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# A/r/tography as Living Inquiry Through Art and Text

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*There is a substantial body of literature on arts-based forms of research demonstrating scholars' endeavors to theorize the production of the arts as a mode of scholarly inquiry and as a method of representation. However, if arts-based research is to be taken seriously as an emerging field of educational research, then perhaps it needs to be understood as a methodology in its own right. This entails moving beyond the use of existing criteria that exists for qualitative research and toward an understanding of interdisciplinarity not as a patchwork of different disciplines and methodologies but as a loss, a shift, or a rupture where in absence, new courses of action unfold. This article proposes an understanding of arts-based research as enacted, living inquiry through six renderings of a/r/tography: contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations, and excess.*

**Keywords:** *a/r/tography; contiguity; living inquiry; openings; metaphor/metonymy; reverberations and excess*

A substantial body of literature on arts-based forms of research demonstrates scholars' recent endeavors to theorize the production of the arts as a mode of scholarly inquiry and as a method of representation. This article inherits from this scholarly tradition a belief that arts-based forms of research empower and change the manner through which research is conducted, created, and understood. The arts, wrote Maxine Greene (1995), have the distinct power to open our imagination toward the unimagined and the uncertain. Tom Barone (2001a) echoed these sentiments, calling for research that "endow[s] features of our experience with more than a single meaning" (p. 24); research that is playful, exploratory, and expressive. Barone (2001b) and Elliot Eisner's (1995, 2001) advocacy for arts-based research have included in their

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arguments criteria with which to assess the quality and validity of this burgeoning form of educational research.

Other colleagues have also represented exemplary forms of arts-based educational research. Some of these forms include research as performative, research as provocative, and research as poetic (e.g., Mullen, 2003; Richardson, 2000). Many others have written extensively on the rationales for arts-based educational research and provided evidence of what counts *as* and what *is* arts-based educational research. Still others have resisted definitions, insisting that to do so works in direct opposition to the aims of a methodology intended to disrupt traditional modes of scholarship and knowledge production (Slattery, 2003). We fully recognize all the diverse forms and theories that have resulted from this field of study and wish to expand on these considerations.

Our arguments stem from a belief that if forms of arts-based research are to be taken seriously as emerging fields within educational research, then perhaps they need to be understood as methodologies in their own right, not as extensions of qualitative research. This entails moving beyond the use of existing criteria that exists for qualitative research and toward an understanding of interdisciplinarity not as a patchwork of different disciplines and methodologies but as a loss, a shift, or a rupture where in absence, new courses of action unfold.

Loss, shift, and rupture are foundational concepts or metonyms for *a/r/tography*. They create openings, they displace meaning, and they allow for slippages. Loss, shift, and rupture create presence through absence, they become tactile, felt, and seen.

Irit Rogoff (Phelan & Rogoff, 2001) maintained that interdisciplinarity is a place of being "without." This without is not a form of negation, a lack, or a denial of what has been previously done. Without is a space of active participation where one discovers that previous methodologies are not sufficient while simultaneously resisting the formation of specific criteria to replace them. Without "intimates process rather than method and alludes to a *condition* in which you might find yourself while doing work" (Phelan & Rogoff, 2001, p. 34). Similarly Mieke Bal (2002) contended that the success of interdisciplinarity, which is necessary, exciting, and serious, "must seek its heuristic and methodological basis in *concepts* rather than *methods*" (p. 5). Concepts are flexible, dynamic, and intersubjective locations through which close analysis renders new understandings and meanings. In taking up the notions of a condition (relational aesthetic inquiry) and concepts (renderings) in this article, we attend to the *process* of creativity and to the means through which one *inquires* into an educational phenomena through artistic and aesthetic means. In graduate classes at the University of British Columbia, one question that continually re-surfaces is, But how do I *engage* in arts-based research?<sup>1</sup> This displacement from *what does it look like*, which emphasizes a product driven

representation of research, to an *active participation of doing and meaning making* within research texts, is a rupture that opens up new ways of conceiving of research as enactive space of living inquiry (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

This article proposes an understanding of arts-based research as enacted living inquiry, which we call a/r/tography. A/r/tography is not intended to discredit other forms of arts-based research, nor is it separate from all previous discourse. Rather, it is one of a range of research methodologies involving the arts and education. It is a tangential thread; perhaps a thread that has become un/stitched, un/raveling its own existence into new beginnings. A/r/tography as such is a methodology of embodiment, never isolated in its activity but always engaged with the world.

Although other sources provide rich illustrative examples of a/r/tography (de Cosson, 2003; Irwin, 2003, 2004; Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay, 2001, 2003a, 2003b; Springgay & Irwin, 2004; Wilson, 2000; Wilson et al. 2002), this article seeks to describe six renderings of a/r/tography as an approach to research that is attentive to the sensual, tactile, and unsaid aspects of artist/researcher/teachers' lives. The intent of the term *rendering* is not to offer a criterion-based model or to suggest that these six are descriptions of a/r/tography. Each rendering is not an isolated event but rather, formed in relation with each other through aesthetic inquiry. So too, there is a mediation and meditation *between* these six renderings that leaves open the potential for additional renderings and the activity that exists in their intersections.

Renderings offer possibilities of engagement. To render, to give, to present, to perform, to become—offers for action, the opportunity for living inquiry. Research that breathes. Research that listens. Renderings are not methods. They are not lists of verbs initiated to create an arts-based or a/r/tographical study. Renderings are theoretical spaces through which to explore artistic ways of knowing and being research. They may inform the doing of research, the final representation, and/or the ways in which viewers/readers understand and access an a/r/tographical text. For renderings also return and/or give back.

To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through a process of art making and writing.<sup>2</sup> It is a process of double imaging that includes the creation of art and words that are not separate or illustrative of each other but instead, are interconnected and woven through each other to create additional meanings. Rogoff (2000) explained that visual and textual encounters are not analytic of each other. They are not discourses laid on top of one another in the hopes of transferring meaning from one textual realm to another; rather, they are interconnections that speak in conversation *with, in, and through* art and text such that encounters are constitutive rather than descriptive. Inasmuch as the art and text are enacted in relation to each other, so too the viewer/reader figures into the process of meaning mak-

ing, adding layers of inter/textual dwelling. Each informs and shapes the other in an active moment of lived inquiry (see Springgay, 2003b).

To this extent, the following six renderings of a/r/tography are methodological concepts of what research should be when a relational aesthetic inquiry approach is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text and between and among the roles of artist/researcher/teacher and the viewer/reader. Although other renderings may emerge with time, these renderings are grounded themes distilled from our ongoing aesthetic inquiry as artists/researchers/teachers. To render research as evocative does not necessitate the inclusion of these renderings as facts or procedures. They are intended to perform alongside each other as provisions of immense opportunity for re/writing research and culture that exists at the intersections of knowing and being.

## SIX RENDERINGS OF A/R/TOGRAPHY

### Contiguity

A/r/tography is a coming together of art and graphy, or image and word. It is a doubling of visual and textual wherein the two complement, extend, refute, and/or subvert one another. This doubling resists transparent rereadings and rewritings of experience, preferring complexities and the process of appreciating complex meaning making (Aoki, Low, & Paulis, 2001). The doubling of art and graphy is important when conceiving of a methodology that includes both visual<sup>3</sup> and written processes and products of a research text. Respectively, the use of the term *text/uual* makes present the implications of "texts" beyond, outside, unknown, and tangential to the visual and the written. Thus, a/r/tography includes an understanding of intersubjectivity. Through doubling, hegemonic categorizations of knowledge production are troubled, infusing both the art and the graphy with intention and attentiveness. This doubling is not a static rendering of two elements positioned as separate and distinct; but it is in the contiguous interaction and the movement *between* art and graphy that research becomes a lived endeavor.

Contiguity is also emphasized through our understanding of the roles of artist/researcher/teacher or the practices of art making/researching/teaching.<sup>4</sup> Emphasizing the divergent roles is not aimed at further categorizations or to produce artificial boundaries (see Slattery, 2003). Rather, the intent of drawing attention to these roles is to also speak of their interrelatedness, their shifting, transitory nature, and to make visible the spaces *in between* the roles and the *activity* inherent in practicing these roles.

In addition, we make use of these distinctions to remind a/r/tographers that researching is a living inquiry of what it means to know and to search as

artists, as researchers, and as teachers. Our understanding of the term *artist* is embodied, holistic, and broadly defined. However, it is imbued with the understanding that to live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher is to live a contiguous life, a life that dialectically moves between connecting and not connecting the three roles. The dialectical in/between spaces amid these roles are dynamic living spaces of inquiry: Spaces touching at the edges, then shifting to be close, adjacent, but not touching—only to touch again. It is not a process of categorization but a concept that requires deep attention and penetration. A/r/tographers anticipate performative, visual, and textual inquiry as they move from one role to another, learning through the uniqueness of each role, before they venture into rendering an inter/characterization of the roles. Employing visual and textual forms of research, Richardson (1994) said,

Trying out evocative forms, we relate differently to our material; we know it differently. We find ourselves attending to feelings, ambiguities, temporal sequences, blurred experiences . . . we struggle to find a textual place for ourselves and our doubts and uncertainties. (p. 521)

It is about dwelling in a space of inquiry that resists formal naming: A willingness to allow for discomfort, frayed edges, and holes.

As with the doubling of art and graphy, the doubling of *art* and *a/r/t* emphasizes an unfolding *between* process and product, text and person, presence and absence, art and audience, teacher and student, author and reader; but it also resides on the edges of these dualisms. In this instance, duality is understood to mean duality/nonduality (Pryer, 2002). Vibrating amid dualities is a space for uncertainty and ambiguity. Dualisms become clear before blurring, interconnecting, blending one into/through the other, only to return to clarity and then ambiguity/complexity again, in an endless hermeneutic circle (see de Cosson, 2002). “To engage in hermeneutics—to interpret—then, is to tug at the threads of this existential text, realizing that, in tugging, the texture of the entire fabric is altered” (Rasberry, 2001, p. 13). Folding and unfolding the fabric of experience is a process of differentiation. In a fold, the outside is never fully absorbed, it is both at once exterior and interior. There is always a play of opposition and tension in the operation of the fold (see Springgay, 2003a). “Folding holds out the potential to diversify endlessly without falling into the logic of binary oppositions. This sense of the fold thinks matter as doubling back upon itself to make endless new points of connection between diverse elements” (Meskimmon, 2003, p. 167).

Artists, researchers, teachers engaged in a/r/tography are living lives of inquiry: Lives full of curiosity punctuated by questions searching for deeper understandings while interrogating assumptions. Asking oneself questions that linger between, amid, and/or within visual/textual, theoretical/analytical, and pedagogical/curricular matters is to live a life committed to

inquiry, active engagement, and dis/comfort. It is often an anxious life, where the a/r/tographer is unable to come to conclusions or to settle into a linear pattern of inquiry. Instead, there is a nervousness, a reverberation within the excess of the doubling process. Living inquiry refuses absolutes; rather, it engages with a continual process of not-knowing, of searching for meaning that is difficult and in tension. Tension that is nervous, agitated, and unpredictable. When fabric is distressed it is said to be "marked" or "treated." Examples are staining with tea, washing with stones, more difficult distressing using substances such as bleach and acid, and even cutting. Thus, nervousness as living inquiry distresses art and text, calling forth new meanings and knowledges. Nervousness is also relational, reverberating between art and text, a living inquiry that is in continuous movement.

### Living Inquiry

In a/r/tography, visual, written, and performative processes are enacted as a living practice of art making, researching, and teaching. This is similar to Sumara and Carson's (1997) understanding of action research as a living practice. They are not merely activities added to one's life but also the processes by which one's life is lived so that "who one is becomes completely caught up in what one knows and does" (Sumara & Carson, 1997, p. xvii). In a/r/tography, this living inquiry is an aesthetic encounter, where the process of meaning making and being are inextricably connected to an awareness and understanding of art (Rose, 2001). For the sake of our specific arguments, this means that living inquiry is an embodied encounter constituted through visual and textual *understandings and experiences* rather than mere visual and textual *representations*. One cannot separate, through abstract means, visual and textual interpretations of lived experiences (Meskimmon, 2003).

A/r/tography is an inquiring process that lingers in the liminal spaces between *a(artist)* and *r(researcher)* and *t(teacher)*. Entering into a/r/tography arises out of a "desire and daily life" (Rasberry, 2001, p. 1) to make sense and create meaning out of difficult and complex questions that cannot be answered in straightforward or linear tellings. The issues in question may permeate a life and engage emotional, intuitive, personal, spiritual, and embodied ways of knowing—all aspects of one's private, public, and/or professional self (Springgay & Irwin, 2004). Understanding ourselves as constituted through experience, a/r/tography does not live outside or separate from the experience of inquiry. Thus, both the subject and the materialization of the research are open to perpetual reconfiguration (see Bochner, & Ellis, 2002). This is a performative site of reflection, "where the psychic formations of subjectivity and culturally coded identities intersect and 'interface' one another" (Watson & Smith, 2002, p. 11). Relationships between the visual and

the textual within the “interfaces” or intersections of a/r/tography, which include the roles and lives of artists/researchers/teachers, are “intimate, inextricable, and multivalent” (Watson & Smith, 2002, p. 19).

Visual and textual components of living inquiry may also be “interrogations” where difference and contradiction ask viewers/readers to reexamine assumptions, destabilizing forms of identification. Such encounters with a/r/tographical texts “inspire thoughtful action” (Mullen, 2003, p. 168) through the intersections of art and graphy. Each elucidates the other but is not reducible to it (Watson & Smith, 2002). The separateness of textual and visual media is maintained, and yet this separateness is an intimate dialogue that simultaneously sustains difference and distinction while enabling connections. In living inquiry, research is subjectively informed and subjectively coproduced; viewers/readers take up where the artist(s)/author(s) left off, continuing the complex and multifarious act of meaning making.

A/r/tography is a living practice; a life writing, life creating experience into the personal, political, and professional aspects of one’s life. Through attention to memory, identity, autobiography, reflection, meditation, story telling, interpretation, and/or representation, artists/researchers/teachers expose their living practices in evocative ways. A/r/tographers rerepresent their questions, practices, emergent understandings, and creative analytic texts as they integrate knowing, doing, and making through aesthetic experiences that convey meaning rather than facts (see Springgay & Irwin, 2004). A/r/tography is not a formulaic-based methodology. Rather, it is a fluid orientation creating its rigor through continuous reflexivity and analysis. It is a contiguous methodology where interweaving threads of theory, practice, and poesis are not separate and distinct but contiguous (Irwin, 2004), allowing for deeper understandings to emerge with time. A/r/tography may inspire many to its methodology under the assumption that little *techne* is needed. On the contrary, as art and text double, both need to be valued for the disciplinary and interdisciplinary traditions they represent. Art and writing come from long traditions held within vibrant communities. These communities are always within our collective consciousness. Artists, poets, and scholars have influenced our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Recognizing their presence in a/r/tographical work is critical. We are re-writing and re-creating who we are and what we believe not as didactic representations but as re-representations, “a making strange” (Mulvey, 1991).

Part of the process of living inquiry is to live a life engaged with creative works and to recognize the power of art to transform. Thus, a/r/tographers need to position their work/research amid the practices and living inquiry of other artists in much the same way that citational practices of scholars take place. This is not to illustrate a concept through an artwork but rather, that the art itself is a condition, a positionality that constitutes agency and change (Rogoff, 2000; Springgay & Irwin, 2004). And yet, being able to cite and



engage with the work of others is only part of the theoretical engagement found in a/r/tography. Just as *techne* is acquired by noted artists and writers through continuous creative activity while being aware of contemporary and historical practices in writing and the arts, a/r/tographers are living a life of inquiry with, in, and through their art forms, writing practices, and roles as artist, researcher, and teacher. Through this active inquiry, they are engaged with the difficulties that each practice and role brings to a particular context. A/r/tographers use their practices and roles to make meaning, to change meaning, and to understand meaning. They use their “desire and daily life” (Rasberry, 2001, p. 1) to help others reflect on their own meaning-making practices. A/r/tography is not something adopted ad hoc at the time of research dissemination; it is a thoughtful, enacted way of knowing and being. A/r/tographers living a life of inquiry are living a life of excess, a life that forces understanding to evolve through acts of deep engagement.

### Metaphor and Metonymy

A/r/tography as a methodological process infuses understandings of metaphor and metonymy. Through metaphors and metonymic relationships, we make things sensible—that is, accessible to the senses. Metonymy is a word-to-word (or image-to-word, or image-to-image) relationship, which emphasizes a displacement in the subject/object relation, such as part to whole encounters. More important, it is the movement within displacement that provides metonymy with its pulse of difference, recognizing the extent to which signifiers dislodge Others with partial, opaque representations and not only revealing meanings, events, and objects but also *obscuring* them in this very act. Thus, meaning is anticipated, it is alluded to, provocative, and suggestive. Metonymical meaning is not intended to close spaces with singular interpretations but instead, allow for the ambiguity of meaning to shift in space and time.

The slash is particular in its use, as it is intended to divide and double a word—to make the word mean at least two things, but often more. It also refers to what might appear between two points of orientation, hinting at meaning that is not quite there or yet unsaid. This play between meanings does not suggest a limitless positionality, where interpretation is open to any whim or chance. It is the tension provoked by this doubling, between limit/less that maintains meaning’s possibility. The slash is not intended to be one or the other term; it can be both simultaneously, or neither. The slash suggests movement or shifts between the terms. For example, the term un/familiar is a movement between the familiar and the strange. The slash makes the terms active, relational, as they reverberate with, in, and through each other.

Metaphor is also important in understanding a/r/tography. Although metaphor is the substitution of signifiers, where one signifier takes the place of the other in the signifying chain, the two signifiers are not equal; one does

not absorb the other in unification. The doubling aspect of metaphor increases and provokes a reconsideration of each other. This process of doubling and re-doubling infuses a/r/tography within a continuum, a turning back and a moving forward.

Between metaphor and metonymy there exists an intertwined relationship in which meaning un/does itself. There is both a loss of meaning and simultaneously a realization of it, invoking the presence of what it is not, and also what it might become. Distinct in appearance and application, both help us to see and reveal attributes in new ways, to cross boundaries, and to shape intersubjective relationships. Literal language could be argued to exist within systems of containment and classification, whereas metaphor and metonymy permeate boundaries, disturbing system and order. Patterns do exist within metaphor and metonymy but are intentionally open and fertile, accentuating differences of perception. A shift in awareness takes place within these openings, which can be attributed to struggle or tension. As we struggle to reveal understandings through the use of metaphor and metonymy, the tensions created in fact do not close down receptiveness but rather, allow us to perceive the world “freshly,” to look for complexity, and to “inhabit fields which previously appeared as opaque and unapproachable” (Fiumara, 1995, p. 21). A/r/tographic encounters are active—frayed, entangled, and split open.

## Openings

As a practice of meaning making, a/r/tography relies on a multiplicity of perceptions held *between* and within sensual and textual ways of knowing. Engagement that is *between* is open and porous, whereas knowing is situated within the midst *and* on the edges. As such, a/r/tography is active *and* responsive: It requires attentiveness to what is seen and known and to what lies beneath the surface. A/r/tographic knowing un/folds, stretches out, and is exposed. It is raw, like the frayed edges of a piece of fabric—threadbare like lace. However, openings are not passive holes through which one passes easily or that allow one to see through with distinct clarity. These openings are cuts, cracks, slits, and tears; refusing comfort, predictability, and safety—deliberately seeking out “the difficult, the unknown, the ambiguous, [and] the unpredictable” (Sumara, 1999, p. 42). Holes cut into fabric are ruptures, dis/rupting the uniform surface. Difficulty enables contradictions to exist and encourages places where “knowledge resists” (Carson, 1997, p. 87). These spaces of tension allow knowing to include loss and things un/done (Wilson, 2000). Loss can be visualized or imaged, for example a tear or a hole cut or worn into fabric. Loss is also metonymic, allowing knowledge to be split open, revealed, and ruptured. As living inquiry, a/r/tography is a process of opening texts, of seeking understanding by continuing to un/ravel and to stitch back in response.

Fabric as a metaphor and means of understanding a/r/tography expounds the meaning of an open text. Openings are a foundational part of the cloth—its fibers woven and strands joined together with spaces in/between. There are openings like holes worn with time, reflecting the fragility and temporality of meaning. Other openings are cut deliberately and act as invitations to enter into and look through, offering new views and perceptions, encouraging dislocations and disruptions. Openings that are torn, shredded, and ripped in acts of violence and disruption remind us that living inquiry is difficult, that it is filled with dis/comfort and loss, ruptures of ecstasy and pleasure that trouble and pull at the holes of existence. These holes are not empty spaces needing to be filled. They are located in space and time, allowing artist/researcher/teachers to move within the research text, penetrate deeply, and shift the boundaries of perspective. It is discourse characterized by fluidity, the open interplay of elements, and the possibility of infinite re-combinations.

Openings are invitations that leave room for encounters between artist/researcher/teacher and reader/viewer entangling experience(s). Encounters are meetings that involve surprise and conflict, that are not a coupling but a mediated space of coming together and pulling apart (Ahmed, 2000). This produces what Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) described as a text that is “writerly” rather than “readerly,” where meaning is not inherent in the image or text but coconstructed in the encounter between a/r/tographer, reader/viewer, and the image/text. Exchanges unsettle, create movement, collide, and nestle side-by-side as meanings are negotiated in relationship to other meanings.

Opening toward others invites a shared participation, which compels evocative and emotional resonations with the text. Research that is positioned as relational considers issues of reciprocity, exploring what it is to be “bound together with the words and lives of others” (Chambers, 1998, p. 20). Such research is situated as a conversation for understanding, as an act of negotiating meaning, and as an ongoing exchange between Self and Other, and between texts and images. Therefore, the intention of the imaging/writing is not to inform—as in to give information—but to *open up* to conversations and relationships as “a researcher conducts research *with, through, and in* the company of others” (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, p. 1, italics added). Threading together the exchange between a/r/tographer and viewer/reader, the image/text becomes an active space, echoing and reverberating in communion.

### Reverberations

Reverberations within a/r/tography call attention to the movement, the quaking, shaking, measure, and rhythm that shifts other meanings to the sur-

face (Aoki, 1996). These vibrations allow art making/researching/teaching to sink deeply, to penetrate, and to resonate with echoes of each other:

Put your ear to the line, closer to the words. Listen. There are other texts called and recalled in the research text. (Luce-Kapler, 1997, p. 194)

Reverberations also excite possible slippages of meaning, where the act of returning is not mirrored but a performance where each reverberation resists and pushes forward toward new understandings. In a similar manner, reverberations are individual and shared. Privately and socially constructed, reverberations activate openings to let others' work and words resonate throughout in a tangled co-laboring (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993). Pollock's (1998) notion of "nervous" performative writing constructs a similar understanding:

It anxiously crosses various stories, theories, texts, intertexts, and spheres of practice, unable to settle into a clear, linear course, neither willing nor able to stop moving, restless, transient and transitive . . . it operates by synaptic replay, drawing one charged moment into another, constituting knowledge in an ongoing process of transmission and transferal. (pp. 90-91)

A/r/tography performs communication where the process is taken up in perpetual motion—an interplay between the new and the customary (Irwin, 2003). It is the desire to respond to the disappearance and appearance of signs, the impulse between what is known and what cannot be expressed, that gives new tension and vibration to the signifier. Research, thus, becomes an act of unsettling, an evocation that calls out, asking for a response, a living inquiry, transforming static moments into momentum, multiplying and metamorphosing.

## Excess

Trinh Minh-ha (1989) wrote expressively on the power of writing—writing beyond simply expressing oneself, that is, writing to *become*. This becoming through writing reveals fears, inhibitions, desires, and pleasures: To write from within and through the body is a writing of *excess*. Excess is an ongoing practice concerned not with inserting facts and figures and images and representations into language but with creating an opening where control and regulation disappears. Excess is a way to re-image ourselves into being; re-assembling the mundane of our experiences. Excess is the flesh of being, the space-between interiority and exteriority, where touching touches and touches back in continual reverberations (see Springgay, 2003a). It is in the space of excess that knowledge is negotiated as intimate and sensuous.

Georges Bataille (1985), in *Visions of Excess*, re-imagines excess as a doubling, a point of rupture between absolute knowledge and sheer loss. Vacillat-

ing between conservation and destruction, excess becomes a movement toward anything; everything returning in a dynamic momentum. More traditionally, excess has been associated with bodily states: excrement, the anus, blood, sex, orgasms, and abuse. Such associations carry with them the weight of the monstrous, the Other, and hierarchical class distinctions whereby the deviant and abhorrent threatens discipline and control. This excess is the excess of waste, the stuff of discipline and re-pair. But Bataille reminded us of the ways in which it could be used to work against, to subvert, and to act as an agent of change. It is the nature of excess as an *activity* of the sublime, the horrible, and the magnificent intertwined and moving that is central to his claims about excess' generativity. It is the motility of touch, the reverberation that folds back on itself, that allows excess to un/ravel, un/write, and re-image in a continual process of exploration. Excess provides opportunities for complexity and deeper understanding; It is open, pliable, and in constant change. Excess, thus, questions not simply material substances but also how things come into being, the philosophical nature of existence and meaning making.

## RENDERINGS OF RESEARCH

To render research is to commit to living inquiry through text and visual images. So too, the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher must become *active* processes and practices of living a life deeply. Deep inquiry into our lives requires a/r/tographers to make meaning through their senses, bodies, minds, and emotions. It is a research process that is fluid, uncertain, and temporal. Shoshana Felman (1997) suggested in her writings on the unconscious that meaning is not just understood at that instant but rather, that new meanings continue to surface with time:

The significance of the discovery appears only in retrospect, because insight is never purely cognitive; it is to some extent always performative (incorporated in an act, a doing) and to that extent precisely it is not transparent to itself. Insight is partially unconscious, partially partaking of a practice. And since there can never be a simultaneous, full coincidence between practice and awareness, what one understands in doing and through doing appears in retrospect. (p. 15)

Rendering is not simply about art or text that "stands for" a particular concept or research finding; rather, it is a possibility of creating meaning, a possibility of what it is, is not, and what it might be. Thus, renderings are not simply static images or words captured on a page; they are visual, aesthetic, and textual performances that dance and play alongside each other, reverberating in excess and as openings. In fact, a hesitation in writing this article was the condition through which we needed to separate the six renderings. This separation is not a distinctive delineation but rather, renderings themselves are

living, contiguous, metaphoric/metonymic, openings, reverberations, and full of excess. Each rendering moves alongside and between the others.

Returning to Rogoff (2000) and Mieke Bal's (2002) notions of new practices within interdisciplinary work, a/r/tography exposes the dissolution of the boundary between the "creative" and the "theoretical." Rather than recognizing interdisciplinary work as a bricolage of existing paradigms, disciplines, and methodologies, interdisciplinarity needs to focus on the "unnamed something"—the "without" (Rogoff, 2000). Through close attention to the un/said and un/known, a new field of study, a/r/tography, might constitute itself. This *condition* of without is paramount in understanding and shaping aesthetic inquiry, where encounters within the visual and textual are imbued with dis/comfort and struggle that allow one to conceive of possibilities unthought of before. Interdisciplinarity as *concepts* is also salient. Concepts are not fixed definitions. They are dynamic, intersubjective, and fluid (Bal, 2002). It is within the activity of meaning making, "groping" to discover concepts/renderings, that possibilities are born in which one might gain insight into what concepts/renderings can *do* (Bal, 2002). It is this activity, the in/betweenness of living inquiry, that emphasis needs to be placed. Bal (2002) argued that this shift in methodology is not predicated on binary oppositions or formulaic methods of criteria but rather, on a model of *interactivity* where rigor is achieved through deep inquiry and mediation. Concepts need to be evaluated by their ability to provide access to phenomena not otherwise attainable; the new organization needs to be compelling and yield new and relevant information (Bal, 2002). A/r/tographical renderings are just that. They are conditions of aesthetic discovery and inquiry, they constitute a field of study or a methodology, and they rupture evaluative processes so that living inquiry, enactment, art, and graphy cannot be separated out into criteria. A/r/tography dislocates complacency, location, perspective, and knowledge. A/r/tography becomes a passage to somewhere else.

## NOTES

1. We represent one group of a/r/tographers within a larger community dedicated to creating artful forms of inquiry across a variety of art forms and educational milieus.

2. Visual imagery directs this discussion but in fact, a/r/tography can easily embrace any art form (music, dance, drama, film, etc). In other places, we have argued that a/r/tography needs to include all forms of expression, given the artificiality of attempting to separate them.

3. We use the term *visual* in our arguments, but *music* and *graphy*, *poetry* and *graphy*, *fiction* and *graphy*, and *drama* and *graphy* could be inserted here.

4. Although we call attention to these roles and the process of aesthetic inquiry, we recognize that not all arts-based researchers share this perspective.

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