More than glitter and glue: An arts-informed autoethnographic exploration of school-based art education

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Abstract

This doctoral study offers a space to inquire about and explore complexities, joys and obstacles faced in the teaching of art in a school setting. It takes the form of an arts-informed autoethnography and is viewed through a combined new materialist, decolonial, and affective lens.   Within the presentation of this study, I look to acts of making and reflecting that explore the impact of materials and how they act to mediate knowing and making meaning through embodied relationship. Used flexibly and reflexively, this combination of theoretical and methodological approaches enables an emergent methodology that initiates a call to seek more than what is traditionally expected and supposed within a Western framework of thinking.

Through this approach an intentional examination and questioning of human and more-than-human experience is considered. By charting my navigation of time and space, and by identifying possibilities, differences, and possible mismatches, of the perception of the role of visual arts education, perhaps other arts educators can feel supported and empowered to share their stories, concerns, and ideas for change.

Guiding this study are three questions that ask: In what ways do individual school experiences influence perspectives and approaches to visual arts education? What social practices and value systems are at play in dominant approaches to visual arts education that need to be considered and interrogated? Recognizing public education as a complex space, how can new materialisms inform an expansive practice of arts education?

Using these questions to frame explorations and unfolding understandings, ideas and concerns were able to surface. Within the presentation of this study, I share three ideas, or threads, that developed through the art making and reflexive research methods. In the first thread, a sense of not belonging and its effect on identity opened to choosing to embrace ever-changing, emerging entanglements. In the second thread I look at the conception of time in a school. I then interrupt linear time's hold through material intervention. In the third thread I confront narratives of scarcity at play in my teaching practice. I attempt to navigate an understanding of the craving for control and predictability in the face of 'not

enough'. Rather than allowing myself to disengage from ambiguity and uncertainty, I embrace exploration *with* materials and affects. In this way I look to enact interconnectivity and subjectivity as strength through making as a way of knowing and a lived form of inquiry.

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A note about figures

With the exception of figure 1 (described above), visual connections are interjected throughout the dissertation in the form of photographs. These images are left unlabelled and are interspersed purposefully within the chapters to tangle with the reader's own generation of affective and conceptual connection or dissonance.

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I would also like to acknowledge that I live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

Author's declaration *

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Introduction: Following threads

'I try to follow the threads where they lead in order to track them and find their tangles and patterns crucial for staying with the trouble in real and particular places and times'
Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2016, p. 3.

This doctoral dissertation explores motivations and problematic issues regarding what is expected when delivering arts programming in schools. This investigation lays bare some of the forces that have shaped my journey of situating shifting cultural understandings of school-based visual arts education, bringing to consciousness core values and driving compulsions. Framing each chapter of the dissertation is a squiggly line. Each line represents a thread to be enjoyed for its unique looping configuration. As suggested in the quote above by multispecies feminist theorist Donna Haraway, each is a metaphorical thread that sets out experiences as related in the chapters to be followed and observed for patterns and tangles. Following the thread of ideas leads to becoming responsive to unfolding thoughts, images, and feelings as they are encountered in the dissertation. It can also be tied to the long-practiced language of sewing as enacted in this study.

More than glitter and glue

Glitter and glue – what would school be without them? Familiar materials used in school art activities that end up in unexpected places. Both are great at sticking … to clothing, skin, furniture … and can be difficult to remove. Glitter adds decorative colour, texture, and shine, while glue holds things together. Like glitter and glue, art education is often treated as a decorative element and is equated with making a pretty product. However, art education is *more than* just shiny finishes. In addition to developing the craft of art making, art education teaches how to look and to notice an array of perceptions that influence our world and the worlds of others. There is a powerful culture of thinking available within and through art education that extends beyond aesthetic appreciation, that can teach and reinforce the importance of making decisions, choices and multiple understandings (Hetland, et al., 2013). This study looks to go beyond the surface of material attributes and manipulation; it looks to the depth and possibility of recognising our entanglements with materials (yes, even glitter and glue) and each other.

Overview

This study offers a space to inquire about and explore complexities, joys and obstacles faced in the teaching of art in a school setting. It takes the form of an arts-informed autoethnography and is framed through a combined new materialist, decolonial, and affective lens.   Through this approach an intentional examination and questioning of human and more-than-human experience is considered. Within the presentation of this study, I look to acts of making and reflecting that explore the impact of materials and how they act to mediate knowing and making meaning through embodied relationship. Used flexibly and reflexively, this combination of theoretical and methodological approaches enables an emergent methodology that initiates a call to seek more than what is traditionally expected and supposed within a Western framework of thinking.

Art education is constantly facing questions about its value and necessity. As Davis (2005) notes, 'The need for justification has been a virulent thread in the history of the field' (p. 87). As such, a tension exists between justifying why arts should be a part of general education and observing or lauding what people are capable of producing through arts

education. Davis suggests that arts educators 'stop looking for a way to get our foot in the door and start looking at the way we move our feet' (p. 180). In this doctoral study I explore what makes me, as a visual arts educator, 'move my feet' the way that I do.

In 2018, in my fifteenth year of teaching, I returned to teaching visual arts in schools after more than ten years in special education. This re-entry, as a municipally funded Fine Arts Specialist that operates on the periphery of the provincial curriculum framework, came at a time of change in the educational landscape of Nova Scotia. It also coincided with my doctoral studies and an internal search for reconnection between my teaching practice, my background as a visual arts educator, and identity as an artist (which I had set aside while pursuing qualifications and mastery in teaching students with special needs).   My return to art education together with the doctoral process has rekindled a confidence in my lifelong interest in making sense of the world by making things. However, it has also surfaced a dissonance and disconnect that I feel between theory, ideas, intention, and enactment in teaching art.

By focusing on my individual journey of unearthing the discourses behind my practice and experiences, this study offers insights both for myself and for others to question and inquire into thoughts and experiences of art education and education in general. In an effort to practice cultural humility's commitment 'to continual critical self- reflection on researcher privilege, positionality, power, and taken-for-granted beliefs about what constitutes knowledge' (Schmitt et al, 2021, p. 12) I chose to centre my teaching experiences as they occur in 'real and particular places and times' (Haraway, 2016, p. 3), and examine them in a way that presses up against my understandings and inhabits uncertainty. By charting my navigation of time and space, and by identifying possibilities, differences, and possible mismatches, of the perception of the role of visual arts education, perhaps other arts educators can feel supported and empowered to share their stories, concerns and ideas for change – to open a larger dialogue about 'moving our feet' intentionally, possibly in chorus.

As art educators often work in isolation from other arts specialists, it may be useful for art education practitioners to see my struggle and growth and to relate to it. This study can be seen to offer a specific contribution to research in visual arts teaching and education by

offering an in-depth exploration of one practitioner's journey. It is also, through its portrayal and analysis, a call for all education stakeholders to engage in a dialogue about arts education in schools.

To position my study within historical and disciplinary contexts, I broadly review the field of visual arts education in Canada. I present a survey of relevant school-based practices and programming from Confederation (1867) to the present. I then look to an area of possibility for the future and introduce a range of research in education generally and then more specifically in arts education that use post-critical lenses and discourses.

This study combines new materialism, decoloniality, and affect theory as a theoretical lens through which to intentionally explore and question human and more-than-human experience. The theoretical choices made in this study reflect and effect a hybrid and fluid lens whereby questioning of social structures and phenomena that attempt to decontextualize knowing and feeling occurs. In this way I look to enact interconnectivity and subjectivity as strength through making as a way of knowing and a lived form of inquiry. To this effect, new materialism's focus on recognising the active role that objects, materials and tools can play in meaning-making is combined with decoloniality's focus on multiple ways of knowing and being. To this I apply affect theory to understand the entanglements that exist with/in people, objects, and materials in given educational contexts. I use these theories together to make visible the emotionally and viscerally messy and muddled space of learning and teaching.

In order to enact the supporting theoretical structure of this study, I set a methodological course of research to lay bare underlying themes and discourses, assumptions, and values. By means of an arts-informed autoethnography ideas and concerns were able to surface through a process of negotiating meaning and action while engaging with materials, tools and objects. What emerged was then analysed for what it revealed about my practice as an arts educator with consideration given to theoretical traditions and possibilities.

The application of autoethnography allows for an exploration of my positionality as a researcher, art educator and arts practitioner. Along with the arts-informed aspect of my

research process I engaged these experiences of positionality through art making in the form of sketching, printmaking, and needlework. I similarly engaged in writing and walking as experience to bring the art making explorations and questions back to theory and memories of experience. Finally, in addition to art making, an important method of data generation was the restorying of generalised experiences into narrative vignettes and performative writing that represented a particular issue encountered through lived experiences.

Looking to disrupt and question traditional ways of being and knowing, I sought research questions that would guide and support my developing understandings. Centring the influence of my experiences as a visual arts teacher, and the context in which they occur, opened to explorations that speak across spaces and materials. Enfolded through its many iterations, the research questions that follow developed and became cues, or structured signals for action and reminders of purpose. The formation of three research questions allowed me to suspend an expectation of answers and instead design my inquiry to build understanding and connection. The three questions that frame this study are:

RQ1: In what ways do individual school experiences influence perspectives and approaches to visual arts education?

RQ2: What social practices and value systems are at play in dominant approaches to visual arts education that need to be considered and interrogated?

RQ3: Recognizing public education as a complex space, how can new materialisms inform an expansive practice of arts education?

Thesis structure and form

Within this dissertation, conventional literature review and theoretical framework chapters establish the research, scholarship, and discourses that I build from in my study. A methodological framework chapter follows in which I describe and justify the arts-informed autoethnographic design as well as the discreet art making and reflexive research methods that I take up in this work. The scholarship that results is then divided into three themed findings chapters.

Entitled 'Running in place', the first findings chapter explores feelings of belonging through the generalised experience of painting a large-scale mural with elementary aged students. A sense of not belonging and its effect on identity is distilled to a choice to embrace ever-changing, emerging entanglements. Working through uncertainty with a needle in my hand I find a way to communicate and work through the unease.

In the second findings chapter, 'Stitches in time', I consider the consuming effect that measuring and performing linear time has on the drive to control and predict in education. I consider how conceptions of time can affect and be affected by interactions through two vignetted experiences and their accompanying visual and performative explorations. By choosing to engage in a postcritical way with the theme of this chapter, I interrupt linear time's hold through the material intervention of thread and fabric. Through and with the thread, materials and concepts joined to effect an acceptance of time as fluid. Images of the art making process are deployed as provocation for the reader and as records of my thoughts and actions frozen in time through stitches. By focusing less on controlling time and more on inter- and intra-action, time was able to emerge at a different pace in relation to the conversation my hand and body had with the thread, needle, and cloth.

Over the course of the third findings chapter, entitled 'Hanging by a thread', the notion of scarcity and its relative impact in education is investigated through visual, performative, and narrative explorations of the generalized school-based teaching experience of preparing for an embroidery lesson that goes awry. Viewing this experience and explorations through my chosen theoretical lens allowed me to confront narratives of scarcity at play in my teaching practice. This permitted me to navigate an understanding of the craving for control and predictability in the face of 'not enough'. Rather than allowing myself to disengage from ambiguity and uncertainty, I embraced exploration *with* materials and affects. In this way my material and affective entanglements take in and acknowledge being in the moment and being plentiful, through intra-action with sewing and light.

The findings chapters work to communicate a more-than-human chronicle of investigation and searching for connection. Between an ever-looping needle and thread, and furtive scribbles and taps on a touchscreen, a visceral connection of ideas and texture were expressed and documented. Through the layers of stitching and writing, tangles of experience have emerged into patterns. The findings chapters encompass three of these patterns that persisted through the research process and asserted their need to be recognised and discussed.

The represented experiences are ripe with tension – the tension of thread, cloth, and needle; and of practice, theory, and thought. These tensions form dissonances such that distinguishing judgment from (mis)understanding is only discerned through breaks in affective flux and difference, experienced as discomfort (Boldt & Leander, 2017). As an enactment of this tension, performative writing punctuates vignettes of generalised experiences, which, along with changes in font size, act to incongruously destabilise and focus on affective intent. Visual connections in the form of photographs are interjected within each chapter. To embody these visceral breaks in the flow of thoughts and feeling, images are left unlabeled and are interspersed purposefully within the chapters to tangle with the reader's own generation of affective and conceptual connection or dissonance.

Literature Review: Connecting threads

Visual arts education in Canada

This review begins with school-based art education's form and presence around the time of Canada's confederation (1867). It does not encompass the art of pre-colonial and colonial times as this is intended to be a brief overview of conventional public (governmentally funded) school-based art education. However I do wish to recognize the role that art education programming in Canada has had in diminishing the value and contribution of Indigenous peoples and non-indigenous marginalised groups of settlers. As Stankiewicz (2007) explains in her postcolonial analysis of international histories of art education:

> 'art education contributed to cultural imperialism by teaching young people in colonial societies or indigenous groups that their traditional arts were not as highly ranked in an aesthetic hierarchy as European arts, nor their artistic taste as finely cultivated as that of European experts … devaluing the art forms and informal art education methods of pre-colonial societies' (p. 18).

This summary of the history of art education in Canada is therefore not complete as it focuses on generalizing school-based practices and programming.

As colonies of British North America became provinces and territories of the newly formed Dominion of Canada in the late eighteen hundreds, they retained control over their systems of education. This control was maintained partly to reflect the different geographical, religious and cultural priorities of each jurisdiction and its provincial or territorial governments. Provincial and territorial control over education continues today under the Constitution Act of 1867 to 1982. Though each province or territory controls the delivery,

organization and evaluation of public education, the systems are generally similar in their historical and present forms.

Influence of UK and USA

Prior to the Second World War (WWII) British and European art movements and theories heavily influenced art education in Canada. As a young constitutional monarchy, close ties remained to the United Kingdom (UK). Its impact on art education can be seen in how education systems were built and validated. This began with adherence to the South Kensington system, looking to emulate British success in manufacturing and industry. Curriculum ideologies and educational theories in sway in the UK were often used as guidelines and building blocks for provincial and territorial decisions (Stirling, 2006).

After WWII the United States of America (USA) rose to global economic power, and began to increasingly influence social, cultural and political fields, including education. With a shared history, and as the USA's closest neighbour, American movements and thinkers have long influenced Canadian art education. Its dominant influence came to the fore in the late 1950s with a major movement for curriculum reform that continues to define curriculum organization and priorities. By the early 1970s the USA had replaced the UK as the major source of art education influence (Pearse, 2006).

There is an exception: French tradition and language have had a dominant influence in the education systems of Quebec, parts of New Brunswick and Manitoba. This includes an influence on art education in these provinces. However, for the purposes of this review, when speaking of Canada as a whole, I will be referring to English-speaking Canada. This is not meant to discount the influence and history of French tradition and language, but to streamline the review to larger generalizations that can be connected to the contemporary habitus of English-language public schools in Nova Scotia where this study is based.

1850s-1900

As a young Commonwealth country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Canada's public education systems were for the most part dominated by British ideas and culture. For art education this was evident in a focus on utilitarian mechanical drawing. Developing skill in drawing, or draftsmanship, was a way to train designers and the future labour force for manufacturing and industry. A focus on geometrical and freehand drawing was intended to translate into 'better designed manufactured goods with more pleasing decorations' that would 'improve a nation's ability to compete on world markets' (Stankiewicz, 2007, p. 16).

As in many English-speaking countries and colonies at the time, the South Kensington system of industrial drawing dominated art education until around 1910. Instruction under this system was 'rule-bound, governed by the approved drawing manual and overseen by drawing masters, preferably with credentials from the British South Kensington art and design school system. Conformity was valued over individuality' (Pearse, 2006, p. 7/28). Most school-based drawing instruction in the early 1900s consisted of copybooks with printed exemplars and blank space for drawing reproductions.

1900-1920s

Between 1900 and the 1920s 'handiwork' such as paper crafts, cardboard modelling, book binding, and sewing entered schools (Chalmers, 1985). Influenced by the American Arts and Craft movement, which had in turn been influenced by the British movement with William Morris and John Ruskin at its core, 'drawing' instruction became 'art'. In addition to drawing copies, design, decoration and colour work, as well as drawing from nature, became part of what was taught. The move from copying and representation found in drawing copybooks became art instruction that included looking at design and structure. Professional artists were sought as leaders in instruction and their work as exemplars for students to emulate (Pearse, 2006). While art education at the time moved away from drawing for reproduction, a focus on imitating adult ideas and compositions remained in place until the years following the First World War.

1920s-40s

In the time between world wars contemporary studies in psychology began to impact art instruction in Canadian schools. A continued influence of the Arts and Craft movement was augmented by interest in the Child Study Movement and Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Self-expression and child art - artwork generated by children and not copies of adult artwork - began to flourish. First influenced by the work of Franz Cisek in Europe, and supported by the theories of John Dewey and progressive education in the USA, child art took hold in school programming. Active participation in a learning process that included imaginative and colourful artwork became prized and continued into the 1930s. Its progression and inclusion across Canada was interrupted by the war years of the Second World War. When the war ended 'art education, in Canada, at the end of the 1940s … (was) a spotty and inconsistent activity, in which provinces, by and large, espoused liberal philosophies and conducted conservative programs' (MacGregor, 1979, p. 1).

1940s-1950s

The post-war period saw an expansion of the middle class, and with it personal growth through self-expression in art education. The time around WWII also saw many persecuted people fleeing Europe and settling in North America. This included artists, designers, and teachers that were members of the Bauhaus art movement. A school of design, architecture, and applied arts originally situated in Germany, the Bauhaus are often associated with a geometric style characterized as 'severe but elegant' (Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.). Disseminated through artist-educators, such as Joseph Albers and László Moholy-Nagy, the Bauhaus model of abstracted formal construction (as opposed to the preceding models of representational reproduction, or imitative reproduction) began to influence how art was taught in schools. As Howell (2020) explains:

> A guiding premise was that creating art is a constructive endeavour, and that construction is superior to imitative representation ... Fundamental to instruction were several key ideas: the primal quality of the elements, the identification of 'relationship' as the overarching principle of organisation, and the conception of artistic skill as a special visual ability (p. 44).

This premise of construction narrowed art to being viewed as discrete objects that could be formally analysed and did not include larger contexts that are now recognized as part of visual culture, namely the relationship of makers and viewers (Freedman, 2003), and the effect (and affect) of the makers, viewers and materials interacting (and intra-acting).

The dominant influence of the Bauhaus model of fundamental concepts endures in school visual arts curricula in the form of the elements and principles of design. As exemplified in the recently updated Nova Scotia visual arts curriculum (Prov. of NS, 2020), these 'fundamentals' continue to be entrenched as dogma in school visual arts curricula as necessary building blocks for both abstract and representational art creation and understanding. However the influence of Bauhaus formal construction and abstraction are not explicated or even referenced. The assumptions regarding form and its divorce from context underpin this view of 'fundamentals' and do not recognize that sometimes the parts do not add up to the whole. In fact, what are described as relationships are actually spatial orientations fixed in time (Howell, 2020) something even Conrad Waddington, a geneticist who promoted relating physics and painting, denounced as unimaginative 'tactical technology' (Waddington 1969, 49). Using this mechanical form of process, and the application of rules and components, does not recognize relationships that exist between form, context, and actors.

Returning to the discussion of the post-war period, the earlier interest in psychology, theories of creativity, and child art influence could still be seen in classrooms. The child-centred approach to education, that called for schools to meet the needs of the individual child, held sway. This was supported by a continued influence of John Dewey's championing of art and education as essential modes of expression and democracy (Dewey, 1938). At odds with the Bauhaus notion of fixed principles, the pragmatic work of John Dewey and his prioritization of experience and the learner was still in evidence in Canadian schools. Though in many cases it is now taken for granted, Dewey's view of the child as being shaped by, and in turn responsible for shaping, their environment also saw art as process- rather than product-oriented (Grierson, 2017). His advocacy for centring school activity around the

nature and experience of the child continues to be a strong driving force in elementary schools today. However, as it relates to child art of the period and the operant curriculum enacted in schools at the time, the emphasis of child art on engagement, exploration and meaning making, with the child seen as an artist with their own innate wisdom and curiosity was contained within the sphere of school and childhood. Davis (2005) explains that,

> Drawing on the modernist quest for freedom from traditional constraints, students in this progressive tradition were only encouraged to create and not to consider, either on their own or in terms of their developing efforts, the work of famous artists of the past and present (pp. 91-92).

In schools Dewey's art as experience disposition did not translate into having students question or reflect upon art found outside of the school, in the art world of adults.

A further support of child-centred exploration during this time period came from post-war reconstructionist Herbert Read's *Education Through Art* (1943) and art educator Victor Lowenfeld's *Creative and Mental Growth* (1947). Read saw art as a way to reform society after the devastation of WWII. Read presented art as 'a condition required for the healthy cognitive and emotional development of the child, thereby creating a society of mentally stable and productive citizens' (Barchana-Lorand, 2015, p.170). *Education Through Art*'s moral appeal was buttressed by Read's consideration and application of contemporary psychological research, suggesting a connection to cognitive and emotional development as justification for art education. Though Read suggested empirical evidence and science would prove his argument, such evidence has never been fully realized. Further, Read's arguments for 'art' seems to have less to do with the subject of art and more to advocating for a larger role for creativity and emotion in education. Nevertheless, as Barchana-Lorand (2015) explains, 'Read's analysis has had considerable influence mainly within the arena of educational theory, and, in particular, regarding the role of creativity in education and on the therapeutic and diagnostic significance of children's drawings' (p. 170). He can be credited with influencing both a general shift in the education of children and with inspiring the work of prominent Canadian art educator Charles Dudley Gaitskell. Through the work of Gaitskell, such as *Children and Their Art* (1958), this impact, according to Pearse (2006), 'gave shape to school-based art education in the postwar period' (p. 20/28) in Canada and held sway up to the 1980s (Clark, 2006). Gaitskell's influence saw the promotion of Read's *Education Through Art*, echoed Dewey's child-centred progressive education and applied

Lowenfeld's stages of child art development.

Lowenfeld's *Creative and Mental Growth* (1947) connected art education with developmental psychology and at the time gave it legitimacy as an academic field (Alter-Muri, 2002). Lowenfeld used his observations from teaching children in Europe and the USA to articulate art-specific goals and pedagogies that looked to developmental psychology and motivational techniques. Lowenfeld, like Dewey and Read, believed in learning by doing and offered within *Creative and Mental Growth* 'techniques', or cueing strategies and questions, for art making activities. More influentially, especially in elementary art education, *Creative and Mental Growth* presented a theory of developmental stages of children's art that teachers could apply to assessing and planning for young children's art lessons. *Creative and Mental Growth* was widely used as a textbook for elementary art teachers into the 1970s. Further, the appeal of a predictable, and therefore controllable, hierarchy of development has resulted in these stages of artistic development still being referenced in elementary classrooms and curriculum today. Like the Bauhaus influence on elements and principles of design, Lowenfeld's stages of artistic development are often left unquestioned by the general classroom teacher and many art specialist teachers alike, even though the work has been marked with legitimate concerns. These concerns include the critique of lacking statistical analyses and references, thereby making the stages anecdotal and not scientifically sound. The aforementioned appeal of predictability also speaks to cultural bias, as identified by Hamblen (1985), wherein generalizable hierarchies are ordered and viewed as progressing towards an ultimate goal or endpoint, when linear growth is not supported by actual children's drawing progressions (Alter-Muri, 2002). In looking to children's drawings as evidence of each stage, there is not a recognition of the different graphic models that children would be exposed to in different cultures (Kindler, 1997). The stages also did not address social influences on art development, like peers or media (Barkan, 1966). This is not to say that Lowenfeld intended his work to be adhered to as a universal script, in fact he cautioned against using his theories to generalize the development of children's art: 'He continually reiterated that development differed among children, and art teachers had to be flexible in using the developmental charts as a guide to average expectancies' (Alter-Muri, 2002, p. 174-175). Whether used prescriptively or

applied with caution, Lowenfeld's work has allowed many classroom teachers to feel confident in planning and teaching art activities and lessons.

1960s

While art education programs in Canada continued to grow throughout the country in the 1960s and 1970s, they were not left unscathed by the educational fallout of the USSR's launch of the space satellite Sputnik in 1957. The subsequent space-race between the USSR and the USA began an overhaul of the American education system, with a pronounced emphasis on science and mathematics education. Canadian systems also changed to favour scientific rationalism. Within this overhaul, a conservative, discipline-oriented focus took hold. With a focus on science and scientific ways of thinking, feeling was separated from understanding, and with that art education shifted away from its previous focus on self-expression. The separation and organization of knowledge and methods of inquiry into attributes came from the sciences and was spurred on by the work of cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner (1960), whose discipline approach continues to be applied to education today. The distinction between disciplines, deemed important to education for competition in the space-race, and subjects that were not seen as directly relating to it, saw art relegated to being a 'non-academic' subject.

late 1960s - 1970s

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the beginning of the accountability movement. 'As accountability became the new watchword, curricular affairs shifted from consideration of content to identification of effective devices for evaluation and measurement' (Efland, 1990, p. 248). A continued commitment to rationality saw a shift from learning as inquiry to learning as mastery of preselected facts (Popkewitz, Pitman, & Barry, 1986). Such facts were to be planned and evaluated using behaviour-based objectives that connected to developmental psychology and social taxonomies. Art education curriculum content, with the influence of aesthetic education in the USA, grew from art production to include art appreciation, art criticism and art history. Children were seen as having 'tremendous creative potentials as intelligent viewers, perceptive critics, and sensitive interpreters of the

arts' (Feldman, 1970, p. vi). In order to facilitate looking at and interpreting art, visits to local art galleries became a common experience for public school children.

While curriculum developers embraced the concept of disciplinary knowledge and scientific rationality, it was sometimes tempered, or overtly countered, in practice. Stankiewicz (2007) notes, concerning art teaching in Quebec in the 1960s, that while the art world embraced conceptual and performance art, school systems focused on objective disciplinary knowledge and evaluation, and art teachers in Quebec had their own ideas:

> 'few art teachers brought contemporary art practices into their curricula or connected art with social reforms. Most viewed art education as compensation for excessive rationality in school learning … Their goal was to involve students "*in an artistic experience*" and not a knowledge of art' (p. 23)

In practice notions of innate creativity and romanticism continued to hold sway.

Also in the 1970s, American art education historian Arthur Efland, looking at the operational curriculum, or to what actually happens in classrooms, noted a dominant 'school art style' in elementary schools (1976). This 'style' is typified by what Bresler (1999) refers to as

> a safe, surface level style, evasive of meaningful issues, avoiding the wider ends of the emotional and intellectual continuum that could be evoked and expressed, eliminating the problems that art could raise (p. 33)

Writing in 2013, Gude points out that the style continues to be popular even as the shifts in paradigms and curricular focus have changed. When Efland wrote of School Art Style in 1976 he estimated that the style had been in practice in school classrooms for forty-five to fifty years, making it now, in 2021, up to ninety years. That is almost a century of 'standardized, product-oriented, one-time projects, with no continuity, skill building, or development of reasoning abilities' in elementary schools (Bresler, 1992, p. 403). The value of visual arts education becomes, in this context, a defeating narrative of quick homogenous products.

The idea of 'arts-in-education' also took hold during this time, with many schools 'experiencing' the arts (now an inclusive plural) through visiting artists and performances. It

also saw arts being used to teach other subjects, integrating with general curriculum. As Efland (1990) notes in discussing this idea,

> The term *interdisciplinary* was often used in descriptions of arts-in-education programs; although this would suggest affinity with the idea of the disciplines, it rather referred to the use of the arts to teach other subjects (p.246).

Similarly, discussing the emergence of arts-in-education in 1960s Ontario, Clark (2006) identifies the promotion of interdisciplinary practices. Clark also points out the difference between collectively taught arts education and arts-in-education that relied on artists and art galleries and emphasized studio-based activity.

The involvement of teaching artists presents a double-edged sword to arts educators. As Hanley (1994) explains, in relation to the reemergence of arts-in-education programming in the 1990s:

> This temporary measure helps keep artists employed and provides an important link between students, the schools, and practicing artists, but may also camouflage the true state of arts education in the school by providing the appearance of a program where none exist (p. 211).

Isolated projects that tout arts integration and infusion by bringing artists into classrooms also perpetuate a bias towards performance and production. As Efland (1990) aptly sums up,

> Though the effort was well intentioned, it shunned the use of educator as resource persons on the problems affecting the teaching of the arts; as a result, it tended to alienate many of the groups it purported to help. (p. 246)

Such groups include artists, students, and classroom teachers, but conspicuously proves most alienating to school-based arts educators, camouflaging the precariousness of their positions in schools, if they still exist. Efland's and Hanley's critical reflection on arts-in-education in the 1960s and the 1990s continues to be relevant today.

1980s - 1990s

With increasing school visits to local galleries and museums, art galleries and early childhood educational settings began to be recognized as locations for art education programming. The reform themes of the 1960s that centred on disciplines re-emerged,

taking the form of Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) in the USA. Elliot Eisner's (1972, 1987) promotion of a structured curriculum focused on sequential content rather than self-expression was influential. DBAE was content–driven and divided into four interlinked disciplines of art production, art criticism, aesthetics, and art history. Its impact in Canada can be seen in the 'balanced' approach that was taken up by many provinces and territories. Such a balance was struck by sequencing the very similar areas of studio, art history, art criticism and aesthetics. The 'balanced' art curriculum continued into the 1990s. In this second decade, 'issues and activities that address cultural pluralism, multiculturalism and aboriginality' were raised, but did not progress, as there was little funding (Irwin, 1999, p. 31). Interest in thinking of art education as a part of a larger visual culture also took root.

2000s

A majority of provinces and territories released new curriculum documents in the period around the second millennium. They were, for the most part, a continuation of disciplinary knowledge and objective evaluation through grade level outcomes, indicators, and rubrics. Western forms of knowledge extended their hold on education systems that continued to focus on accountability. Standardized testing scores were used to justify a 'back-to-basics' emphasis on language, math, science and technology. The commitment to these 'core' subjects overshadowed the 'concomitant decline in instructional time and resources allocated to the arts' (Upitis, 2011, p. 5). Neuropsychology's influence began to take hold with brain-based strategies and a stronger adherence to developmental stages. As Pearse (2006) summarizes,

> Art education in the late modern and postmodern eras can be described as an amalgam of child-centred modernist philosophies and practices, Bauhaus-engendered "art fundamental" theories laced with American Discipline Based Arts Education (DBAE) and a Canadianized version of "Arts Education", enlivened with a dash of multiculturalism (p. 25/28).

Present

Pearse's summary of the late modern and postmodern eras continues to be relevant today. The modernist core is still evident in arts education through the previously mentioned continued use of formal design principles and the reliance on studying historical examples of

'great masters' (or the dead white men from the modernist trope of the successful artist as a white-straight-cisgender-man who is recognized by the chosen judges of high art for his 'genius' and received the rewards of fame by monetizing that 'genius'; or the 'extraordinary' story of someone who is not a white-straight-cisgender-man 'beating the odds' to achieve fame for being an 'exception', also achieving success through monetization). Additionally, the operational curricular valorization of production-oriented superficial quick projects that are visually 'cute' or generally appealing appear 'standardized, reflecting diverse ability levels rather than diverse visions and ideas' (Bresler, 1992, p. 403) and are still prevalent in classrooms. However, this is beginning to be disrupted by an increased focus on metacognition in addition to conceptual and procedural skills (Marshall, 2014; Perry, Lundie, & Golder, 2019), as well as the inclusion of contemporary socially conscious art practices, along with art from non-Western, marginalized, and indigenous groups. The British Columbia (BC) arts curriculum (2021), for example, looks to honour many ways of knowing and has engaged First Peoples (Indigenous) ways of knowing and principles of learning. This BC curriculum, while still discipline-focused, favours a pedagogical model of developing disciplinary thinking habits that can be generalized to other areas. This shift from isolated discipline to cross-disciplinary dispositions is at the heart of Hetland et al's *Studio Thinking* (2013) and its Studio Habits of Mind (SHoM). SHoM looks to framing art teaching and learning around cognitive processes and behaviours that are commonly found in art making. Hetland et al refer to this thinking-centred approach as 'habits of mind', part of the metacognitive-building strategies and scaffolding of the Project Zero retinue of research and publications that focus on understanding cognitive processes in and through the arts (pz.harvard.edu). An increased interest in choice-based pedagogies that promote these thinking-centred approaches is also on the rise, as creative thinking, student choice and voice become (re)valued (Jaquith & Hathaway, 2012; Douglas & Jaquith, 2018; Sands & Purtee, 2018; Hogan et al, 2020). There is a powerful culture of thinking available within and through arts education that extends beyond aesthetic appreciation, that can teach and reinforce the importance of making decisions, choices and multiple understandings (Hetland et al., 2013).

Across Canada learning *in* and *about* the arts has largely been supplanted in the elementary years to favour learning *through* the arts, though all three are suggested as active in schools. This follows a renewed focus on integrated and interdisciplinary learning and arts-in-education projects and programmes supported by national arts organizations, private foundations and community art groups. As mentioned previously in regards to arts-in-education initiatives in earlier decades, a concern regarding such programmes being used to camouflage cuts and deficiencies in school-based arts education continues to be raised (Hanley, 1994; Reid, 2018).

The ebb and flow of art education's priorities and foci in Canada can be characterized as a oscillating emphasis on learning *in* the arts, or the 'how to' of technique, mediums, and expression; learning *about* the arts, the historical and cultural aspects of art creation and expression; and learning *through* the arts, or using the arts to facilitate and deepen learning in other subject areas (Upitis, 2011). What seems to be neglected or omitted in much of the historical retelling and prioritization of art in schools is what I would call learning *with* the arts - with the places, spaces, materials, peoples (human and more-than-human) and affects that inter- and intra-act. With this idea in mind, I now turn to looking at the educational research literature that has taken on this *with* stance – research that can be described as post-critical, and more specifically new materialist.

New materialism and the post-critical in education

I will delve more into new materialism and other post-critical theories and stances and how they apply to this study in the Theoretical Framework chapter. This section of the literature review provides an introduction to a range of research that has occurred, and is occurring, using post-critical lenses and discourses in the field of education and the sub-field of art education.

The ideas and approaches described and developed through new materialism are, as Ahmed (2008) has pointed out, not actually new. That matter has agency and vitality has long been respected in Indigenous epistemologies. Though these ways of thinking and being are not

new, what is considered to be a more recent development is how, through a new materialist lens, educational researchers are applying them to curriculum and pedagogy. As Snaza et al (2016) explain,

> new materialisms require us to reckon with how existing theories of curriculum tend to presume both the humanness of education – that is, that education concerns humans learning with humans what it means to be human – and the prevailing disciplinary or subject divisions that have been constructed entirely around a particular conception of the human being (p. xx).

This reckoning opens curriculum and learning in education to critiquing modes of thinking that idealise and perpetuate individualism, heteronormativity, and able-bodiness as the assumptive 'normal'. In terms of educational research literature, the methods that dominate the field are also questioned for their assumptions regarding these idealisations and scientific linearity. Such questions press for moving beyond the human, to learning

> to attune to the world in ways that go far beyond the humanist restriction and cease pretending that while humans are engaged in learning and teaching, all other things are mere background (Snaza et al, 2016, p. xxii).

Through this, and with it, a shift occurs for educators thinking of curriculum, moving away from the subject/object divide towards encompassing and enfolding relationships and interdependencies beyond the human (Snaza & Weaver, 2015). These relations work together, as an assemblage, to surface understandings (McKnight, 2016). Put another way, as Snaza et al (2016) explains: 'There is no longer a knowing (human) subject who acts and a passive (nonhuman) object that is acted upon: everything is "entangled"'(p. xvii). Within this entanglement objects are recognised as having agency and a participatory role in education, 'they are not merely inert stuff that forms the background for a more important "human" learning experience' (p. xx). These objects, or more-than-human things[1] hold what Bennett (2010) describes as 'thing- power', '...the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle' (p. 6). In an educational context, the intra-

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[1] The terms 'non-human', 'more-than-human', and 'other-than-human' are used somewhat interchangeably within the research literature. All press for the recognition and understanding of objects, things and beings that exist beyond the human. For the purposes of this study 'more-than-human' is favoured. In my view, 'non-human' and 'other-than-human' suggest a continued adherence to Western notions of human domination that centre humanness as the norm, and where all else is *less than* the human. 'More-than-human' offers a retelling that does not centre on the human or focus on binary and deficit ways of thinking.

action of things and humans are an important influence on what is called school – the place that is produced through, and because of, these intra-actions.

In general education

As previously mentioned in relation to his influence on art education in the first half of the twentieth century, John Dewey (1938/1998) espoused that the child and environment shape each other. In looking to center school activity around the nature and experience of the child, he recognized the situatedness of their experiences. A need for an interactive site for pedagogy, one that shifts based on interplay, can be perceived in his work. That the space and person hold affective resonance and form came from the recognition of environment and previous lived experience having an effect on learning. Within new materialist educational discourse these notions of space and affect in pedagogical encounters are extended and activated.

Writing of the sociomaterial and assemblages in education, Postma (2012) offers a consideration of education not as a site, but as an active participant in the 'enactment of realities' (p. 151). This is echoed by Fenwick and Landri (2012) who suggest to 'foreground the "matter" of education as the mutual entailment of human and non-human energies in local materialisations of education and learning' (p. 1). Also looking to the sociomaterial, McGregor (2014) brings us back to matter and the material, offering that it is important 'to explore how matter matters, beyond what humans do with it, in educational contexts' (p. 213).

Writing about early childhood educational settings, Hultman and Lenz-Taguchi (2010) focus their attention on relational materialism and the non-human forces that inform children's learning. Attending to the human-non-human encounters amongst young children and their environments, they present relational materialism as "a space in which non-human forces are equally at play and work as constitutive factors in children's learning and becomings" (Hultman & Lenz-Taguchi, 2010 p. 527).

Questioning special education policies and pedagogies as unable to address the complexity of children and young people with disabilities' experiences, Reddington and Price (2018) look to new materialism

> as a form of pedagogy (that) can prioritize learners with disabilities embodied, relational connections to school and destabilize highly medicalized functional pedagogical approaches. The material turn in schools is a welcoming pedagogical framework that places the material body and the emergent learner at the center of our practice (pp. 465-466).

They present new materialism as an answer to the search for pedagogical approaches that 'allow for increased voice, creativity and active engagement' in the learning of children and young people with disabilities (p. 466).

Van de Putte et al (2018) investigate the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) workplace, and how the space of the workplace enables intra-active encounters. They put forward this space 'as an active agent among the entangled, multiple, intra-acting agents that made up the assemblage of inclusive practice' (890), opening to the possibility of 'difference' being valued and legitimated in school (p. 888).

In art education

In art education, the post-critical has allowed for researchers to examine and champion how material conditions, meaning, and feeling influence and enfold each other. Intuitive connection through affect is affirmed in Ellsworth's (2005) viscerally felt pedagogy, in which educators are encouraged to recognize that 'Bodies have affective somatic responses as they inhabit a pedagogy's time and space' (p. 4). As such, affective intensities are mobilized as places of learning and teaching. Springgay (2008) looks to transmateriality and touch in art education as potential areas of meaning making. While Hickey-Moody (2013) echoes Ellsworth, looking to 'mobilize a being of sensation to interrogate the affective forces produced by art' (p. 92). All three researchers (Ellsworth, Springgay, and Hickey-Moody) present compelling arguments for recognizing the importance of complex encounters of relationality and feeling in pedagogical experiences.

Looking again to early childhood, this time to early childhood art education, Lenz Taguchi (2009) critically analyses taken for granted habits of thought and action 'habits of teaching and learning that are tied to material-discursive conditions of things and matter, as well as ideas and notions of learning' (p. 49). Kaplan (2020), researching in the same sub-field, presents a case study of an 'unfolding mural' created with young children. Kaplan focuses on the intentional move away from traditional expectations of a goal-oriented activity, instead favouring and elevating the power of the 'yet-to-be-known' and 'curricular serendipity' (p. 26). These researchers offer examples of what Snaza et al (2016) describe as:

> A new materialist pedagogy … (that) dramatically shifts the ways we conceive of the ends or aims of education. Humanist education always begins with the end and works backward, justifying the means, both curricular and pedagogical. And at the end is almost always a version of Western Man. … new materialist pedagogy is open ended, processual, and attentive to the aleatory nature of encounter (p. xxii).

The affective and the material feed the aleatory nature, one that depends on chance, or Kaplan's serendipity.

Garber (2019) focuses on the 'thing-power' of objects and materials as activations for deep engagement in art education. Within her discussion of the role that the material plays in decision-making and choice, Garber notes the important role materials, objects, and making play in learning and teaching in art. She observes that, 'intra- actions and correspondences arising from the materialism of the classroom—the media, processes, people, site, and outcome—form an entanglement that students and other makers value' (p.16). Returning to affect and how it relates to objects and the material, Hickey-Moody and Page (2016) also speak to what can be of pedagogical value in regards to the act of making in the arts. To them, the 'transformative capacities' (p. 1) of matter and entanglements are available through how 'bodies and things are produced together' and intertwine as 'co-constitutive of our embodied subjectivity' (p. 3). Such mutually essential enactments also rely on Ellsworth's affective intensities, showing in Hickey-Moody and Page's reading that 'affect is the way in which art speaks and the materiality of voice is part of the way art speaks' (p. 11).

Autobiographical and autoethnographic arts-based research practices in education

I now turn to situating this study, a self-described arts-informed autoethnography, within the sphere of research inquiry that is based in, or informed by, the processes and products of the arts. Looking to provide a brief acknowledgement of the literature that has preceded and informed this study, I situate this work more specifically within Arts-Based Research (ABR) that is combined with self-study, autobiography, and autoethnography. While in this dissertation I identify Arts-Informed Research (AIR), as described by Cole and Knowles (2012), and describe its application in the Methodological Framework chapter, ABR is a more widely used term and will be focused on within this review (Leavy, 2020).

Within the ABR field some researchers, such as Barone and Eisner (2012), Haywood Rolling (2013) & Gerber et al (2012), look to the arts as ways of knowing in qualitative research. Others, like Neilsen (2004) and McNiff (2018), distinguish ABR from qualitative inquiry, suggesting that by seeing art as a 'transdisciplinary way of knowing and communicating' (McNiff, 2018, p. 24) ABR has developed into a research paradigm in its own right.

The term Arts-Based Research was first presented by Eisner in 1997, though Barone and Eisner (2012) assert that the term originated four years earlier at Stanford University. Eisner (1997) presents arts-based inquiry as a way to open debate and experiment with alternative methodologies and ways of thinking in educational research. Similarly, Scholartistry, a term coined by Nielsen (1998), employs the arts to animate social science inquiry. Nielsen (2012) notes that

> Increasingly, scholars are choosing to explore phenomena in ways that fuse their scholarship with their aesthetic perspectives; the resulting scholartistry (Neilsen, 2001) has created room for a discussion that is long overdue (p. 4/12).

Within this circle of practice-based educational research that connects to art-making, A/r/tography also developed. The acronym 'a/r/t' within A/r/tography represents the combined role of the artist-researcher-teacher (Irwin et al 2006; Springgay et al 2005). Such practitioners are considered to occupy an 'in-between' space where knowing, doing and making merge to create a third space (Pinar 2004). In such a space 'relational acts of

teaching and learning through living inquiry' exhibit educational potential (Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2012, p. 2/11).

Self-study

In discussing living inquiry and the role of life stories in ABR, Cole and Knowles (2001) look to portraying life through life history research and recognise research as having an autobiographical element, but distinguish that while '(a)rts-informed research has strong reflexive elements that evidence the presence and signature of the researcher, but the researcher is not necessarily the focus or subject of study' (2012, p. 62). As such, the assumption of researcher presence does not necessitate a study of self. However, Sinner et al (2006) note the powerful role that a 'hybrid, practice-based form of methodology' that is necessarily about the self and the social (p. 1224) can play.

Arts-based self-study methods building on autoethnographic narrative methods of researchers such as Denzin (2006) and Richardson (1997) have developed, with Barone (2008) even referring to Richardson's work as creative nonfiction (a form of ABR). Looking to the unconscious material that can be generated through arts, Slattery (2001) calls for an arts-based autoethnography. Similarly Mitchell et al (2005) utilise arts-based self-study methods. Scott-Hoy (2000) uses evocative stories and images to connect herself and her research process. Scott-Hoy & Ellis (2012) note that

> In line with autoethnography, arts-based researchers include the artist's subjectivity and present their work as embodied inquiry: sensuous, emotional, complex, intimate. They expect their projects to evoke response, inspire imagination, give pause for new possibilities and new meanings, and open new questions and avenues of inquiry (Bochner & Ellis, 2003) (p. 10/17).

This has been applied to the visual art education context. Eldridge (2012) describes her research as a visual autoethnography (as outlined by Smith-Shank & Keifer-Boyd, 2007) that employs collage to reflect upon experiences teaching art in public elementary schools. Gill (2014) uses autoethnography to explore the relational process in teaching art. Parker (2017) employs illustration to communicate her exploration of being and becoming as an early career art educator.

Within this research literature I situate my emergent methodology. I enact an arts-informed autoethnographic exploration of teaching school-based visual arts. Through negotiating materials and affect, the educational space opens to seeking more than what is traditionally expected.

Theoretical Framework: Threading the needle

'Nothing in experience is absolutely simple, single, and isolated' (Dewey, 1933, p.145).

Like everyone, I am a 'product of inherited understandings, inherited truths' that are constantly 'being disrupted by new stories and new realities' (Phillips, 2014, 0:23-0:31). In this study I work towards a disruption that troubles the boundaries of 'normal' as delineated in Western epistemology, and look to share experiences as examples of commonality, connection and complexity. I begin this chapter with one of those stories, a story of making and listening:

In high school, I had access to small blocks of soapstone, each about the size of a football. I carried the blocks home, one by one, wrapped in a wool scarf and cradled in my arms like a heavy baby. With my art teacher's encouragement, I used them to create several carvings – a mother cradling a child; a leaf that metamorphosized into a face; an organic undulating circle representing the continuum of life. Each sculpture was chiseled and sanded into shape on my father's workbench, near the hum of the furnace. At first I focused on how I was going to make the stone conform to my designs, but unexpectedly the stone would crack and pieces would fracture and fall.

My attempts to force my will onto the stone was not simply inexperience, it aligned with the dominant Western perception that objects, and nature in general, are there for humans to gain mastery over. A hegemonic knowledge system rooted in domination, Western modernist ways of conceiving and perceiving the world revolve around the idea that autonomous humans use reason and rationality to act and make sense of the world. To master it, or develop it, in the name of progress and growth. Western notions of 'progress' and 'growth' however rely on distancing from and externalising community, nature, and affective literacies, along with the dismissal or othering of non-dominant knowledges and

peoples. There is an unequal exchange when this Western hegemony demands convenience and taking, in the guise growth, that comes at the expense of both the short- and long-term health of the Earth and its beings. The ecological implications of assuming human superiority is at odds with traditional interconnected and subjective views of balance and temperance – of reciprocity: give and take.

I had been warned that I couldn't force a shape out of the stone, that it would, in its own way, tell me what and where it was willing to give. I had to learn its surfaces, as well as its tensions and faults, and work with them to create shape, to evoke meaning. I learnt that there has to be a dialogue, and I had to accept what the stone was willing to give me – there were limits and I had to listen.

I have tried to listen to the surfaces and what lies beneath in the tensions and faults of this study. Viewed from multiple perspectives, my memories and experiences tangle with ways of being and thinking that are dissonant with the dominant rational and compartmentalised perspective. I look to overcome this dissonance and effect a hybrid, fluid lens through which to question the social structures and phenomena that that try to decontextualize my knowing and feeling. The theoretical choices I have made reflect this. As such, supporting and shaping this study are new materialism, decoloniality, and affect theory. Together these theoretical approaches enact interconnectivity and subjectivity as strengths. They are applied here to inform and infuse this study with an intentional exploration and questioning of human and more-than-human experience.

Through these approaches I also look to making as a way of knowing and a form of lived inquiry. The negotiation and exploration that occur through these lenses are meant to interrupt and suspend traditional Western approaches to knowledge, production, and ways of being in an educational context, and to open to vitalities and relationalities that exist beyond hegemonic expectations.

New Materialism

"Our knowledge-making practices are material enactments that contribute to, and are part of, the phenomena we describe" (Barad, 2007, p. 247).

As soon as I could use my hands, I was encouraged to make things. Squishing warm, homemade, salt-scented play dough between my fingers. Shaping it into objects, pounding into the table, scratching and poking it with a stick and cookie cutters. Sitting in a highchair at the kitchen table with a large paintbrush in my hand. Paint in an old muffin tin, mixed from powder and water, ready to cover collected papers with bright colours. Exploring and imagining in a large cardboard box decorated with painted bricks and cutout windows to be a home or a puppet theatre or a hideaway. Using smaller shoeboxes to build rooms and beds for toys and animals. Crayons scribbled and drawn on paper and on walls or under a bed. Used sideways for rubbing collected leaves and flowers into patterns and impressions onto paper.

In addition to many of these materials, the family craft box held 'things' to be assembled or used at the kitchen table: shiny candy wrappers, paper tubes, scraps of yarn and string, tissue paper wrappings saved from gifts, pine cones, buttons, and fabric scraps from outgrown clothing or moth-eaten scarves. Everyday objects that would, in another household, be discarded as trash, were treasures in my home. These 'things' helped me to develop and communicate my wants and needs and fueled my imagination.

I was encouraged to engage with the world in this way, moving and mediating my understandings while my mind and body were active in making. I revelled in the experiences, the sensations and smells, the excitement of something becoming. This way of thinking and being, so seemingly natural to me, would sometimes chafe against the world around me, leading me to question and to consider what was different, why things were not making sense. I had to develop a way to negotiate and explore what was happening within and around me. At times the outside world took over, but making and being with materials, with 'things' remained.

This research study has been a process of reclaiming that connection to the 'things' of my life. In enacting this connection, I draw from the work of theorists Barad (2007) and Bennet (2010), and educational researchers Fenwick and Landri (2012); Lenz Taguchi (2010); and Postma (2012). I look to decentre the Westernized human subject (that against which I chaffed) in educational processes and learning. I focus on new materialism's recognition of the active role that objects, materials and tools play in our meaning-making, affectively working with/in us. As Monforte (2018) suggests, I take the view that

> '(f)rom this decentred standpoint, the environment is not separate from humans, but part of the human experience. It is not a mere backdrop for their deeds and meanings, but an assemblage of human and non-human entities, affects, things and cultural practices' (p. 385).

Reality, in this telling, is not pre-given but perpetually enacted through encounters with other agencies, agencies that can be more-than-human (Hollin et al, 2017, p. 933). Looking to materials as co-constructors of 'reality' opens new avenues to approach experiences and values in arts education. The more-than- or other-than-human material objects of encounters can therefore be seen as 'not merely inert stuff' (Snaza et al, 2016). An exploration of ways that human and more-than-human materialities, or object-ness within new materialism as a focus for study, can be taken further. Snaza et al (2016) suggest

> we might begin to ask of the objects that surround and shape us how they have come to be here and what material and economic processes were required for their arrival. We can ask what they *do* to us, and even what they might do that has *nothing* to do with us. We can take off from the concepts of hidden and null curriculum and ask about how traditional humanist education teaches us anthropocentrism precisely by *not* attending to these nonhuman materialities and their agencies (p. xx-xxi).

This idea of looking outside of the human, beyond the human, to objects and materials, informs this study and presses for us, humans, to 'understand ourselves as material objects of the world, just as any other beings and matter' (Lenz Taguchi, 2009, p. 47).

New materialism allows for an active construction of knowledges and understandings from negotiating situational meanings. It 'permits a form of social constructivism … while retaining the idea that the object is more than just our construction of it' (Rosiek, 2018, p. 36). This pushes such construction beyond the human to encompass interactions, or 'intra-actions' (Barad, 2007), with/in objects and what can be classified as 'non-human'. It allows a 'way of understanding the world from within and as a part of it' (Barad, 2003, p. 88). Building on constructivism's emphasis on social engagement and negotiation of meaning, new materialism looks to consider the other-than-human aspect of engagement and meaning making. As Sencindiver (2017) describes:

> Reworking received notions of matter as a uniform, inert substance or a socially constructed fact, new materialism foregrounds novel accounts of its agentic thrust, processual nature, formative impetus, and self-organizing capacities, whereby matter as an active force is not only sculpted by, but also co-productive in conditioning and enabling social worlds and expression, human life and experience.

In this way, the 'social constructions' of matter become material actors with agency, recognizing the matter of our experiences and contexts.

Once such agency is acknowledged, it can be seen to be entangled in intra-acting assemblages of 'multiple enlivening agencies that are simultaneously at play and that affect each other. There are assemblages of intra-acting agents, human and non-human' (Van de Putte et al, 2018, p. 898). Thinking in terms of intra-actions releases objects to become and be activations that can, as Fenwick and Landri (2012) explain, 'transform materialities of education from 'matters of fact' to 'matters of concern'. They ask not only how human/nonhuman entanglement affects educational practices and policies, but also where are the openings for change' (p. 4). Opening educational practices to consider change, and different ways of being and knowing, then has the potential to blossom into new possibility and hope.

While new materialism offers the flexibility to move away from linear relations and allow for 'deep explorations of processes as well as self, others, human experiences, and social issues' (Garber, 2019, p. 17), it can also be seen as problematic in its move 'beyond' the human. By reaching beyond, it chances overlooking and misrepresenting the de-humanising experiences that many humans have endured (and continue to endure). Therefore, in addition to a new materialist reading, this study takes on a decolonial lens. This lens is necessary in order to address this possibility and to trouble normalized concepts of human, even when situated in a more-than-human context.

Decoloniality

> '… we embark on decolonial journeys that slow us down, call for listening, learning, re-learning as well as walking in a serpentine manner' (Lobo, 2020, p. 575).

This study was punctuated, and punctured, by the COVID-19 pandemic. The uncertain isolation of the first few months of the pandemic bubbled over into racial and social reckonings that became an inflection point for me and this study. Like many white educators, I looked for a way to make meaning of the experiences, events, and realities around us; to actively confront my biases, implicit and otherwise, and educate myself in pedagogical approaches that work to build community, give voice, and redistribute power. As such, I offer what Breidlid (2012) refers to as a 'critique from within' (p. 26) of our

hegemonic monoculture. While I can situate myself within the dominant Western systems of knowledge and power (I am a middle class, cisgender, straight, Euro-Canadian settler who has had the cultural and economic capital to navigate a tertiary education system built for me), I do not always consider myself an insider. My experiences as a woman and my connection through art to making and the more-than-human have opened into a way to grapple with complex systems. I worry about becoming comfortable and complacent in focusing on the more-than-human and losing sight of the very human struggle to be seen and heard. Because of this worry and awareness, the new materialist lens of this study is combined with the decolonial.

Informed by the work of researchers and advocates Mignolo & Walsh (2018); Breidlid (2012); and Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2008), I apply a decolonial lens to this project partly as a recognition of possible limitations of new materialism, and post-humanisms more generally. This is a deliberate recognition of the need for what Bayley (2018) refers to as a 'vital awareness' of 'just how easy it is to step back into humanism when decoloniality is not close to the heart of our endeavours' (p. 246). Importantly, a decolonial lens is enacted because of its focus on multiple ways of knowing and being. As Mignolo (2020) explains: 'decoloniality provides an option, an orientation towards delinking and towards epistemic and aesthetic (subjectivity, sensing, emotioning) reconstruction. Coloniality of knowledge goes hand in hand with coloniality of being' (p. 616).

Decolonization encompasses multiple, contextual, and relational processes, practices and praxis that work to undo a colonial matrix of power – a matrix that reifies a universal concept of modernity and coloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Mignolo, 2020). Identified as 'Western' or of the 'Global North', this concept of modernity and coloniality is hegemonic and, therefore, in need of questioning. This is not, as Briedlid (2012), attests, to 'undermine its importance and merits, but to put its self-proclaimed superior position globally in perspective' (p. 21). Further, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) explain, such an interrogation 'does not mean a rejection or negation of Western thought; in fact, Western thought is part of the pluriversal. Western thought and Western civilization are in most/all of us, but this does not mean a blind acceptance, nor does it mean a surrendering to North Atlantic fictions' (p. 3). Mohanty (2003) calls for us to resist these fictions, a resistance that 'lies in self-conscious

engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations and in the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces' (p. 196). The embeddedness of Western discourses, suggesting ideological, cultural, and epistemological neutrality, need to be troubled.

Zembylas (2018) describes decolonization as involving 'the deconstruction of dominant Eurocentric forms of intellectual production and the pluriversalization of the knowledge field by acknowledging epistemologies of the Global South that have been made invisible by modernity and coloniality' (p. 254). Decoloniality is described as 'expressions of thought and praxis that resist the ecological and racial violence reproduced by the rhetoric of modernity/coloniality' (Lobo, 2020, p. 576). Such rhetoric promotes dichotomous with/against notions that favour individuality, rational science, progress, detachment from and domination over nature; and deny difference, in-betweens, reciprocity, relationality and spectrums of being and knowing.

In educational contexts this translates into acknowledging that 'educational practices and schooled knowledge name education as a particular cultural place, a historically institutionalized place of settler colonialism' (Seawright, 2014 in Breidlid, 2012, p.35). As such, decolonization can act to reconcile and reconstruct dislocation, disembodiment, and disengagement as grounded local subjectivity, emergent sensations, and vital connectivity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 3). In that way, it can change how things are viewed and categorised (and question if they even should be categorized). Mbembe (2016), in addressing the colonial matrix of power in higher education, asserts that 'to decolonize implies breaking the cycle that tends to turn students into customers and consumers' (p. 31) It works to interrogate the political, economic, and social structures of the West/North by recognizing and grounding itself in non-hegemonic epistemologies (Breidlid, 2012, p. 25). It acts to 'connects us, but it does not presume to make uniform ... our thinking, doing, and words' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 6).

As a counternarrative, decoloniality emerges from, as Walsh explains in *On Decoloniality* (2018), a process of reknowing multiple knowledges, through 'the ongoing serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing and living; that is, an otherwise in plural' (Mignolo & Walsh, p. 81).

Combining new materialism with decoloniality

Combining new materialism with decoloniality is not without precedent: The work of Zembylas (2018) and Postma (2012) support combining posthumanist and decolonial approaches in educational contexts. In considering Mignolo (2006), Zembylas offers the supportive idea that '(t)ogether posthuman and decolonial perspectives can be more effective because they pluriversalize the task of decolonising … curricula and pedagogies' (Zembylas, 2018, p. 264). (Though Zembylas writes more broadly about using posthumanism, a connection to new materialism as a form of posthumanism is drawn here.) Their use in concert, Zembylas asserts, 'open up radical possibilities for both cultivating an ethics of relational ways of being and knowing and giving priority to the tasks of decolonisation' (p. 255). Both act to '(unsettle) the singular authoritativeness and universal character typically assumed and portrayed in academic thought' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 2).

Affect

> … if we begin not with rational plans but with the body, we begin with an expression of the energies and potentials in the present. The quality of emergent time is one of fluidity, of surprise, of movements of the body punctuated by rest and focused reflection; this is the quality of the ebb and flow of energy of the body in inter-action with other bodies (Boldt, Lewis & Leander, 2015, p. 435).

In the chapters that follow I will often refer to my embodied relationship to materials and ideas. In order to honour these felt responses and emergences I have included affect theory as a lens through which to view and communicate this study. Drawing from the work of Massumi (2015); Hickey-Moody et al (2016); Hickey-Moody and Page (2016); Boldt, Lewis and Leander (2015); Springgay and Zaliwska (2017), I apply affect theory to understand the entanglements that exist with/in people, objects, and materials in given educational contexts. I use it to make visible the emotionally and viscerally messy and muddled space of learning and teaching.

An affect, as described by Charteris and Jones (2016), is an 'intensive force that bodies exert upon one another that increases or decreases their capacity to act' (p. 199). Taking all

experience to be embodied, Wiebe and Snowber (2011) note that 'it is through our senses that we come to know' (p. 11). As such, affects are enacted and are not always communicable through language. Being open to ways of knowing and communicating that are not necessarily language based allows for insights to be cultivated that might otherwise be elusive.

Through this lens affect can be viewed as 'transpersonal, embodied and situated, in that it circulates among and between subjects' (Charteris & Jones, 2016, p. 192). In such a circulation meaning and relation become through a flowing rhizome of connection that forms and disperses in multiple directions, being, as originally explained by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 'open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification' (p. 12). This modification of forces and expression accompanies moments, or gaps and silences (Åhäll, 2018), that can be used to make sense of the world. Butler-Kisber (2012) contends that such '(n)ovel juxtapositions and/or connections, and gaps or spaces, can reveal both the intended and the unintended' (p. 269). The gaps allow for emergence, experimentation, and experience to co-mingle and create anew.

Massumi (2015) notes that affective forces 'exceed our emotions and conscious thoughts' (p. ix), making connections through pre- or non-linguistic forces that present, as Schaefer (2016) describes, as 'a felt compulsion'. Such compulsive force, Schaefer continues, 'connects our bodies and fuses us into communities'. Springgay and Zaliwska (2017) compel those involved in education to be aware of these felt forces and to allow their expression/action to inform our teaching and learning:

> To bear the recognition of the hidden forces of our everyday habits requires us to become affected. To become affected, we argue, is a pedagogical moment where pedagogy is not about a particular form, but comes into being through compositions of expression. (p. 281)

When we take the opportunity to look for and build moments of affective expression and connection, we open ourselves to the possibilities that acknowledging factors and forces that creative contexts can bring. Hickey-Moody and Page (2016) identify affect as being a possible

emerging point of intervention and analysis in education, pedagogy, and
schooling. It expresses the embodied experience of learning, the places in
which we learn, and the histories and desires we [teachers and learners]
bring to learning (p. 9).

This idea is reiterated by Hickey-Moody et al. (2016) to suggest that educators apply it to

their teaching and reconsider what pedagogy means and can be. They argue that

pedagogy can be conceived as an open, continuously created and
recreated process that is specific to intra-actions of difference, not
grounded in existing knowledges that attempt to equalize, normalize or
fall back on traditions of established values, concepts and practices (p.
215).

As such, through an affective lens the role of 'things' are part of the intra-active pedagogic

encounter. The objects and materials that we make/with, play with, struggle with, are also

part of the small shifts that define an encounter. By taking that experience and looking at it

'outside the habitual practices of the already-known' (Deleuze & Parnet in Davies, 2014, p.

10), we open the dialogue to the possibility of change.

Affect's ability to work in discourse with other approaches, such as new materialism and

decoloniality, to 'decenter and entangle the human in the ecologies and materialities that

cocreate our plural world' (Perry, 2020, p. 7) offers a way to actively recognise and

incorporate our ever-changing affective entanglements. Adding the theoretical lens of affect

gives space to the wordless and maps 'the micro-political relations that constitute the

beginnings of social change' (Hickey-Moody & Crowley 2010, 401). In chorus the three

approaches - new materialism, decoloniality, and affect theory - perform to continuously

negotiate embodied meaning.

Summary

Our meaning making does not stand isolated from our view of the world but
grows out of and leads back into it, possibly demanding that our view
change radically. It might also mean that the way in which we participate in
the world has to change (Rodgers, 2002, p.862).

Through this study I look to change, to trouble the constructed boundaries of assumptions

and expectations, and to open these postulations to being viewed and reinterpreted

through a hybrid, fluid lens of new materialism, decoloniality, and affect. These lenses

gather together to push beyond the human without losing the ability to see and be seen by humans, or as Boldt and Leander (2017) more aptly describe,

> we take our human bodies to be sensing at least some of the interaction in an unfolding relationship to other material and semiotic bodies (e.g. words, toys); we are not the centre of the interaction but in fact continually come into being in ever-changing formations (p. 413).

With this in mind I look to a felt practice of co-constructing meaning with other bodies, in ways that sometimes exceed verbal representation, in a fashion that 'constructs paths and praxis toward an otherwise of thinking, sensing, believing, doing, and living' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 4). to shared experiences of commonality, connection and complexity.

Methodological Framework: Whorls of lavender & where they lead

The methodology of this study emerged as I searched for a way to communicate about research as fluid and dynamic. I looked for a way to speak about the work that I do in schools that is honest and aware of the implications of my identity in that space. In asking what I can do with this work from my own positionality, I chose to enact research through an arts-informed autoethnography, allowing for ideas and concerns to surface through a process of negotiating meaning and action while engaging with materials, tools and objects. This recognizes Barad's (2003) assertion that

> '(t)he relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other' (Barad, 2003. p. 822).

With this in mind, I look to my embodied relationship to this work, this space, through acts of making and reflecting that explore the agentic impact of materials and how they act(ivate) and mediate knowing and making meaning. This is used flexibly and reflexively to enable an emergent methodology that initiates a call to seek more than what is traditionally expected and supposed within a Western framework of thinking.

An arts-informed autoethnography exploring context and research as experience, considered through a combined new materialist, decolonial, and affective lens, speaks to my need, as researcher, arts education practitioner, and person, to build awareness about the power of connection, ambiguities and assumptions and to act in a way that encourages embracing what Davis (2005) refers to as 'the ragged contours of human realities in place of the apparent clean borders of right and wrong answers' (p. 7). In using this form of research

methodology, the aforementioned need becomes unavoidable, because, as Armstrong (2008) explains,

> by their very nature, autoethnographies critically challenge taken for granted ways of knowing, ways of thinking, and ways of making sense of the world, which bring the subjective and the objective together. They situate our selves into their social and cultural milieu (section 2, paragraph 1).

Further, in using a new materialist-decolonial-affective lens to view and interpret this inquiry of my own perceptions and situatedness, this study highlights what Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund (2018) describe as the purpose of inquiry: 'to become more reflective on the magnitude of entanglement in which we operate' (p. 4-5). This involves using a methodological approach that speaks across time, spaces and materials.

Combining autoethnography with an arts-informed approach to research allows for the creation of what DeLanda (2006) calls a 'possibility space'. Sinner (2019) describes such spaces as 'active and flexible encounters, revealing the mediation of theory and practice as emotional, sensory and/or experiential knowledge'. It broadens 'parameters of "thinking-with" (to) embrace a conjunctive space of *and*, bringing interpretive lenses to recognize the growing influences of post-humanism and new materiality' (p. 4). Applied to this 'thinking-with' space is an iterative process of material engagement, visual image development, writing and reflecting. Within this the purposeful questioning of actions, intentions, and influences of colonial legacy are also considered. In doing so motivations and problematic issues regarding what is expected when/while/in delivering visual arts programming in schools are exposed.

Autoethnography

While searching for a methodology that would allow for an exploration of my positionality as a researcher and practitioner, I was drawn to the idea that '(a)utoethnography allows the educator the opportunity to effectively acknowledge the pragmatic demands of teaching and of everyday life to take stock of experiences and how they shape who we are and what we do' (Starr, 2010, p. 4). In considering autoethnography I found a possible way to locate

my situatedness and to expose discourses at play through a personalized style that sees my membership in the field as an asset (Wall, 2006). Using my own experiences 'to garner insights into the large culture or subculture of which' I am a part (Patton, 2004, p. 46), allows me to extend my understanding of what is at play in my local school-based visual arts education context. This is supported by Ellis and Bochner (2000), who describe autoethnography as 'an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural' (p. 739). As such, it involves reflexive consideration. Starr (2010) points out the value of such consideration within education, arguing that

> '(b)ecause autoethnography revolves around the exploration of self in relation to others and the space created between them, disciplines like education are ripe grounds for autoethnographic study because a social construction of knowledge, identity and culture is inherent' (p. 4).

To this end this study is framed by the view that people construct meaning through their engagement with the world, through 'their own subjective and intersubjective realities and in contextually specific ways' (Hershberg, 2014, p. 182). But it also looks to move beyond this constructivist view and embrace the role of the more-than-human in constructing meaning through interaction and intra-action. As such it provides a way to 'think through the intersections of material and social constructions' (Sanzo, 2018). Such constructions have been explicitly considered in the development of this study's methodological focus.

Two main forms of autoethnography, evocative and analytical, are represented in the literature reviewed. Maréchal (2010) offers the following summary of the two:

> 'Evocative and emotional autoethnography promotes the ethnographic project as a relational commitment to studying the ordinary practices of human life, which involves engaged self-participation, makes sense in the context of lived experiences, and contributes to social criticism. Analytical autoethnography finds it necessary to look outward at distinct others in order to generate meaningful social analysis' (p. 45).

Both forms offer elements that can be applied to this study. In a call for analytic autoethnography, Anderson (2006) emphasizes that

> 'the autoethnographic interrogation of self and other may transform the researcher's own beliefs, actions, and sense of self. …. However, it is not enough for

the researcher to engage in reflexive social analysis and self-analysis. Autoethnography requires that the researcher be visible, active, and reflexively engaged in the text' (p. 383).

 Such visible engagement is intended in this study to push for presence and accountability.

Looking at evocative ethnographic narrative, Ellis and Bochner (2000) reiterate that the 'primary purpose is to understand a self or some aspect of a life lived in a cultural context' and appealingly add that

> '(r)eaders, too, take a more active role as they are invited into the author's world, evoked to a feeling level about the events being described and stimulated to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives … (Shelton, 1995), and to write from an ethic of care and concern (Denzin, 1997; Noddings, 1984; Richardson, 1997)' (p. 742).

With this in mind, a recognition of the important role that affect plays in the interpretation and construction of meaning, especially when embedded in the context being researched, is also highlighted. Similarly, Richardson and St. Pierre (2018) state that

> 'The ethnographic life is not separable from the Self. Who we are and what we can be – what we can study, how we can write about that which we study – are tied to how a knowledge system disciplines itself and its members and to its methods for claiming authority over both the subject matter and its members' (p. 824).

This study looks to go beyond mere acknowledgement and accommodation of 'subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research', to actively recognizing and incorporating our ever-changing, emerging affective entanglements that occur among the human and the more that human.

Autoethnography acts to entangle by delivering 'a provocative weave of story and theory' that can 'reflect back on, be entangled in, and critique this current historical moment and its discontents' (Spry, 2010, p. 713). With a focus on the journey of unearthing the beliefs and biases that define my practice and my place in the field of education, along with situating it and my shifting cultural understanding of visual arts education within wider contexts, such entanglements then give space to the wordless and maps 'the micro-political relations that constitute the beginnings of social change' (Hickey-Moody & Crowley, 2010, p. 401). In line with Curtis and Curtis (2017), the

reflective stance of the autoethnographer, in addition to locating and examining influence, compels action to change assumptions – an important resolve for all reflexive educators/researchers (p. 269).

Arts-Informed Research

The decision to include art making in this study came through the process of conducting and experiencing a trial study. Adding a visual component to the autoethnographic research process seemed an intuitive choice to make as a visual arts educator and trained artist. Making sense of the world through artistic avenues has long been my dominant way of navigating concepts, ideas, intuitions, and emotion. When I engage in art making I become enwrapped in permutations and possibilities, thinking through the materials with which I interact. Engaging with materials through art making allowed me to negotiate meaning making and acknowledge multiple and diverse forms of understanding.   Within the trial study I engaged in art making as a way to understand ideas, memories and images that related to autoethnographic accounts of teaching students with complex trauma profiles, and what these accounts revealed about belonging and connection in a school environment. Image development and material intra-action opened the possibility of exploring my research questions in a physical and visceral way – a connection that reaffirmed a need that I, as a learner and meaning-maker, require in order to navigate and solidify understanding perceptions. Through this possibility my intentions morphed into an exploration of material entanglements.

As Renold (2018) asserts, discussing the work of Guattari (1992/2006): '"while art does not have a monopoly on creation", it does have the capacity to invent and "engender unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being"'(p. 39). With this invention and engendering in mind, Gee's (1989) view of the arts as critical discourse holds sway, in that the arts can be seen as 'ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes' (p. 7). As such, using art making as a part of my research process can surface and highlight understanding autoethnographic encounters and underlying discourses.

This surfacing and highlighting can be seen as an act of transmediation. Moving between visual, material, affective and linguistic sign systems, I align the arts informed component of my research to align with Siegel's (2012) view that by using art making as a form of multi-modal transmediation I can allow for increased 'opportunities to engage in generative and reflective thinking' (p. 459). By mediating meaning in this way I aim to create an accessible space that decentres the traditional role of doctoral researcher. As Leavy (2020) explains,

> There is no one way to make sense of a piece of art. In this respect, research-produced artwork can democratize meaning making and decentralize academic researchers as "the experts". Furthermore, the kind of dialogue that may be stimulated by a piece of art is based on *evoking* meaning, rather than denoting them' (p. 27).

In focusing on the evocation of meaning, this study uses an arts-informed approach as described by Cole and Knowles (2012). Within this approach, Cole and Knowles explain,

> Arts-informed research is part of a broader commitment to shift the dominant paradigmatic view that keeps the academy and community separated: to acknowledge the multiple dimensions that constitute and form the human [and more-than-human] condition—physical, emotional, spiritual, social, cultural— and the myriad ways of engaging in the world—oral, literal, visual, embodied. That is, to connect the work of the academy with the life and lives of communities through research that is accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic, and provocative (p. 61).

Through the methodology I enact, and theories underpinning it, I look to celebrate connection and to problematize disconnection. By channelling this discovery of celebration and problematization, I look to mediate affective responses and emergences. Like Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (2018) I seek 'a visceral encounter with raw materiality' within this research, something that art making as research can inform (p. 5).

As Weber (2012) outlines, the arts-informed aspect of this research produced data in the form of images, encouraging embodied knowledge and reflexivity (p. 48). I maintained a practice of journaling, sketching and stitching about experiences, thoughts and situations, using an iterative process of creating, writing, critically reflecting, analysing, critiquing and researching/reading literature that resulted in the identification of themes and key issues that will be explored in the findings chapters. I then used this information to express

autoethnographical performative writings of the key issues. My intention for this practice was to allow for Ellis' (1999) contention that,

> In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories impacted by history and social structure, which themselves are dialectically revealed through actions, feelings, thoughts, and language (in Curtis and Curtis, 2017, p. 673).

Such texts played an important role in providing the fruitful data that inform how I address the research issue using, as Leavy (2020) describes, 'openness to the spontaneous and unknown' (p. 20).

Research Questions
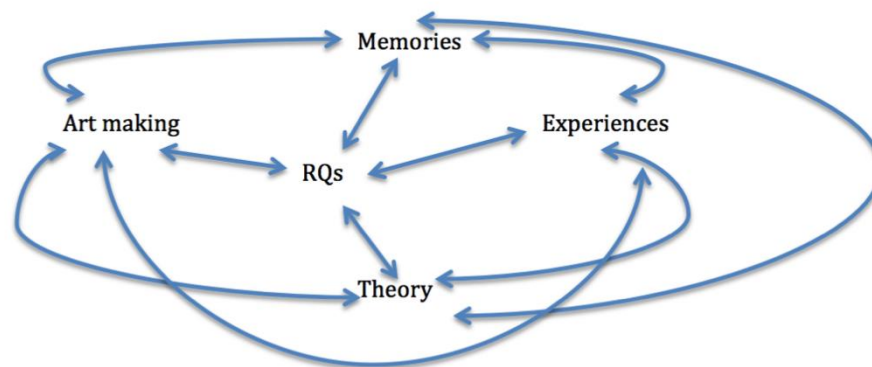
figure 1: relationship of study elements to research questions

The figure above (figure 1) is intended to show an active relationship between the research questions (RQs) and the differentiated elements of this study. Each element has a mediating and even a transmediating role in exploring and understanding the research questions. I engaged in art making as a way to gather and appreciate ideas, memories and images, relating the process of making to autoethnographic accounts and a growing awareness of power structures and of the more-than-human. I similarly engaged in writing and walking as experience to bring the art making explorations and questions back to theory and memories of experience. The perspective and insights that this dynamically iterative and emergent methodology allowed for valuing connection, sharing and questioning in their own right.

Anchoring the research process are the research questions. Each one builds upon the others, acting as a provocation for explorations and further questions that emerge. I appreciated and encouraged this unfolding of inquiry, especially when the questions persisted through the process outlined above. Such questions and concerns demanded attention and became the themes that define the findings chapters that follow.

My first research question asks: **In what ways do individual school experiences influence perspectives and approaches to visual arts education?**

By recognising and navigating my embodied lived experience as transmediated through stitching to words through image fragments and prompts, an awareness of how my positionality both shapes and is shaped by my experiences, perspective and educational approach is made apparent.

Building off and interrogating the surfaced positionality of the first question, the second question looks to structural practices, asking: **What social practices and value systems are at play in dominant approaches to visual arts education that need to be considered and interrogated?**

This question led me to situate myself within, and critically examine, contextual and cultural power dynamics. It opened up spaces to illuminate what is and what could be, leading into the third question.

The acceptance of ideas and concepts as valid because they are thought, felt and embodied within inter- and intra-connecting relationships with the more-than-human opens up educational spaces to more than achieving outcomes and competencies. It enters us into reciprocatory mutual engagements. With this in mind, the third research question ponders: **Recognizing public education as a complex space, how can new materialisms inform an expansive practice of arts education?**

This question brings the study's inquiry back to embracing the iterative, dynamic, and evocative; navigating and creating space for new materialism in professional practice.

Design

This dissertation represents research undertaken in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada and reflects on teaching and learning experiences that developed while working with and within public school education between September 2019 and June 2021.

Location

Halifax is a growing municipality of over 400 000 residents. It encircles a deep natural harbour reaching out to the Atlantic Ocean. Also known as Kjipuktuk, it is located on the unceded ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people, in Mi'kma'ki. The province of Nova Scotia is a relatively small Canadian province surrounded by water. In addition to being the ancestral home of the Mi'kmaq, a colonial history of English and French settlement and occupation continues to influence social, political and economic structures. The influence of this history, and its reliance on the sea, can be seen in the continued presence of the shipping industry, naval military, and coast guard. O'Grady and Moody (2021) note that while the province is often associated with natural resource industries of fishing, forestry, and mining, a large proportion of people are employed in education, where 'more Nova Scotians work as teachers and university professors than as fish-processing, forestry, and construction workers combined' (n.p.).

Education system

Education is one of the major welfare-state programs that the Canadian federal government supports but does so indirectly through federal-provincial agreements. Within the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982, provincial governments are given direct responsibility to fund, legislate, regulate, and coordinate education (section 93). The main stated goal of education in Nova Scotia continues to be 'to provide education programs and services for students to enable them to develop their potential and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy' (Prov. of NS, 2013, p. 3). The Public School Program (PSP), the provincially mandated program of education for students, generally includes ages 5 through 18.

Schools are organized and overseen by Regional Centres for Education, branches of the provincial Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Within each

Regional Centre, schools are organized by 'families of schools' that include elementary and junior high schools that 'feed' into a high school. The grades, or year groupings, of each school can differ in different families of schools. Within the family of schools that I teach, grades are divided into elementary (grades Primary through 6, ages 4 through 12), junior high school (grades 7 through 9, ages 12 through 15), and high school (grades 10-12, ages 15 through 18).

Arts enhancement

My position within the public school system is as a Fine Arts Specialist supporting and enhancing the arts in all schools within one family. This role does not fall under the PSP. Although I support arts programming in schools through offering enhancement opportunities, I do so within the parameters of an invited guest. This role with/in schools came into being in 2018, following the elimination of specialist elementary visual art teaching positions and classes in Halifax.

Time period

In 2018 I returned to teaching visual arts in schools after more than ten years in special education. This re-entry, as a municipally funded Fine Arts Specialist that operates on the periphery of the provincial curriculum framework, came at a time of change in the educational landscape of Nova Scotia. Beginning in 2015, the Public School Program (PSP) has been redesigned and curriculum 'streamlined' to align with provincial government targets focused on literacy, numeracy and career readiness (Prov of NS, 2015). At the elementary level this resulted in a prescribed integrated approach that views anything that is not literacy or numeracy as a 'supporting' subject. With the integrated approach, the visual arts component of the PSP has decreased. For example, in comparing the visual arts curriculum documents of 2000 and 2016, the number of outcomes in grade six visual arts have decreased from 23 to three with eleven 'indicators' of achievement. With a decrease in outcomes also came a drop in accountability, with direct reporting and grading of visual arts being removed from elementary report cards in the 2018-19 school year. Compounding this, in the same year the majority of specialist elementary visual arts teaching positions in the province were also cut, with the responsibility for visual arts curriculum delivery absorbed into the generalist classroom teacher role.

Methods

Art Making methods

'Art engenders becomings, not imaginative becomings... but material becomings... in which life folds over itself to embrace its contact with materiality, in which each exchanges some elements or particles with the other to become more and other' (Grosz, 2008, p. 23).

As already identified, the methods chosen for this study relate to the embodied relationships I seek and explore through acts of making and reflecting. Sinner's 'active and flexible encounters' that surface and connect ideas and issues, also identified earlier, are engaged and activated while working with materials, tools and objects. Recognizing and honouring entanglement as experienced in the moment of exploration, I make art as a part of the research process in order to *make sense*. Having my hands in motion, sensing and feeling thoughts and concepts through manipulating material, opens a way to understand what Schaefer (2016) refers to as prelinguistic or nonlinguistic forces, or what is hard to quantify and capture with language.

Much of the art making for this study occurred during an incubation phase or, aptly described by Hunter et al (2002), a phase of 'intellectual chaos' (p. 389). The obsessive and meditative acts of sketching and hand stitching were complemented by cyanotype fabric printing. Together with the reflective methods (to be described following this section) they acted to both deepen and clarify connections between ideas and experiences, 'allowing relationships between data to emerge that may otherwise have remained hidden, and weaved interpretation throughout the research design in a systematic and holistic manner' (Leavy, 2020, p. 258). Through engaging with the material and developing visual images I enacted making as a 'reciprocal collaborative act' (Ingold, 2013) that invited openness to influences and movements as they emerged and responded in relation to materials and environments - openness to deviation and evocation. Investigating topics through visual image development and through material engagement gave space to the wordless and to telling a story by becoming a part of it.

Printmaking

If it is possible, in a linear sense, to pinpoint a beginning to my methodological undertaking, it all began with sunlight and a sprig of lavender.

I was reminded of cyanotype as an artistic medium during a workshop in 2019 at an arts education conference in Vancouver, Canada. Cyanotype, also known as a sun print, is a photographic printmaking process developed in the mid nineteenth century in England by Sir John Herschel. Using sunlight and water, a deep Prussian blue image can be produced from the shadows of an object; photographic negative; or notes or drawings made on a translucent or transparent film such as Mylar or acetate.

Looking to document the educative experiences and ways of knowing I connected with in Vancouver, I decided to create a cyanotype suite from a sprig of lavender I had pressed between maps and pages of conference proceedings. The land and early summer sun had provided an abundance of lavender to run my hands over on the way between workshops and presentations. Each day I would add a fresh inflorescence (flower head) to my pocket to be rubbed and smelled during available moments, bringing calm with each inhale, capturing memories through the fragrance, activated by touch. By placing four pocket-sized squares of sensitized paper with the newly pressed sprig lying on top in the midday sun, a striking image of negative space resulted. A material memory of the place and time came into being.

Nearly a year later, in the midst of the first COVID-19 lockdown, I returned to cyanotype, reconnecting with the sun and the memory of calm that the lavender connected me to. After experimenting with a few fabric imprints of the same lavender sprig in a weaker spring light, I created printings of circle sketches that I will discuss in the next subsection. In the summer sun the images developed. As the materials and I sat with the sun, I thought of the connections between the drawings and prints - human and more-than-human interactions and intra-actions of light and line blended with what I was learning about reconciliation, frameworks of history, and environmental concerns, and reconnected with the place-based practices presented in Vancouver. The cyanotypes that resulted became a part of the physical/material connection I had to the reiterative patterns I experienced spiralling away and toward my mind and body. They them became the ground for the textile-based artwork that I created.

Sketching
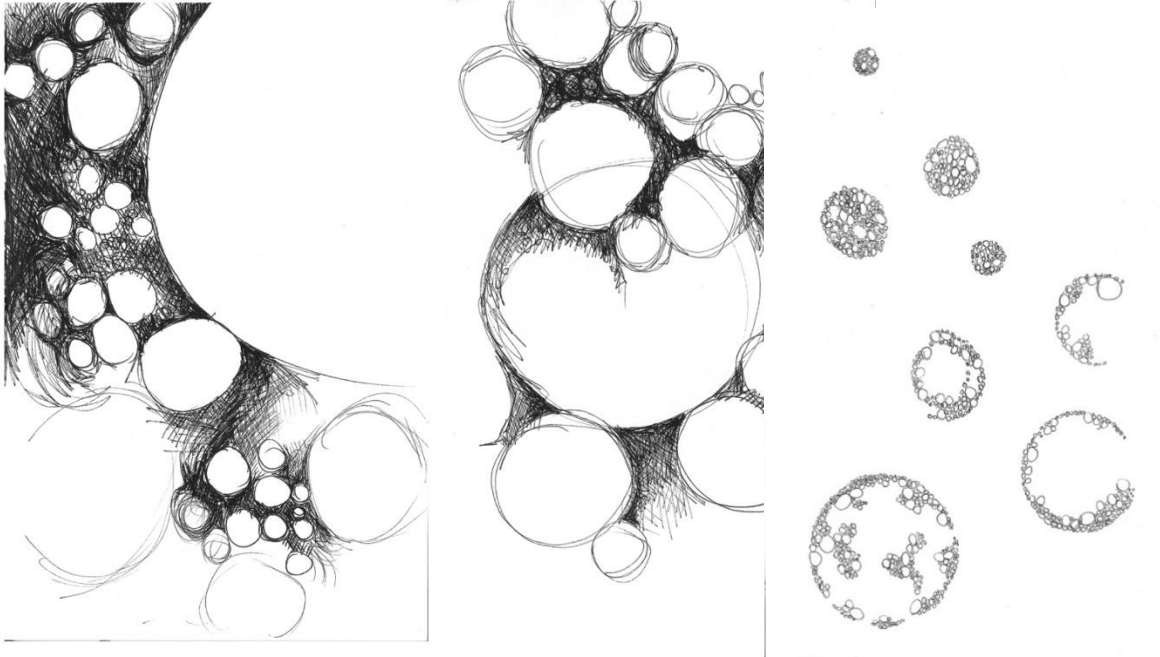
The circle sketches, mentioned above, that developed into acetate negatives for the fabric cyanotypes arose from trying to work out thoughts and ideas while my hand was in motion.   Obsessively, repetitively, and compulsively, I could not stop thinking about circles and drawing circles. While the concept of a circle and what it could mean is of value, it acted as subject matter to the act of mark making - that is to say, that the action of drawing circles was more important, in this context, than the circle form itself. The mark making that sketching produced focused my thoughts, and in turn, the thoughts provided focus to my hand, the pen, ink, and paper. Mark making and meaning making became together, through negotiated action and intention.
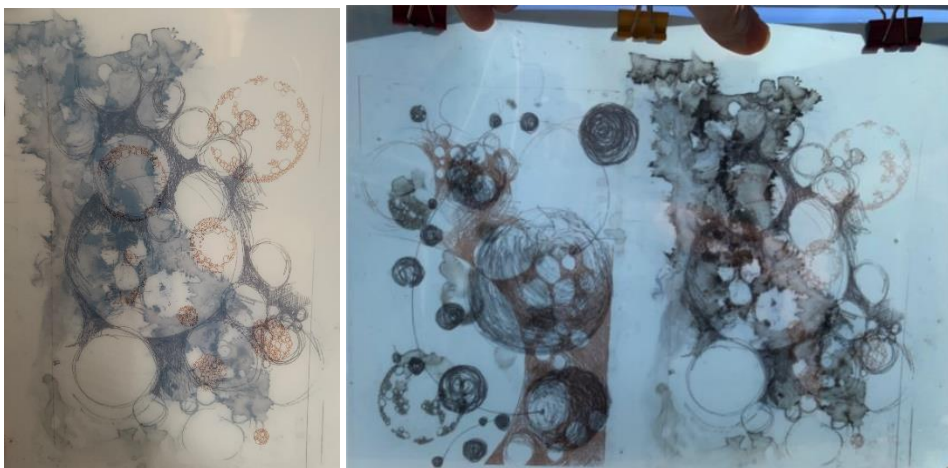
Having returned to creating cyanotypes on fabric, I decided to explore what might come from printing images of the circle drawings. Preparing to print by creating acetate 'negatives' of selected sketches continued the circular motion, moving between ideation and creation back to forming ideas. The acetate 'negative' printings and manipulations created for the cyanotype exploration ended up being interesting in and of them selves, and spoke together in a new way. By layering the acetate images, new nuanced images were created. In these new images of layered sketches a possible avenue for showing the intersection of materials and thoughts within one medium and, when considered in a window with the sunlight, within media (I include sunlight as a medium) resulted. By recording ideas and the process of grappling with them in this way it recognized them as layered perceptions affected by time and subsequent experiences.

Needlework

The negotiated action and intention of the sketches and printmaking transformed into another form of mark making: needlework, or the art of sewing or embroidery. Through making marks with fibre, the thread itself became more than a material object or tool, it became the process, mediating and creating connections. Using fabric and thread to literally and metaphorically sew and layer elements together focused the arts-informed component of this study.

The physicality of fabric and the repetitive process of working with it spoke to me and led my internal discussion and decision-making. The feel of the fabric and the rhythm of sewing highlighted the importance of texture and touch. By viscerally connecting ideas and

perceptions through interacting with fabric and sewing, creative insights were activated. Though my mind would wander while sewing, I was aware of being intentional with visual composition – with the stitch type, size, and shapes; the material choices of fabric and thread; with considering what would be hidden and what would be seen; and with what that could represent as I negotiated understandings and worldviews that merged, emerged, coincided, conflicted with(in) the system of schooling, in school communities, in navigating these spaces as a teacher of art, as a teacher of children, as a learner myself. Similar to Kaplan (2020), I worked with the fabric and thread to establish:

> An organic unfolding of circumstances that was planned in one sense and unplanned in another. The provocation and the inclusion of the materials necessitated some planning to provide space for relational knowing engendered through the richness of encounter, and its openness to unfolding and serendipitous possibilities propagated through play, encounter, and immanence constituted a kind of unplannedness (in its lack of clear product outcomes) (p. 25).

The organic unfolding of the needlework acted as recognition of process and connection to the material and the more-than.

Hunter (2019) recognizes the power of such needlework, not only as a way to activate creative insights but also as

> a way to mark our existence on cloth: patterning our place in the world, voicing our identity, sharing something of ourselves with others and leaving the indelible evidence of our presence in stitches held fast by our touch (p. 298).

As a record, needlework freezes thoughts and actions in time through stitches; it also records embodiment - the memory or evocation of body, placement, and sensations. As a research method, needlework is a powerful way of negotiating understandings that are new and/or emerging, or ever present but until now unrecognized by me.

Reflection methods

Walking

Referring to de Cosson (2003), Irwin (2006) describes walking as 'a steady heuristic action offering spiritual, sensory, and perceptual awareness to everyday experiences' (p. 77). As I related breath, curiosity and awareness (of surroundings, of how I interact with the world, of the ideas coursing through my mind) with the immediate kinaesthetic experience of walking, I was reminded of how thread relates to fabric. As a method of inquiry, walking allowed me to act like a thread, taking my research for a stroll and mapping the route. In this way, walking was creative insight (Grierson 2011).

Like a thread on a fabric ground, I walked. The footprints that I left pushed on to the next step, the next thought, and towards insight that I might not have accessed or perceived without having been in the world, with my body and space integrating through movement (Springgay & Truman, 2017). I walked with care, noticing where my feet fell, often following the small steps of my animal walking companion. My thoughts also moved like my dog – never in a straight line, always searching and sensing more. I tried to move at a gentle pace, allowing time to take in what was happening around me and within me, and to give space to ideas that I was wrestling with in my writing.

Writing

The rhythm of walking linked my thoughts and experiences, activating creative insights. Like sewing and walking, the embodied aspects of writing by hand also allowed me to connect

with my emerging understandings of place, space, theory, and being in education. By returning to the physical act of writing, I felt more connected to the writing process. Handwriting journal entries acted to mediate knowing and making meaning, and facilitated reflexivity in the research design and documentation.

Documentation in images

'An image can be a multilayered theoretical statement, simultaneously positing even contradictory propositions for us to consider, pointing to the fuzziness of logic and the complex or even paradoxical nature of particular human experiences' (Weber, 2012, p. 44).

In addition to documenting the research process materially in fabric and in writing, I used images as a mode of interpretation and representation. Photographs of the artwork and the art making process were combined with writing to document, communicate and propel the research exploration. Weber (2012) describes arts-related visual images in research as data that encourages 'embodied knowledge and reflexivity' (p. 48). The production of images as data was then brought back to writing in the form of photo prompts.

Photo prompts

RQ2: What social practices and value systems are at play in dominant approaches to visual arts education that need to be considered and interrogated?

RQ3: Recognizing public education as a complex space, how can new materialisms inform an expansive practice of arts education?

RQ1: In what ways do individual school experiences influence perspectives and approaches to visual arts education?
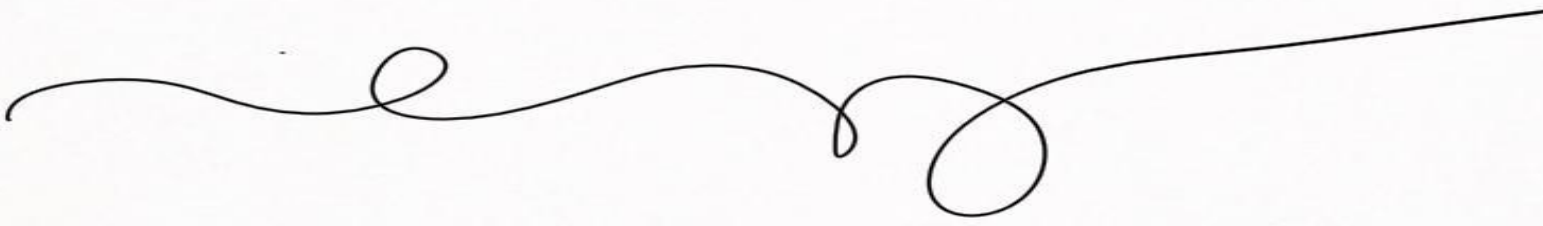
The photo prompts were photographs of the needlework process that I considered as visual representations of a felt practice. Charteris and Jones (2016) support the use of photographs in this way, noting that they are examples of 'materials that can be read as agentic objects within a research assemblage that can highlight a range of elements including interspecies relationality' (p. 195). Each photograph was individually paired with one of my three research questions, randomly assigned. The questions acted as a stimulus for connecting what exceeded representation with themes that were emerging through the writing, sketching, walking and sewing processes. Each pair of photo and question prompts were intended to be provocations that could link, or thread, immediate reactions and responses and create an additional layer of data generation and interpretation.

Vignettes through narrative and performative renderings

According to Merriam-Webster.com a rendering is 'a vivid representation in words of someone or something'. The Cambridge dictionary (n.d.) describes rendering as 'the way something is performed, written, drawn'. With these definitions in mind, it can be inferred that in the act of representing or performing we *render* something to become, to cause it to be. Negotiating understandings through acts of making is a way of *rendering* ideas, experiences, and meaning visible – affectively, verbally and visually. For example, in working with thread and cloth, ink on paper, and stylus to touchscreen, I render my thoughts and intentions into being, and through the text that they produce into becoming more-than they were before they touched and intra-acted. In the context of this study what is described as a rendering is therefor a representation in visual, narrative, or performative form of understandings that have been, or are still being, negotiated into being through making and portraying lived experiences in school settings.

The development of vignettes, or in other words, the restorying of generalised experiences that represented a particular issue encountered through lived experiences became an important method of data generation. The vignettes added an additional layer to express and reflect upon ideas evoked/invoked through sewing, writing, and ambulating. They became a space to create the narrative and performative writing, what I refer to as 'renderings', presented in the findings.

Running in place

The walls hold so much

A part and yet apart

paint becomes wall

mixing with the textures and

layers

that came before

but not after

Introduction

The need for belonging is a fundamental human requirement and a powerful source of motivation (Maslow, 1954). How we make meaning of lives is strongly tied to our sense of belonging. Social interactions that show and make us feel belongingness are foundational to our sense of identity (Social Issues Research Centre 2007). Professional identity is also bound to perceptions of belonging to communities of practice.

In this chapter I use my autoethnographic data and arts-informed inquiry to construct a narrative vignette that highlights the experience of painting a large-scale mural with elementary aged students. Prefacing the vignette is an analogous visual and narrative connection to one of the stitches employed in the arts-informed inquiry, along with a performative interlude. The vignette begins with another visual connection in the form of a photograph from my teaching practice that demonstrates mural painting in process. Punctuating the vignette are changes in font size that act as a connection to the performative summary of the visual and narrative renderings.

I then unpack the constructed experience to reveal larger social and structural issues of identity and belonging in the teaching profession. Following this, I share a reconceptualization of the issues, using a lens that prioritizes enfolding experiences of tactility and connection into narratives. A further performative piece, accompanied by a culminating image, is used to summarise the end of the chapter.

Narrative and performative renderings

The running stitch is my go-to stitch for stippling layers of fabric. With it I create swirling texture and bring layers of cloth together. A series of simple in and out straight stitches, it creates shape and movement through lines. However, it is not the most secure stitch. If an individual stitch is snagged, snipped, or pulled the whole line of stitches is affected, puckering the fabric and possibly unraveling the whole run.

Sometimes teaching art feels like a running stitch that has been snagged. By working in schools but not actually being a part of the school's daily functioning, small things can cause big ripples in constructions of identity and meaning.

(im)permanent

The walls hold so much

A part and yet apart

paint becomes wall,

mixing with the textures and
layers

that came before

but not after

"I like to think that the wall is laughing when I do this", I say to the small group of students, demonstrating how I use a paint brush to 'tickle' a porous brick wall to get paint into small crevices and cracks. It is a technique I often share, and I enjoy seeing young eyes twinkle back at mine, ready to conspire in making the wall laugh. One student offers, "Yah, and the colour makes it smile!".

Beautiful, bright colours fill the cups that the students are holding, ready to add to the hallway walls. The colours on the wall are vibrant and cheery. They have been chosen to reflect the joy and pride that I hope for the students to feel whenever they enter their school. Even the adults - staff and community members - pause to see what the students and I are up to, marvelling at the colours, and at how happy and excited it makes them feel. One small group of students, chatting while painting, discuss all the artwork around the school, confiding to each other that this mural project is different. One of them whispers loud enough for all of them to hear, "This one has more love 'cause the kids made it."

This confession makes my heart soar. What a wonderful reflection of what I hope for the art experiences I coordinate in schools to achieve: to be generated and created by the students in a way that inspires feelings of belonging and accomplishment. This project was a big undertaking. A whole school collaborative mural that stretches across multiple walls, it is massive to compose and organize its execution. I am committed to giving the school something that marks it as special and can act over the years as a reminder of the community's strength. I was invited by the school administration to do just that – make a piece of art with the students that covered the walls and filled their imaginations with peace, joy, and hope.

When I am with the wall and the students, I feel connected and I hope that the students do as well. They chat and laugh. An occasional shriek punctuates the rhythm of their painting, often when an overloaded brush causes paint to drip down the wall.

Also audible is the sound of the paint being applied, so I cue them to listen to it: to the scratchy voice that means the brush needs more paint; the sticky sound that means the paint needs to be moved around. They are also learning to feel the paint, training their eyes and bodies to sense how to pull the paint to create clean lines; to load the brush and feel the tension of gravity and viscosity as it meets the vertical surface.

When the project wraps up, I am physically tired but spiritually satisfied. It was a lot of work, a lot of paint, and a lot of children. Part of the mural was too high up for the students to reach, so I put in extra time on a ladder painting their drawings into life. Students regularly visited to check on the progress or to take a break from classwork and breathe in the growing colours. There were definitely bumps along the way, but they were smoothed out or covered over. The mural was ready, painted with many layers to last for many more years.

What I didn't know at the time was that the mural's life was to be cut short. Like a running stitch, there was a snag. While I toiled on a ladder, sweating into the heated space where walls meet ceiling, the school administration was informed that the school was to be demolished. A new school building would be built to replace it on the same site. Well-loved, the current building was struggling to stay warm, dry, and accessible after many years of use. The community deserved a safe space that could continue to meet their needs - a place to be proud of and to belong to. Hopefully the new school building would provide this. But they didn't tell me.

I found out in the autumn of the following school year, in casual conversation with a teacher at another school, and I was absolutely deflated. It unravelled my sense of accomplishment and fulfilment within my role. It also made my heart - which had previously soared at the whispered pride of the students - sink. It had been a great project and experience for all involved, but the omission made me feel disconnected and questioning whether the administration actually valued having an art specialist involved with their school. It made me wonder if I was just another service that they wanted to make sure they accessed. It made me wonder if I had ever really belonged, if the mural had ever been recognized as more than paint on a wall.

just another

Porous crevices and cracks twinkle and conspire

    covering the walls and filling imaginations

       Listening
to the scratchy voice of brush and paint

         I take a break
breathe in the growing colours
 and bumps along the way

while I toil
    Into the heated space
where walls meet ceiling
            what they didn't tell me

   unravelled
the whispered pride

made me feel
   disconnected
     just another

What is revealed in the narrative and performative renderings

Ideas and concerns that surfaced from within the generalized experience expressed above can be organized through remarks and questions that I regularly encounter in schools. Their relationship to my first research question, their influence on perspectives and approaches to visual arts education, show the discrepancy that can arise between my perspective and approach and the expectations that the people I work with bring with them. I have chosen

two that are common and complex to structure my broader analysis of selected ideas. Each provides important insights into social practices and will be analysed for what they reveal about social practices and value systems. The first question, 'Are you the art teacher?', is a question that students (and sometimes school staff) ask as they try to figure out my place in the school ecosystem. The second, 'It must be nice to just do whatever you want', is a remark that, unfortunately, is often proclaimed in frustration, and is equally difficult to respond to. These common questions and remarks, and my hesitation in acknowledging them in the moment, call attention to the different modes of acceptance and tolerance that take shape in relation to the daily reality of schools and classrooms. This reality presents practical limitations to the conceptualisation and enactment of a truly collaborative art experience in schools, such as the mural produced in the generalized experience of 'impermanence'. As Perry (2011), in speaking of the collective creation inherent in devised theatre, summarises this limitation explaining that,

> In the classroom, such broad acceptance of modes of engagement is not easily granted. From the very structure of the day—the classes timed to the ubiquitous bell, the assessment obligations of the system, the teachers needing to evaluate one student's work in relation to a standard—the nature of devising includes inherent contradictions with the nature of conventional educational systems. A practice that does not encourage consensus of interpretation or cohesion of behavior is at odds with much of the underlying foundations of the school system (p. 71).

The educational setting of schools is therefore not structured, or predisposed, to generative collaboration. In trying to bring collaborative experiences into a school I often feel separate or apart – the opposite of what a joint effort should feel like.

'Are you the art teacher'?

As mentioned above, when I am asked this question it is often by a student. More often than not, it happens when I am directly working with an individual or small group, engaging with them and what they are making or trying to figure out. It happens when standing side by side, facing a wall, with paintbrushes in our hands, or sitting around a table, sewing or working with clay. It happens while my hands, like the students' hands, are in motion. We will be chatting, the students will be focused on what they are doing, and suddenly pause, look at me quizically and ask that question. I try to answer in simple terms, with a 'Yes and

no…', and an age appropriate explanation that clarifies rather that muddles, as expected. But it is muddled.

 Rather that focus on the answer, I am left wondering. I wonder about how the question came to the fore of that child's thoughts. I wonder if they assumed I was an outsider, a non-teacher adult, but that I was reminding them of other teachers in my demeanor, prompting or language usage. Or that, by working predominantly with art materials and chatting while we worked, I somehow didn't fit with their expectation of what a teacher does, what is a valid, possible way of engaging with learning. Either way, a dissonance formed and prompted the question to be asked.

There is no one simple answer to this question. In my position as a Fine Arts Specialist working with a family of schools, I exist in a somewhat liminal space, both in terms of the Public School Program (PSP) and in terms of feeling a part of professional communities within schools. While I am an art teacher, I am not *the* art teacher. I work with schools, in schools, but am not 'on staff' – I am a part of learning in the school and yet apart from the school. My position exists outside of the provincial framework of curriculum and programming, but my practice is within schools and classrooms that exist to fulfil the PSP. I am an invited guest, often working in classrooms integrating the visual arts with other curricular areas or subjects. Yet I am not responsible for (nor beholden to) the curriculum.

My designation as a 'specialist' also sets me apart from the generalist classroom teacher. This specialist designation and the etiquette of invitation perpetuate art as a specialization that is separate and outside of the everyday abilities of the average classroom teacher. It weakens the perception that visual art education plays a regular role in encouraging students to question assumptions and investigate differing versions of reality. Rather than infusing art into a school and its culture, through this interpretation visual arts education's possibility as a dynamic and important part of contemporary culture and education is put at risk. Its perceived exceptionality is an outlier to be ignored or explained away. Within this weakened perception my professional practice, which is situated on the periphery of the education system and yet in schools, a practice that relies on relationships and meaning making with materials, is also dismissed or set apart.

'It must be nice to just do whatever you want'.

It is nice to have the freedom of not being constrained by grade level outcomes, school literacy and numeracy goals, and for accounting for everything that goes on in a classroom or school. But that also means my role is not tethered to 'intended' learning. From this perspective my role is a non-essential add-on, or an afterthought, something to be used when convenient and ignored or dismissed when inconvenient. It is difficult to reconcile the dismissive and ambivalent tone of the remark with the powerful possibilities that exist beyond the traditional (colonial) classroom expectations of neat and tidy predictability and control.

However, while I may have felt disconnected and at times perceived an indifferent and silent contempt for my role, I also recognize the very real conflicting pressures of curriculum, time, resources, and space that classroom teachers face daily. Looking for predictability and control is understandable given that the context in which teachers work – schools – is being continually reconstituted to fit with external demands for flexible labour and learners (Williamson and Morgan, 2009). This reconstitution is often experienced as a constant expectation to adapt and change without questioning. I understand it – I have in the past caved to the seemingly ever-present call to define my self-concept as an educator by the expecttions of a system that prioritizes standardized outcomes and accountability through near constant assessment (Carter et al, 2016). I have lost myself to a machine that is more interested in numbers than people and relationships. I cannot fault others for doing the same - it is difficult not to in the current educational climate.

Pressure

In recent years the rhetoric of education reform in Nova Scotia has been fevered, with provincial government, competing political parties, teachers' organizations and media players feeding insecurities about global competitiveness. Fuelled by rankings and interpretations of international, nation and subnational standardized testing, these insecurities have served to perpetuate self-doubt and breed anxiety both within teachers and the general population. Changes appear continuous, leaving little time for teachers to wrap their minds, and practices, around implementation or for students to understand what is expected.

This in turn results in even less time to question why the changes are being made and what effect they will have beyond the presented perceived need to restructure or reform students' learning and teachers' occupational roles and responsibilities. Everyone must 'make do' with additional expectations more efficiently and effectively, to create the workers of tomorrow.

The short span of 2014 through 2018 saw numerous changes in education in Nova Scotia including a ministerial panel on education (2014) whose recommendations triggered a provincial action plan for education (2015) that entailed a complete overhaul of the curriculum. The new curriculum expectations and teaching standards for grades primary through six that resulted from this were implemented during a protracted, contentious teacher contract dispute (16 months, ending in March 2017) that included a student lock-out, strike action, and a legislated contract/return to work that continues to be challenged at a constitutional level. This triggered the establishment of a Council to Improve Classroom Conditions (2017) and a Commission on Inclusive Education (2018) to address concerns raised by teachers and parents during the contract dispute. Then, the provincial government commissioned an external Administrative Review (Glaze, 2018). They swiftly enacted legislation based on this review, disbanding all English language school boards in the province, and removing teachers with administrative roles from the teachers' union (2018).

Less on the radar, but important to the context in which this study takes place, this time period also saw the end to elementary school art education being taught by visual arts specialist teachers in Halifax (2018). In its stead, Fine Arts Specialist positions were created, from the same municipal funding source, to be available for school community collaboration and arts enhancement. Framed as a replacement for these lost specialists and as a way of equitably distributing art support throughout the region, it left generalist teachers to teach visual arts based on their varied pre-service degree requirements and experiences. Within this context art was being added piecemeal to instruction, and being interpreted as present if drawing or colouring were included. Smilan and Miraglia (2009) warn that

> '(t)eachers with a surface understanding of the value of teaching art and
> an insufficient knowledge base in art materials and pedagogy may be
> anxious about implementing art practices in curricula. They may avoid
> using art or inappropriately compensate for their lack of abilities' (p. 42).

When combined with the exclusive emphasis on literacy and numeracy, what often results are 'standardized, product-oriented, one-time projects, with no continuity, skill building, or development of reasoning abilities'. Bresler (1992) aptly reflects that in this situation,

> 'Rather than deal with a body of knowledge and skills, art curricula are decorative, trivial, and typically associated with the less important aspects of school life. As the more intellectual substance is excluded from the definition of art, art does not share with school's primary values' (p. 411).

The primary value of visual arts education becomes, in this context, an undermining narrative of art as decoration for other subjects and has teachers looking to 'make do' and plan and prescribe away error and chance (Jensen, 2007). The daily realities of schools and classrooms seem, in this light, to be more about limitations than possibilities: limitations on the practical, and flexible, application of techniques, concepts and theory to jam-packed curriculum that is already competing for time in the schedule and for space in classrooms; limitations to connection and making - making a mess, making a noise, making a difference.

What could be revealed

'Yes, and…'

While this is not a question, it is the answer I try to give and the one I hope to receive. 'Yes, and…' is an acknowledgement of what is and what can be, of more-than. In relation to my third research question, this response quivers with affective energy and material possibility. It shows a way to expand professional practice and enfold the new material and the decolonial. The emergence of belonging and identity as a theme in this study was, in hindsight, inevitable. My body, in writing about the generalised experience expressed above in 'impermanent', reacted like I was reliving the experience. My jaw clenched and shoulders tightened with tension.

My heart and mind raced with uncertainty and confusion, questioning if my perceptions were accurate: Did that really happen? Am I just being too sensitive/overreacting? Is it possible that I didn't pay enough attention to the adults? That I was so focused on working with the children that I missed something? Trying to rationalise my feelings and visceral reactions to information while writing, I fell back into the trap of trying to make this study something expected, that would fit with what is already there and accepted. This one act, of not being told about the mural be(com)ing impermanent, led me down a path of frustration and analysis of how the education system and society primed me to feel like I had failed, isolated and excluded. Considered this way, my identity as teacher, as artist, and as an advocate for art in schools, conflicted with the perception of being, in my own words, 'just another service'. While at issue in 'impermanent' is my sense of (not) belonging and its tumbledown effect on identity, I choose to focus on the process of coming to this theme and of becoming in this theme; processing and writing about it; struggling with what the writing was showing, or more importantly not showing, and how I could communicate this struggle. To bring it back to where and how I can find and feel belonging. For me, this occurs by returning to affective and material engagement. By working through uncertainty with a needle in my hand. To those moments at the wall, painting and talking, sharing stories along with technique. It was here, within the experience and the relationships with materials and people that were engaged that, like Lobo (2020), I felt 'the vitality of human and more-than-human power that struggles but emerges from the cracks, fissures and margins to seed plural becomings' (p. 575). I feel these things again, but now they are more pronounced and poignant. They have opened a space to illuminate what is and what could be, because when I feel like I belong, I am a part of the energy and ideas flow.

So, instead of losing myself, again, to a system of numbers and rational facts, pulling energy and inspiration from a well of belonging, I move towards the call to seek more than what is traditionally expected and supposed, to embracing my ever-changing, emerging affective and material entanglements. Beyond this act, and within how I choose to react to it, is a more abundant option. I choose to remember and encourage relationships with the materials of making, and of community in making. As suggested in the vignette I choose to see more than paint on a wall.

Summary

more than paint on a wall

Porous crevices and cracks twinkle and conspire

      vibrant and marvelling

I feel belonging

      Special strength

            covering the walls and filling imaginations

I am with the wall

            Listening

to the scratchy voice

      feeling the paint

  feeling the tension

            I take a break

breathe in the growing colours

 and bumps along the way

while I toiled

        Into the heated space

where walls meet ceiling

the whispered pride

became

more than paint on a wall.

Stitches in Time

Introduction
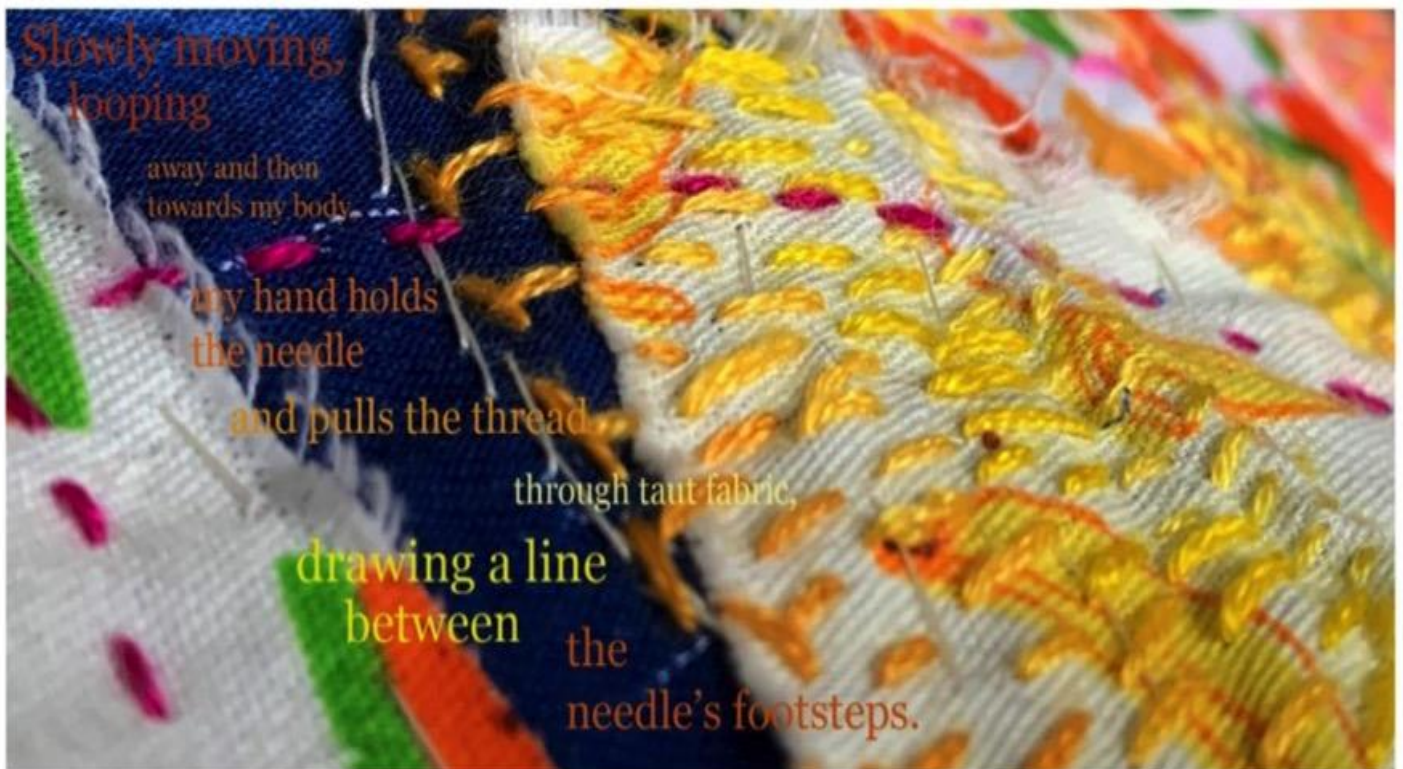
'Time in itself, absolutely, does not exist; it is always relative to some observer or some object. Without a clock I say 'I do not know the time'. Without matter, time itself is unknowable. Time is a function of matter; and matter therefore is the clock that makes infinity real.' John Fowles, The Áristos, 1964.

Whether time exists or not, as Fowles suggests above, it can be considered one of the most influential concepts of contemporary life. According to a study by the Concise Oxford Dictionary that looked at word usage, 'time' is the most frequently used noun in the English language (Hammond, 2019). We, in northern climes, appear to be obsessed with time – with its linear measurement and employment. Twisted through colonial-capitalist

production into a commodity for controlling efficiency and productivity, time has been given power, it can even be conceived of *as* power (Schmitt et al, 2021). But does it need to be this way? Is time's role in society, and more specifically in education, to be necessarily played out in an infinite line of succeeding tasks? Does a change in perspective, or in how we interact with time, and through time, with other people and objects, change what is prioritized, and what is considered of value?

Over the course of this chapter, the notion of time and its relative value in education is explored and analysed through visual and narrative renderings of school-based teaching experiences. I invite you to see what they offer and to consider how conceptions of time can affect and be affected by interactions. I end the chapter with a visual representation of my research experience to show how the presented ideas connect to and through the act of embroidery.

In this chapter, as with the last, I use my generalized autoethnographic experiences and arts-informed inquiry to construct a narrative vignette that highlights the struggle against time and urgency that can often be found in a classroom. I begin with a discussion of time as it is often constructed in the school settings that I have experienced. This is followed by the first of two vignettes. The vignette, 'touching time', begins with a visual connection in the form of a photograph from my teaching practice that demonstrates a student in the process of needle felting. Punctuating the narrative portion are changes in font size that act as a connection to the visual and performative summary.

Following the first vignette I return to a discussion of time as experienced in the classroom. I then interrupt this train of thought, to insert a visual and narrative rendering that connects to one of the stitches employed in the arts-informed inquiry. This is accompanied by a performative rendering inspired by the affective and material connection I make with and through the stitch, in this case the backstitch. In interrupting a focus on time as linear measurement, I open the space to allow for looking at time through making. I also invite a consideration of how the stitch and the act of creating with it connect to a research process

that enacts time as emergent and porous. I then share a second vignette of a generalised classroom-based experience that shows the possibility for connecting in this way.   The chapter draws towards its end with a call to refocus on enfolding experiences of tactility and connection into narratives. I summarise the chapter with a final performative piece, accompanied by an encapsulating image.

Wasting time

There is an invisible force in the classrooms I visit: the constant looming presence of time. Its literal manifestation hangs, ticking away, on the wall in the form of an analog clock. The movement of its arms reverberate in a silent classroom with short, sharp taps. If the clock is not accurate or 'on time', for whatever reason, it can throw off the pace of a lesson, leaving a conversation or instruction to quickly and frantically wrap up or stop abruptly. Its anthropomorphized form is always there, taking note of what has been accomplished and insisting that more still needs to be done before the end of the day, when the clock bell rings.

Time in school is often either perceived as being used wisely or wasted. I feel it viscerally before I enter a school building, especially when I know I will be working to a tight schedule of multiple classes in succession. I feel constrained and inflexible, unable to allow the activities to branch out organically.   It is ironic to be inflexible when the construct on which the time I am feeling has been actively produced to demand speed and *flexibility* in the face of change. In the context of a neoliberal school these are the virtues expected of the accomplished and efficient (Sugarman & Thrift, 2020).

What seems to go unrecognized, is that time exists in this form only because we agree to let it. It has been constructed and universalised into a unit of measurement and commodification through Western standardisation for colonial-capitalist power and profit (Schmitt et al, 2021). It has been contrived and perpetuated to control and monitor. Tying time to outputs and measuring its value in economic terms, linear time works for a profit-

oriented society that aligns with lineal notions of unending progress and growth. In the hustle and bustle of a school, time is constantly constructed and negotiated through our social interactions. It is to be accounted for and balanced within a framework of efficiency and timetabled markers of growth. In the face of an omnipresent pressure to produce and account for tasks and measurements of learning it is easy to slip under the thrall of timelines that have definite beginnings and ends. Ironically, the constant pressure to produce, to achieve prescribed outcomes and learning targets within predetermined timeframes, feels unending. However, is it actually time that we are feeling, or are we feeling something through time, something that has been presented as being about time, in order to obscure? Might it lead us to focus responsibility for how time is used on the individual teacher, instead of the social institutions that have promoted it as a commodity in the first place (Sugarman 2014)?

Touching time

The sound of a dry-felting needle entering foam is a wonderful whispering crunch. It bites into foam placed under wool, piercing and pulling the wool fibres, forcing them into tighter and tighter tangles. Once exposed to this sound and what it produces, students look forward to making it crunch and to seeing the wool become felt. They are excited to see their ideas become physical and touchable.

As much as the sound and feel of wool being felted creates ripples of contentment and awe, the experience takes root in thinking ahead and composing images, often on paper.

When working with a classroom full of students, I start dry-felting lessons with a planning session. It is an opportunity to talk with students about their designs and to help them problem solve visual ways of communicating intention and translating it into wool. Even though I spend the whole session on my feet, jumping from one student to the next, it feels calm and replete with purpose.

In one session the classroom teacher noticed this and quietly commented as the students worked away at their designs, "it's so nice to have the time to go around and conference with students. To give them the chance to talk about ideas and try things out". This was a kind gesture offered in gratitude for the experience and it warmed me with appreciation, but it also struck me as unfortunately odd.

Odd because I would hope that all learning experiences were meant to do this – to try things out and share about ideas. It was as though my being there gave the teacher permission to slow down and talk with the students about something other than math, reading, or writing. I didn't say this, instead whispering back, "It's great to see, isn't it? I'm so happy we could make the time."

permission

The sound
enters
in a whispering crunch

It bites
Piercing

And pulling

Forcing tangles
to see ideas
become physical and touchable

Ripples of contentment and awe
take root
communicate intention

Translating
and jumping
it feels calm and replete with purpose

the chance to talk
Gesture

To slow down
whisper back
make time

Wasting more time

The pressure not to 'waste' time, to fill the school day with learning activities and achieve goals, is gently illustrated in the vignette above through the classroom teacher's observation. From the perspective of a productive use of time, such art making activities – ones that engage in exploring material and conceptual iterations of communication and connection, are perceived as a luxury, an indulgence, or a conceited act (Jardine et al, 2006).

Art as a part of schooling and education is, in this view of the value of time, not considered an effective and efficient usage. Though not a lament, the vignette is sorrowful in the wistful wish for more. While it could be described as a craving for more time, it is really a desire for more connection with the students and their lives, for letting the relationships guide how their time together unfolds rather that allowing targeted learning outcomes to dictate the day.

The performative piece, 'permission', that follows the vignette is a reminder of what *is* there when we look to interacting with and through materials. Beyond the implicit and explicit systemic expectations of learning on a linear productive path there exists a space for being and becoming, where time slows and connection emerges.

Rendering time

My favourite stitch is the backstitch. In embroidery it can draw a line, outline a shape, and add detail. In hand sewing it is the strongest stitch for attaching materials together. The act of sewing a series of backstitches loosens my mind while it strengthens connections with the fabric.

Sometimes the act of stitching leads to thoughts, other times the stitches follow what is already being considered. I often start a sewing session with an experience in mind, one that I know I need to sit with but cannot force. Sometimes thoughts stay, sometimes another idea or experience presses through. These thoughts both puncture and punctuate the sewing and present different avenues of thought and connection.

When the thoughts are too much, focusing on the needles' path and the resulting line of silken thread anchors me to the present. It allows me to be in the present without worrying about time – about keeping time, making time, using time, wasting time, or needing time.

Keeping time

Slowly moving,

looping

away and then

toward my body,

my hand holds

the needle

and pulls the thread

through taut fabric,

drawing a line

between

the

needle's footsteps.

A rendering of time well spent

It was a predictable lesson: To make worry dolls out of simple materials to be added to individual 'toolkits' students had for emotional regulation. It was a discrete, contained lesson, with materials pre-sorted into paper bags for each student, saving lesson time from managing material distribution. It would require one hour. Normally I would only offer to facilitate art activities that spread out over multiple days to allow for a deeper exploration, but it was a period of high stress in the school, and teachers needed predetermined, scripted activities that they could feel a sense of control over. For this lesson I was collaborating with a classroom teacher that I had worked with multiple times before in previous school years. I knew from those experiences and the conversations that we had

that she would be open to letting the materials lead. Meaning, the lesson outcome didn't need to stay predetermined.

The sequence was set and paced for a smooth completion on the hour. We sat in a circle, I read a story, connections were elicited, materials were shown, and there was a quick how-to demonstration before the students went back to their seats with their paper bags full of

materials. They got to their seats, pulled out their scissors and markers, and began making.

The young students giggled and chatted as they wound bright yarn around pegs, crisscrossing the yarn to wrap around chenille arms, gluing the tucked ends in place, help at the ready, if they needed it. Fabric was cut and glued and added, making magic.

Then time became space. Instead of expecting the students to immediately move on to the next scheduled task, the classroom teacher gave them time to explore and play with their new creations. For some that meant cutting and gluing the extra materials from their bags, attaching them together and to the paper bags. Any details they couldn't cut or glue were added with markers. Whole worlds were born out of paper, yarn, cloth and glue.

For one small group, the space gave them time to have characters greet each other, and then to act out stories together. For one student the cut and glued fabric became a cape that he used to fly his wooden character through the air.
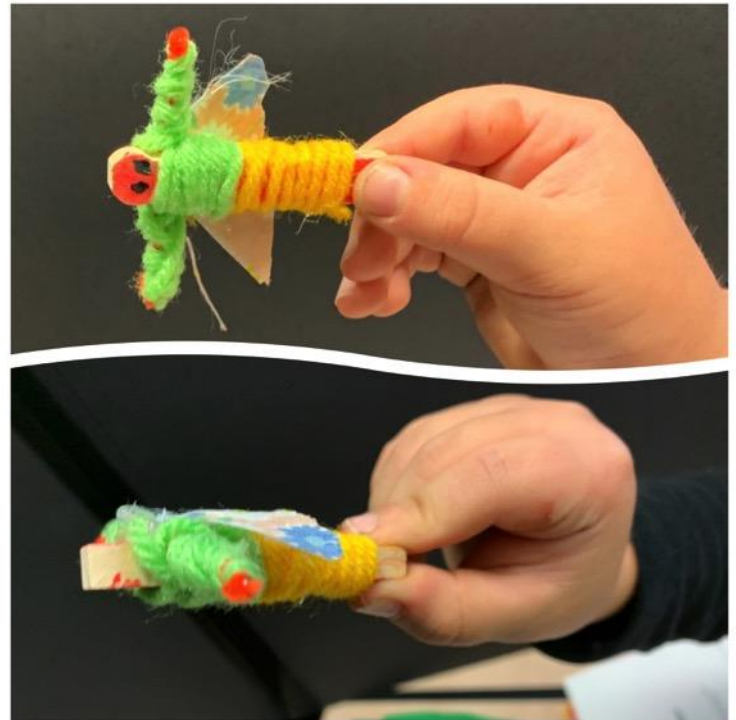
While still contained within the bell times and required hours of the school day, the pace set itself. In moments like these, 'instructional time' – the unit by which the school day is organized and measured, it's association with efficient and effective learning time (Prov. of NS, 2015b) – becomes enfolded in making meaning and connections with the materials, the subject matter, and peers. These connections and meanings may have been missed or even lost if the classroom teacher and I had been focused on standardized units of time, measured by a clock, or by the designated subject learning outcomes.

This teacher, while aware of what was deemed expected by school officials, curriculum documents, timetables, and grading, let her students know that she valued exploring and making connections by giving them time to do so. She gave them time like it was space. Space to breathe, to be and become. Space for growth beyond linear timeframes and surrounded by possibility.

For some teachers it might be difficult to allow this space or time for exploration without a tangible result directly relatable to grade level curriculum outcomes. They would perceive it as a waste of time, as would many people in our culture of economic efficiency, where 'time

is money' (Levine, 2021). But was it? Was this a waste of valuable instructional time? Should there have been a greater sense of urgency, a need to quicken the pace, to be more productive? To use the language of assessment and accountability - what was achieved, and could it be measured?

I did not need to rush off to another class or another school, so a scheduled hour became most of the morning. The next week I returned to visit the class for another lesson. When I arrived at the classroom door students greeted me, pulling out and talking about the worry dolls in their toolkits. Because there had been time the previous week to talk and play, an opportunity for learning and sharing something greater occurred.

The conversation, knowledge sharing and experience would not have occurred if during that first lesson we had been focused on efficiency in the form of following scheduled time. The targeted activity and the one-hour originally scheduled would have been achieved but not more. The pace of the session, of making something with their hands while their minds and bodies worked in concert with others – human and material – made for experiences that resonated with connection and meaning because we, the students and teachers, were able to participate in unfolding time. The outcome of this experience could not have been predetermined or planned for. Without allowing for a practice of time that can fold and unfold into novelty inter- and intra-acting with people and the more-than-human, wooden pegs would not have become superheroes to whisper worries and hopes to.

Interupting time through thread and fabric

With the needle in my hand, I puncture the cloth, and draw a line between myself, time, memory, and material. In this moment time is forgotten and yet always present.

The photographs and performative writing above are a record and example of how I chose to engage in a postcritical way with the theme of this chapter. They are a record of my thoughts and actions frozen in time through stitches.

I came to recognize my conflicted relationship with the forces that shape my perception of pressure and limited time while embroidering a circular patterning of stitches around a silhouetted impression of a lavender. At a point of feeling intense pressure, with what seemed like an infinite line of tasks to complete in a short amount of time, I took the time to embroider. This choice interrupted and allowed for a reprieve from persistent time pressures. Embroidering provided a respite from the stress and anxiety I felt, borne from an over-saturation of urgency.

This acknowledgement opened to a recognition of how I *know* time through material encounters – as relative to affective experience rather than efficient time usage. Through and with the thread I was able to have an open dialogue with materials and concept to effect an acceptance of time as fluid, but also gently recognize that I live in a society bounded by linearity.

I similarly needed to interrupt my thoughts and explorations regarding the concept of time in an attempt to open up the space to what could be and thereby decentre time's traditional role in schools as constricting. I did so by evoking an embodied relationship with time in schools as a teacher and out of schools as a learner trying to navigate the doctoral process and its linear timelines. Like the narrative, visual, and performative renderings of 'rendering time' interrupted the deliberation of linear time expectations in schools, the methodological practice through which this was surfaced thrummed with material affective energy and connection. I came to appreciate, as I worked on vignettes, disseminating experiences into categories - by theme, by concern, and by affective resonance – that what really reverberated were the moments spent considering the experiences, composing them into stitches in and on fabric – moments of *time*, remembered in thread. This reminded me of Garber's (2019) assertion, through invoking the work of Rumljak (2004), that

> objects and materials have an ability 'to foster intimate experiences' (Rumljak, 2004, p. 186) that can engage us in deep explorations of processes as well as self, others, human experiences, and social issues. Intricacy in objects 'immerse[s] us in their complexity', leading to a slowing of time and thickening of experience (Rumljak, 2004, p.191) (p. 17).

By focusing less on controlling time and more on inter- and intra-action, time was able to emerge at a different pace in relation to the conversation my hand and body had with the thread, needle, and cloth.

Through stitching in time, with time, and of time, a recognition of process and connection to material (and the more than material) was made. Using mark-making as a statement and to represent the passing of time, the repetitive stitches brought time and convictions together to create a pathway to lines of thought that embrace the more-than-human construction/conversation that occurs when a needle pierces cloth. It grew into a space for being and becoming.

Summary

the needle's footsteps

draw a line

looping

pulling

holding

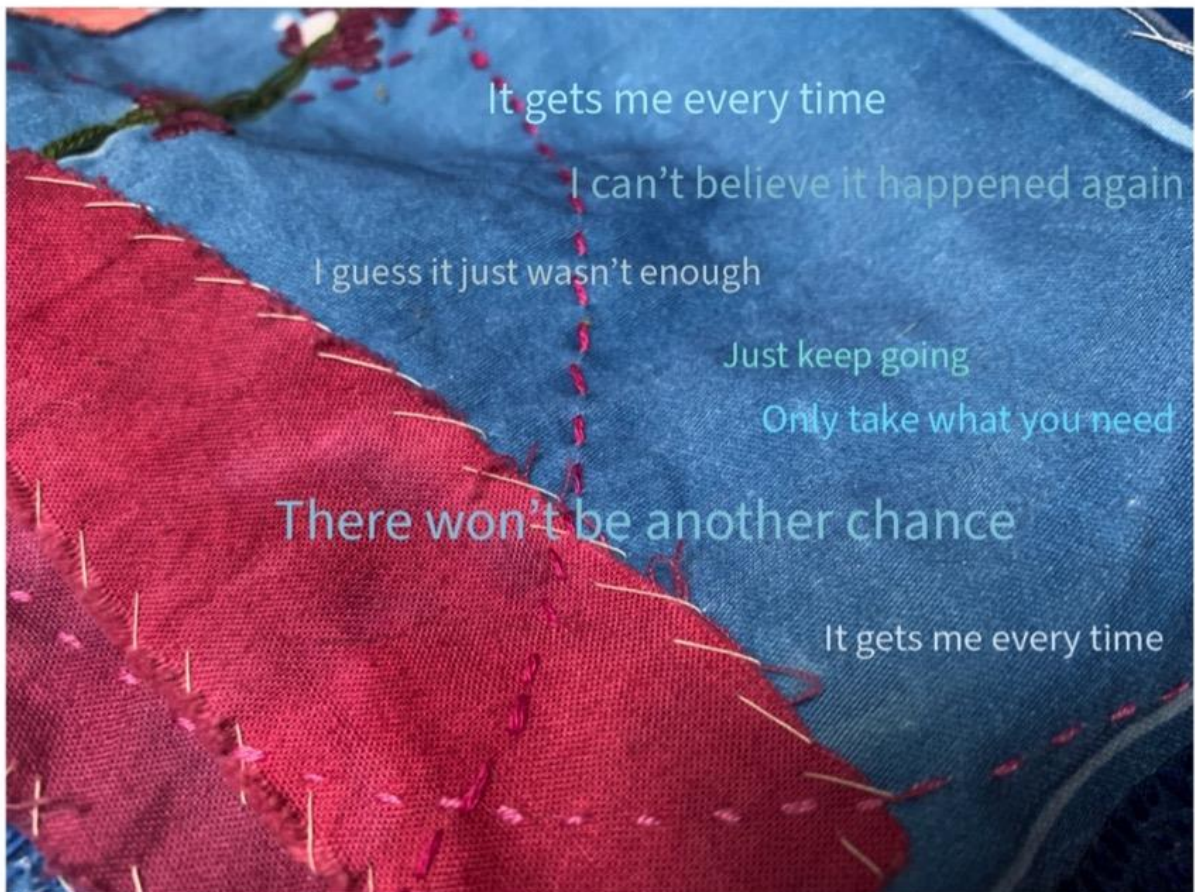through

between

taut fabric

and thread

slowly moving

whispering back

time stood still and

kept moving at the same time

Hanging by a thread

It gets me every time

I can't believe it happened again

I guess it just wasn't enough

Just keep going

Only take what you need

There won't be another chance

It gets me every time

Introduction

> For me, and for many of us, our first waking thought of the day is 'I didn't get enough sleep'. The next one is 'I don't have enough time'. Whether true or not, that thought of *not enough* occurs to us automatically before we even think to question or examine it. We spend most of the hours and days of our lives hearing, explaining, complaining, or worrying about what we don't have enough of.
>
> Lynne Twist, *The Soul of Money*, 2017, p. 43-44

For many people expectation and urgency fill our days. Living with a constant sense of scarcity, of not having or being enough, takes a toll. Teachers face the apprehension that they do not have enough time, resources, experience, or support. That somehow, with *more* of these things, the problems we face could be solved. But it is not that simple or straightforward.

In this chapter, I continue to use my generalized autoethnographic experiences and arts-informed inquiry to create evocations of meaning and experience through narrative, visual, and performative anecdotes. A narrative vignette is constructed to demonstrate the agitation that can sometimes result from a sense of scarcity in schools. By using the word scarcity I mean to invoke a sense of insufficiency and *not enough* in the form of a pressing demand to '*do more with less'*. For teachers, this can take the form of both implicit and explicit expectations to achieve standardized learning targets and provide curated learning opportunities while *balancing* administrative tasks, supervision, and building trusting relationships with students, other staff, and families, all within the confines of a limited budget and timeframe.

Immediately following this introductory section is a visual and narrative rendering that connects to one of the stitches, the overcast stitch, employed in the arts-informed inquiry. An additional visual example from the art making process of this study follows and is accompanied to its right by a performative introduction to the vignette 'unravelling', which succeeds it. Placed within the text of 'unravelling' is a visual connection in the form of a photograph from my teaching practice that shows students picking through a jumble of

yarn, as they would through embroidery floss. To accentuate the notion of a tangled mess, images of a circular scribbled line are translucently set behind the narrative text. Additionally, punctuating the narrative portion are changes in font size that act as a visual connection to both the performative introduction and the visual and performative summary of the vignette, entitled 'wound'.

I follow 'wound' with 'frayed edges', a discussion of where the '*need*' for control may be coming from. I then pause the discussion to demonstrate the tangible apprehension I experience when confronted with a perceived lacking. The fragmented form of written, performative and visual texts that follow 'frayed edges' imitate the staccato pace of invasive thoughts and feelings of alarm and insufficiency I sometimes feel during lessons: misgivings of not being enough, not having enough, and not giving enough. These apprehensions are at odds with a simultaneous presence of '*too much*' - too much material accumulation and wastage (because there is 'more' it is not as dear), and control in terms of outputs and products.

The fragmented subsections are separated by lines from the narrative rendering 'wound' and sequenced by the order in which the lines of text appear in both 'wound' and 'unravelling'. While separated, they also leak into each other, just as the apprehension surrounding being and having enough leak into actions and thoughts. Each small subsection acts differently, to intersperse, interject, accentuate, and foreground my affective entanglement with teaching and making in schools.

After the disjointed presentation of these subsections, a reengagement with what I refer to as 'degrees of plentifulness' is presented. Within this final section I proffer possibilities that might exist beyond having or not having, and being or not being. The chapter closes with a visual and performative rendering that speaks to a plentiful encounter experienced during the research/making process.

Unravelling in a rush

The overcast stitch is a shallow stitch with a flat edge. It offers a quick way to sew together two pieces of materials with a loose looping motion. It is not the most secure or long-lasting stitch, but it works to quickly bind edges and prevent fraying. It also prevents unravelling when you are in a rush.

unravelling

It gets me every time.

I can't believe it happened again.

I guess it just wasn't enough

Just keep going.

Only take what you need.

There won't be another chance.

I have a good supply of embroidery floss. Wound around bobbins, labelled by dye lot number, and organized into analogous colour groupings, they glow and vibrate with possibility in their clear plastic container. Peaceful perfect possibility. Until the container has been in a classroom full of children. Then the floss is used and abused and returned unceremoniously in pieces and piles – the labels gone, the bobbins naked. The container is awkwardly closed with a giant rubber band fighting against the strain of jammed-in balls of thread. Anything missing is likely on the floor or squirreled away in desks.

It gets me every time.

I also have a healthy dose of patience when working with children. From my viewpoint they are learning how to value, use, and care for materials that they have possibly never encountered before, all while trying to express or understand concepts and issues in a critical way. It is a lot to juggle, so I aim to be patient and to calmly guide their explorations and navigations of new material encounters. But there are times when I just cannot find any patience. Instead, I find frustration and panic.

I can't believe it happened again.

When working with a group of students I regularly chime, 'Only take what you need to start', followed by letting them know they can get more later if they run out. I try to explain what I mean, modelling how to choose and cut a length of floss, and how to carefully pull apart the strands so they can all be used or saved for later use. There are visual steps laid out in colour photographs, sequenced to remind them. I warn that rushing or taking too much can mean tangled skeins full of knots. I know that the majority will not heed my advice or warnings, that they need to figure it out through trying themselves. I also know that it will mean scraps of floss all over the place, and student frustration with the materials and with each other possibly boiling over. Similar feelings flood my senses – I thought I was ready. I planned, the materials were prepared and organized. I should have been ready.

I guess it just wasn't enough.

When I see students being wasteful –taking more than they need, grabbing and pulling at the skein until it is a tight ball, and then feverishly hacking it into chunks instead of untangling the floss – I lose my patience and often my perspective. I see it as an unnecessary waste of materials in a human world that takes too much. Add to this a classroom teacher hovering, buzzing in my ear that, 'So-and-so doesn't know what to do' and 'what do you do with such-and-such? What's it called again?' I can feel the teacher's uncertainty through these frantic words and the tension in her voice and her eyes. So I don't make eye contact, I just keep going.

Just keep going.

Sometimes, when I can maintain some perspective, I can calmly let them know that this is part of learning how to use the materials. 'Be kind to yourself', I say, 'Take your time. You will make more knots if you rush', adding the reminder that, 'There's enough for everyone if you only take what you need'.

Only take what you need.

But the immediacy steps in. The clock on the wall calls out, screaming to find a solution, fast. They need it. Right away. Now. Yesterday. This is it, there won't be another chance.

There won't be another chance.

The next time, I make sure that materials are pre-sorted, pre-cut and individually packaged. There may be less choice and some unnecessary waste of materials, but it will be efficient and controlled. Everyone will have enough. But even then,

It gets me every time.

Wound

around bobbins

they glow and vibrate with possibility

pieces and piles

awkwardly strain

squirreled away

learning how to

value, care, encounter, express

I calmly guide

but there are times

instead

I take

pull apart

tangled skeins full of knots

scraps of floss

grabbing and pulling

a tight ball

hacking uncertainty

frantic words and tension

immediacy steps in

screaming

yesterday

the next time

but

even then

Frayed edges

The performative rendering immediately prior to this section, entitled 'wound', is intended to engender a narrative of expectation and urgency in teaching art. Within this section 'wound' is retold, with enlarged segments of performative text punctuated by description and exploration that relate to the larger culture of urgency in schooling.

The words and phrases that have been placed in italics within this chapter are, in my view, impractical expectations that place professional and personal identity in a precarious state and cause disconnection. These expectations act to perpetuate inequalities and binary thinking through competition and conformity that arise due to a sense of scarcity (Roux & Bonezzi, 2015). Boldt (2006) speaks to the effect that such a predicament can have on teachers and the learning opportunities that they feel able to provide:

> The sense of crisis that currently pervades many early childhood and elementary classrooms creates and exacerbates intense anxiety for teachers and frequently sets in motion changes that move children further from the questions and modes of learning that fuel their engagement (in Boldt, Lewis & Leander, 2015).

With such anxiety circulating in classrooms and schools, a craving for control and predictability ensues. This decreases the possibility of engaging with curricular and pedagogical ambiguity and uncertainty. An emphasis on management and monitoring bind learning to topics 'in ways that make it possible to control, predict, assess, and monitor their production, distribution, consumption, dispensation, and accumulation' (Jardine et al, 2006, p. 4). This can result in learning opportunities being reduced to surface features that are, in an art education context, managed through material acquisition and mastery. It forecloses exploration *with* materials and affects, disengaging with the unexpected and inefficient.

In the narrative text above I wrote about a box of embroidery floss that I perceived as an *appropriate* amount for its purposes. In truth, I probably have an unhealthy supply – I have much more than is needed at one time. I easily have enough floss for an entire year of embroidery projects. Yet I always feel the need to acquire more. More floss, more everything. The saying 'you can never have enough' seems to apply to my desire to stock up,

to have more, to *be prepared* … but for what? Perhaps it is not the supply that is unhealthy, but my perception of it: my perception that by continually increasing the supply I can be prepared for any eventuality.

This need for some form of control is fed by the inherent uncertainty and ambiguity of our twenty-first century lives – lives that are filled with the immediacy of simultaneous globalized, localized, and technology-imbued reality (and fiction). In this conception control and consistency are packaged as desirable. It takes the human desire for certainty and safety and leverages it to comply with bureaucratic measures that bind education's purpose to economic outputs, without looking at the landscape beyond a consumer-centric economic hegemony. Such a landscape is dwarfed by an economic system built on unending growth and manufactured or artificial scarcity. It permeates all aspects of life, and education is no exception.

In Nova Scotia, education is positioned as primarily focused on stimulating economic growth and workplace participation. The main stated goal of the Public School Program in Nova Scotia is 'to provide education programs and services for students to enable them to develop their potential and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy' (Prov. of NS, 2013, p. 3).   As teachers work to accomplish this objective, often at a frantic pace, they can be left feeling like it is 'more of a struggle to "make do" and guard against mistakes rather than the playful acts of creative interpretation' (Jensen, 2007, p. 497). A narrative loop of scarcity plays out not only in individual classrooms, schools, and education systems, but also in the minds of the people involved. In this way an economic concept takes on human attribution - turning having into being. Such a consumer-centric culture has created an often-unquestioned *need* to accumulate and acquire as a way to control feelings of adequacy and capability.

around bobbins

they glow and vibrate with possibility

Maintaining materials and tools to perform at their best when needed, to last through the art making process, is part of an artist's and an art educator's responsibilities. Treating materials and tools with respect and care recognize their important relationships to the bodies and minds that create with them. It also acts, on the part of the educator, as part of a ritual that gives a sense of control and order. However, it is a false sense of control, especially as a visiting teacher. The ability to embed routines and responsibilities regarding materials and tools is not available. Instead an unfortunate choice between ensuring materials and tools are respected and ensuring the art lessons are achieved in the time allotted has to be made. Often, the materials and tools are sacrificed as '*consumable*' and therefore replaceable. They are disconnected from possible relationships and caring.

pieces and piles

awkwardly strain

The idea of a crisis, of exceptional urgency and threat, can distract teachers from questioning the drive to constantly push, forcing them to quickly move through learning tasks and cover curriculum topics. Like jammed-in balls of thread, they strain to fill every minute of the school day with content. In this way it takes a teacher's role of helping students learn, and ties it, and the teacher's sense of worth, to a system focused on delivery and performance. Our competence and worth as people and professionals become enmeshed with a stream of socially constructed problems imbued with a pervasive sense of scarcity. The tangle that ensues affects perceptions of value and emphasis in classrooms and curriculum.

squirreled away

During lessons that involve embroidery, I make a habit of discretely checking inside and under students' desks for floss that they might be holding on to, that someone else might need before them. Their intention is not to take away from someone else, but to ensure that the material will be available for them when they want it. Teachers do the same thing, hoarding materials in their classroom cupboards, and even under their own desks. Like the children, they want to ensure that the materials they intend to use are available when they need it, rather than 'risk' leaving it in a communal storage space. For the most part, all of these people, students and teachers alike, are friendly and helpful, so why would they hoard materials? Is it because they cannot *afford* to collaborate or share? Collaboration involves compromise and time, two things that teachers wish they could share but perceive as needing to be rationed in order to *make it through,* or survive, the school day. Shah and Launer (2019) express this push for control via rationing and its disturbing effect:

> 'Even when we believe that we are practicing in accordance with our values, we often still remain constrained by a system that requires us to justify the allocation of resources, including our own attentiveness, compassion, curiosity, or willingness to give of ourselves as human beings. There is an implicit shared belief that we should ration even our humanity' (p. 112).

These constraints often result in a lopsided distribution of energy and resources, so that, instead of looking to share and connect, a perceived need to protect the self and our own interests can take over.

value, care, encounter, express

calmly guide

I own a number of t-shirts that feature wordplay, or 'punny' graphics and text.   One such well-worn t-shirt bears a message responding to the unasked proverbial question: Is the glass half empty or half full? The answer, prominently displayed at the top of the shirt, is that 'The cup is always 100% full'. The t-shirt's graphics illustrate the answer with a hand-drawn image of a drinking glass, a line demarcating where the water ends. At the right-hand

side of the image the two halves are labelled: 'water 50%' on the bottom, and 'air 50% at the top. With a simple illustration we are asked to question our assumptions and perceptions. What do we lose sight of when we limit ourselves to seeing one thing, in this case water? Or when we measure it, how that measurement is interpreted? In the rush to fill the school day, to 'cover' as much 'content' as possible, we lose sight of what we are measuring achievement for and against. We fail to question *why* we are measuring at all.

Further, using the t-shirt example, we miss the *opportunity* where the water ends and the air begins. We miss being. Being in that moment, with each other. In that moment we chance missing the value of just being - of caring, experiencing encounters that are expressed through inter- and intra-action with what is around and within, all swirling unnoticed while we try to calmly guide lessons, students, materials to stay on target.

but there are times

I plan and prepare materials, like the embroidery floss, hoping for the materials and the people involved in the lessons to breath and live and connect. I also prepare in the hope that it will open a space to calmly provide guidance and encouragement. But there are times that the calm does not come, or it abruptly, uncomfortably disappears.

instead

I take

pull apart

tangled skeins full of knots

scraps of floss

As I untangle knots and attempt to salvage scraps of floss, I am reminded that by existing in

a loop of thinking of not having or not being enough, I am not thinking about what *is* possible and how it could be different.

<div align="right">

grabbing and pulling

a tight ball

hacking uncertainty

frantic words and tension

</div>

Instead I unravel when in a rush.

I don't make eye contact and look at what the problem actually is.

 I just keep going.

Lost and overtaken by the noise.

<div align="right">

immediacy steps in

screaming

</div>

When consumed by feelings of *not enough,* all the preparation, planning, and intention to calmly lead is overtaken by frustration - of immediacy, lack of respect for materials, self-absorption, and waste. It makes me doubt and question my abilities as a teacher. Even as I write this I am constrained by immediate concerns of

Will it be enough? Have I said enough? Have I done enough?

<div align="right">

yesterday … the next time

</div>

But I can't forget. I must remember and make eye contact. There is a larger picture that extends into yesterday and tomorrow.

If I was to reprioritize, or change perspective, could I bring more consciously into my teaching practice and life an awareness that the socially constructed concept of 'enough' is *not adequate*? That I need to seek more without exceeding? That nothing is limitless?

<div align="right">but even then</div>

It brings to light what we really lack in these contexts. We lack a sense of what 'enough' is and means. That understanding 'enough' means seeing that it is about both scarcity and abundance in the form of excess. Realizing we are living in excess of our collective ecological means changes the relative value of enough to actually be too much.

In this way abundance and scarcity are similarly problematic as absolutes (Mehta et al, 2019).   Either way the (mis)appropriation of resources is still framed only as taking without the reciprocal giving and gratitude, without the understanding that our human actions affect the more-than-human others that we take from. Reengaging 'enough' and 'balance' as relative requires investigating notions of scarcity, sufficiency, and abundance. Through this enough comes to represent balance as reciprocity. However, questions remain.   How do you know what balance is when society does not? When we do not live in reciprocity with the earth or the people we live with? When we live in the immediate now of our wants, and can push figuring out the cost to later?

Degrees of plentifulness

My intention in this part of my inquiry was to offer looking toward sufficiency as a way to counter the pull of not enough and scarcity, only to find that the feelings as encountered and wrestled with in the performative and narrative pieces persist in my being. While I question 'what is enough?' I find the more pressing question to be 'how do I *know* enough?' Is enough adequate or ample? Abundance suggests the availability of large quantities, scarcity assumes lacking or dearth. Sufficiency implies enough to meet needs, but all are contextual and prone to interpretation. Offering a moderate possibility that exists between opposites has foreclosed rather than opened possibilities, and remains on a binary line.

Finding myself at odds with the experience of writing about encounters and entanglements with such perceptions, I feel disconnected from my intention, like I am a bird constantly circling but unable to find a place to land. However, this is where I need to pause and break with these thoughts – the questions are just leading me back to control and certainty, to traditional ways of responding to provocations (Boldt & Leander, 2017). I do not need an answer, I need an understanding with which I can intentionally relate and respond.

I need to re-open my thoughts to ways of being in the world and with the world that speak to more. I need to honour the relationships that exist, and bring recognition to interrelationships between human selves and more-than-human others.

Perhaps in order to understand enough, I can look to its synonym 'plenty'. For something to be considered plentiful it must be 'more than sufficient without being excessive' (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Plentiful, or plentifulness, offers possibility with nuance. When treated in degrees, possibilities might exist beyond having or not having, and being or not being open.

In this way I am able to reposition my material affective entanglements in terms of degrees of plentifulness. I can frame the materials, objects and tools with which I work, not as resources to be used and manipulated, but as co-investigators and co-builders of

understandings that change and grow as our relationships (with materials, tools, space, time, people, objects) develop.

In this way I find plentifulness in the act of making. Through and with material engagement in the form of sewing, light, sitting, and listening, I come to see the warm light streaming through the open slats of window blinds. To feel the sun giving my thoughts clarity, making the sounds of needle and thread moving with and through fabric precious, poignant and full. I focus on what *is* and how I can work with it to continue to *be*.

With the material conversation of the needle nudging my fingers to guide and assert the direction of the stitches, I find the urgency and invading thoughts of 'not enough' washed away by the vibrating shadows of tree branches reflecting through a window. I recognize these experiences as fleeting but not scarce. That in the dark winter months when much of the stitching of the arts-informed part of this study was produced, I found calmness and fullness in sewing. It allowed me to exit a loop of scarcity that I encountered in schools and to see beyond it. Through the sound of a needle puncturing taut cloth and the ensuing slow pull of thread was plenty.

Summary

The warm light
of the afternoon
sun
 gives my
thoughts clarity
and makes the
sounds of needle
and thread
moving through
fabric
 precious,
poignant
and full.

Conclusion: Tying up loose ends

'When you sew, you must pause when the direction changes, alter the angle of your needle to go around a corner, shorten a stitch to make a sharp turn, lengthen it again to skim along a line' (Hunter, 2019, p. 192).

Like a needle in the act of sewing, following the thread of ideas that emerged within this study has drawn a path to being responsive to unfolding thoughts, images, and feelings as they are encountered. Through the layers of stitching and writing, tangles of experience surfaced and joined. Working to communicate a more-than-human chronicle of investigation and searching for connection in teaching art, I have tried to show, through piecing together words, images, and affective connection, how this responsiveness opens rather than closes the thoughts and discomfort that persisted.

The research questions: understanding instead of answering

Looking to permutation as response, I conclude with a reflective summary that connects across the study through the guiding structure offered by the research questions. Enfolded through its many iterations, the research questions structured signals for action and reminders of purpose. In suspending an expectation of linear answers and instead looking to build understanding and connection, an integral relationship between questioning and complexity was revealed This then intentionally related and responded to accepting permutations of ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in real situations.

In what ways do individual school experiences influence perspectives and approaches to visual arts education?

Early in the course of researching and exploring I became aware of a problematic assumption that this question's wording evokes. The question suggests a linear influence of school experiences to perspectives and approaches. Through negotiating experiences this linearity opened to seeing a circular relationship that lived within this study's research process. Where perspectives and approaches influenced embodied lived experiences as much as those same experiences influenced my approaches and perspective. This pointed out how easy becoming re-entrenched in systemically prioritized ways of knowing can be. It provided a call for the conscious decision to disentangle from those ways of thinking and to perceive differently, to enfold more rigorously non-traditional (or non-Western) modes of learning and being as they relate to being and becoming connected. By recognising and navigating my embodied lived experience as transmediated through stitching, to words through image fragments and prompts, an awareness of how my positionality both shapes and is shaped by experiences, perspective and educational approach was made apparent.

Each of the findings chapters offered an example of this circular relationship. In the chapter 'Running in place' I showed, through the generalized experience of painting a mural with children, the discrepancy that can arise between my perspective and approach and the expectations that others bring with them. The practical limitations to collaborative art experiences in schools, in relation to the daily reality of schools and classrooms, were

framed as incongruous and disheartening. It foregrounded the role external action (external to art making) can have in foreclosing affective understandings of experience. The chapter 'Stitches in time' continued this framing. The pressure not to 'waste' time, to fill the school day with learning activities and achieve goals, was illustrated through a generalized experience that had students planning for needle felting and their classroom teacher wistfully noting time's preciousness. The generalized experience expressed through fragmented forms of text in 'Hanging by a thread', depicts the agitation that can sometimes result from a perceived sense of scarcity in schools. Through the unravelling of an embroidery lesson, I show how perception and reality can crash together. Through the vain attempt to prepare for uncontrollable factors, I sought to command the learning space by increasing the supply of materials and limiting what could be done with them. Teasing apart the represented experiences only worsened these feelings of 'not enough' and seemed to create a tighter knot of misunderstanding and inertia. In the tangle of writing and images within the findings chapters I found a way to express the exploration and development of my worldview and how it pressed uncomfortably against expectations.

What social practices and value systems are at play in dominant approaches to visual arts education that need to be considered and interrogated?

Building off the surfaced positionality of the first question, the second research question looks at structural practices at play. This question led me to situate myself within, and critically examine, contextual and cultural power dynamics. All of the represented experiences occurred and chaffed against an education system focused on delivery and efficient performance.

Within 'Running in place' the limitations experienced in schools and classrooms surged from a mounting pressure and expectation to focus on standardized outcomes in literacy and numeracy. In this light, possibilities regarding connection and making in the form of messy (materially, emotionally, and cognitively) art activities were treated as unimportant and disconnected from prioritized learning targets. In 'Stitches in time', opportunities for connection had to be accounted for and balanced within a framework of efficiency and

timetabled markers of growth. With time perceived as either being used wisely or wasted, speed and flexibility become synonymous with effectiveness and efficiency. From the perspective of a productive use of time, art making activities that engaged in exploring material and conceptual iterations of communication and connection, were an ineffective and inefficient indulgence. In 'Hanging by a thread', the previous perception of indulgence was collapsed in the face of an urgent lack of time. The idea of a crisis, of exceptional urgency and threat, was identified as a distraction from questioning the drive to constantly push, and to quickly move through learning tasks and cover curriculum topics.

In order to exit this discourse of speed and 'not enough' I interrupted conceptual explorations with visual, narrative, and performative texts. Intended to pause, slow down, and open up spaces to illuminate what is and what could be, and they lead into the third question. While the second research question highlights the complexity of space in which education occurs, the third seeks to acknowledge the space and embrace the iterative, dynamic, and evocative as a way to navigate and create additional space for the more-than-human.

Recognizing public education as a complex space, how can new materialisms inform an expansive practice of arts education?

Often organized by the punctuation of performative writing and images, thoughts fractured and fragmented as I wrestled with embracing an expansive practice while still negotiating a limited space. This question brought the inquiry back to embracing the iterative, dynamic, and evocative. Within an expansive space, ideas and concepts are thought, felt, and embodied within inter- and intra-connecting relationships with the more-than-human. Validation of the affective and more-than-human opens educational spaces to more than achieving outcomes and competencies.

'Running in place' shows that by working through uncertainty with a needle in my hand I am able to bring focus back to where and how I can find and feel belonging. While at issue

within the chapter's generalized experience is my sense of (not) belonging, and its tumbledown effect on identity, I choose to focus on the process of making as a way of becoming and communicating. I choose to remember and encourage relationships with the materials of making, and of community in making.

In 'Stitches in time' I act on the lessons learnt from 'Running in place' and interrupt the limited space of discourse surrounding linear time and efficiency by inserting a visual and narrative rendering that connect to a more-than-human perspective. A practice of openness to whimsy and serendipity sees the space unlock to allow for looking at time through making. I continue a consideration of how the stitch and the act of creating with it connect to a research process that enacts time as emergent and porous.

Through these expansive enactments emerge a visceral connection of ideas and written texture in the form of the chapter 'Hanging by a thread'. Framing the materials, objects and tools with which I work not as resources to be used and manipulated, but as co-investigators and co-builders of understandings that change and grow as our relationships (with materials, tools, space, time, people, objects) develop, allow me to exit a loop of scarcity that I encountered in schools and to see beyond it. As I intentionally relate and respond to plentifulness, I see these experiences quiver with honesty and subjectivity together - like patterns of shadow and light through window blinds

Together, the three research questions and the explorations that developed because of them, act ultimately to combine, to be a resistance to control, an embracement of belief in self and connection to the more-than-human, to my own way of making meaning. They have also led me to embrace mediated experiences of stumbling and messily finding uncertainty and joy.

When the questions persisted

Stitched whispers

each scrap of
fabric

each
piece of thread

sat in and held
space

consumed me

sitting with

dwelling

tensions

through sewing
sketching and
thinking

let the thoughts
connect and collide

pulling
between change and stability

forces that shape

time softens

pressure and presence
My hand registers

a line

a shape

Touching thoughts, intuitions, reactions

stitching whispers

with needle and thread

Moving on: expansive enactments and textured nuance

The theoretical and methodological choices implemented within this dissertation speak to the powerful 'materiality of voice' (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016) and self-reflexivity that a deep engagement with art making and the more-than-human can offer. By surfacing the quiet and personal I honour connection and the opportunity it occasions. In gently challenging the boundaries of knowing and being in a school setting, I model a way to navigate and create additional space. As an exploration of meaning making that softly disrupts and questions traditional Western ways of being and knowing, this study invites other educators and researchers to consider identifying their own ways to recognize and negotiate embodied lived experiences. Experiences that speak to and unfurl our educational spaces in order to foster softer, more inclusive and collaborative spaces that see (and seek) beyond the human.

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