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Georgia State University

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ART AND SELF DISCOVERY
THE CALL AND RESPONSE OF MAKING ART

by

CYNTHIA A. TAYLOR

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport, PhD

ABSTRACT

This arts-based research study grows out of the examination of a lifelong practice of art making I dub *Call and Response*. Gaining insight through the research and exploration of doodling, automatic drawing and other surrealist techniques and ideas about perception, I not only better understood the development of my creative processes and strengthened my artistic voice, but learned how these practices could be beneficial in teaching and learning the visual arts in the k-12 classroom.

INDEX WORDS: Call and Response, Automatism, Doodles, Archetypes, Perception, Pareidolia

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THE CALL AND RESPONSE OF MAKING ART

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CYNTHIA A. TAYLOR

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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Cynthia A. Taylor
2015

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by

CYNTHIA A. TAYLOR

Committee Chair: Melanie Davenport

Committee: Melody Milbrandt

Kevin Hsieh

Timothy Flowers

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

I am only a link in the chain. This work is dedicated to my ancestors and the future generations of my family who may one day walk this Way. May it be some service to those who may quest, in search of connection. I did this work for them. It is constant and so am I.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to take this chance to express my appreciation to my professors at Georgia State University; Mel Davenport, whose keen insight, expertise and friendship illuminated the way. To Melody Milbrandt and Kevin Hsieh, whose support and encouragement kept me going. To Timothy Flowers, without whose mastery and enlightened conversation, I may not have had the courage to explore. And to the many teachers along the way, who left the trail markers along the journey for future discovery. I thank my friends and family for their love and support from the bottom of my heart.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Personal Observations

Finding the voice is a constant struggle for the artist and this is true for me. I am no different. In art there is revelation and art making may hold the key to discovering who we are as individuals and as related members of humanity. In my artistic endeavor I have never been as close to the elusive voice as when I create the work in which I am now entrenched. I have rendered the typical assignment, adhered to formalist guidelines, painted by the numbers, so to speak, but it is only when I have no preconceived intention that the work is most authentic.

Being artistically dormant for many years, I returned to school to pursue my undergraduate degree in painting at the Savannah College of Art in Design in Atlanta. One night pondering a final project, I began to doodle on my paint splattered drawing blotter. Somehow forgetting about the assignment I allowed my mind to become absorbed in the act of mark making. Several hours passed, I was surprised to see that the lines, marks and shapes became an elaborate, intricately woven tapestry of sorts. As if Newton's Apple dropped out of the sky onto my head, I knew then I was to doodle my way into the final project.

These drawings, or maybe they can be called meditations, are extensions of the drawings in the margins of every notebook I have ever had. These cast-off drawings, with their meandering lines, manifest time and again whenever I have a pen in hand without a purpose. Art projects and assignments have always been coupled with expectation, with some purpose and often made under duress. When I have drawn without those restrictions, I conjure a focused beauty, an internal satisfaction, exceeding far beyond any specific intention. I believe art, at least

my art, comes from the place that communicates to the hearts of others, in a subconscious language spoken without the constriction of words.

It was only *after* creating these pieces, hearing the reactions and responses of professors, colleagues and friends, and having to explain my process and inspiration that I understood how I indeed worked intuitively. There is a mystery in creative work that scholars and poets write about, and artists seek: a universality that connects humanity to its source. There is a silent communication between the artist's work and the audience, a harmonious resonance that exists between the eye and the image. Whether intentional on the artist's part or not, this is the realm that echoes our shared heritage. The response to the created visual image has its origins in the first marks of humankind. This led me to query complex questions, "What is art, and what specifically is it about my art that people are drawn to?"

An analysis of my work I sought to discover these communicative properties and qualities. "The formula must come after the discovery... the description after the fact. Once we intuitively know what it is, then we can talk about it." (Ron Gang n.d.)

Growing up it was difficult expressing to some, what I was thinking or feeling because they could not *see* what I was talking about. Being in empathetic company of other visual thinkers is where I found solace. It was later in life by a twist of fate that I became an educator and began to see the many ways in which others learn. I was introduced to the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983), and found it to be particularly relevant as it provided insights to my own way of learning. I was able to better connect to my students, many who were visual learners, and found that we spoke a common language.

Over time, I began to delve deeper into the study of how people process information and how much of this information is differentiated by culture and environment, physiology and

emotion. The use of symbol to render meaning is a major function of visual language and using a visual process of communication can be more cohesive or direct for the visual learner. Leo Vygotsky, Russian born psychologist and founder of Social Development Theory, posits that (human) development cannot be separated from its social context. “We could therefore say that it is through others that we develop into ourselves and this is true not only with regard to the individual but with regard to the history of every function.” (p. 161). We do not exist or learn in a vacuum, so finding empathetic individuals is essential to the artist soul.

Visual influences and triggers have always shaped my understanding of the world. My response to light, shadow and space informed my aesthetic and inspired my desire to study architecture. Some of my earliest memories come from being able to visually manipulate the scale of what I was looking at by altering the vantage point; and detecting images of figures and scenes in the linoleum floor, a phenomena called pareidolia, that interestingly still finds their way into my work.

Another significant signpost was instrumental in my decision to continue my art education happened in 2001. After the loss of my brother in the World Trade Center attack, in efforts to help deal with PTSD, (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), I took advantage of the offer of therapy recommended to the Victims of 911 Families. I decided to see Atlanta based art therapist, Maxine Hull. In our sessions, I would work in various mediums and after analysis and discussion, she made me aware of a constant recurring motif in all of the artwork I made. As she explained the possible meaning or indication of this gesture, the nautilus spiral, I gained insight into my particular approach to life. Maxine asked me to describe the form and consider how I began to draw the image. As I began to describe how the line starts moving forward then turns in and continues in that fashion, over and over, extending out then turning in, I had an insight into

situations in my life where I repeated this very pattern of attempted pursuits. I had internalized this struggle; the spiral was a visual metaphor! One of the nagging matters of unfinished business in my life was the fact that I abandoned my art career. It was extremely intriguing and liberating to discover that perhaps my struggle manifested itself in this simple symbol that contained such a valuable personal lesson, as well as a catalyst for change.

Overall, this was a fruitful experience, one of the many markers on the way to a deeper understanding. In contemplation of that recurring figure, a shift in perspective occurred as I discovered a greater, more universal meaning of the nautilus spiral. The nautilus spiral is to many the Golden Mean, the DNA molecule, what Carl Jung called the Cosmic Force. Researching the symbolic meaning of this organic gesture, I found this gem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, (1858) excerpted from “The Chambered Nautilus:”

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,

As the swift seasons roll!

Leave thy low-vaulted past!

Let each new temple nobler than the last,

Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,

Till thou at length art free,

When I first began to decipher the meaning of the spiral in my drawings, I understood it as incomplete attempts, starting from the outer spiral, reaching out and recoiling back in on itself.

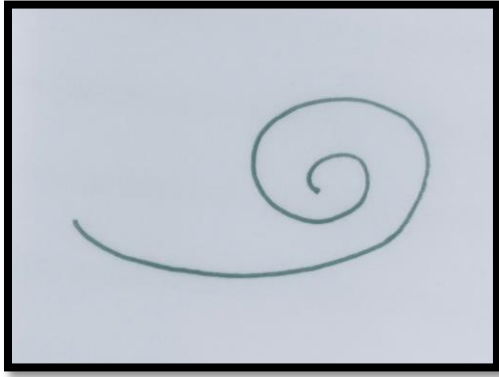


Figure 1. Sketch of Spiral

But with new eyes and a new perspective, I instead saw the spiral as a symbol of expansion, of growth. As the nautilus grows it adds a new chamber, abandoning the old for the new. Loosely translated, Carl Jung called this kind of contemplation *active imagination*. Active imagination is a technique developed by Jung to amplify, interpret, and integrate the contents of dreams and creative works of art. This universal symbol contained helpful information that I could apply to my personal life. Malchiodi (1998), said the following:

The associations that one makes with a drawing or painting through active imagination are spontaneous and uncensored, and reflect life experiences and perceptions, environmental influenced, and universal symbols. In exploring your images through active imagination, you may discover personal, cultural and universal associations. Active imagination was thought by Jung to tap the universal world of myth and heritage - the collective unconscious - and reveal archetypes, the contents of the collective unconscious. (p. 226)

Purpose of the Study

Having the knowledge of *how* to do works of art is not as meaningful as *why* do works of art. The overarching purpose of this studio-based thesis was to open an internal dialogue and finally confront the artistic self. The revelations born of this A/R/Tographic investigation (Irwin,

2004) revealed itself on many unexpected levels. . Functioning all at once, as artist/teacher/researcher, I explored the primordial beginnings, followed the natural evolution of prior works, and discovered hints and insight to my creativity.

In the role of the artist, this studio-based approach provided me with an opportunity to explore the creative process and helped further develop my own style of art production. As a researcher, I explored aspects of the creative process influential to my approach and development. And through the investigation of corresponding themes and concepts, linked my work to current and historical movements in art. As a teacher, I considered how the findings of this study could translate into classroom practice. The study provided a framework for using art as a tool to assist students in finding ways to make interdisciplinary connections, develop critical thinking skills and hopefully find their artistic voice.

Call and Response

Through the studio-based approach, building on the doodle, I used what I consider a *Call and Response* method of art making. The *Call* being the initial sometime random (unintentional) processes, and the *Response* is my (intentional) reaction and artistic choices. *Call and Response* can be traced the ancient African communal tradition and functions as a method of communication and ritual group participation. It is later expressed in African American music, in Negro spirituals and gospel music as a kind of conversation between the group or community leader and the chorus or congregation. In jazz music in particular, it is heard as a musical improvisational conversation. *Call and Response* in visual art it can be explained in general terms as,

“...Interactive, process-oriented and concerned with innovation, rather than mimetic, product oriented or static. *Call and Response* patterns provide a basic model that depends and thrives upon audience performance and improvisation, which work together to ensure that the art will be meaningful of functional to the community.” (Sales, 1992, p. 41)

In my particular creative process, the *Call and Response* is metaphorical, between the collective inspirational source and myself as the artist or the audience. Beginning with the nautilus spiral, my first revealing clue, I entered the investigation by looking into the work of the Surrealists. I looked at several artists that use automatic drawing, which is an easily comparable creative process to the *Call and Response* method. The nature of making work without an intentional product in mind creates an expansive and mysterious playing field. The work emerges out of play and questioning and subconscious wandering. It is here in the wandering where the artist lets go and trusts the forces that dictate her inspiration.

While a discussion about Surrealism cannot be understood without delving into ideas about perception and psychology, I believe art making is essentially about the maker. Susan Krauss, sculpture chair at Savannah College of Art and Design and former professor, explained to me that everything an artist creates is a self-portrait. With this in mind, I attempted to understand how the *Call and Response* technique of doodling helped to address the following questions:

1. How would this investigation provide insight into my own creativity, my influences and cognitive processes of perception?
2. What findings from my research might seem meaningful to develop into strategies for my teaching?

Definition of Terms

Throughout the following explication of my studio thesis the vocabulary utilized according to the accompanying definitions is as follows:

1. Surrealism - Surrealism an artistic and literary movement, dedicated to expressing the imagination as revealed in dreams, free of the conscious control of reason and convention. Surrealism embraced not only art and literature, but also psychoanalysis, philosophy, and politics. The Surrealists aimed to liberate the human imagination through an aesthetic investigation of *desire*—the authentic voice, they believed, of the inner self and the impulse behind love.

2. Surrealist Techniques- Decalomania –Surrealist technique for generating images, paint applied to paper then folded to create a mirror pattern, or pressed against another sheet. **Grattage** - scratching the painted surface of the canvas with pointed tools to make it more tactile. **Frottage** - Technique of reproducing a texture or relief design by laying paper over it and rubbing it with some drawing medium

3. Automatism (Automatic Drawing) -Term appropriated by the Surrealists from physiology and psychiatry and later applied to techniques of spontaneous writing, drawing and painting. In physiology, automatism denotes automatic actions and involuntary processes that are not under conscious control, such as breathing; the term also refers to the performance of an act without conscious thought, a reflex. Psychological automatism is the result of dissociation between behavior and consciousness. Familiarity and long usage allow actions to become automatic so that they are performed with a minimum of thought and deliberation. - a term borrowed from physiology, is the involuntary functioning of an organ or other body structure that is not under conscious control, such as breathing.

4. Doodle – to scribble, absent minded drawings, drawing done in a distracted or unconscious state there is no overriding concept or visual intention in a doodle, it is its own reason, its own purpose. Possibly a way to tap into the collective unconscious (According to Jungian psychology, a part of the unconscious mind, shared by a society, a people, or all humankind, that is the product of ancestral experience).

4. Perception - immediate or intuitive recognition or appreciation, as of moral, psychological, or aesthetic qualities; insight; intuition; discernment

5. Pareidolia - a type of illusion or misconception involving a vague or obscure stimulus being perceived as something clear and distinct.

6. Archetypes from Greek arkhētopos, from arkhētopos first-moulded; an original model or pattern; prototype. An original model after which other similar things are patterned. In the psychology of Carl Jung, archetypes are the images, patterns, and symbols that rise out of the collective unconscious and appear in dreams, mythology, and fairy tales.

7. Artography- The term *artography* was created to signify the multiple roles played in arts-based research: artist-researcher-teacher. Artographic researchers draw upon personal experiences as they work through the arts to question, ponder and theorize new questions and possibilities.

8. Asemic Writing- is a wordless open semantic form of **writing**. The word **asemic** means "having no specific semantic content". With the nonspecificity of **asemic writing** there comes a vacuum of meaning, which is left for the reader to fill in and interpret.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ades, (2009) Surrealist art is the creation of alternative visions of the world, full of symbolism and personal meaning that dig deep within the subconscious and are full of authenticity and power. Surrealist art defined as fantasy, having unearthly qualities, is dreamlike, weird and strange, often having juxtaposing contradictory elements. Surrealism began as a '20th-century avant-garde movement in art and literature, sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind. The creation of the surreal image can be produced or is revealed in several ways. In art the free association of images, or Psychic Automatism, was first introduced by Andre Breton (1924), writing in the *Manifeste du surrealisme*: "Surrealism, n. Psychic Automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern" (Hofmann, p. 26)

Automatism, a term borrowed from physiology, is "The involuntary functioning of an organ or other body structure that is not under conscious control, such as breathing." (thefreedictionary.com) Surrealists later applied these techniques of spontaneous writing, drawing, and painting. The artist must place herself in the role of the vessel, the conduit, allowing the subconscious mind to activate. In psychology, Freud used methods of free association, dreams and the unconscious, to help with his suffering patients. Automatism was to be the undergirding of one of the most pivotal art movements in western culture, Abstract Expressionism.

Stylistic Influences

I feel an affinity to several artists. I am drawn to their work with a sort of artistic kinship and aesthetic understanding. The artist's path is often a path of the unknown and even though I have practiced and studied art most of my life there are still major voids that are just now beginning to fill. I have been fortunate in having several insightful professors aide me on the path of creative self-discovery. When first seeing my work suggestions were made by my art professors to look at the work of these artists: Anselm Kiefer, Jean DuBuffet, Cy Twombly, Mark Tobey, Xu Bing, and Gu Wenda.

My drawing and painting professors from (SCAD) Savannah College of Art and Design, in Atlanta, recognized particular qualities and similarities in my work to other artists. Anne-Marie Manker saw immediately that I was in love with texture. Mike Brown (ibid) said after seeing the work *Odyssey* (*Figure 2*) that I was on to something that needed further exploration.



Figure 2. *Odyssey*, ink and acrylic on canvas, (18 x 36 inches)

Odyssey is part of a triptych done in 2008 for my undergrad final at Savannah College of Art and Design. It all started with the doodle. And it was in this series that I first experienced

Automatism. After making these pieces and carefully studying them, that I realized they were indeed landscapes, feeling very much like a walk in my childhood neighborhood. When in the process of doing these, I could have drawn on indefinitely. MacLagan (2014) would consider this a Meta-Doodle. Larry Anderson, a SCAD professor, suggested I look at the work of Outsider Artist, Jean Dubuffet. (*Figure 3*)



Figure 3. Jean DuBuffet, From Dubuffet's Texture Series, *A Place for Awakenings*, (1960), sand, pebbles and plastic 34 7/8 x 45 3/8 inches

Retrieved from http://www.moma.org/m/arts/show_on_view_by_department/5?locale=en&page=9

I was immediately attracted to this work because of its aerial terrain like quality, color and texture. Dubuffet, an untrained artist in the traditional sense, but a true artist in the very real sense, made the connection to art making and the psyche when recognizing that art is only interesting when coming directly from the deeper parts of a person's being. Jean-Dubuffet (1967)

Another suggestion was made by Tom Francis, another SCAD professor, said the scripting in *Figure 5* put him in the mind of Cy Twombly and I should look at his work. (*Figure 6*) I used the same doodle technique in *Figure 5*. as in *Figure 1.*, but began writing in an unreadable scripting technique that I later discovered called Asemic Writing.



Figure 4. *Untitled*, ink on black paper, (10 x 16 inches)

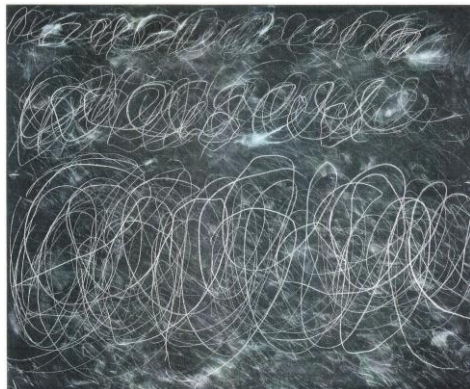


Figure 5. Cy Twombly, *Untitled*, (1967) oil and crayon on canvas, 50x67 inches, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation,

Retrieved from <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/14074>

Upon researching each recommendation, I found linking threads and became more intrigued. Reading about Twombly's work, he manipulates line with a kind of abstract handwriting, (Asemic Writing), a method that owes itself to automatic surrealism. "Twombly

modified the Surrealist technique of automatic drawing by creating compositions in the dark – after lights out” (Cy Twombly, *American Draftsman*, 2015).

Michael David, another professor at SCAD suggested I go and look at Anselm Kiefer’s work. I wasn’t prepared for the impact I felt when I first laid eyes on the work of Kiefer’s *Dragon*. (Figure 6)



Figure 6. Anselm Kiefer, *Dragon (Drache)* 2001, 185 x 220 1/2 inches

Retrieved from <http://clatl.com/gyrobase/ImageArchives?feature=slideshow&slideshow=2653363&oid=2653756>

I was unaware of his work but became captured immediately by its impressive and enveloping size and its dark, visceral texture. Not to be so bold as to suggest an equal talent to any of these artists but a developing personal aesthetic began to emerge as I saw some common threads in my work in relation to their work. Kiefer’s *Dragon* left such a great impression on me and I was pleasantly surprised reading about his creative process as it reinforces newly discovered ideas about my own creativity.

Oh, I have no intended impact. None at all. Each viewer can create their own experience, their own work from what they see. It's nice if people understand the ideas and references behind my work, but it's absolutely, not necessary. There is no intention, no big idea behind that place. I just started it. (Hudson, 2014, para. 33)

In the margins of books and paper, I developed a habit of doodling a kind of indecipherable cursive handwriting, an unreadable script. (*Figure 7*)

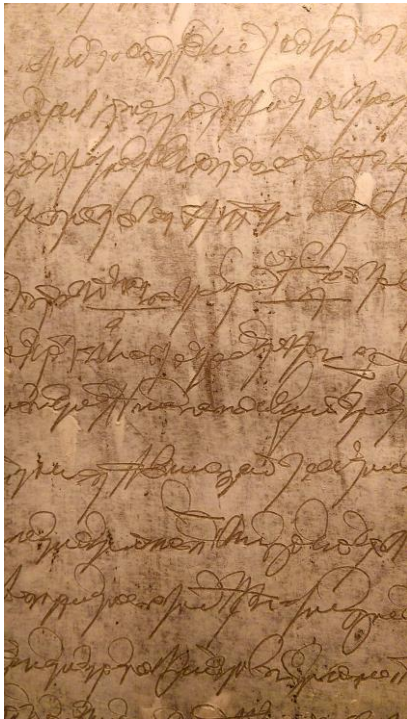


Figure 7. Letter to my Self-Asemic Writings, Oil pastel on brown paper, (18 x 36 inches)

It has been compared to a type of contemporary Chinese calligraphic writing, although not identifiable as characters, the quality has a similar fluidity. Melanie Davenport, my advisor at Georgia State University, suggested looking at the work of Chinese Calligraphy artists Xu Bing and Gu Wenda. (*Figure 8 and 9*). Both Bing and Wenda create a kind of imaginary script or text based on Chinese calligraphy and I am very anxious to learn more about their philosophy and artistic process.



Figure 8. Gu Wenda, *United Nations Babel of the Millennium*, (1999) hair, glue and rope, Installation dimensions variable; Collections SFMOMA,

Retrieved from <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/29566#ixzz3Z2xzcBuk> San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

I didn't realize there was so much fodder for my research especially finding this jewel of Gu Wenda's. who explores new world identity with his 'transnational monuments' using Asemic writing to comment on divisive language constructs. Like Wenda, Xu Bing also creates art writing to comment on divisive language constructs. Like Wenda, Xu Bing also creates art

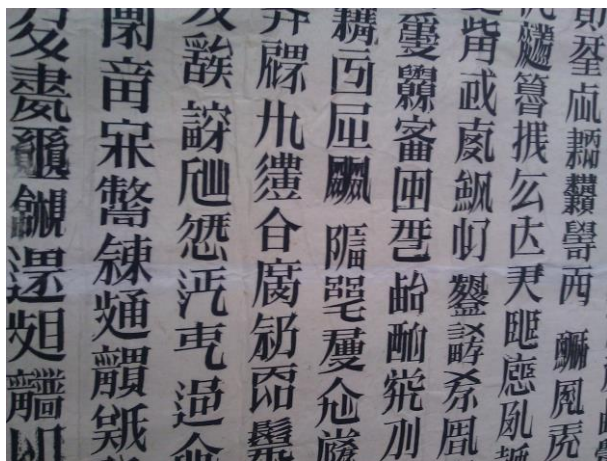


Figure 9. Xu Bing, *A Book From Heaven*, Installation, 1998

Retrieved from http://crosbyart.com/2012/03/20/fabricated-texts-and-invented_language/

using illegible text emphasizing the power of language, the impermanence of words and comments on what it means to be human and the creation of our reality through perception.

Finally, probably one of the most significant stylistic comparisons of my work was made to the Abstract Expressionist Mark Tobey. Grady High School art teacher in Atlanta, John Brandhorst, introduced me to his work and I knew then I had found the artistic progenitor of my

work. I thought...I have found my people! Mark Tobey, an American painter born in 1890, was a senior member of the Northwest School of Mystical Painters He is most notable for his creation of white writing, (*Figure 10*) it has been described a ‘contemplation in action’. (Mark Tobey, Painter, U.S.A., 2010)



Figure 10. Mark Tobey, *Broadway*, 1936, tempera, 26 x 19 1/4 inches

Retrieved from <http://bahai-library.com/bafa/t/tobey.htm>

I included Mark Tobey in my collection, one, because of the obvious similarities of medium, white line work and two, his ‘meta-doodling’ technique. And once again, similarly, upon further research I find that he also taps into the world of microcosms and meditation. Tobey (2010) said of his work,

Over the past 15 years, my approach to painting has varied, sometimes being dependent on brush-work, sometimes on lines, dynamic white strokes in geometric space. I have never tried to pursue a particular style in my work. For me, the road has been a zigzag into and out of old civilizations, seeking new horizons through meditation and

contemplation. My sources of inspiration have gone from those of my native Middle West to those of microscopic worlds. I have discovered many a universe on paving stones and tree barks. (pg. 36)

Interestingly, Toby was greatly influenced by Chinese calligraphy and was often compared to Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock. Pollock and Tobey had a mutual respect and admiration for each other. And Pollock's famous abstract technique is so closely aligned with Chinese Running Style Calligraphy that it deserves further inquiry.

I followed the signposts along these inspirational pathways. I have quite a healthy resource of creative minds to help provide some insight and guidance. Finding the nexus linking these artists, the heavily laid textures of Keifer, the densely impacted lines of DuBuffet and Tobey, the fluid structured lines of Twombly, the language of Xu Bing and Gu Wenda; I find that all are similar translations that have spoken to me in either their creative process of automatism or the graphic language of line.

Mark Tobey and Cy Twombly's works are often described as Automatic or beginning with a doodle. The comments from these artists are markers or gateways, if you will, that bring me back to my own work; the white writing of Tobey's microscopic worlds, the narrative in Twombly's work, the non-intentional process of Keifer's and the visual similarities to Chinese Calligraphy, lead me to the beginning processes in my work. I also begin with the 'doodle'. A traditionally unsophisticated art form, the doodle is not considered art but a precursor, a sort of "warm-up exercise" (MacLagan, 2014).

Art Education

The art of mark making exists in tandem with being human. Mark making is a human activity. The earliest mark making generally called the scribble, happens in children up to the age

of 5-7, Universally, in the early developmental stages, children draw in a surprisingly similar manner. (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2009). As children develop, the ‘scribble’ becomes identifiable as recognizable symbols and shapes, interpreted according to distinct social, and cultural mores. Studies from social scientists and psychologists, even neurologists, have looked into the motivations and symbolism behind the scribble and the doodle. This manner of drawing isn’t labeled art until it has developed the cultural, social and personal ‘attachments’ that give it meaning.

What of the drawing itself, the ‘scribble’, the mark, the doodle? Some would argue that the first marks *do* have an attachment and *is* of great importance. Mark making is just one way of connection, of developing relationships and communicating with others. We use mark making, (art) to understand and make sense of our physical world, our experiences, ourselves. “Carl Jung, Swiss psychologist, understood the connection between image and the psyche and he developed a foundation for understanding symbolic meanings in imagery through his studies of archetypes and universalities” (Malchiodi, p. 24).

While I am interested in the archetypal image and its connection to the collective consciousness I wonder, is the Surrealist method of Automatism a pathway to this knowledge? Do my simple doodles contain archetypal images like the nautilus spiral and reveal a common collective consciousness? I am curious how this plays out in my work.

Archetypes

Rhoda Kellogg (1970) addresses in depth several of the points I am exploring in her book *Analyzing Children’s Art*. She makes comparisons between the marks made by early humans and those found in children’s drawings. She collected thousands of children’s drawings, from 2 to 5 years from all over the world, and classifies the marks, and shapes ranging from scribbles to

commonly recognized images. Kellogg found similarities from the study of archaic images of rock and cave paintings, surmising that the connection must definitely indicate the existence of a collective unconscious. She includes Jungian's description, "as the timeless experience of the human race" (p.230) going on to say, "They are transmitted to individuals through archetypes: that is, through symbols of the various kinds of universal human experience. Each person, therefore, is more than the total of his own life's history." (p.230). According to Jung, (1932) the collective unconsciousness can only be reached and expressed by the symbol. One of the first inherent symbols the child creates is the Mandala form, a circle with radiating appendages that usually represents a human being. The Mandala is a repeated figure found in ancient religions. The word Mandala is a Sanskrit symbol for the representation of the universe. (*Figure 11*)



Figure 11. Petroglyph Mandala from the Hawaiian Islands

Retrieved from <http://www.waldorftoday.com/2013/09/mandala-the-encircling-round-holds-sway>



Figure 12. Sample Child's Mandala Drawing, P.Terry age 2, (8 x 10 inches)



Figure 13. Details of Repeated Mandala like patterns in my work

Mandala has become a generic term for any plan, chart or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically; a microcosm of the universe. In science and in religion, humans are often identified as the center of the universe, the source of the radiating lines.

Perception: In the Eye of the Beholder

Lastly, I believe that while looking at the overarching concepts of archetypes and common ground aspects of art and mark making I cannot discount the validity and importance of perception in the creation and interpretation of art and mark making. While art making is a complex process it is inherently two-fold. The artwork has a double life, one in the process of the maker and the other in the reception of the viewer. The artist may or may not have certain intentions when making the work but may or may not factor in the mind of the viewer. Each brings a personal, entirely separate repository of meaning to reference. Remembering that all art is a self-portrait I have included this section as a part of my investigation because the work I am building on has raised the question of the perception of images. What something is or looks like remains unsolved and left to the viewer to determine. But as the maker, I am concerned with

what the images hold for me. I do not impose a specific dialog when I work. The conversation is between myself and the image.

Neurology has its own answers to the questions raised here and I have discovered what neuro-scientists have to say about the phenomena of visual perception in relation to art. How does the subconscious recognize then transmit common images without prompting? Neurologist Vilayanur Ramachandran (2007) sheds light as he explains the relationship of the perception of art and aesthetics and the function of neuro-pathways. Is there such a thing as art/aesthetic universals? Is there a common biological or neurological basis of aesthetics? Ramachandran did research into the ways in which we are able to perceive what we tend to call art by examining the way the brain delineates form, color, pattern, space, etc. We have billions of neuropaths that fire when some information moves us emotionally. It is processed in the brain, the priorital lobe, the angular gyrus enables us to understand metaphor. The temporal lobe part of the brain allows us to recognize individual objects and the meaning of things. A simple post from *Humans of New York*, the photographer, Brandon Stanton asked of couple of eye doctors,

What's something about the eye that most people don't realize?" The response, "The eye doesn't see. The brain sees. The eye just transmits." So what we see isn't only determined by what comes through the eyes. What we see is affected by our memories, our feelings, and by what we've seen before. Stanton, 2014)

Another revealing and interesting comment on perception, recently the news reported on a viral phenomenon about the color of a dress, asking viewers which combination of colors did they see. The color of the dress was either perceived as white and gold or as blue and black. It was all in how the image was perceived through the individual's eyes. As Nin (1961) suggests, "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are" (p.124).

Native American philosopher, Jamake Highwater, (1981) writes on the American Indian idea of perception of reality, he says,

Art is a way of seeing, and what we see in art helps us to define what we understand by the word “reality. Though the dominant societies usually presume that their vision of the represents the sole truth about the world each society (and often individuals within the same society) sees reality uniquely....Making images is one of the central ways in which mankind ritualizes experiences and gains personal and tribal access to the ineffable...the unspeakable and ultimate substance of reality. (p.58)

We internalize our experiences of our environment. As artists we turn these experiences, interpret these experiences, into beauty. Performer Buffy St. Marie (2012) says of the creative process, “What you can do with [Art] is really quite special...“is unique to each person and yet it can describe something that’s common to everyone...there is a telepathic quality to art, that gets beneath all the surfaces.” (Moore, 2012, video file, 20:00)

Summary

When I set out on this journey I gathered information that I believed would serve as an impetus to self-discovery. My researched was comprised of information received from suggestions, observations, personal interests, curiosity, recall, and by pleasantly synchronistic events. The first constructive guidance came in the form of:

- Artistic Comparisons - Researching the work, style, and most importantly the process of the artist, provided great insight into my own approach. I learned to trust the process by letting go of intention and allowing it to unfold intuitively. I was amused knowing these artists were inspired by similar ideas to my own and that it’s okay to have grand and unconventional ideas. Because I felt an affinity to these artists, learning about why work

they make art and what they had to say through their art brought validity to my thinking processes and I felt like it legitimized my work.

- Surrealism - I quickly realized that my work was surreal at best and hadn't considered the many ways and techniques that Surrealist artists employ. My investigation into the doodle led me to Automatic drawing then to Asemic writing. It was a delightful confirmation to learn that the methods I used had hints of these techniques and I was able to take them further. Researching how they created art led me to explore new ways to use media.

Archetypes - Exploring *Surrealism* opened up the world of semiotics, *archetypes* and the collective unconscious and the science of art therapy. I tried to interpret meaning from the symbols and images in my work and wondered if they contained clues into my creative process and came away with a personal mythology.

- Perception. - This opened the door to subjective reality, i.e. *perception*. I peeked into the neurologic science of physical perception. Even though there are common physiologic ways in which we see and experience stimuli, perception is highly subjective. Each person influenced by environmental and socio-cultural factors. I stored so much visual information in my memory that when reflecting and creating work, it became the governing factor informing my aesthetic.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

An A/R/Tographic Approach

I function simultaneously as an artist, teacher, researcher, and student, dancing constantly between roles in a place called *the borderlands*. I am inspired by Irwin and de Cosson, (2004), *A/r/tography: Rendering Self, Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry*. In my study, through documentation of the studio process I addressed my first research question. The first part of my inquiry involved gaining insight into my own creativity and discovering my artistic influences and cognitive processes of perception, as well as my particular aesthetic sensibilities. In recognition of the time restraints, this process has evolved over a year. This undertaking is in actuality a cumulative process that spans my lifetime and each plateau brings me closer to creative self-actualization.

In the role of an artist, I began the creative process attending to the internal landscape, the progeny of dreams. As a set point, I included the first and second generation in the series to show the early development and subsequent progression. My usual technique employs oil pastel that is applied then etched away, then drawn back into, responding spontaneously to the random images. I produced new work by the same responsive discovery, which I term *Call and Response*, utilizing Surrealist techniques one of which includes automatic drawing, (doodling) and open-ended inquiry, letting the processes inform me. I also made use of the method of decalomania, grattage and mono printing to encourage spontaneity and create the unknown “x” factor. This process revealed information about my personal perceptions.

The act of exploration has its obvious limitations in unknown outcomes but the unknown factor yields the greatest return. Ray Dalio, of Bridgewater Associates, a financier, who manages

the largest hedge fund in the world, had something really interesting to say about his success that I find applies to the concept. “It’s dealing with what one doesn’t know that’s more affective than knowing.” He goes on to say, “People think that my success is due to what I know, it’s not. It’s more due to how I deal with not knowing” (Dalio, 2015, cited in Feloni, 2015, para 5). He actively seeks out the unknown and the contrary to gain greater insight and allowing a more holistic perspective.

Influences: from Latin *influere*, from *in-* ‘into’ + *fluere* ‘to flow.’ The word originally had the general sense ‘an influx, flowing matter’. I would say this part of the process is the *Call*, the input, the variable, that I do not necessarily control, it is what I respond to. I adhered to the *Call* by creating several small test images created by Surrealist methods of random outcome. After which, choosing from the studies the most successful outcomes, I made 2 to 3 large final pieces reflecting the cumulative discoveries. I documented the process highlighting relevant actions, discoveries and observations. I reflected on my process as self-examination and discussed how the value of this research related to my perception as a teaching artist. This led me to my next research question, “How can I integrate the information and research into my teaching strategy? “But first, I must experience that which I intend to teach” (Naths, 2004, p. 123).

Limitations

As in many studies, limitations of time and expense are always considerations. The other limitations that I would like to acknowledge is although I’ve incorporated some of the research about universal archetypes, and generalized perceptions, this study is just about me, reflecting on my personal aesthetic, and observations discovered during the creative process.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROCESS AND REFLECTIONS

I have been functioning as a teacher/researcher for many years before deciding to return to school and because my job as a general education teacher warranted it. I have neglected my role of artist for some time. In choosing an A/R/Tographic study, my desire was to embrace the creative path and strengthen my artistic voice. I understand what I am doing is really part of an evolution of work developed from undergraduate studies at Savannah College of Art and Design. I discovered bits and pieces of it on my journey backwards trying to find its inception. I developed a technique that seems to be my personal signature. For all intents and purposes, I have identified this method as the doodle.



Figure 14. Example of doodling technique, (5 x 5 inches)

Figure 14 is a typical example of the marks. I usually work from left to right as in handwriting and work my way over the entire space. Creating intertwining lines and marks and shapes, my hand moves unceasing across the surface. When doing large surfaces it may take several days and sometimes weeks as this process can be physically taxing on the muscles in the hand, as the marking is continuous. It's very easy to lose a sense of time when working this way as the process is very meditative. Working this way, responding to the marks and shapes created

by the interaction of line and space, is the process of Automatism. I am not trying to dictate what happens to the interacting lines really, I just follow the leads.

A sculptor, talking about the work she was doing, related that sometimes in a quiet moment the figures she was working on would scream at her demanding attention and consideration. Artists often speak of the art taking on a life of it's own. In this investigation into my own creativity, I was curious to discover what my work had to tell me. I knew there was something more these pieces had to offer.

I have several pieces hanging on the walls of home and in looking at the work would see so much more than what I had first created. Sometimes I saw what looked like figures or animals, but they really came across more like landscapes or maps as in the image shown again in *Odyssey* (Figure 15). I began to realize in some odd way they were places in my childhood. Back in the day (we lived in different times), as a very young child I was allowed to roam freely. I knew those streets like the back of my hand and as I grew, the radius of my journeys grew ever wider. I began to contemplate the concept of mapping.



Figure 15. *Odyssey*, 2008, ink on canvas, (18 x 36 inches)

The shapes and turns in those pieces are very architectural and have a real sense of aerial space. The physical landscape is a bombardment of geometry, shapes and lines, brick and concrete, an overload of stimulation. I understood the deep correlation between these made images and my hometown environment. My sense of space was dictated by cityscape. We are surely affected and inspired by the visible world. Looking at these pieces now feel like a ‘walk’ through my neighborhood, my internalized New York City experience.

Years ago I remember having a conversation about the idea that humans are a product of everything we are exposed to not and just emotionally, but visually as well. All of our senses receive information and affect our perceptions. And living in a place like New York City with the tall skyscrapers shaping the view of the open sky, has a direct impact on our perceptions. I found this idea fascinating. Later, I would read about the science of cognitive perception.



Figure 16. The streets of New York City with its limiting views of the sky are commonly referred to as corridors

Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/53872140@N04/5647334407/in/photostream/>



Figure 17. Aerial view of New York City shows the density and compacted space

Retrieved from <http://www.dolliecrave.com/photography-graphics.php> title="Photography Graphics Tumblr

I began to realize how impressions that are assumed dormant or forgotten continue to express themselves, especially when triggered or actively recalled. They are the lenses through which understanding and definition is determined.

How did this investigation provide insight into my own creativity, my influences and cognitive processes of perception? I hoped the examination of these early pieces would help me understand my process of making meaning. Each and every inquiry leading me deeper down the rabbit hole into realms far beyond the scope of this thesis but were extremely interesting. I gathered research about art therapy and the use of symbolism, dabbled in the subconscious, fascinated reading Jung's collective unconscious, poured over the science of neurology and cognitive perception. I found relevant information here regarding pareidolia, the phenomenon of seeing distinct images within vague or obscure stimulus. An example of this seeing images in the clouds. What intrigued me about pareidolia is that it absolutely factors into my creative process, responding to and enhancing the perceived forms. In art therapy these perceived forms are

particularly significant because like Jung believed, held unconscious but relevant information about the beholder.

So far, I only worked in black and white. Georgia State University art professor Tim Flowers introduced the idea of mixing media. So, I began to play with color using the same drawing technique. I used oil pastels to coat the paper, etched into the surface with the same marks, lines, and shapes. Adding touches of watercolor and charcoal, I created a third layer of shapes and marks.

Figures 18 and 19 and 20 are pieces in the next generation of my work. Here I discovered similarities between the multi-perspectives of Chinese landscapes, (*Figure 18*) even delved into the illusionistic work of MC Escher as a result of the work in (*Figures 19, 20*) and again was confronted with the idea of perception and elements of pareidolia. These pieces all have multi-perspectives and are illusionistic. When researching ideas about perception it led me to complex issues about the brain and cognition.



Figure 18. Ethereal Landscape, 2013, conte, chalk and oil pastel. (9 x 12 inches)



Figure 19. *Untitled*, 2013, Creating and enhancing paraidolia art, oil pastel, charcoal, pencil and watercolor, (9 x 12 inches)



Figure 20. *Untitled*, 2014, etching, pencil on oil pastel, (15 x 44 inches)

My research led me to explore and try surrealist techniques of decalcomania, frottage and grattage and used the printmaking process to develop new works. I was leading with the premise that these techniques would reveal some hidden clues.

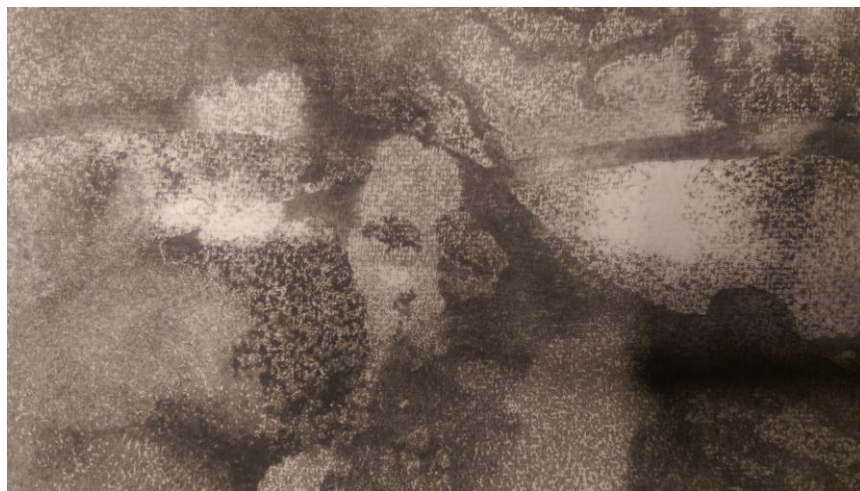


Figure 21. *Can you see the face?* 2015, Example of Pareidolia, inkwash, (9 x 12 inches)

I made stacks and stacks of these studies; some really began to ‘speak’ to me. This is when I heard the *Call*. I usually saw landscapes and created terrestrial or otherworldly terrain by shading with a dry brush of graphite or highlighting with white ink and erasure. Others were quiet and I left them alone. Some needed no response at all.

The next three *Figures 22, 23, 24*, I believe were my most successful in the printed series. I was able to best communicate what I saw in the material and were the most satisfying. Most assuredly, they are landscapes. I tried several times to recreate the action on a larger scale all of these attempts failed. Either because the size didn’t allow the same physical manipulation or the material didn’t behave accordingly, I wanted to control the outcome but couldn’t.



Figure 22. Ethereal Landscape, 2015, manipulated monoprint, (9 x 12 inches)



Figure 23. Shadows and Light, 2015, monoprint inkwash, (9 x 12)

I pulled one more (*Figure 23*) hoping to get something worth working with and after seeing the results, I concluded that sometimes the *Call* is enough. I didn't do anything here but wash away some of the excess ink.



Figure 24. *Vessels on the Riverbank*, 2015, multicolored monoprint, (9 x 12 inches)

I consider this piece (*Figure 24*) to be one of my most successful. The *Calling* here was very demanding! It became a turning point in the development because I was satisfied with the outcome and I decided to move on. After my efforts in exploration with printmaking and wet medium, I was left with some real successes, some real failures and some possibilities to work with.

I chose to tackle a large-scale work, 36 x 48 inches on Stonehenge watercolor paper. I started again with the doodle, but armed with new techniques, research and the principles and elements of design and composition, I created this piece (*Figure 25*) – It's part intuitive, part intentional. The result was a very other-worldly landscape image packed with symbols, multi-perspectives.



Figure 25. Matter Becoming Spirit, 2015, etching on oil and chalk pastel, (32 x 44 inches)

I began the work by carefully attending to each section. I applied the white oil pastel, and then rubbed the surface with charcoal. Depending on the pressure, I created dense dark areas or lighter transparent fields. Satisfied with the section, I began to etch into the surface, responding to the forms that revealed themselves. In cases when a form only partially became visible, I intentionally sought out to create the image. Since the piece developed in sections, the overall outcome did not concretize until completion. I had no preconceived intended image and was pleasantly surprised with the outcome. There is a definite ground and sky to this piece as I worked from bottom to top. After contemplating on the ascending earth to sky, I decided on the title.

Tackling the work was a constant series of checks and balances, intermittingly stepping back and making assessments. Although I was making decisions based on my design background and artistic sensibilities the work still developed intuitively but now we worked as partners or co-creators. *A Call and Response* is a conversation.



Figure 26. Detail 1, *Matter Becoming Spirit*

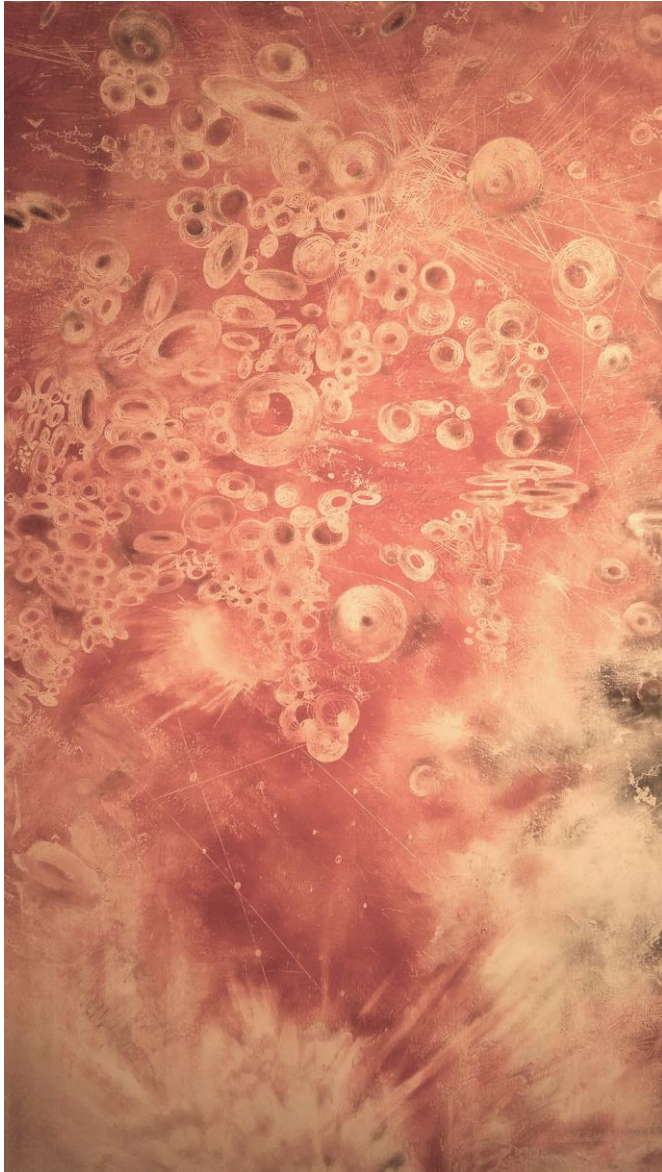


Figure 27. Detail 2, Matter Becoming Spirit



Figure 28. Detail 3, Matter Becoming Spirit

In preparation for the companion piece, I made a few more studies. I played with color but still relied on my trusted doodle. Shading the forms and sculpturing the lines with graphite added a three dimensional quality allowing the eye unlimited places to discover. I enjoyed the outcome and the interplay between colors. So much so, I decided to recreate this on a larger scale.

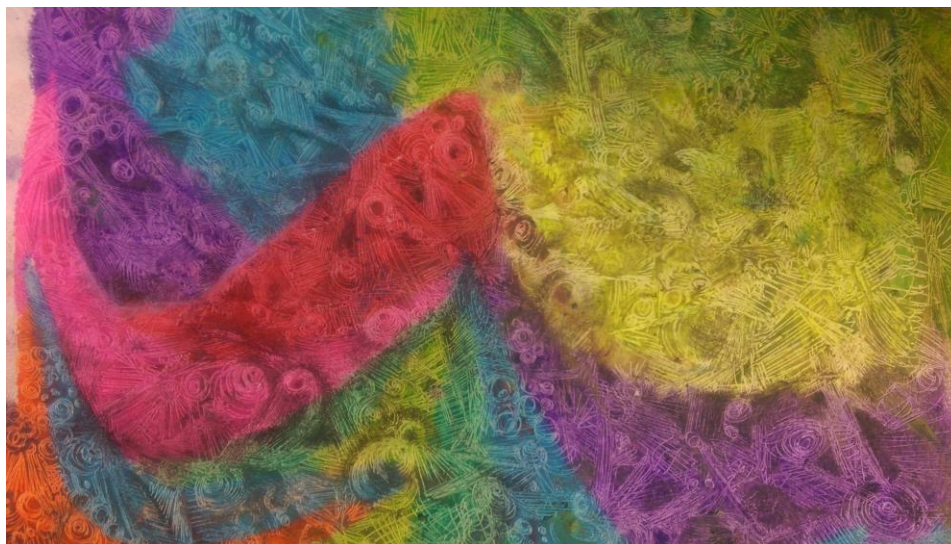


Figure 29. Study with Color, 2015, oil and chalk pastel, (9 x 12 inches)

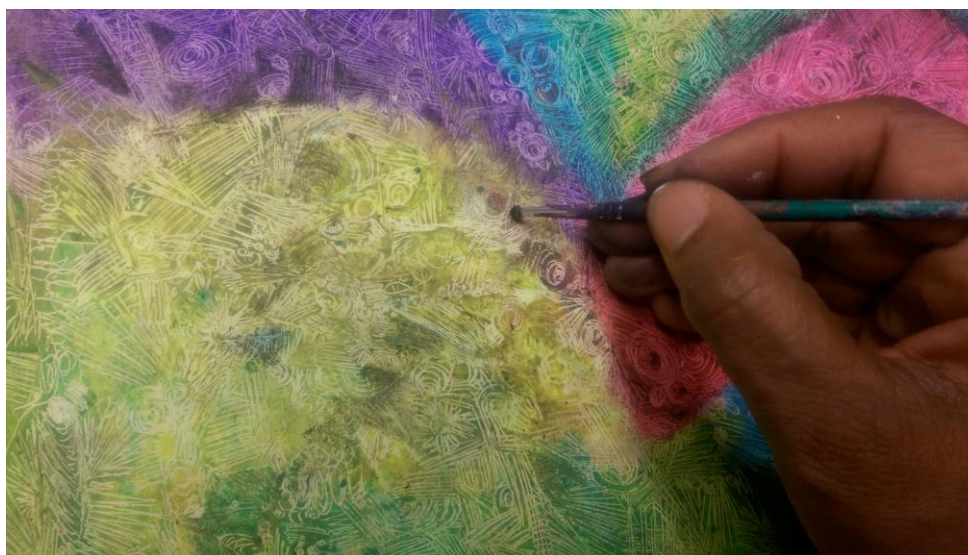


Figure 30. Detail Study with Color, 2015

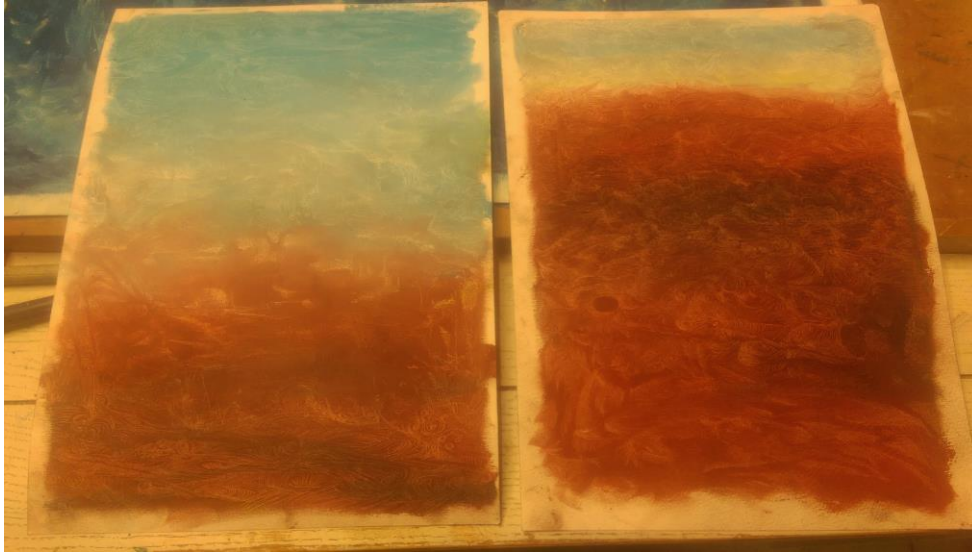


Figure 31. Studies 2015, etching, on oil pastel, using two colors, (9 x 12 inches)

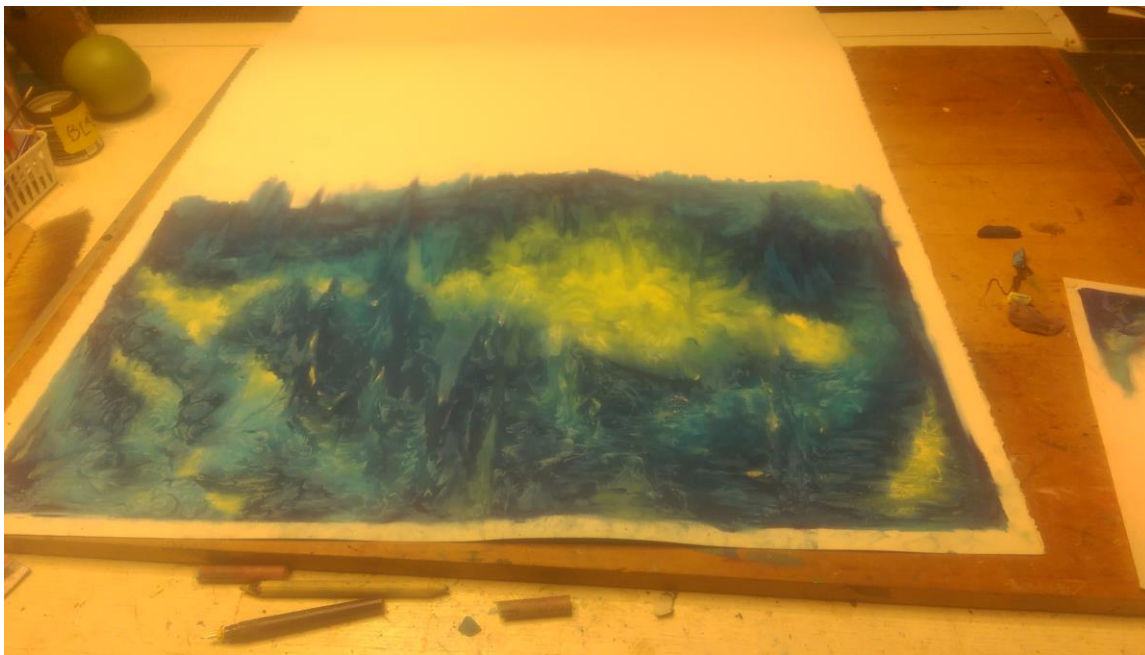


Figure 32. Untitled, 2015, Beginning etching on oil pastel, (30 x 44 inches)

At the start of this work (*Figure 32*), I immediately had the familiar feeling of satisfaction and pleasure that I was onto something, an artistic joy. Knowing that we are a product of everything around us, I knew immediately that this was a product of my current environment.



Figure 33. Untitled, Completed etching on oil pastel, (30 x 44 inches)

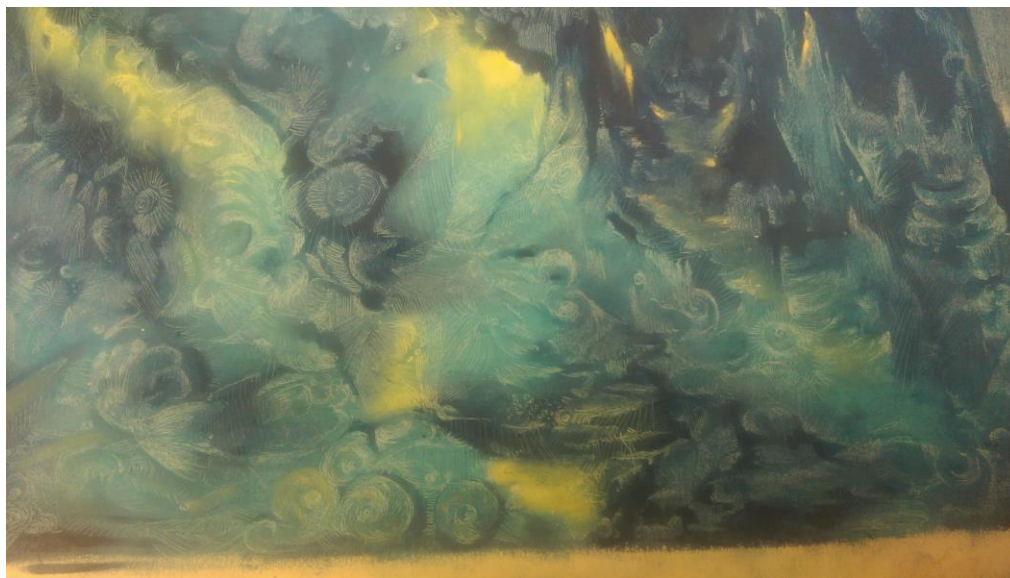


Figure 34. Detail 1, Untitled, etching on oil pastel

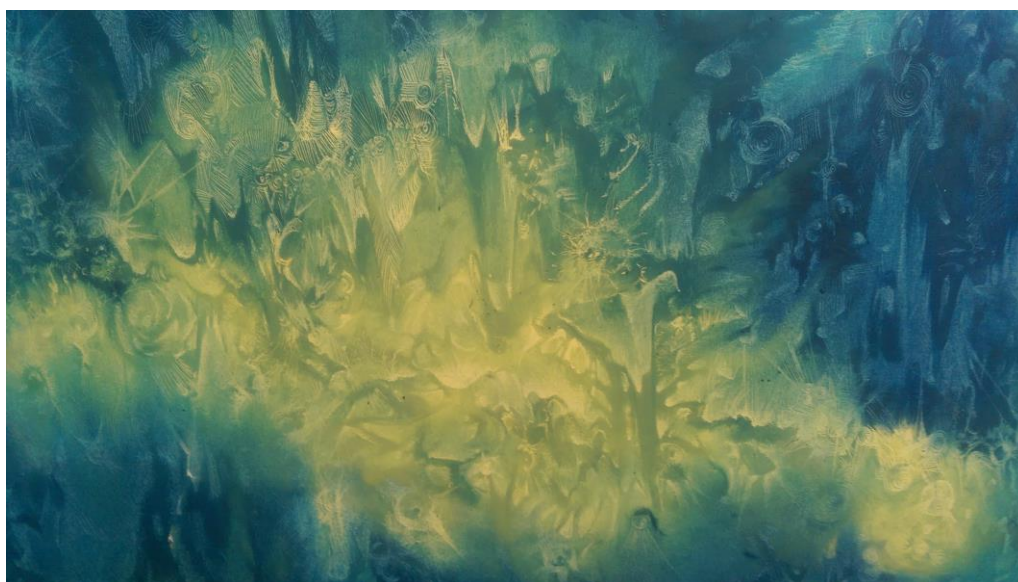


Figure 35. Detail 2, Untitled, etching on oil pastel

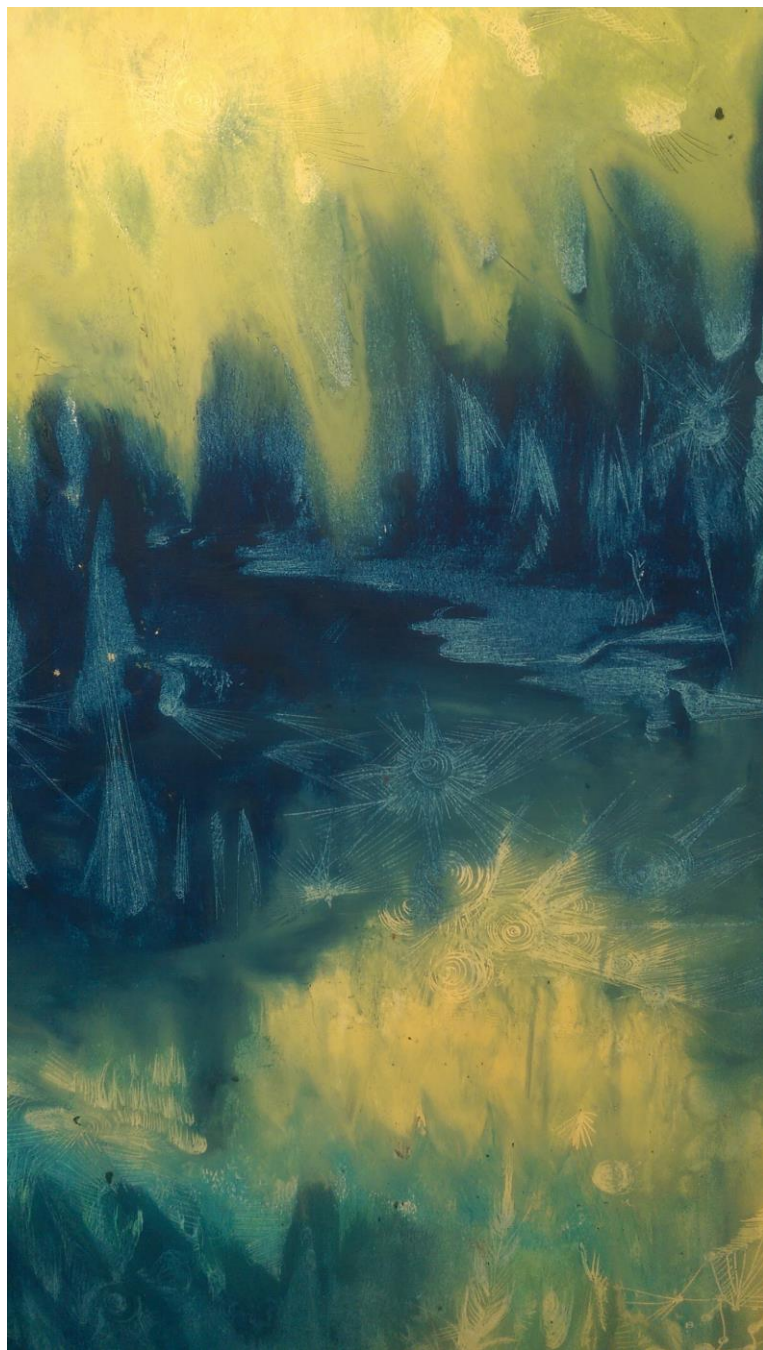


Figure 36. Detail 3, Untitled, etching on oil pastel



Figure 37. Detail 4, etching on oil pastel



Figure 38. Detail 5, etching on oil pastel

But here was something else that influenced my aesthetic. This bit slowly revealed itself as a link in the creative process. When I lived in New York City, I worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I was surrounded by magnificence daily but was never moved by the paintings. I

say moved because, sure, I could decide which ones I liked and didn't but truthfully I couldn't understand what the fuss was about any of it. I used to rush past it all to get to my station! Horrible, right, and me being an art student! Then one day I wandered into the American Wing and saw Albert Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountain's, Lander's Peak*. It was really the first time I was moved by a painting and apparently moved so deeply, it forever defined my own sense of aesthetic beauty. I know now why I loved Bierstadt's work.

Later, as a painting student at Savannah College of Art and Design, thanks to Professor Michael Brown, I learned about the aesthetic concept of the *sublime*. The sublime is understood to mean a quality of greatness or grandeur that inspires awe and wonder, in art often relates to the natural landscape. In *Figure 32*, I worked hard to create the sublime over and over in every turn. German philosopher Immanuel Kant, in his influential *Critique of Judgment* (1790), described the Sublime as an internal force focused upon the individual's response, arguing that it came from within the human psyche.



Figure 39. *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, Albert Bierstadt
Retrieved from <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/07.123>

I know that since moving to Georgia, being surrounded by its beautiful forested landscapes, has had a direct influence on my current work. I have internalized its beauty and it has impacted my senses, especially the spatial/visual. It is what I pay the most attention to. These forces govern my aesthetic decisions and the *Call* I respond to!



Figure 40. My Backyard in Georgia, digital photograph



Figure 41. Sky Lights, digital photograph

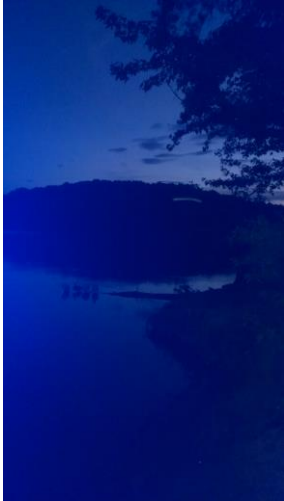


Figure 42. Twilight at Sweetwater Creek, Georgia, digital photograph

Process Reflection

Clive Bell, (1914) in his essay, “Significant Form” purports that in order to gain a true aesthetic experience from a work of art and for art to be considered art at all it must be created from a deep and emotional place within the artist. When created from this place, which has no

motive, no ties to the ‘business of humanity,’ it is free to communicate directly to the source within. My research took me on a journey to the Source within. I wanted to unravel the mystery, gain insight into my own creativity, find out what made me tick as an artist, discover what influences govern my cognitive process. What I have come way with is a deeper sense of how utterly sentient we are as human beings, influenced by everything in our lives, good and bad and seemingly inconsequential. How we respond, interpret and make meaning depends on the weaving and sometimes crashing together of the bits and pieces of countless stimuli over our lifetime. Being an artist, researcher and teacher, I am always in a place of receiving, responding and expanding and there will always be sources of inspiration.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS IN ART INSTRUCTION

The Teacher Becomes the Student

As mentioned earlier, I chose an arts-based study to explore the roots of my creative process. I was prepared to hunker down and work without distractions. I finally had the luxury to give it 100%. I was loaded down with research material, space to work and nothing but time. But it was not going to be that easy. I was hired at a local public school in the middle of the school year just when I made other plans to focus on my art and writing. I found myself struggling to devote time and energy to my work.

What happened in the next few months was entirely unexpected. I was struck by the synchronous events unfolding as I navigated this new experience. I was not used to the level of energy it took teaching in a public school environment. The entire population of K-5 came through my classroom each week and we only had 45 minutes for each session. In and of itself, the experience was exhilarating but exhausting. Then having to come home and devote a

different kind of energy to my creative work was very difficult. I was working arduously, sometimes making headway and sometimes failing. I realized that my failures were productive and actually became instructive. I was gaining so much information from them I was able to translate that positively within the classroom through encouragement and example.

I began to identify and empathize with my students. I saw myself as a young student and thought about how I learned, my environmental influences and what information stayed with me. I wondered about the influences my students carried with them. They spend nine confined hours, moving from class to class and deal with personal stressors. I began to see correlations between my work as an artist and the structure of learning and the challenge of integrating both.

I began to see a return on the A/R/Tographic process. I have functioned as a teacher and researcher but I was not living my work. A/R/T/ography is a living practice of art, research, and teaching: a living metissage; a life writing, life-creating experience (Irwin, et al 2004).

Irwin explains the contributors in her book as, A/R/T/ograhers living their work, representing their understandings, and performing their pedagogical positions as they integrate knowing, doing and making through aesthetic experiences that convey meaning rather than facts. The in-depth research I did led me to retrieve memories and synthesize important connections and therefore led to a greater understanding of my creative process. Not everything I researched was directly applicable but the act of inquiry was fruitful.

As a former private school teacher, I had the habit of telling my students to behave like scientists in all situations, to explore, observe, compare and contrast. This is also the basis of my philosophy on teaching art and my approach to my own creativity. I began to observe similarities between my struggles and the challenges I perceived facing my students. I believe to help foster creativity, children, like artists, need time to decompress, to explore, and to imagine. What I

needed for myself as an artist is what I believe students, especially in early childhood, need to nurture creativity: time and space to hear yourself think.

Journalist Richard Louv, (2008) addresses this need in his writing. It is his belief that it is essential to the well-being and emotional development of all children to have direct unstructured exposure to nature. The idea behind this philosophy can be applied directly to art making and exploration within and outside of the classroom to gain creativity through introspection, reflection and connection. John Dewey, 20th century philosopher understood that children are shaped by their experience and the conditions, events that take place around them. He noted that the student needs to interact with the subjects they are learning — to create new experiences and reflect on their past experiences as a way of gaining new and greater understandings. Children need safe places for expression to actually become more creative. I began to consider how I might create a climate that supports this philosophy. “I must experience that which I intend to teach” (Naths, 2004, p.123)

Creating Student Opportunity for *Call and Response*

The experience and lessons gained through art education are most important and can be the most valuable. Artmaking is just a tool. Dewey (1934) said real art is the experience of making or encountering the object, when the work is separated from these experiences it is separated from life. An experience has pattern and structure, because it is not just doing and undergoing in alternation, but consists of them in relationship. To put one’s hand in the fire that consumes it is not necessarily to have an experience. The action and its consequence must be joined in perception. This relationship is what gives meaning. Learning about and doing art is not about the final product. It can reveal interesting information but the true reward is the artist’s

response to the experience of making meaning through art. I have been doing art for most of my life and the reflection on this process and experience has been my most rewarding.

How can I integrate this into my teaching? As a teacher, I function and understand more clearly my role is a facilitator, a mediator between content and exposure, creating lessons that allow students time for observation and introspection through the creative process. As the facilitator, I am keenly aware and attentive to the way students are learning and processing; by executing and failing, reflecting and responding, questioning and relating, making choices and assumptions and making connections. After exploiting the A/R/Tographic process I would surmise that I don't *teach* ART I would say that I *use* ART as an agent of *Call and Response* for richer and more meaningful experiences of anything. I would also say I teach students *why* we make art. Art is the way to hear the *Call* and *Respond*, engage the mind, body and soul in the deeper understanding of all things. And in one final revelation, as I struggled to find my artistic voice and *Respond* to the *Call* or like in Bell's essay, make connection to the *universal source within*, I am now certain that the *Call* I hear is the sound of my own voice.

Conclusion

This A/R/Tographic study provided deep and thoughtful insight into my own creative process, influences and cognitive processes Like Dorothy and the ruby slippers; the answers have always been with us. We carry within clues and hints we just have to learn to access them. I realize on this journey we are never alone; there are catalysts along the way to illuminate the path. Knowledge is built upon all that comes before us. We first have to decide to pay attention, attending to and reflecting on what is at hand. This takes discipline and determination.

There is a time for every season, a time for gathering and a time for planting. I understand the importance for allowing time to explore new material and approaches. As an

artist I need to give myself time to explore without intention, return again to wandering; to make discoveries, synthesize new ideas, try new things, to invent, to consider, to collect; *to gather*. As a creative person, one must create the conditions for listening, to hear the *Call*.

Creating the conditions often means taking risks. Exploring, isn't exploring without venturing into the unknown. You can't discover what you already know. Taking risks is a vital component in the creative life. Being comfortable doesn't always mean being successful. I learned that failures are only perceived mistakes that provide critical lessons and there is always something to gain.

Finally, there was an underlying joy in art making that uniquely expressed my own voice. Researching various artists and concepts provided access to alternative methods I hadn't considered. I discovered connections to my creative process and synthesized new material that enabled me to have a more meaningful dialogue about my art.

The findings from my research that I believe are meaningful to develop into strategies for my teaching are closely aligned with what I learned for myself as an artist. Ultimately, this investigation led me to look carefully at cognitive perception and the learning process and how it relates to me; attention (inspiration, what I pay attention to), memory (which memories do I access), produce and understand language (semiotics, personal and global), learning (how I make connections) and finally, (how I) reason, solve problems, and make decisions. With these understandings came validation. I was able to see myself as a whole individual, an artist with a unique voice. More importantly, I see myself as a whole individual in a world of other whole individuals, each having their own unique vision and qualities worthy of a platform.

This perspective lies at the seat of my desire to teach. If, as a teacher, I am cognizant that I am the catalyst, aware that students access their own perceptual faculties; attention, memory, the production and understanding of language, making connections, problem solving and decisions; it is within my power to provide opportunities, open-ended projects in which students can play, invent, explore take risks, synthesize, and ultimately find their own voice.

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