ourselves to engage in free association or “...following what beckons...” (Coleman in Collins & Galliant, 2010, p. 216). Coleman believes this to be a fruitful approach to research; allowing the unexpected and the personal to shape the stories we tell.

Dina Belluigi (2013) is concerned with examining the conditions under which the creative process can be learned and supported. She acknowledges that the artist self requires the use of intuition, being open to options, and the suspension of judgment. She writes that anxiety needs to be tolerated in creative practices “To accommodate chance, intuition, and the emergence of unconscious associations, within the art-making process...” Additionally frustration may increase in “...approaches that do not have pre-determined objectives but allow

for the emergence of the work's content in process" (p. 14). This anxiety has been a constant for me as I have struggled to make meaning of what I am doing and have done. I have felt untethered as I waited for that *ah ha* moment that would allow me to move forward. It has been important to trust that happenstance will intercede eventually and ease the anxiety of nothingness and the possibility of failure. To combat this distress I took up the stance of *active waiting* in which I continued to read, to look, to make art, to experiment, play and search out metaphors that could support the structure of my artwork and give me the courage and conviction to move forward.

In this active waiting I considered how aspects of play, surprise, and risk-taking connected to the development of my own art as well as my students as witnessed in the following journal entry:

Journal Entry: June 10, 2013

*I was thinking today about how I could work with a video clip that I had recorded of a fire. It was lit as a ritual closing, an ending of the school year for my grade 10 classes. We burnt our final projects in an outdoor fire pit along with written personal hopes for the future. I was wondering about layering some still images with the video and thought-maybe I should work with a more sophisticated program so I could have more control or direction over the outcome. At the same moment I recoiled from this thinking; 'but then there wouldn't be a surprise'. I love the surprises; risk taking, this is what I truly love about art-making, this is what I need, to be surprised and amazed; to not know what is going to happen, but to work with what is at hand and respond to that.*

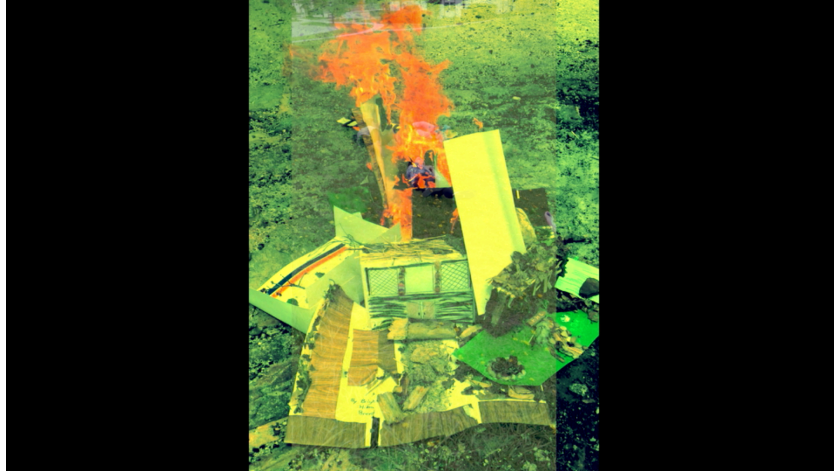


Image 34: Still from the process of *Fire II*, 2013





Image 35: Stills from *Fire II*, 2013

*When I work with my students I am often disappointed when they become stuck in their work insisting that they require exact colours (I have to have blue for the sky) or specific materials (I need to make this project with wire). I think that they too would come to love surprise if they were to limit themselves to what is available, problem solve, even if it is unfamiliar or not in accordance with the outcome they have pre-imagined. Take a risk! This is what I have, now what can I do with it? How can I make this work? I think that art is richer from this direction, entering into an unknown world where anything can happen rather than re-creating something that already exists-even if it is within your mind.*

I understand risk-taking as a continual proposing of and acting on the *what-ifs*. In the above images, taken from *Fire II*, I began with video footage of the burning of a final school project. Additionally I had taken video of the children rolling down the hill. I was inspired by the ability of the editing program to use the long rectangular images to slowly shift the children out of the picture and have the fire consume the remains. The deer was a still photograph that I inserted, again guided by inspiration and play. I believe its presence adds an extra dimension of mystery and another layer of possible meaning and interpretation. In playing with image and process, without preconceived expectations, I come to find direction through the serendipitous occurrences that reveal themselves through this active waiting.

### **Play: Active Waiting**

Prior to the establishment of metaphors, engaging in play offers opportunity to take an open stance, an *active waiting*. Playing is an engagement that loosens the imagination; a lubricant for discoveries. Playing allows for ideas to slip into narratives and brushes into paint whirlpools, dragons and elaborate beaver dams. Characters meet, fates collide. Pleasure is experienced and discovery is at hand. Bellugi (2013) writes, “To accommodate chance, intuition and the emergence of unconscious associations, within the artmaking process, the student may suspend analytical, rationalist thinking in order to play with ideas, materials and techniques” (p. 14).

Recently my grade ten class had an opportunity to play with non-traditional and very messy art materials; mud, moldy paint and found objects placed in a baggie and randomly distributed. I was amazed at the level of engagement. I heard, *Is this art? If this is art then I love it!* We spend over two hours *playing* in the mess. Conscious decisions, right and wrong vanished as paint spilt and glue consolidated mud and plastic onto a newspaper backing. The act of playing allowed for, insisted upon, embodied learning as my students reacted in organic ways to the materials rather than working with a predetermined and conscious goal. I understand these playful times as *active waiting*. As you work, the ideas begin to come and then to grow. I have noticed so many times with myself and with my students, I will begin something, a drawing perhaps and then partway through I have a better idea. I want to restart. This happens in the classroom regularly. Making art with children requires a great deal of thinking on your feet, of spontaneity, of patience and flexibility. Things don’t always proceed as planned and they shouldn’t as this is part of the creative process; playing, incorporating surprise, going with the *flow*, and allowing for new directions to be set; inspiration is generated through work and play.

In a journal entry from her master's thesis Stephanie Springgay (2001) discusses an artwork with one of her students, "I encouraged play with paint and pigment, acrylic mediums, risk and time for reflection. She wanted step by step do it this way in one night answers. Criteria. Deadlines. Grades" (p. 97). For many students, play is a risky endeavor. The student wants to be assured of success. By removing the expectations of pre-determined outcomes, play is encouraged and new opportunities will and do emerge.

In creating art for this thesis I played and experimented with new materials, new software, with combining images, all the while waiting for that moment when I would be able to proceed with a tightened direction, a structure and some sense of a developing precision. I have found that in the process of working my ideas began to take shape. For example, the following images demonstrate how I chose to play with the image, mirroring myself, morphing the image into various patterns and finally overlaying these increasingly complex images with video taken. In doing this I was able to think about this image, myself working out, as an image in transition, active, looking to myself in the mirror while unusual shapes form and undulate in/between the multiple images of self.



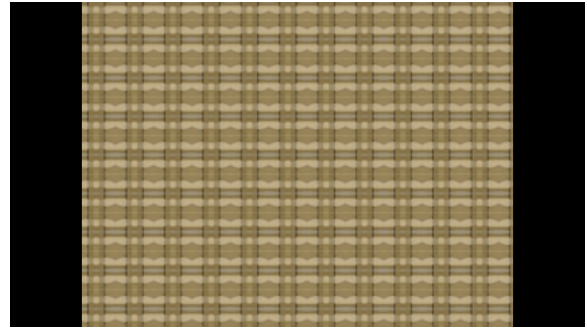
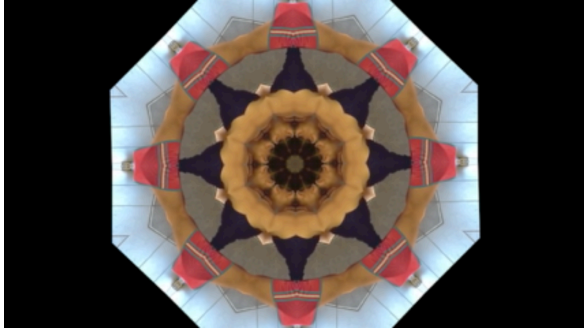


Image 36: Stills taken from the process of making *Running, Pulling, and Lifting*, 2013

Carabine (2013) writes about how once she has developed a tacit knowledge with her art materials, an inner confidence, it allowed her to accommodate frustration and anxiety that are inherent components to the process of creating art. It has been of particular importance to this research to keep active, engaged and experimenting, playing with ideas, both with hands on making and writing, trying out new art techniques, talking to people and living attentively. The boundaries that I previously thought existed between my *regular life* of teaching and art-making over the course of this work have been significantly eroded. Through playfully continuing to consider all aspects of my daily life as opportunities to make and respond to artistically, I believe I have managed to reconceive of my fragmented self, into a more holistic and interactive self. I am not one thing or another, but as I so enjoyed hearing Michael Emme pronounce at the CSEA (Canadian Society for Education through Art) conference in Fredericton, “I have an art life” (2011).

In terms of this research, surprises have developed out of interactions with the world around me regarding my day-to-day existence. This is the part I look forward to and wait for in a semi-state of patience. Sameshima writes, “Being open in the moment means listening intently, simultaneously seeking relationality, acknowledging connections and appreciating the fullness of presence in the present” (2007, p. 35). Being open connotes a sense of keen attention and awareness but also a desire to know, to seek out and make sense, indeed to experience the world and to learn from those experiences.

Barthes (1980) names and describes the phenomena of embodied encounters with photographic images as having *punctum* an “...element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me” (p. 26). Similarly I recall an experience (not unlike Barthes’ embodied encounter with the image of Napoleon’s brother) I had while looking at the sculptural

work of Giuseppe Panone in the Art Gallery of Ontario. Panone was able to obtain a number of ancient trees from the palace of Versailles after a torrential storm had pulled them out of the ground. Taking these enormous trunks, he carefully carved into them, exposing the heartwood, or the young sapling that resides in the middle of the tree. I was at once overwhelmed as I felt I was looking at the same small tree that Marie Antoinette would have looked at hundreds of years ago. It gave me an intensely emotional sensation of time existing all at once; that the past is held within the present, simultaneously. This viewing was transformative, shifting my understanding of my connection to other worlds, times, and places; suddenly my twenty-first century self was implicated in France's historical past. Coleman (2010) sums this up, recognizing that there is "...a sense that ethnography is being pieced together out of the circumstances of the present as well as the observations of the past" (p. 216).

In my own artwork I like to play with sensations of nostalgia, sentimentality, and longing. I often use found or discarded objects in my work that I feel are imbued with potential stories that have *punctum* (Barthes, 1980), elicit emotional response. My home is filled with antique collectables, which inspire and make appearances in my art in various ways. In using these what I consider to be emotionally charged objects in conjunction with images from my own life experience, I attempt to create dialogues in between time, place and events, and I implicate myself in other's pasts. I try to establish places for potential audience to engage with their own memories and experiences. In regards to the artwork for this thesis, I have used linens, quilts and tablecloths and connected them with images of my daughter as she performs her snow run. Both the images and the materials capture moments in time, that now, as an artwork, are destined to be tied together in a previously unfathomable relationship. The piece entitled *Embrace* (refer to image 37) uses materials, a tablecloth, a silk fringe, or ornate needlepoint to

suggest remains of a time and place now past. The wreath like fringe focuses on the layered images of the snow scene which in linear but held in a circle, capturing and entrapping the movement. The work is a puzzle to be solved through the multiple stories held within the various juxtapositions of materials and imagery. The viewer needs to connect and make meaning on his or her own terms.



Image 37: *Embrace*, 2013

I understand that knowledge is constructed and situated within the multiple experiences of the individual and is often provoked into being by serendipitous events that consist of encounters with objects, art, poetry, and in conversation. Gary Knowles comments that in life history research, the story “...hinges on turning points and critical incidents...” (2001, p. 231). In my research I have found and used these moments of happenstance, exploiting them in order to develop personal narratives of self-identity. From the very initial stages serendipitous occurrences and intuition shaped the direction I took. Karen Schaller (2008) responds, when

asked about how she came to choose a form for her thesis, "... it seems I had very little to do with it-it came to me in a moment of uncertainty and fear, after a year of work, as an inspiration" (p. 240). I have often felt a sensation that is difficult to describe in words, but it is like I need to be filled up, have read or experienced a good deal of something before I am able to create something and then it comes pouring out fast and furious, reconfiguring what I have taken in. I heard a writer on the radio discuss this phenomenon in terms of his own work; he used the term *vomiting*. In a preparatory state I collect ideas and experiences. I remain open and waiting. I take in information, I am attentive, and then something happens, and it is like lighting a match and throwing it on a pile of gasoline soaked paper. Schaller describes it as, "...that heady moment when time stops and words, once reluctant and shy, come strong and certain" (p. 243). Similarly Alexandra Cutcher (2008) describes a "...tsunami that had to be released..." (p. 33).

In this thesis these serendipitous occurrences have shaped the direction of my work. One such instance occurred when upon reading Olga Ivashkevich's (2011) article relating to her study of girl power, I was able to see my work, what I had been making, in terms of performances. That is we perform our identities according to social and identifiable scripts. I was photographing these performances both of my daughter and myself as we worked, played and ran various errands. In the following image we are driving through the carwash in between grocery shopping and getting gas for the car.



Image 38: Still from *Carwash*, 2013

Another such turning point occurred one evening when I was listening to the radio and the announcer reported the death of poet, Samuel Menashe. The radio then played a recording of Menashe reading a poem. A particular line jumped out at me, *I am who I was*. For me this was a serendipitous moment, a point in time that arrives only when one assumes a state of continued waiting. Menashe's words connected deeply with my own unspoken suspicions relating to identity. Just as the delicate sapling resides in the mature tree, *I am who I was* suggests a temporal connection between the *that-has-been* and the *that-which-resides-in-the-now* as it passes continually into the future. I am who I was reminds me not only that my identity is negotiated in communication with my past but also that I am connected to and constructed by interactions with others throughout time and place and yet am able, compelled even, to return, to reflect. Our lived experiences form layers over us, transforming and (re) shaping us. I have tried to communicate this sense of a continual consuming and regurgitating of experience that builds

and changes who we are as we interact with the world. Through the use of various techniques such as layering and the juxtaposition of both personal and profound images and objects I have attempted to build up a sense of time and place thus creating emotional connections and an ever-complex sense of the transforming self. Following is an example of this continued and ever increasing manipulation as the original image is played with and remade.



Image 39: Original image



Image 40: Black and White image



Image 41: Still created in a video-editing program



Image 42: Painting on a computer printout with a net over top in order to allow for the image to be transferred in paint onto the netting



Image 43: Image layered with additional photos, found objects and frame, candle wax

Image 39-43: Multiple forms of *Snow Run*, 2013

In considering what I have attempted to do with my layering processes I am reminded of an artwork by Eric Cameron in which he took various objects and began painting consecutive layers of white primer over them. In time they were completely unrecognizable in relation to their original form. This process, which is in inverse to Panone's foray into connecting the past with present, reflects how our own encounters with one another can forever and continually modify both our sense of self and how we are perceived as we continue to apply layers of experience to our lives. I wonder at what point these layers begin to shift and contort. I wonder too if there is an essential core or starting point or just fragments. Am I really who I was?

Susanne Gannon, in her paper, *The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing: French Poststructural Theory and Autoethnography*, quotes Foucault who declares that, "Even in the deepest recesses of our psyches there are no experiences which, if evoked, will reveal our identities." *There is no coming to know a hidden self* as the self remains "...perpetually under construction" (2006, p. 480). Cole and Knowles extend this thought; "In research as in life as in art, there is no possibility of completeness, certainty, or closure" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 103). Although there might not be a true or original identity, I have witnessed a continual return to my artist self at various stages throughout my life. In times of conflict it is my creative process that allows me to make sense of my experiences and bring order and understanding to the chaotic encounters of living and becoming. It is this understanding of self as artist that facilitates personal transformation, allowing for me to subsume and perform additional roles such as that of teacher.

### **Metaphor**

Serendipitous occurrences allow for the arts based researcher to acquire new perspectives through establishing a single or even multiple metaphors. These altered views allow for the

researcher to move forward. Renee Norman (2008), was “...desperately seeking a structure...” (p. 66) that would allow her to engage with her arts based research. Eventually and through a serendipitous visit to a friend’s house she began to contemplate mirrors and realized the overwhelming presence of the mirror in her readings. Additionally she recognized the mirror as “...symbolic of the autobiographical I...” (p. 67). She was then able to move forward with her research. This is reflected in Eisner and Barone’s (2012) proposed third phase where the researcher experiences an epiphany and the research direction becomes tangible.

In my inquiry numerous metaphors emerged throughout, from the initial conceiving of this study where I too considered the metaphor of the mirror and the capturing of a photographic self-portrait into a mirror. The first of these images was taken when I was thirteen.



Image 44: *Self Portrait*, 1979

And has continued on into the present day with the addition of my daughter in the frame.



Image 45: *Halloween*, 2010

Finding the shards on the riverbank, another metaphor, allowed me to consider representing a story told in fragments.



Image 46: *Shards*, 2012

Similarly my digital work allowed me to experiment with the notion of layers and transitions as I built up *image memories* one on top of the other, exposing and hiding various imagery and sound.

Quilt making and stitching served as metaphorical acts that brought together fragments of physical material from my collections of artifacts in combination with digital photographs.



Image 47: Detail from *Specter*, 2013

As I worked with these metaphors, reflections, fragments, collage, layering, and transitions, I found a continual need to be flexible and responsive to what was developing. The metaphors set up a direction, some boundaries to work within, however at times I needed to relinquish control. So, for instance, when I determined that the quilt (entitled *Specter*) I had worked on was in fact not working out, I was able to look at it literally from another point of view. In this case I looked at it in reverse, from the backside, and saw the potential to solve my artistic dilemma from another direction. The underside was visually compelling. I understand that a considerable degree of flexibility in both vision and practice is a required characteristic in both my art-making and teaching practices. In general I have found that a willingness to consider various perspectives is not only enriching, but reflects a way of being in the world. It is a

reflective and responsive stance that, for me transgresses boundaries and pervades each role I commit to, artist and teacher.

As discussed in the previous chapter, *Specter*, the title for my art exhibit, also a metaphor, developed out of experiments I was doing with photographic image transfers and layering of painted netting. The resulting images retained a ghostly quality, a feeling of not quite being in this realm and so I began to think about ghosts and haunting. In terms of autoethnographical explorations, the metaphor of a specter or of a persistence, a haunting of the past seemed like an exciting structure to center my artwork around. Jennifer Paziienza (2001) acknowledges a persistence of memory in a body of artwork she painted, which brought together old photographs, fragments of memory, of place and time. The metaphor becomes a focal point for my developing body of artwork. In this study the idea of a specter, of a persistence of imagery, a repetition or resurfacing of events, inextricably links my present self to my ever-present past.

In addition to the guidance provided through metaphor the use of transitions and layering facilitated representations of self in states of becoming, documenting movement from one place to another from one self to another, a physical building of self, not unlike the layers painted by Eric Cameron. The layers represent lived experience and how at any point in time there are many interconnections between self and other. Some of these experiences are masked, hidden, still there but submerged, while others shine out from underneath, continuing to assert themselves. The use of transitions were explored in the video work as I captured these overlaps in between both still and moving images, letting them merge together as one image is leaving and the other arriving.



Image 48: Still from *Dress-Up*, 2013

### **Transgressing Boundaries**

Wholeness is thus living inside and outside-living a subversive aesthetic, moving with conviction, away from the safety of conformity and standardization, and the fear that holds us there, to the unknown, to the new, and to the open connective spaces where the impossible becomes possible. (Sameshima, 2007, p. 33)

Being open to the serendipitous requires a breaking down of boundaries in between our daily-performed roles as Sameshima (2007) writes, "...living inside and outside" (p. 33). Essentially, in a pursuit of wholeness, an unmaking and remaking of self is required to transgress preconceived roles and transform oneself into new ways of being. When I began this research I perceived my artist self and teacher self in opposition to one another. Engaging in this process of reading, art-making and writing has required that I question and transgress the boundaries I had previously conceived of for myself. As with the metaphoric river shards, I had the opportunity to

create my own bowl-of-shards by bringing together my own disparate pieces of story and experience, and ways of being and working and interacting with the world.

Where once I perceived incompatibilities and divisions between my artist and teacher self, through engaging art-making for this research I am now aware of how one role has the potential to inform the other. As with identities in opposition, binaric relationships can be seen in my artwork, in particular in the black and white photographic stills I created for my exhibition. In between the binaric opposites of dark and light there exists a considerable variety of grey. Mixed with varying degrees of black and white, it is the greys that give shape, nuance and form to what we perceive. I believe these black and white stills (refer to images 37 and 49) express this notion of transgressing boundaries, relying on the greys to soften and blend edges (my artist self touching the teacher self). In these mirrored images where I am depicted facing myself in increasingly complex repetitions where new patterns grew. In the moving video that these stills are taken from, this undulation from pattern to pattern is even more pronounced. Visually I am situated confronting myself in action over and over in always changing forms. This same convention is evident in the cyclical representation of my daughter running into the snowy woods. She too is mirrored and facing herself. In-between, where the images meet something new is seen which shifts the understanding of the image. It is like that age-old picture of two silhouetted faces looking at one another. When focusing on the black the viewer sees the two faces, but when looking at the white it becomes an image of a vase. In many of my images a similar focal opportunity unfolds for the viewer. There is the option to try and focus on the recognizable or, alternatively on the patterns that form in between imagery. This shift in focus had allowed me insight into new ways of conceptualizing self.



Image 49: *Snow Run*, 2013

## Conclusion

This second section of chapter five asks what it looks like to be an artist/teacher and more specifically how serendipity contributes to the form of this dual identity. As with Suominen-Guyas, (2008) quoted at the opening of this section, I have been attentive to the details of everyday as I waited for clarity. In this respect being an artist/teacher manifests itself as attentive collector of experience, continually examining thoughts, and ideas in playful acts of waiting for metaphorical spaces to develop and shifts in understanding to unfold.

Collier and Collier (1986) express that in order for ethnography to feel authentic there needs to be aspects of surprise and discovery involved in the process of analysis. “Deliberate combinations of open and structured procedures during analysis enable us to discover with our full capacities of perception while defining and checking those perceptions through careful reference to visual evidence” (1986, p. 172). I understand this open structure as a working stance

that requires the researcher to be prepared for and even desirous of, the unexpected, open to serendipitous moments which have the capacity to further inform and transform, what Coleman writes as the "... changing authorial self [who] may spend many years reworking the memory of an original, serendipitous moment of insight or experience" (2010, p. 217).

In my research I have been receptive to serendipitous moments as I worked with my images and various art materials, reading relevant literature and, living my day-to-day life. Being attentive, remaining open, acknowledging bodily and sensual responses to experience be it reading, listening, tasting, smelling or looking. These are essential ways of being that have enriched and elaborated my artwork, connecting subjective physical and intellectual experiences with a representation in words and images. It is through this heightened living that connections are made possible, understanding is unearthed and new directions are forged. Alexandra Cutcher (2008) writes of making "...space for serendipity and chance to play their part in the journey, and create mental spaces for the truths to bubble to the surface" (p. 30).

### **Part III**

#### **Dialogue: What it means to be an Artist/Teacher**

Carl Leggo (2008, p. 20) writes, "I regard all my autobiographical writing as a tantalizing search for wholeness by dwelling with the fragments. I write fragments of narrative out of the fragments of memory I cherish, and the fragments of stories, others, especially family, offer me, and the fragments represented in photographs." He adds that in examining our own stories we can connect to larger stories thus enriching and deepening our own lives as well as the lives of others. Our identities hinge on the fragments that we choose to share with an audience. Through conversation and dialogue our shared stories narrate the building of our identities.

I am reminded of the artwork of Barbara Kruger; in particular the black and white image that features a fractured mirror (which is missing numerous shards) declaring, *You are not Yourself*. This image visually and textually suggests that not only are our identities incomplete and fractured, but also that we are limited by a myriad of socio-cultural forces in knowing ourselves. In Kruger's work, identity is reflected back as broken, incomplete and in transition, as the remaining glass shards threaten to fall away, thus erasing this partially reflected identity. Spry comments that, "Autoethnographic texts reveal the fractures, sutures, and seams of self interacting with others in the context of researching lived experience. In interpreting the autoethnographic text, readers feel/sense the fractures in their own communicative lives..." (2001, p. 712). What we share and how we perform ourselves, impacts on how we are perceived and hence, how we perceive and come to know ourselves.

In this discussion I will explore the ways in which dialogue has impacted my art practice and allowed me to connect and rework fragmented memories and stories into a comprehensive body of artwork. This third and final part of my analysis falls into three conversations: the first one being a dialogue between my own lived experience and the reflective art-making that resulted. A second dialogue is found in between the parts and pieces of the artworks themselves, between the photographic images (both the stills and the video), the materials and the processes undertaken to reshape them into artwork; and finally, the third dialogue results in the sharing of work and ideas. It relates to Eisner and Barone's (2012) final phase of research, the dissemination where the work is given exposure to an audience, who through their own experience contributes to and extends meaning.



Image 50: *Shoveling*, 2014

### **Dialogue Number One: Lived Experience/Art-making**

“What keeps you from your work becomes your work.” (Kamanos Gamelin quoting Caroline Forché in Knowles, Promislov, & Cole, 2008, p.23).

This phrase has continued to resonate with me throughout my work on this thesis. What typically keeps me from my work are all the mundane, often dull, and occasionally pleasant tasks and chores I undertake. And so, what I do throughout the day, each and every day becomes the material I work with to create my art. I make art through reconfiguring or translating my experiences of my daily living as an artist/ teacher into various visual, aesthetic formats.

In regards to the artwork created for this thesis, I believe that as a large and diverse (in terms of media) body of work, it speaks to how daily activity and lived experience in fact become inspiration; there is a relationship as one activity feeds another. I understand my art and

art-making process as a way to restate, reexamine, recreate and respond to my fears, anxieties and joys in multimodal, visual ways. For me, art-making is a very personal expression that emerges from a place without words. Eventually, in a process of reflective dialogue, I can make sense of my process that can eventually be shared in words.

***Inner twin.*** In my research the initial dialogue began within myself, utilizing the private inner voice that Kamanos Gamelin (2008, p. 180) refers to as her *inner twin*. This interior voice becomes a constant narrator and friend, interpreting experiences as I reflected on the meaning and direction of my life in terms of the roles I fulfill. Kamanos Gamelin felt the need to silence or alter this inner voice when working on her thesis. She felt pressure to conform to established academic structures. Eventually she gained the confidence and courage to create and express her ideas in her own voice. “I soon learned that separating who I was from how and what I wrote was demeaning” (2008, p. 183). Kamanos Gamelin found the strength and courage she needed to express herself authentically by reading the words of Alice Walker, who uses the voice of her own inner twin as the source of her writing. I understand the importance of listening to this inner voice in creating my own artwork. Throughout this process I had to continually push myself, make myself vulnerable by being truthful to that inner voice.

In the research process, what begins in the head, in private conversations eventually requires sharing, feedback, be it through actual spoken conversation or reading. “The a/r/tographical process is one of intimacy and vulnerability; a living inquiry that breathes and moves through difficult spaces of un/knowning” (Springgay, Cosson, & Irwin, 2008, p. 336). These authors continue, noting that as a collaborative endeavor, A/r/tography seeks to piece together voice and experience in ways that create new openings and spaces for stories to collide and meanings to emerge. Through a process that vacillates between the reflective inner dialogue

and an external sharing, meaning is (re) considered as new perspectives are exposed and contemplated.

In order to facilitate the required intimacy to open these spaces of knowing, the sharing of ideas needs to be a reciprocal process; one that consists of reaching out and being met by another who is also searching for an image of self to be reflected back. At times these dialogues will challenge notions of self, while at other times the conversations will be reassuring and confirm what is already suspected or known through the determining of common ground.

Moving from this inner dialogue between oneself to an externalization of thoughts, feelings, and ideas can leave the researcher vulnerable, but also make available the possibilities of connections, which as Kamanos Gamelin determined, supported her intuition and influenced her writing. The dialogue in my research, as with everything I create, began in a conversation with my *inner twin* as I considered what I needed to communicate and how that would happen. This voice encourages and questions, critiques, and congratulates. More than that this internal creative friend, is my reassurance that *I am who I was* (Menasche, 2005).

## Dialogue Number Two: In/between images



Image 51: *Pixies*, 2013

***Censored voices.*** The second conversation is had within the images themselves. As a collection they speak to one another revealing ongoing stories that reside in personal experience. My connection or dialogue with these artworks is intensely personal. Each image or set of images is redolent with back-stories. For instance the set of photographs that feature my daughter playing in the lake with pixilated friends came into being through a number of occurrences. These images originated as holiday photos taken on a sultry summer evening at the beach. They capture a glimpse family life and likely are similar to photographs that many families have taken and yet because of the pixilation there is an added sense of tension and mystery. One asks who else is on the photograph? Why is part of the image pixilated? In applying to the ethics board for approval for this research I struggled to make a case to be allowed to create imagery that included identifiable images of my daughter. Working with a new editing program I found a

filter for pixilating. I originally thought I would make a video with these images as they were, but then decided that the pixilation effect that I may have been directed to use to disfigure all my imagery provided an intriguing perspective. We often see this effect used in the media when someone cannot be identified as they are being protected in some way. This eradication of character is two-fold; it may provide a veil of protection for the subject but it also takes away something. For me the imposition of this effect rendered me as an artist impotent and voiceless. I was greatly relieved when I was granted the permission to use identifiable imagery of my daughter.

Haywood Rollings (2010) comments that “Arts-based research methodologies are characteristically emergent, imagined, and derivative from an artist/researcher’s practice or arts praxis inquiry models; they are capable of yielding outcomes taking researchers in directions the sciences cannot go” (p. 110). The direction is undetermined but revealed in the working process. The destination then too is reconceived of as an ongoing journey, rather than a finishing point or arrival. The arts-based researcher is continually arriving. For me it has been imperative to leave all possibilities open as I worked towards creating my art for this study. In the event I had been restricted the work would have suffered, my authentic voice muffled.

Belluigi (2013) concurs with this need to allow for creative freedom. She outlines Freeman’s notion of *weak* and *strong* creativity where in order for a creative act to be strong the student/artist needs to go beyond the initial problem and further elaborate or problematize the initial impetus. More questions are raised than resolved. Often it remains, particularly in classrooms, that the final product, rather than process, bears the brunt of assessment, which has the potential to stifle creativity as the artist/student works towards fulfilling a curriculum’s pre-determined outcomes. It is imperative if the work is to be authentic, that the student/artist be able

to take risks and make the necessary and often times risky decisions of what to share. Engaging in non-directional creative play, experimentation and risk taking allows for ideas to percolate and for the artist to then set a course of direction. In working and playing with the images of my daughter, my ideas developed slowly and organically as one image or material or process came into contact with another. With each move or action taken, my work began to open up, and began to live inside of me and so as I went about my day, these thoughts and feelings were near the surface. This constant living with the art, made it possible to then make connections to the outer world in the form of serendipitous events, because my work is simmering, my awareness is heightened.

Following are a number of images that demonstrate the playing I engaged with in terms of developing my artwork for this study (refer to images 52-55). Over a period of time I used various media and a variety of effects. I often began with a digital image, applying a variety of effects to it, hands on interventions. There were a multitude of images to look at and from which to select. Again, I ended up choosing the images that I believed had potential to communicate something about the transition of self: of becoming. The first image of my daughter's hair (refer to image 52) was taken on her graduation day, a milestone in her childhood, thus expressing her transition from childhood into young adolescence. The following image of my daughter sporting a toy rifle (refer to image 53) is in juxtaposition with an artwork reflected in a store window in New York City. The illustrated women look both feminine and yet powerful, as they are larger than life and covered in rhinestone jewels. My daughter, a small girl, acquires power by proxy from the grasping and aiming of a rifle thus experimenting with what it feels like to hold this authority. Following this is an image created in PowerPoint that removes my daughter's identity (refer to image 54) by deleting her facial features and further disguises her image through the use

of repetition. When seen in a row like this, I am reminded of images of marching armies or factory workers, all wearing identical uniforms and performing tasks in unison. I made this image when there was a question of whether or not I would be able to use identifiable images of my daughter in my research. I wanted to see how I could approach my research question with the constraints of concealing identity. Looking at this image now I find it interesting that it is not unlike the black and white stills I did use in my research that incorporate repetition to such a degree as to allow for a shift in the viewer's focus. Within the pattern the repeated figure seems to evolve into something else that is yet to be understood and describable.



Image 52: *Graduation, 2011*



Image 53: *Get Away from the Door*, 2011

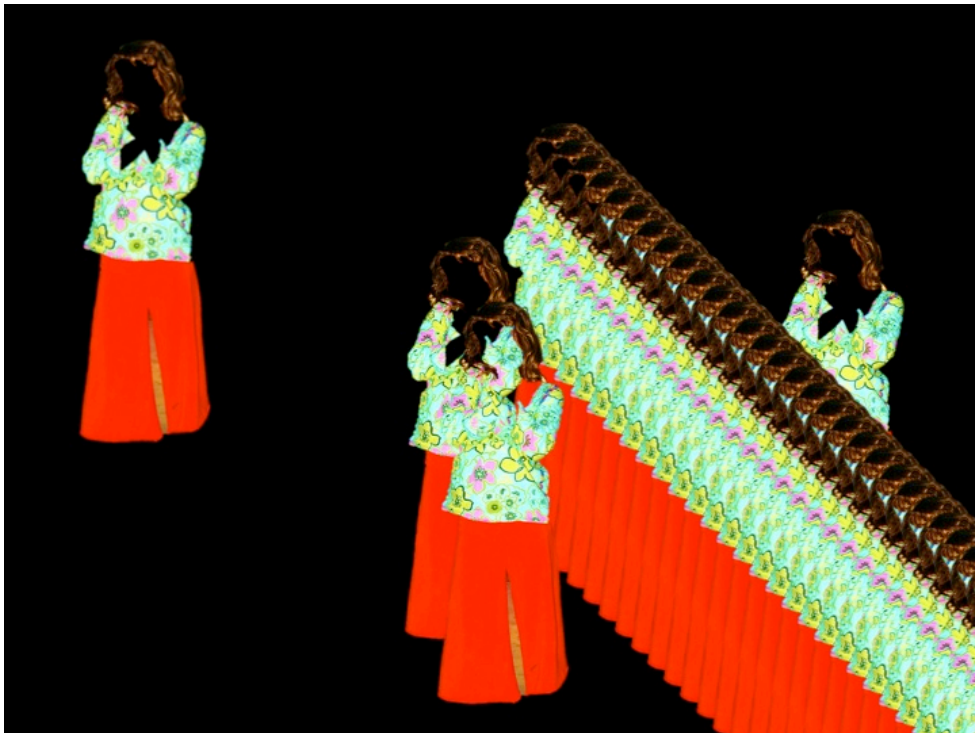


Image 54: *Army Girl*, 2013



Image 55: *Snow Run*, 2013

In the pixilated swim series, *Pixies*, I considered how the blurring of identity through pixilation reminded me of old video games; video games, the lifeblood of many of my students and my daughter. These images too are a continuum of the earlier experiments above. In creating the very short video using these images I incorporated layers of electronic video music as the soundtrack. Because the beats do not line up the effect is somewhat cacophonous, adding yet another layer to the imagery, perhaps echoing the already present sense of tension that the camouflaged figures evoke. Much of my work including this set of images and their video form reflects and refers to my own tension and anxiety as I have struggled to make this artwork, to conceive of myself as an artist and a teacher.

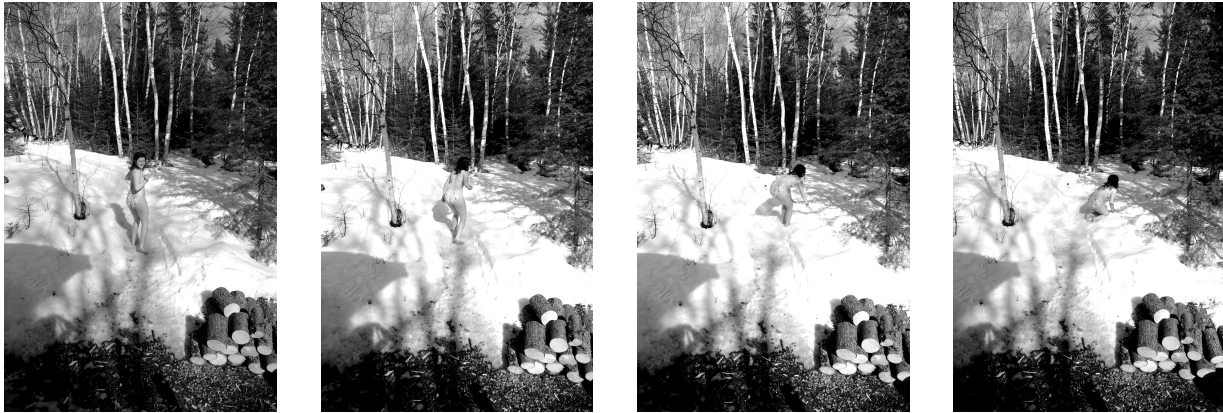


Image 56: *Snow Run*, 2013

**Rebirth.** The above four images represent four out of the sixteen originals from this series. This set of images is embedded into numerous artworks in the final exhibition for this thesis. In these images, we are on holiday and my daughter is running into the snow in a bikini. During this vacation we were able to use a wood-burning sauna in the woods and it was recommended that we run into the snow when the temperature became unbearable. Inspired by the photography of Eadweard Muybridge, I animated these pictures in a video program. I changed the images from colour to black and white to elicit a sense of nostalgia. I further incorporated a mirror effect (refer to image 55) and then played it in a loop with piano music and layers of my own running excursions moving underneath. The images pulsed with piano music taken from a selection of show tune accompaniments purchased when my daughter was taking singing lessons. All of these pieces working together in a kind of progressive, but repetitive loop refer to an ongoing process of reflecting and cleansing and of doing and beginning afresh. Using the mirror effect allows the images to meet in the center forming additional patterns. Symmetry results and because of this the central shapes often take on qualities of a human or animal form.

In this in/between space we can imagine and see strange creatures and new possibilities. Setting these images side by side as if they have been sliced down the middle and opened up can also mimic what happens when we look in a mirror and see our negative backwards selves reflected in our examinations. This research began with images taken into mirrors and this theme continues to thread through my work as I have attempted to analyze what it means to shift my self-understanding and capture moments of transition.

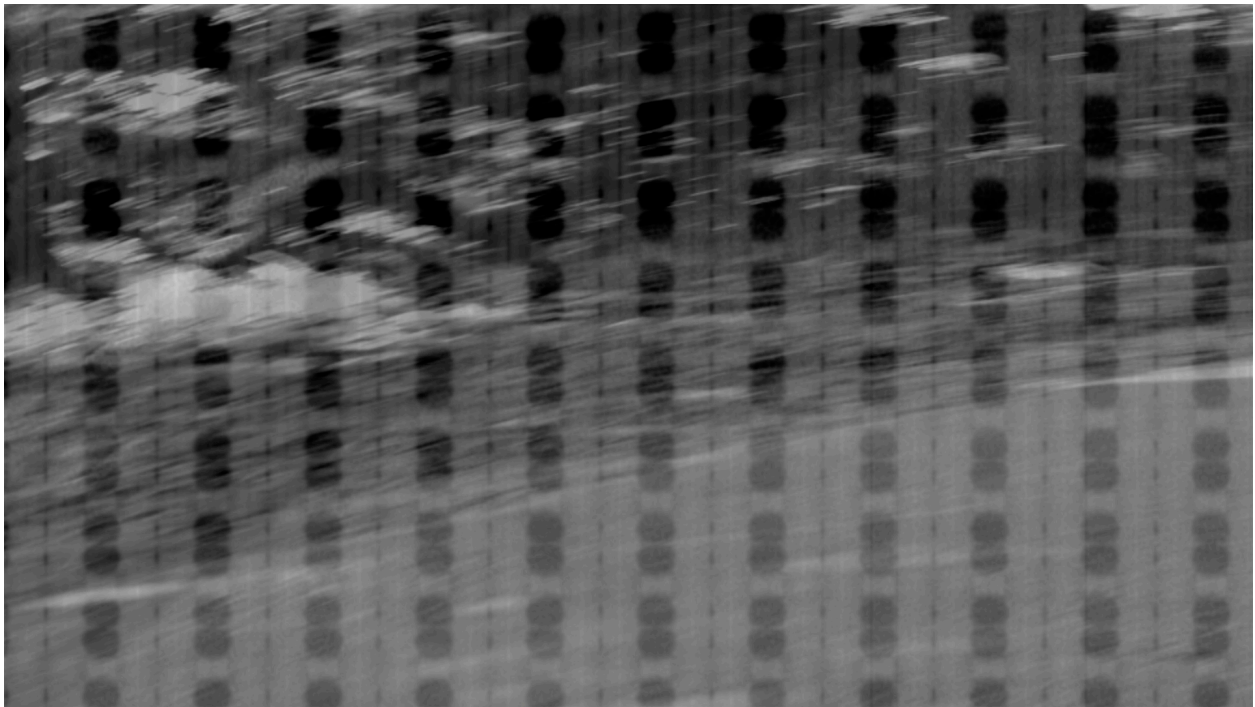


Image 57: Still from *Running, Pulling, Lifting*, 2013

As the aforementioned video proceeds, my daughter's images give way to the visual patterns of my gym workouts, which are transformed through the same mirror effect discussed in the previous section of this paper. As I perform the same tasks over and over again they become transformed through a variety of editing interventions so that each segment appears as something different, different but the same. Some of the segments in this video are so abstracted (refer to image 57) that they appear as moving patterns with all traces of my identity having been

eliminated, not unlike the pixilation effect in the *Pixies* series. Looking at the same action repeated in a different context allows for new spaces to open up and new ways to see and know. At times my image becomes lost, disappears into the patterns and then, through reflective and creative imaginings I emerge again, reconfigured. The snow run image echoes this repetition as it is seen repeated in various art media and runs in a loop in the video *Running, Pulling, and Lifting*. My artwork illustrates *becoming* as a cyclical and ongoing process that requires a returning, a revolution, a revisiting, and a reconsidering of action. In trying to consolidate identities and establish a sense of wholeness, it is imperative to look back, make connections and seek out and identify patterns of doing, making, and thinking.

***Reverberation, reciprocity.*** Every artwork I created for this exhibition similarly holds stories that existed before their creation, inspired their creation and developed alongside their creation. Each of the artworks created for this exhibition captured a tension and a mystery in that they have been manipulated beyond the recognizable. In bringing these images, videos and sounds together I am creating a place of reverberation where the visual and audio can come together and rebound off one another thus complicating my stories. With the addition of an audience, the work is again allowed to consume and reflect additional meaning through the engagement and interpretation of others as they bring their own lived experience to the gallery. I expect that in sharing this art and having exposed my work to an audience that they too will have been able to connect to and understand events in their own lives that may have been or continue to be obscured.

In their book on arts based research, Eisner and Barone (2012, p. 162) discuss the importance of building *structural corroboration* when compiling evidence. Well considered data unite to create a compelling whole, a credible story that goes beyond the personal and enters into

the generalizable; "...the study persuades because of its validity" (p. 163). In this study I have created artwork that I believe, resonates beyond my own experience; that speaks to others and provokes a dialogue that extends and elaborates what I have come to know.

I have not set out to create a specific image that instructs the viewer directly as to what it is like to be an artist and a teacher. The meaning in my work is indirect and fluid, and can therefore be interpreted in multiple ways. In her book *Empathic Vision*, Jill Bennett (2005) writes about an exhibition of trauma-related art that she is curating,

This led us to finally frame the exhibition in a way that reflected process - a coming into language - rather than the subject matter of trauma discourse. In doing so, we hoped to move away from evaluating art in terms of its capacity to reflect predefined conditions and symptomologies, and to open up the question of what art itself might tell us about the lived experience (p. 2).

This is how I hoped for an audience to engage with my work, not through expecting specific answers but by asking about the process, about what the art is telling them about lived experience, both mine and by extension their own. I hope those who saw the exhibition of my work were able to experience it in consideration of their own lived experiences and memories. The written artist statement, available to read at the exhibit, directs the viewer to more specific considerations. In relation to experiencing the work visually the written statement can help the viewer to connect and make meaning, but it can also narrow interpretation. Sameshima comments on the problems and the benefits of presenting text to an audience when presenting visual artwork, "Unfortunately, the text can "trap" the reader in seeing the work in a particular way... On the other hand the words provide another perspective, a window into tracking the unfolding lived experience of the creator" (2007, p. 286). In writing this thesis I have similar

thoughts and concerns, that although I am attempting to describe clearly and in words how I have traversed the creative challenges of using art-making as a format to research my identity, I wonder how it will be received and understood by an audience. Will it be too specific possibly narrowing the interpretation of my artwork or will it add richness to the meaning, drawing the reader in and encouraging them to ponder about their own understanding of identity.

In considering process, the ways in which my visual work formed through interactions with reading, thinking, making, writing, looking, and waiting, I have come to understand my identity similarly. It is dependent upon reverberations and reciprocity. Ghecevici (2010) explores ways in which artist teachers negotiate their identities. “For me, artist-as-teacher became artist/teacher during this living inquiry, with an emphasis on the space in-between, where adjacent and simultaneous acts and methods un/fold” (p. 113). The reciprocity between one thing and another creates a space of wholeness. I too found that there is a relationship between acts of doing or the way in which I approach making and teaching. For me art-making becomes a collaging process, a bringing together of diverse materials from an array of sources in order to present the viewer with a comprehensive set of ideas that they can then take and make their own. As a teacher I do the same, I become a facilitator. I find and offer students a variety of materials and processes that they can then use to communicate their own lived experiences.

Through working on this thesis and having the opportunity to examine my artistic process I have come to notice that as a teacher I try to guide my students to engage with their work in ways that are comparable to my own processes. Ghecevici (2010) finds that artists recreate their own experiences for their students. To recreate these ways of working and generate meaningful subject matter, I encourage my students to consider personal stories, rely on their own experiences for art-making ideas, make visual collections, talk with one another, look at other

artwork, look at each other's artwork, and use materials as places to begin exploring ideas. I also like to make the artwork that my students make either along with them or just in advance and record what I am thinking, listening to my inner voice, so I will be able to understand what barriers they might encounter along the way and then be able to guide them through. This is how I approach teaching, through the sharing of my own understandings, I teach who I am. The artist and teacher self are inextricably tied together in a reciprocal relationship, artist/teacher.

**Dialogue Number Three: In Conversation with Others.** The inner twin acts as narrator to the lives we live. By exposing this private voice to a public forum in dialogue, we are called upon to make ourselves both vulnerable and humble in relation to others. It is this candid surrendering of the intimate that allows and even provokes a mutual sharing of stories. Tami Spry says "Autoethnography is a felt-text that does not occur without rhetorical and literary discipline, as well as the courage needed to be vulnerable in rendering scholarship . . . to step out from behind the curtain and reveal the individual at the controls of academic-Oz" (2001, p. 714).

Springgay and Irwin write, "Research becomes a process of exchange that is not separated from the body but emerges through an intertwining of the mind and body, self and other, and through our interactions with the world" (2008, p. xxii). In the same text, Graham Sullivan concludes that the purpose of this book of research stories, entitled, *Being With A/r/tography*, "... is to open up conversations and relationships through research [providing] opportunity to creatively and critically explore new possibilities..." (p. 242). The title of this book assumes the importance of relationships in research that utilize art and text as ways to explore and communicate lived experience. This conversation in between self and other opens the door to vulnerability.

**Vulnerability.** Vulnerability "... is not weakness but risk and surrender to scrutinizing acts" (Ghecevici, 2010, p. 116). Ghecevici adds *vulnerability* and *repetition* to the proposed set of a/r/tographical renderings she engaged with to help to constitute her research. Vulnerability requires connecting to others, of being open, it is a place where "...knowing and unknowing collide" (p. 116). For her it was a tool in her research process. This was also true for me. I found myself becoming vulnerable through exposing deeply personal thoughts about and through my art. I have come to understand that authentic art practices require a risk of losing face, inviting embarrassment and submitting oneself to possible ridicule. As a teacher I live this everyday in the classroom when I am sharing my always-personal understanding and passion about art. It is more than sharing something that I know, but rather sharing who I am that makes it feel so risky.

Karen Schaller (2008) writes about her own panic related to becoming exposed and vulnerable in the sharing of work that is intensely personal. As with many arts-based practitioners, including myself, she is fearful of failure and of not being able to defend her work. Despite her panic and despair, Schaller is driven to make something that is personally meaningful. Throughout the process of making my artwork for this research, I struggled with what I felt comfortable sharing and what I needed to hide, disguise or make palatable. In a recent conversation with a colleague about my artwork she made the observation that something was being covered up, concealed from the spectator. I concurred with her observation but later questioned whether my layered, juxtapositions, and digitally altered images are employed to elaborate or obfuscate meaning. This quandary came up over the course of my research as I pondered the relationship between vulnerability and truthfulness. Have I been courageous enough to create and exhibit work that is credible?

In the past I have found it challenging to exhibit my artwork in relation to feeling vulnerable. Sharing artwork is risky in that it is personal, connected to the artist and thus an assessment of the artwork can be perceived of as an assessment of the self. Much of my video work roused my anxieties and heightened my vulnerability. Although I approached the making of the videos in the same way I create other artwork, I felt uncomfortable with showing it more so than with the photographic still images or multi-media collages. Partially this was because I had not ever shown video work in an exhibition. My hesitancy may have had more to do with the fact that my image and my voice were featured in a number of the pieces. For instance the video *Mopping* included both my identifiable image, filmed in a particularly unflattering way, and my voice reading a poem. Because of the inclusion of this representational self, the exposure and feelings of vulnerability are tenfold in comparison to what I have shared artistically in the past. As with other images and video created for this study, I have used effects such as mirroring, layering and changing the speed on the video. As well I have made some adjustments to the colour saturation. In the voice recording I have used an echo effect to my poem that resulted in the words taking on the structure of a kind of round where each line is repeated three times and becomes entwined with the lines ahead and behind. These effects blur my identity somewhat and cover over certain words and actions, while other parts are accentuated. Images of cleaning, water, and running move together on the same screen implicating meaning between these elements and actions. The completed video begins with a set of three still images of my daughter jumping off a pier and splashing into the lake. (Curiously I recall that when I begin a project that I am unfamiliar with, I envision myself jumping off a pier, letting go.) From there I begin to mop the floor, my bare legs are seen from the knee down over a hardwood floor that is mirrored and comes together to form a *V*-shape thus creating new images or possibilities where the mirrored

images meet. A small mirrored insert of me running appears ovetop of the mopping. It is rendered in black and white. As the video progresses and the words of my poem fill the air, the running image increases in size and correspondingly in importance. As I mop I keep running or moving or making. For me cleaning is a preparatory activity that opens up spaces of creative possibilities. The poem (refer to page 107) that I am reading in this video describes the seasonal changes and the requirements that accompany the end of summer. It is a transition that moves from the slower days of the warm summer, back to the fast paced demands of the school year. I imagine this video artwork as metaphor for the process of *becoming* which requires a jumping off of piers, preparing space, concentrated action, all in relation to a willingness to concede to vulnerability.



Image 58: Still from *Mopping*, 2013

Carabine (2013) writes about her anxiety around creative work, “This is the anxiety of nothingness, failure, fear, self-doubt and self-loathing. It is also the anxiety of uncertainty and of not-knowing” (p. 34). I have felt all this too, but for myself, it is the sharing of inner fears that is the most challenging, thus they are hidden, covered and layered over with leaves and shadows, wax and pixels.

Carabine writes, “ I began to realize I was returning, not only to work that was known to me, but to work, and ways of working, that felt ‘safe’; where I knew I could be successful...I was potentially avoiding something more significant about me and the art I wanted to make” (2013, p. 39). I too had moments where I returned to safety during the process of working on my thesis. I eventually came to understand that this retreat was part of an overall process. Not all work is destined to be successful, meaningful, or even research. However it needs to be made in order to break down and transgress boundaries, clarify thoughts and build new understandings. Haywood Rollings writes, “...much of the art that arts-based practitioners generate is just plain old trial and error...” (2010, p. 108).

Sameshima understands that living in a state of wholeness requires, “...living a subversive esthetic, moving with conviction, away from the safety of conformity and standardization, and the fear that holds us there, to the unknown, to the new, and to the open connective spaces where the impossible becomes possible” (2007, p. 33). And so I keep trying, making mistakes, facing the fear of exposure with the conviction that I am attempting to address the specter that haunts me and in doing so will transform myself.

***Transforming through performing.*** Recently a girl in one of my art classes put on a paint-covered apron and exclaimed that she was now an artist. Similarly one of my male students put his canvas on an easel and commented that this was the *real* way to paint. It seems that

cultural props allow for an authentic experience to present itself. We can become someone else, performing our preconceived notions of what it means to be an artist or a teacher through the use of what we believe to be authentic materials. Artists use easels and wear painty aprons for instance. When students are allowed the opportunity and space to behave in ways that they understand to be *real* then they can imagine and transform themselves into artists. It is a kind of rehearsal, a trying on of identities. I heard a sports mascot on the radio discussing how people who become a mascot are able to experiment with their behavior from behind their costume. With their identity masked and audience expectations in place the actor is free to try out all sorts of actions that might otherwise prove embarrassing. They can behave as they think the character would. He also noted that with considerable practice the actor grows in courage and self-confidence and can take more risks outside of the costume. This notion of providing *disguises* has potential in terms of providing authentic and meaningful experiences to students in ways that reduce vulnerability and risk.

I myself have a favorite leather jacket that I wore as a scenic artist, which is encrusted with layers of paint. When donning this jacket I too feel like what I think an artist is supposed to be and I remember how I felt in terms of who I was many years ago.

Although these props can set the stage for transformation, I have discovered through working on this thesis, that this is not enough. It is equally important to question how we have come to determine and understand the expectations and descriptions of the roles we fulfill.

Alexandra Ghecevici (2010) writes,

The juxtaposition of identities we all embrace is, to a certain degree contingent on socially and individually co-constructed images and expectations of being an artist and being a teacher. This is not a static state-of-the-matter though, for practices are

continuously re-negotiated, leading to a perpetual prelude of unsettled identities and inconsistency in thought and values, which make a vital component in reaching some understandings within the vehiculated meanings around us (p. 113).

Without social interaction and dialogue, it is impossible to either come to an understanding of or renegotiate one's identity. We need others in order to see ourselves. Shreeve (2009) writes that work in a school can be isolating. Many artist/teachers are employed part time, working in multiple locations, which, because of an unstable place of community, hinders identity construction. Further to this, the teacher and the artist are often autonomous in their work (Gray & MacGregor, 1991). These aspects of isolation render identity construction a difficult and complex undertaking.

When I began this research I was new to the teaching profession and new to the city I live in. My teaching work remains unstable to this day and thus I have continued to experience periods of isolation in terms of identifying with a consistent set of co-workers and/or student population. However, over the last few years I have been able to make many new friends and acquaintances in both the art and teaching professions. These often-collaborative relationships have contributed to a shift in my understanding of what it means to be an artist and a teacher. Previously I held a more static or even stereotypical idea of how an artist should be. In my deepest heart of hearts I felt as though I would never be a successful artist, even though I made art all the time and exhibited fairly regularly. I believed that I needed to be able to make a living from my art career and dedicate my entire life to my art if I were to truly believe I was an artist. One of my students asked me why I did not decide to become an artist. I told her I was an artist as well as an art teacher. Many of my students have been surprised that I can draw and paint and that I show my work. Like myself they hold their own notions of what it means to be a teacher

and an artist and for many of them, these two identities are not compatible. As a teacher, I feel I need to expand upon and break apart these stereotypical beliefs that narrow the possibilities of who one is and can become. My intent is to allow for both my students and myself to conceive an ever-expanding repertoire of possibilities for us that challenges and redefines pre-existing beliefs.

In her thesis, Springgay (2001) discusses the photographic artwork of Cindy Sherman. She writes that although often considered as self-portraits, what Sherman is actually communicating is how women put on cultural costumes, masquerading or “performing as the subject of another’s gaze” (p. 107). Further she writes that we need to see ourselves as “other” in order to transform ourselves. At first I didn’t quite know how to go about this. However, I now understand that it is through connections with others that a more direct self-critique can be had. It has been largely through my work with the artist group at MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women’s Art), and my connections to the many artist/teachers I have come to know that I have been able to form new and more fluid understandings of the possibilities of being and becoming an artist/teacher myself.

In communities of practice I can see myself in others. To quote the Beatles; “I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together” (Lennon & McCartney, 1967). There is a sense of belonging and of mutual understanding in sharing and working together that reduces our vulnerability and supports the risk taking that is both required by and inherent to our artwork.

## **Conclusion**

Relevant dialogues are had in relationships between the private, individual experience of the photograph and the public sharing of that image or collection of images. Martha Langford says, “The showing and telling of an album is a performance” (2001, p. 5). What essentially

begins as a collection of images that relate to personal experience within a select group, such as a family or classroom of children, moves from a personal world to a public forum in the telling or performing of the stories remembered in the pictures. In this communication between the performer and audience, our identities are revealed to one another and reflected back to us. Carl Leggo quotes Susan Griffin saying, "One does not know oneself except by being mirrored." He further comments that this is a very powerful notion for understanding issues of self identity, especially ... the ways that we are often mirrored and represented, and hence shaped, in the discursive practices of the dominant culture" (2008, p. 16).

## Chapter VI: An Assessment of Transformation

This thesis was motivated by my own personal struggle to *take flight*, as Pinar encourages (Pinar, 2003), and inquire into how the roles I fulfill have sculpted and defined me. In this research I have come to understand that being an artist has been and continues to be the central identity for me. Becoming a teacher instigated self-doubt as I questioned how I could continue to conceive of myself as an artist while practicing as a teacher. Like many other artist/teachers, art-making has been a life long pursuit and the way in which I address and resolve personal conflict, and explore my lived experiences. Richard Hickman writes, “art is not only a way of knowing, but also a way of being” (Hickman, 2010, p. 10).

Arts-based research seeks to generate new forms of knowledge through theorizing of art-making. (Barone & Eisner, 2012). In this final chapter I will discuss the findings of this arts based autoethnographic inquiry in terms of what have I learned about the ways in which identities shift and transform, in particular my identity as an artist and a teacher. I will then continue to remark on some of the more pertinent implications. I will conclude with a selection of questions that arose during this research which may prove to be provoking research topics in future inquiry.

### Findings

In working on this arts based thesis, it has been important for me to acknowledge the connection between *knowing* (theoria), *doing* (praxis), and *making* (poesis) as ways of engaging with my research question (Springgay et al, 2008). This three-prong *formula* allows for different ways of thinking to develop in action, whilst engaging with theoretical ideas, teaching and art-making. In my research I also considered how *memory*, *serendipity* and *dialogue* have framed my art-making process. Within this structure, acts of *knowing*, *doing*, and *making* in conjunction with

*memory, serendipity* and *dialogue* became epistemological tools or provocative actions with which I was able to make connections between my dual practices both as artist and teacher. I will use the three concepts here to summarize my findings.

**Memory.** Jill Bennett (2005) quotes Swiss psychologist Édouard Claparède, “For Claparède, to represent oneself in memory was to see oneself *from the outside* as one might see another. “My past self...” he wrote, “...is thus psychologically distinct from my present self, but it is...an empty and objectified self, which I continue to feel at a distance from my true self which lives in the present” (p. 22). Bennett proceeds to write that memory comes into being when experience transforms itself into a representational form. In regarding this form we are offered the possibility of considering our past selves from a more objectifiable position. In this engagement our personal memory becomes associated with a generalized cultural memory, where one’s past experience takes on aspects of relatable social norms and conventions. For instance, I see evidence of having identified as an artist in my photography collection in images that position me in front of my artwork (refer to image 22). I recall intentionally setting up these images to mimic portraits I had seen previously that depicted *the artist at work in their studio*. In particular are the iconic (and often black and white) images of male American Abstract Expressionist and Pop artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein. Another set of imagery portrays me in the position of teacher/camp councilor. In these images I am working with children at summer camp. Although much more casual and taken in the outdoors, they are reminiscent of yearly classroom photographs (refer to image 32) with the *teachers* on either side of the class. I did not consider myself a teacher at this point in time, but it is relevant to recall my long time association with children in relation to what it means to me to practice as a teacher.

In this research the examination of my photograph collection acted as a trigger reminding me of what had been forgotten. The images allowed me to interpret and witness persistent patterns both in my visual interests and my self-portrayals. I was thus able to come to an understanding of how the past can impact the present as I used these categories as a starting point in my art-making.

In selecting the photographic imagery I was to work with in this inquiry it was most important for me to select work that engendered an emotional or embodied response. As it happened the images that held the greatest degree of *punctum* (Barthes, 1980) for me were those of my daughter. I found that these images were rich in possibility in this exploration of identity transformation. Not only do these images invoke affect, but they can also be interpreted in a more generalizable and metaphorical way. My daughter's image has the capacity to represent childhood in all its aspects, growing, learning, experiencing, and experimenting in the transformative cycle maturation. The image of *child* is central to issues of pedagogy, caring, and nurturing. Therefore this body of work, which is personally meaningful to me and connects directly to my own experience, can be generalized beyond the personal. An audience can come to the work with their own experiences of being children, parents, teachers and/or artists and bring their own memories into the work thus creating a personal connection.

The images I chose to exhibit of myself were not from the archives of my photograph collection. Instead I chose to depict myself in the present, in action, running and exercising in the gym. These images explore lived, embodied experience that through repetition, become patterned and increasingly complex. Embodied memories have been critical to this research in terms of answering what it feels like to be an artist and a teacher. In these images I am neither teacher nor artist. Instead they speak to transformation, to the tentative moments of *becoming* as one image

becomes increasingly complex through the addition of layers and mirroring. I understand this as a parallel or metaphoric representation of self in action, of *becoming* as images of self become increasingly complex. By working with metaphors I was able to expand possibilities of connections and explore ephemeral states of transformation. This way of working allowed for me to investigate my research question inductively, thus I did not enter the research with predetermined ideas about what I would make and what it would mean. Instead I spent considerable time *playing* with ideas and materials waiting for moments of clarity. Rotas and Springgay quote Manning and Massumi writing that "...positing the conditions and terms of the research *before* the exploration or experimentation, results in stultifying its potential and relegating it to that which already fits in with pre-existing schemata of knowledge" (2014, p. 2). I used memory engagements to ignite my experimentation and then let my intuition guide my work in order to produce previously unknown understanding.

In this research I have found that transformation requires action and waiting. Using old photographs to instigate memory has provided fodder for continued art-making as I consider how my past and present selves are connected. I continue to feel like an artist yet with each new encounter I am transformed. My identity is dependent upon and reflective of context, where I am, what I am doing and with whom. When I am situated in a space, working with students on art projects, I come to feel like an artist/teacher.

**Serendipity.** Sameshima (2007) concludes, "I suggest that transformation is more "abundant" when receptivity is attentively engaged *before* the new experience or disorienting dilemma occurs" (p. 311). This statement reminds me of yoga practice in that you are asked to set an *intention* at the beginning of your work. My *intention* in this inquiry has been my research question; what does it mean to practice as an artist and teacher simultaneously? I have kept this

intention/question at the forefront of my mind in advance of and during my work on this thesis. In a continued open and prepared state I have collected and made sense of lived experiences required to create a body of artwork that speaks to identity in terms of transformation; fragments coming together to create moments of wholeness.

It has been the serendipitous occurrences that have shaped my developing artwork and the resulting understandings. Tamara Kohn writes, “Serendipity is the interactive outcome of unique and contingent mixes of insight coupled with chance” (2010, p. 193). Chance encounters, when ruminated on, allow for new perspectives to emerge. In the case of my research it has been through a series of happenstances that I came to explore and understand the impact that daily routine has on who we are and who we think we are. I kept coming back to the phrase, *what keeps you from your work becomes your work*. This became a kind of mantra for me as I developed my artwork using the personal imagery of everyday life. Through additional readings I developed a greater awareness of the ways in which my various daily *performances* concur with the discourse for women in Western society. My life and the representations of my life included acts of shopping, working, and exercising. This led me to further consider the notion of performance in terms of identity and the scripts we follow to interact with one another, performing our daily roles. As a teacher and an artist there are various expectations of behavior. Stereotypes exist that assume, “...a real artist would not teach (Graham & Zwirn, 2010, p. 219). In my classes I have confronted this stereotype continually. Robinson-Cseke (2007) writes, “The symbolic ideas of the artist (creativity and independence) often conflict with the symbolic ideas of the teacher (neutral and conformist)” (p. 103). The performance that is expected is that the artist acts unencumbered by rules whereas the teacher is submerged in regulations and regimes. In this research I have confronted these stereotypes working towards conceiving a new definition

of artist/teacher. It is important to consider, comprehend, and critique the significance of the roles we choose for ourselves. Jill Bennett (2005) quotes Nietzsche,

[People] confound themselves with their role; they become victims of their own good 'performance'; they themselves have forgotten how much accidents, moods, and caprice disposed of them when the question of their 'vocation' was decided- and how many other roles they might have been able to play: for now it is too late...the role has actually become character; and art, nature (p. 17).

In playing a role, the self-risks becoming static. The role is no longer a representation, but an inherent and unquestionable, impenetrable self. Working on this thesis, has allowed me to reflect on the roles I have chosen of artist/teacher, in advance of any petrification and thus in serendipitous ways I have been transformed. I have renegotiated previously held conceptions of my artist/teacher roles, discovering that various interactions of the everyday serve to propel forth new configurations of self in ongoing cycles. I concur with the findings of Alan Thornton (2005) who lists multiple dispositions of artist/teachers, who find that they "...see their practice as artists as an important aspect of their teaching. Some may also see their teaching as an important aspect of their art practice" (p. 169). With a newfound knowledge of the reciprocal relationship in between art-making and teaching I can fight against stereotypes, creating new spaces for myself and my students to inhabit.

**Dialogue.** Carl Leggo comments that "...autobiographical writing is always both personal and public, and that we need to write autobiographically in order to connect with others" (2008, p. 4). I understand dialogue to be any relational connection that occurs between myself, the artist/teacher and researcher and my lived experience, artwork, and an audience. Dialogue in this research is conceived of as three-part; the first conversation is had between my own lived

experience and my art-making; the second is found in between the various imagery and materials of the artwork themselves, and finally, the third dialogue relates to sharing of this body of artwork with an audience.

In terms of a dialogue between my lived experience and my artwork, this research has allowed me to understand that my identity is relational, collaged, dependent upon encounters and shaped by artistic interpretation, art-making. Sameshima, (2007) encourages the fostering of relationality stating, “The transformative process is further enhanced if the learner is able to make connections relationally (p. 311). Once I began to make connections between my own remembered and present life through a persistence of imagery that dated back to childhood I began to see a kind of visual language unfold that is unique to me but at times also reflects others like myself who are compelled to engage in art-making as a way to understand the self. Ghecevici (2010) writes, “...artists are compelled to satisfy a need to explore who they are” (p. 113). In my exploration of self as artist/teacher I found that my daily life envelops me. What I do becomes entangled with who I am and how I approach and connect with the world.

This complex set of interrelationships between doing and being is symbolically demonstrated in dialogues had in between the various artworks created for this thesis. There is both a consistency of imagery but also a chaotic clash in terms of the variety of materials and processes I have used.

Artist Allyson Mitchell presented her artwork at an artist talk at Plug in Gallery on July 17, 2014. She commented that by using forlorn and forgotten recycled craft materials in her art, she imagines that she is “...communicating with the dead...” Although I have never phrased it this way, I too have considered this relationship or dialogue I have with the recycled materials I use in my artwork. In the case of the artwork created for this thesis most of the fabric pieces are

the remnants of the woman discussed earlier in this paper (refer to image 6). As well her image appears, in a digitally altered form, at the beginning of the video, *Still Moving, Farewell*. I think that this connection to the past is compelling. To implicate oneself with another's past can be felt powerfully as noted earlier in this paper using the examples of Roland Barthes' (1980) experience of looking into the eyes of Napoleon's brother in a photograph and of my own extraordinary experience with Giuseppe Panone's work which revealed the heartwood of the trees from Versailles. I now recall that this negotiation with the dead has been a life long consideration. As a child I recall playing piano and imaging that Bach and Mozart would speak through my fingers and guide my playing.

In choosing the materials and the processes that collide in this body of work, I hoped that they would speak on their own, outside of my manipulations. In using my life long collection of photography, old film and video clips, linen, and bits of fringe I hoped to expand the possibilities of interpretation by letting the various media speak to one another thus creating new meaning out of unexpected relationships. I am a collagist in disposition, in art-making, in teaching, and in my day-to-day living. Through considering the multiple meanings that are possible in the juxtaposing of various materials from present day digital imagery to forgotten linens, I have considered that my identity likewise is dependent upon juxtaposition. In each new context I renegotiate meaning and transform.

The final dialogue is had between art and audience. These interpretations are purposefully outside of my control yet through communication may offer me additional understanding of self as the audience views and interprets the work in the context of their own lived experience. The work does not dictate a single or correct interpretation. Rather I understand my art as an invitation, which asks the viewer to encounter and experience the images, sounds, and text from

a unique and personal perspective. This way of viewing artwork is active and participatory; it requires the audience to engage in reflexive thought, a conversation with self and other. They are offered transformation through participation.

### **Implications**

Carl Leggo writes, “Essentially pedagogy is all about transformation” (2008, p. 9). In my role as teacher, I will use what I have learned in regards to my own transformation to assist my students in their own personal explorations of self through various attentive acts and opportunities. The following outlines the two essential implications of my research, in which I find that both students and artist/teachers need to engage in authentic exploration of self through their art-making. Graham and Rees (2014) write, “the construction of identity is an important concern among adolescent children as well as in the work of many artists” (p. 22).

**Students need to engage in authentic art-making processes.** Suominen Guyas (2008) writes, “...I consider it my responsibility to first study myself and expose my contextual understanding of my identity to critical inquiry” (p. 25). After reviewing the results of numerous studies, Carter and Irwin (2014) concur, noting that is only after teachers “look at their experiences and subjectivities... [that they can] exercise agency in their teaching and lives” (p. 5) subsequently providing opportunity for their students to do the same. Through the process of creating art for this thesis I have come to understand the relationality between my identities, how the artist self informs the teacher self and the teacher self the artist self. My ways of being and doing and performing take from one another. Throughout this thesis I have come to understand that the ways in which I interpret the complexities of my identity are reflected in the ongoing cyclical processes of making art. Through a continued attentiveness to various moments of remembering, serendipitous occurrences and the many dialogues or relationships had in between

art and life, I have been able to trace out an avenue for a (re) conceiving of self, which is ongoing.

Graham and Rees (2013) question, “How do we teach students to value or notice their own experiences as a legitimate field for art-making? Instead of mimicking traditional practices, a better goal might be to have students experience the actual methodologies employed by artists” (p. 19). Student art-making needs to achieve meaning in process by connecting-which many art teachers who understand artistic process do already-to ideas, personal experiences and concepts, going beyond an exploration of a medium. In order to think like artists and therefore engage in an authentic practice, it is suggested that students need to be able to play with and develop metaphors that help to elaborate and bring new understandings to their own lived experiences. As well it is suggested that educators develop students’ capacities of attentiveness to affect and opportunities to become aware of and build embodied knowledge. Sameshima (2008) remarks, “Through emotion, the body is evoked and deep learning and synergistic possibilities arise” (p. 49).

As I have come to understand, it is in the process, the looking and the thinking and the waiting, that meaning and understanding surface. In the classroom a knowledge of the thinking process of the artist and an understanding of *becoming* can be used to allow students authentic ways in which to engage in and direct their own sense of identity, exploring who they are and who they want to continue to become in the future. Understanding that identity is a fluid and ongoing process is empowering. This perspective allows both for choices and mistakes to be made as one experiments with the thoughts, ideas, and processes involved in forming identity. In this process risk of failure is reconceived of an essential part of one’s personal journey.

Also intricate to authentic experiences in terms of art-making and identity development are dispositions related to *waiting* and *not-knowing*. In creative practices it is suggested that students be given the time and space to develop the ability to tolerate the anxiety of not-knowing specific outcomes, developing the patience to wait, and trusting that the mists will clear to reveal stunning moments of lucidity. These *ah ha* (Barone & Eisner, 2012) moments, if waited for, repeat again and again as our experiences and encounters come to shape understandings of self. Knowing this makes the waiting not only easier but perhaps even positively anticipated and thus through repetition not-knowing becomes closer to desirable. Carabine writes, “To learn from experience it is necessary to be able to wait for meaning to emerge and then to be able to think about the experience” (2013, p. 38). In public schools time is a valuable commodity. Teachers are accountable for covering vast curriculum, marking and assessing class work, and serving on various committees and fulfilling extra-curricular responsibilities. Despite this highly structured environment, if art classes are to offer students transformative experiences, time and space needs to be allocated for ideas to develop and subsequent reflective opportunities need to be incorporated in order for the students to make connections with their work, their experiences and their cohorts.

**Teachers need to find communities of practice.** A second implication surfaced by this research encourages artist/teachers to find communities of practice in which to reflect on and negotiate their identities through art-making. Alison Shreeve (2009) reminds us, “Identity is a complex issue of structuring and restructuring a sense of self in response to the world around us” (p. 152). Further, “Constructing an identity of participation in a community of practice needs opportunities for imagination...having images of ourselves in this world, with pasts and futures

and possibilities envisaged within the community of practice” (p. 157). Until we see ourselves reflected by others we cannot fully know the possibilities available to us.

Throughout this research I have worked towards redefining the role of artist and teacher for myself, in the attempts to understand the relationship in between the two practices. This (re) conception occurred for me over a period of time through *knowing* (theoria), *doing* (praxis), and *making* (poesis) as I worked on this thesis. I recognized one of the barriers to my (re) conception was isolation. When working in a school it can be impossible to find a reflection of self as there is generally only one art teacher per school in Manitoba. It is therefore challenging to establish a hybrid identity in the school community without a reflection of self. Because of this isolation it has been necessary for me to connect with other artist/teachers outside of the school walls. I have found these connections in a variety of communities from the collegiality of the Manitoba Association for Art Education (MAAE) to my artist group at MAWA, to teaching in a gallery setting. Collaborating on art projects with my artist/teacher colleagues has created an opportunity for me to see myself in others. It has been both inspiring and educational in terms of developing new understandings regarding the connection between roles and transformative practices. I am energized by these connections, which feed my artistry, giving me fuel in the form of ideas and inspiration to go back to the classroom. Gibson & Murray (2009) in their research of art educators found that “...those who identified themselves more as artists than as educators or who perceived that they acted equally as artists and educators also believed that they were more confident in the classroom as well...” (p. 344). By connecting with other art educators and through an active art-making practice, not only has my confidence and sense of self-increased, but also my pedagogical practices have been invigorated by my art and my art-making has taken on aspect of activities that have taken place in my classroom.

## Future Research

As is the case with arts based research, this work generated questions that could not be addressed within the scope of this thesis. Eisner and Barone (2012) propose that a fundamental purpose of arts based research is not to add to a

...knowledge base or to offer to proffer truth claims regarding social phenomena...Art based research is designed to enable readers and viewers to see aspects of the social world that they might have overlooked otherwise. [It's purpose is]...to raise significant questions and engender conversations rather than to proffer final meaning (p. 166).

The following paragraphs provide an account of questions, issues, and curiosities that surfaced during the course of this research.

During this research project I became increasingly interested in the creative process. In particular I have pondered the role that the unconscious and the intuitive fulfill in both art-making and teaching. Creative practices require, as Carabine (2013) remarks, a strong belief in the role that unconscious processes play in art-making. "Making art involves unconscious as well as conscious processes that draw deeply on the artist's inner experiencing...which require the artist to come face to face with the unknown in themselves" (p. 36). In examining my own imagery I have identified a kind of visual lexicon or thematic persistence that has evolved over time. Through this inquiry my awareness of this unconscious repetition has been heightened. There appears to be some sort of logic or consistency that is revisited over and over again in my imagery. I wonder if or how other artist/teachers engage with intuitive practices in their art-making and in their teaching. Do those of us who make art all have a visual language and how does this begin and develop over time? Is there a teaching language per se and how can this be made visible?

Working with my students during this research brought up questions of not only how I negotiate my own identity, but I came to wonder how my students could use art-making to engage in their own transformation and growth. How could they develop meaningful ideas that would connect their art to their lived experiences while simultaneously increasing awareness of their unique creative process and who they are becoming? How can these lofty goals unfold in an often-crowded room, with particular time constraints and within an established hierarchical system that requires an assessment of pre-conceived outcomes? Ultimately how can schools and students begin to understand and conceive of the value surprise and transformation as a legitimate and desirable outcome?

During my art-making process I witnessed a reciprocal relationship in/between the imagery and materials I was using. As I would begin to work with a photographic image I followed its journey through many transformations and interactions that I imposed through various artistic interventions. At the beginning of my research I imagined and proposed that my work would center on photographic and digital work. This became problematic for me in terms of deciding where to draw lines, delineate what was research and what was *trial and error* and what was *excess* to be continued elsewhere. Even at this point I continue to struggle with this aspect of engaging in arts based research. In the future I would be interested in pursuing issues around the porous nature of borders and boundaries that I encountered in working on this thesis.

This research has led me to determine that being an artist goes beyond fulfilling a role. For me it is a strong identity that pervades and guides the totality of the roles I encounter and take on. Over the course of this research I began to wonder how teachers of subjects other than Art understand themselves. This consideration began in a conversation with a colleague who teaches Science. Although she studied science in university, it is not her identity; she does not

practice science at home after school or have a science lab in her basement. If it is true that artist/teachers hold a greater degree of satisfaction with their teaching when practicing art then how do non-artists, teachers of English and Math understand the relationship between what they teach and who they are? What are the implications for creating an authentic practice in the classroom? Further, I use art-making as a way to engage in deepening my understanding of self. How then do other non-artist teachers come to understand their identities? What impact does their sense of self have on their teaching? Gibson & Murray (2009) find that aligning an artist identity with that of educator results in a sense of self as effective in the classroom. They too wonder if this finding would "...hold true for educators from other disciplines" (p. 344).

In this research I came to find that my role of mother continued to resurface in my thoughts and in my art-making. Being a mother is a strong and substantial part of my identity as my daily life revolves around cleaning and preparing meals and caring for my daughter. At the beginning of this research I recalled the inner conflict I felt when I was faced with becoming a mother. Like becoming a teacher I cringed at my perceptions of what it meant to be a mother in contrast to my already established artist self. My imagination conjured images of domestic bondage, coupon cutting, Oprah watching, and cross-border shopping trips. Through both an ongoing art-making practice and finding a community of artist/mothers to work with, I was able to negotiate this transformation in a similar manner to the way that I have come to understand the reciprocity between artist/teacher. Within the process of working on this thesis I have come to wonder how I might be different with my students if I was not a parent. Would I even be a teacher if I were not a parent? I wonder if, when my daughter is grown, if it will be more challenging for me to connect with my students. I believe future studies into the ways in which mothering impacts teaching practices would be of considerable interest to my ongoing research.

A final consideration, which has developed out of my thesis research, is the possibility of inquiring into the experiences of successful art educators, both those who work in schools as well as those whose practice involves museums, galleries, and community-based programs, such as MAWA and Art City here in Winnipeg. Investigations could connect the historical, such as the infamous Arthur Lismer, with the contemporary. In particular and surfacing out of my personal experience, I am interested in the pedagogy that takes place during artist residencies and mentoring situations, that can parallel learning in schools but potentially allows for more fluid and open environments for students. It would be compelling to inquire into the ways in which the dual practices of the artist/teachers in these instances inform one another. Additionally I am interested in looking into relevant and available programming in Canada to support artist/teachers in their quest for professional connections, what opportunities and communities exist for artists who are teachers to develop their dual careers?

### **Conclusion**

“We need to write personally because we live personally, and our personal living is always braided with our other ways of living-professional, academic, administrative, artistic, social, and political” (Leggo, 2005, p. 5). My artist self is my constant and strong. I am always an artist. It is as an artist that I have been able to negotiate my teacher identity. Identity is contextual, relational, and relies on an ability to be reflected by others. It is dependent on circumstance and fluctuates in the face of change. With a shift in perspective the disconnected fragments of self I once experiences now converge. I become an artist/teacher, an artist/researcher, an artist/mother. I anticipate that this list will continue to grow as I continue to live and work and come into contact with the world. My personal journey of becoming continues,

always on the precipice of transformation, moving into new places, encountering and negotiating new selves into the future all the while aware that *I am who I was*.

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