From Art for Arts Sake to Art as Means of Knowing: A Rationale for Advancing Arts-Based Methods in Research, Practice and Pedagogy

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Abstract: This paper advances a philosophically informed rationale for the broader, reflexive and practical application of arts-based methods to benefit research, practice and pedagogy. It addresses the complexity and diversity of learning and knowing, foregrounding a cohabitative position and recognition of a plurality of research approaches, tailored and responsive to context. Appreciation of art and aesthetic experience is situated in the everyday, underpinned by multi-layered exemplars of pragmatic visual-arts narrative inquiry undertaken in the third, creative and communications sectors. Discussion considers semi-guided use of arts-based methods as a conduit for topic engagement, reflection and intersubjective agreement; alongside observation and interpretation of organically employed approaches used by participants within daily norms. Techniques span handcrafted (drawing), digital (photography), hybrid (cartooning), performance dimensions (improvised installations) and music (metaphor and structure). The process of creation, the artefact/outcome produced and experiences of consummation are all significant, with specific reflexivity impacts. Exploring methodology and epistemology, both the "doing" and its interpretation are explicated to inform method selection, replication, utility, evaluation and development of cross-media skills literacy. Approaches are found engaging, accessible and empowering, with nuanced capabilities to alter relationships with phenomena, experiences and people. By building a discursive space that reduces barriers; emancipation, interaction, polyphony, letting-go and the progressive unfolding of thoughts are supported, benefiting ways of knowing, narrative (re)construction, sensory perception and capacities to act. This can also present underexplored researcher risks in respect to emotion work, self-disclosure, identity and agenda. The paper therefore elucidates complex, intricate relationships between form and content, the represented and the representation or performance, researcher and participant, and the self and other. This benefits understanding of phenomena including personal experience, sensitive issues, empowerment, identity, transition and liminality. Observations are relevant to qualitative and mixed methods researchers and a multidisciplinary audience, with explicit identification of challenges, opportunities and implications.

Keywords: arts-based research, arts, aesthetics, visual narrative inquiry, reflexivity, authenticity, polyphony, knowledge

1. Introduction: Arts and aesthetics

"Beauty is the terrain of real artists, and one way to recognise them is if they dwell in this terrain" (Nicolosi 2010, p.106).

Nicolosi's (2010) description, situated in a primarily theological discussion, is representative of critical questions regarding the definition and nature of beauty, perceptions on value and authenticity and the approach by which "real" art is created and received. This paper seeks to move beyond more "restrictive" notions of art and the artist (Foster 1996, p.202) and similarly, of beauty as the preserve of the Fine Arts (Hegel *1835/1993)*. It foregrounds authentic personal expression and *art as experience (Dewey 1934) which can be found in the everyday, with individuals continually acting on – and acted upon by - their environments. Drawing on diverse contextual exemplars outside of the institutions (*Finley 2008) *and varying types and methods of interaction, engagement with art is demonstrated to expand perceptions and scaffold a broadening of understanding. This can build a* "knowledge of something else" (Dewey 1938, p.122)*, enabling reflexive and purposeful action (*Goldblatt 2006)*. The relationship between art and aesthetics is now explored in depth.*

The Arts may be considered a democratising "aesthetic dimension of experience" (Alexander 1987, xiii on Dewey 1934), combining nature and will (Emerson 1841), imparting both text and texture (Larsen 2013), connecting decoration and utility (Glassie 1993), supporting social reinforcement (Dissanayake 2003) and enabling personal discovery and knowledge making (Sullivan 2005). Indeed, artistic production and the human response evoked are recognised neurological events (Kapitan 2014). Art provides "a vital timepiece" (Davidson 2012, p.97) which enables connection and transition, both *through the process* of its creation alongside the capacity *to see oneself* substituted into a creative artefact, which may take multiple potential forms. Art can induce emotion, challenge understanding and be disrupting and even disconcerting, serving to redefine how

we make assumptions and potentially catalysing transformative change (Bishop 2004). Self is therefore important to both the production and *consummatory* experience of art (Dewey 1934).

Derived from the Greek *aisthetika,* aesthetics refers to that which is perceptible through both visual and bodily senses, transversing individual and cultural consensus level responses. An art-centred aesthetic experience offers transformative power which can "modify irrevocably our habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving" (Jackson 1998, p. xiv), reintegrating standalone embodied events into the stream of daily life (Dewey 1934). It can draw from a rich influence base and reach out to a broad audience enhancing understanding of the human condition (Cole & Knowles 2008), reflecting the entanglement of making and viewing (Dewey 1934). *Hegel's (1835/1993, p.3) depiction of* aesthetics as the *"realm of the beautiful" affords a close association with* the Fine Arts as creations of the mind and considered transcendentally higher than natural beauty. This view persists in many modern philosophical definitions of aesthetics (Wickman 2006). Kant (1970/1951) describes the self-sufficiency of an aesthetic object, a perspective of disconnected detachment, later advanced by the proponents of *art for art's sake* (Abrams & Harpham 2009, p.61).

In this paper, the perspective adopted aligns with D*ewey* and *Wittgenstein's* examination of aesthetics as used in our lives and activities but is not as restrictive as the sub-discipline of everyday aesthetics (Melchionne 2013). Human beings are the 'live creature interacting with its environment' (*Wittgenstein 1958,* 77) and further, as Dewey (1934) discusses, the relationship between fine art and ordinary experience may be considered dialectical. A consideration of the Arts and aesthetics *can be orientated towards the everyday, ranging from emergent scholarship in street art (Harwood 2014), to community creative enterprise (Eaves 2014) and daily expression in the workplace (Eaves & Walton 2013); foregrounding* art as experience *(Dewey 1934). The core question emerges, what can the* purposeful and coherent use of arts-based methods incorporating aesthetic appreciation *make possible* in terms of shared, individual and self-understanding, across diverse contexts, to broadly benefit research, practice and pedagogy?

2. Fugue as metaphor and paper structure

"Each piece of music we play, each dance, each drawing, each episode of life, reflects our own mind back at us, complete with all its imperfections" (Nachmanovitch 1990, p.25).

Responding to Bresler's (2009, p.8) call to encourage musicianship and musical sensibility in an expanded research context, the author employs a metaphor of the fugue to aid perception, conceptualisation and engagement; benefiting from artistic and classical connotations. Use of metaphor enables a pervasive cognitive and interactive process which aligns conceptualisation and language (Fauconnier 1997, p.168) and fosters *seeing-as* to scaffold shifts in framing and awareness (Cornelissen & Kafouros 2008). Metaphorical impact may include support for organising and clarifying understanding and theory, alongside the generation of new conceptual insight, ideas, constructs and meaning.

Aligning with the aesthetic orientation of this paper alongside increasingly ***volatile***, uncertain, complex and ambiguous research environments, a fugue is considered a germane vehicle for both metaphorical and structural representation, given its historical association of adoption in times of societal, cultural, technological and religious change (Mann 1965). Considering its polyphonic composition, it is also consistent with the methodology and purpose employed as well as its situation in the literature of multiple disciplines. A fugue begins with an introductory exposition and is composed contrapuntally with a tonic/dominant subject and counter-subjects with themes repeated, expanded and altered through various voices in episodes, entries and finales. This connotes dynamism, variation, imitation and modulation, multiple layers, tension and release, sound and silence, and a stream of motion or flow (Mann 1965).

A fugue is paradoxical in nature as cognate with its etymology, embracing both the Italian *fugere* (to pursue) and *fugare* (to flee). The paper is similarly designed to achieve unity and order, harmonising the text as a whole; whilst seeking inventiveness and episodic elaboration, in its combination, management and presentation of polyphony or multiple voices as distinct but related parts. Discussion firstly imparts an initial

exposition of the *principal voice of arts-based methods*, then moves to explore a main recurring subject of *arts-based methods as different ways of knowing,* alongside a countersubject of *author reflection and experience*, employing episodes or case exemplars which also serve to ground some of the more abstract dimensions. This fugal form can also enable a "searching-out" of participants, researcher (Rainwater & Scheidk 1985, pp.71) and audience, inviting them to rethink a particular issue or perspective. It also aligns with Pieper's (1990) elucidation of how artistic craft/practice and appreciation can captivate, elevate and notably, encourage contemplation and attention to the minutiae which may be overlooked.

3. What is Arts-based research?

Arts production constitutes an authentic experience (Dewey 1934) that "becomes research when practices are articulated as inquiry" (Hernández-Hernández & Fendler 2013). Arts-based research is a "process that uses the expressive qualities of form to convey meaning" to enlarge human understanding (Barone & Eisner 2012, p.xii), synthesise intuitive thought with logic (Vallack 2005), disrupt and reconcile (Estrella & Forinash 2007) and develop an empathetic participation (Ewing 2013). It employs aesthetic judgment and blurs discipline boundaries (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008), enabling an interplay of form and content (Leavy 2009) and building layers and interconnection (Roberts 2008). This moves beyond the confines of discursive communication and the "hegemony and linearity in written texts" (Butler-Kisber 2008, p. 268) to deliver new insight, meaning and values. Leavy (2009) richly describes six core genres, those of narrative inquiry, poetry, music, performance, dance or movement and the visual arts. Approaches within and across these fields offer breadth and fusion of "tools that allow us to reveal that which would remain unseen" (Hernández-Hernández & Fendler 2013, p.viii) or silenced (Barone 2000). It is congruent with a sociomaterial, performative perspective "that knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from a direct material engagement with the world" (Barad 2007, p.49). This is intra-active thinking, relevant whether the context is in language, in movement, in rel

As an emergent field, there remains diversity in methodological scope, approach and techniques; ongoing debate regarding standards, legitimacy and publication, and variance in application; for example arts-based approaches are more typically observed within education research than business, management and innovation studies (Schiuma 2012; Barone & Eisner 2012). Nebulous nomenclature is identified with the terms arts-based research methods, arts-based methods, arts-based approaches, arts-informed methods or inquiry and artistic research (Stanley 2009; Scott et al. 2013; Hernández-Hernández & Fendler 2013) often used interchangeably.

Rolling (2010) foregrounds a particular distinction between the arts-based and arts-informed, emphasising *immersion*, disciplined practice and high creative commitment to arts practice for the former, and an orientation towards employing arts *inspiration* for the latter, either in source or presentation. The primacy or centrality of the arts methods to the research process is stressed (Springgay et al. 2005) across the scholarly inquiry, method of representation and/or means of performance. Davidson (2012) elucidates this when discussing the personal and professional insight gained by participating through the *full process* of artwork creation, including curation, framing and exhibition; an experience which altered relationships with the artefacts and the ideas represented. Arts-informed research foregrounds an approach that is "influenced by, but not based in the arts" (Gillis 2012), undertaken as part of a systematic investigation (Ewing 2013). Stanley's (2009) discussion on arts-informed inquiry emphasises an inclusive and mutually reinforcing perspective.

This paper is panoptic and unifying in intention, respecting arts-based and arts-informed methods as equally valid as appropriate to context, application and means of integration with capacities to "increase voice and reflexivity …. , and to expand the possibilities of multiple, diverse realities and understandings (Butler-Kisber 2008, p.268). The term arts-based methods will be employed from this juncture to aid clarity and consistency. The work seeks to contribute to the evolving and interrelated epistemological, theoretical and methodological dialogue in respect to art as a mode of inquiry. It demonstrates the value of intersection, the range of problem situations which may be addressed and considers strengths, limitations and dimensions of quality when *moving beyond reading, to become generative*, exploring the creation of images and visual reality (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008). Further, it aims to foreground and advance the depth of perception that may be achieved from art-based methods, as encapsulated in the metaphor of *stereopsis*, inspired by Cassirer (1944).

4. Arts-based initiatives in business and management

Art-as-illustration exemplars are well established within business education (Eaves 2014), from the metaphorical association of Jazz and entrepreneurship (Barrett 2012) to Shakespearean plays as a stage to explore leadership issues (Ibbotson 2008). Purposeful arts-based interventions (Schiuma 2012) are also increasingly adopted, typically aimed at management and leadership levels in respect to skills transfer, employing a projective technique, illustration of essence and/or making (Taylor & Ladkin 2007). For example, social sculpting and staging may be incorporated to enrich and dramatise case studies. Furthermore, the spontaneous use of artistic expression within the workplace can provide a conduit of informal and organic actor expression and an aesthetic form of resistance to change (Eaves & Walton 2013) but remains underexplored.

This emergent influence of the arts and aesthetics is considered a cognate response to engaging, understanding and managing complex, dynamic and ambiguous organisational environments, characterised by messy, indeterminate and intricate problems (Meisiek, Irgens & Barry 2008). It reflects a need for managers to expand forms of learning and knowing, with greater attention to situated and experiential approaches that include conative, emotional and practical/making dimensions (Eaves 2014). It also contributes to the development of aesthetic workspaces that support reflexivity and aid contextual, cultural and self-awareness in respect to roles, perspectives and behaviours (Sutherland 2013). Given this potential alongside extant knowledge gaps, the paper aims to surface broadened insight for cross-disciplinary benefit.

5. Author positioning and personal experience

The author opines a holistic and pluralistic approach to research which foregrounds the interconnections between epistemology, theory and methodology, with the stance that no method should be privileged as *intrinsically* superior to another, but rather, the selection and indeed combination of methods must be based on the value afforded to address the particularity of the problem situation. It is also influenced by an appreciation of both theoretical and methodological bricolage aligning with self-identification as a "researcher-bricoleur" (Denzin & Lincoln 2011), underpinned by purposeful and intelligent-action orientated pragmatism (Dewey 1920).

Catalysed by trustee and volunteer roles in a UK charity and community creative-digital enterprises, fused with multidisciplinary IT practitioner, artistic and educational roles, the accumulated research was partially a response to a situation of *disorientation* as described by Mezirow (2000). This relates to a personally felt disconnect between the potential for the experiences of interconnection, insight, relatedness and enhanced meaning by "making special" (Dissanayake 2003, p.13) through art, and its broader actualisation. It reflects a desire to explore the capacity for greater inclusion of equally valued arts-based methods as experienced within creative/third sector roles extended to a range of settings and disciplines, opening up art across research, practice and pedagogy.

The author is committed to exploring a rich, panoptic continuum of aesthetic experiences, ranging from the ordinary and background, to the intense and foregrounded and has a particular interest in research that can *give voice* and support the *enablement of participants* by fostering polyphony, surfacing the intangible and invisible, and optimising the capacity for authenticity in representation. There is also a strong personal desire to continually enhance recognition and understanding of different ways of learning and knowing to benefit professional praxis alongside self-development. Drawing on Gadamer's (1989) *fusion of horizons,* an open-minded, multi-sensory immersion is encouraged to foster deep and receptive reading. This resonates with Lewis's (1972) discussion on *looking at* (viewing from outside) and *looking along* (stepping inside) and the nature of what may be considered a true and valid experience; neither is intrinsically better or more representative of truth, rather it is particularistic to each case and should not be a preconceived outcome. It takes looking at *and* looking along to develop appreciation and consideration of different experiences and the nature and truth of what they can tell us, a theme permeating this paper.

6. Unifying methodology

'….bring both arts and social inquiry out of the elitist institutions of academia and art museums, and relocate inquiry within the realm of local, personal, everyday places and events'' (Finley 2008, p72).

As with all research approaches, arts based inquiry should be selected with sensitivity to context and in reflection of the means in which the techniques employed frame or moreover, may impact outcomes. Particular considerations are identified with respect to the potential for a researcher's self-position to scaffold data interpretation, for example the perspective of adults perceiving the meaning of output created by children (Carter & Ford 2013). Lewis's (1972) depiction of *looking at* and *looking along* is salient in this regard. Research method choices attract additional nuances for researcher focus, with the art forms and specific mediums made available for participants highly significant. These directly impact the artefacts that can be produced – opening up some possibilities but potentially, restricting others. As an example, when using watercolours, if the colour palette provided is narrow this could restrain what is painted and it may be this lack of capacity that is more influential in the process and final output, rather than the free expression of the creator, therefore risking a negation in authenticity of interpretation. It may also impact the nature of the experience, with fabrics such as fibre associated with a heightened level of softness and sensuality that can aid the translation of hard ideas into a safe, soft and more accessible form (Davidson 2012).

The research exemplars introduced are connected by a shared methodology of visual narrative inquiry (Riessman 2008), within which both researchers and participants explore and *make meaning* of experience across visual and narrative dimensions with their environment. It is an active, intentional and reflective human process (Bach 2007) which aligns with an increasing need to navigate highly storied, idiosyncratic, ambiguous and emergent contexts, exploring emotion and imagery alongside processes of self-identification and social representation. Photography is employed to benefit reflection and interpretation through preservation and metaphorical connection (Bach 2001). The integration of text and imagery can support reflexivity and personal development, enable identity construction and reconstruction, evoke memory and facilitate the sharing of stories across a group (Riessman 2008; Eaves & Walton 2013). Further, the use of narrative can combine the application of categories as found in the sciences, alongside juxtaposition as identified in the Arts (Meisiek, Irgens & Barry 2008).

Research exemplars are chosen with the intent to foreground a range of media, techniques and materials, tailored to specific contexts, participants, problem situations and audiences (Dewey 1934), with an emphasis on accessibility, polyphony and authenticity (Eaves & Walton 2013). Attention to ethical rigor was applied throughout with participant anonymity afforded as requested. The methodological pluralism adopted is encouraged to "exploit the manifold ways of knowing" (Moses & Knutsen 2007, p.294). Further, the application of arts-based methods contributes to the call for *"added diversity"* (Riessman 2008, p.200) in the emergent field of narrative methodology. For each exemplar, the story behind the production process of the artefact is presented, alongside the artefact (image) itself and the narrative of its interpretation, drawing on the voices of creator, researcher and audience. Guidance, challenges and opportunities surfaced by the use and interpretation of participatory visual texts is fused within the discussion (Richards 2011).

7. Arts-based methods as empowerment and transition

Severn House is a UK regional charity which aims to support and enable victims of domestic assault, providing both a place of immediate safety and aftercare and moreover, fostering an extended system of optional personal and/or group counselling (details are anonymised). As a volunteer in a different but linked charity, the author was approached to become involved in a pilot scheme to explore emotions through the creative arts. This was catalysed by the feedback given by the attendees themselves, both directly to counsellors and through confidential comments cards, in respect to the difficulty of *"Expressing how I really feel, why are the words lost to me?"* which became the title for the project.

An underpinning feature is that attendees indicated a preference not to work with a professional artist, but rather one who would more likely self-identity as, in their words, "an enthusiastic, creative practitioner with empathetic awareness of the charity aims". This formed a scaffold or supporting structure identified from the outset, alongside a commitment to confidentiality – a theme which will be revisited as the discussion emerges. All workshop sessions followed a similar protocol with attendees (5 per group) being offered the same prompt to create a response to a pre-agreed subject. In the exemplar expounded, this prompt was to *"represent your view of anxiety"*.

A range of arts-centred mediums were provided with free selection, including handcrafted (drawing/painting/pastels), digital (Web 2.0 creative applications) and any performance dimension as conceived by the group. The author was available to help participants use the materials and/or technology, providing skills support as requested. The range of approaches in scope was eclectic by design, aiming to optimise accessibility to text and texture via different conduits of expression, thereby supporting polyphony. Selection was also cognisant to McLuhan's (1967) exposition on medium with framing, structure, texture, colour, style, syntax, usage and other specific qualities capable of producing and/or embedding different narratives (Davidson 2012).

Contributors were invited to either note a caption; define an explanation; verbally describe their resultant artefact or "let it speak for itself", with these options agreed within the group. On discussion of all the work created, the following image was universally selected as the *"most representative and provoking".* This was not a judgement of aesthetic quality, but rather of aesthetic impact, one that resonated beyond the individual creator to the group. Nested either side of the image, fragments of the participants' voices are presented, enabling a degree of triangulation in commonality with traditional research approaches, but also allowing for more open interpretation for the audience.

"I have visions of what I want to achieve but I am scared to go for it, to do things, it's how to connect across the two" (Reflection 1).
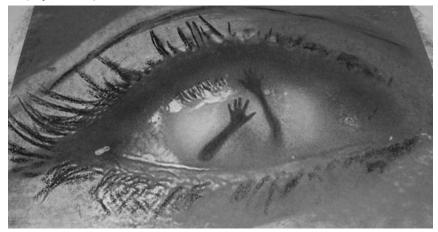

Figure 1: Representation of anxiety (drawing/pastels)

"It is not that we all see anxiety the same, it is that we can all see our own take on anxiety within the picture. It's quite startling to see it like that. You see for me, well, anxiety builds up in intensity but it can change really quickly. I feel like I could alter the colour shade within this image to reflect how intense the feeling is at a particular time. I wish I could be in more control of it like that" (Reflection 2)

"I see the real me, I'm still here. But I don't know how to get me out. And when I feel like I am getting close, well, sometimes it feels safer to stay inside. It's become some strange sort of comfort actually, not going out. But I think I want it to be different now." (Reflection 3).

Both the process of creation and the artefacts produced emerge as of equal significance, facilitating different reflexive benefits and new perspectives. The creative act was seen to benefit the representation of an emotion or feeling that was otherwise *"hard to find the words to express".* It enabled a *"departure from the norm"*, *"a joining up of thoughts I hadn't seen this way before"* and a *"new way of talking".* In addition, scaffolding participant choice in media selection, with support available on request,facilitated personal control which is considered of particular importance when approaching sensitive subjects where people are experiencing difficulties in their lives (Dickson-Swift et al. 2009).. A noted preference for handcrafted rather than digital techniques was observed in this group in order to *"feel what I am doing"* as commented by one participant. This resonates with the authors' belief in making as connecting, aligning with Gauntlett (2013).

The sharing of explanations behind the contributions was particularly impactful, validatory and empowering (Estrella & Forinash 2007). After initial shares and feedback was voiced, increasing connections developed

across the group, which manifested themselves in the semantic and the semiotic, from the cumulative and commonalities of word selection, to changes in tone and supportive gestures made. This created an open, trusting discursive space which may be best encapsulated as a form of *progressive disclosure, an unfolding of narrative*. An almost tacit and emergent appreciation of an aesthetic way of sensing was also identified. Participants were able to repond and put themselves into the work of others, for example, to consider how a change in shading might represent their own intensity of emotion at different points and discuss why, which enabled them to surface greater meaning from that which they had created themselves. This reflects the means in which more informed understanding of the past can build an enhanced capability to comprehend the present and may begin to enact a sense of control.

This collaborative sensemaking led to *Bridge* emerging as an agreed metaphor for anxiety. This reflected the push-pull between moving forward and being held back, and moreover a recognition that holding back was sometimes an acquired form of comfort, not fear. This was highly influential for some group members and interpreted by the author as a transient state resonant of the "transitional spaces of liminality" described by Küpers (2011, p.45). The generative act of art creation, alongside individual and collaborative interpretation had created a personal and shared visual and inter-textual vocabulary to express and begin to join up fragments of experiences, emotions and feelings to benefit discovery. This is congruent with Kapitan's (2014) discussion of the capacity of art to rebalance brain functions which have been negatively impacted by disruptions to human connectivity, such as emotional and physical trauma. The insight continued to develop over time with one participant articulating in a follow-up session that "the issues still continue in my head but I see them now – I am no longer heavy through living them". This reflects the means in which more informed understanding of the past can build an enhanced capability to comprehend the present and may begin to enact a sense of control.

Finally, the author reflects on the fact that this exemplar was never anticipated to be part of a research study; being situated within a personal volunteering experience. However, a desire to share the process and impact emerged strongly from the group narrative and by the end of the pilot, this emerged as a voice in its own right. Whilst preserving anonymity, all contributors articulated the want to expand awareness of different means to explore sensitive issues, to "open up conversations" to the broadest audience, so that the benefits experienced could be made available to others. The rich insight attained through the process is congruent with McNiff's (2008, p.40) assertion that the "most meaningful insights often come by surprise". This elaborated description elucidates the very genesis of this paper and in a moment of fugal counterpoint, also serves to introduce the remaining episodes or case exemplars which move beyond its unanticipated origins.

8. Arts-based methods as identity and transition

Reflecting on the above, the author moves to consider the organic use of arts-based methods, an aspect underexplored in organisational settings. The episode serves to illustrate a more unusual and self-organising intervention technique in the application of cartooning. Combining caricature and portraiture, cartoons are an engaging, compact, imprecise, familiar and ubiquitous visual method which can afford a socio-cultural lens into the lifeworld depicted, surface the serious by means of the playful, amuse, and invite debate. Use of cartooning is in receipt of limited empirical study but demonstrates capacities to surface context and interactions, encourage reflexivity and broader questioning (Lafrenière et al. 2014) and provide an engaging means of dissemination (Bartlett 2012).

As part of a wider mixed methods study within a UK Communications sector firm subject to transformational post joint-venture change, a cultural legacy of passion for creative expression was established. Humour emerged as an important cultural norm, employed as a coping strategy to navigate high rates of change and stress (Eaves & Walton 2013). Indeed, it is increasingly recognised as an important and revealing constituent of organisational life (Westwood & Rhodes 2006). Use of humour may be considered an adaptive defence mechanism and has been found to be negatively correlated with intention to resist organisational change (Bovey & Hede 2001).

The image presented was self-created by an organisational actor in the midst of an outsourcing initiative that had been publicly criticised for lack of transparency. The hybrid cartoon style sketch was posted in a recreational area, spawning similar creations and post-it note additions with fragments of commentary, becoming a transient artistic installation. *"Am I in or am I out?"* was added later as a form of tagline by another

actor. This resonates elements of humour theory, specifically *Relief Theory* as a release of negative feelings towards a subject, alongside *Incongruity-Resolution Theory* where two objects are presented in a single frame and the nature of this relationship explicated (Mulder & Nijholt 2002). It affords utility to surface power, identity and socio-cultural understanding.

Figure 2: Actor use of cartooning

This example is resonant with aspects of relational art or relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002), specifically the capacity to produce new experiences and intersubjective encounters through which meaning is elaborated collectively within a social context. It enables an interactive space for being together whereby novel connections and possibly an alternative discourse may emerge. In contrast to Burke's (2005) foregrounding of the strength of performance identified in framed, set-apart events such as formalised rituals as opposed to the everyday; the author finds that organic workplace examples can also be highly performative and impactful *occasions*. These can serve to disrupt established cognitive and in-praxis routines, validate individual experiences and scaffold constructive action (Estrella & Forinash 2007).

Additionally, alternative organic art exemplars are identified drawing on the authors' active participation in the DIY-making arena, notably a coding-crafts club for young people aged 5-16, alongside support and "governance" roles in two UK social enterprises. This is exemplified at Access Space in Sheffield where knowledge is interpreted to be legitimised by the prominent display of participants' artefacts (Eaves & Walton 2013). This enables creative expression (Walter 2012), benefits cultural intermediation (Jones 2012) and supports a positive psychology that aligns with symbolic functionality (Elsbach & Bechky 2007). As one participant commented, *"I never saw myself as an artist at all, nobody else would give me this opportunity. I can now say I have exhibited!"*

Figure 3: Participant artwork at access space

Alongside craftsmanship and discipline, the capacity to work organically with discarded material and fragments is also revealed (Eaves & Walton 2013); from scraps of hardware to cabling and pieces of wood. It surfaces a need to develop *presence from that which is absent* to find new meaning and a *visual vocabulary* (Chatterjee 2006) as epitomised by one participant: "I guess this is my way of talking about the world and how I would like it to be". Individual and group interactive discussion about the artefacts surfaced a shared need to take apart and reconstruct, to play, to constrain and then find a new form. The desire to "reconnect", "reuse", "show beauty" and "reveal what is hidden" was recurrent. The author also inferred a need to find some degree of organisation and a tacit reflection of art as a neurological event (Kapitan 2014). As one contributor stated *"My ideas just seem to flow better, things come together when I am working and reshaping".*

Figure 4: Industrial Art at Access Space

9. Reflections and Implications

The third sector research involved significant *emotion work* (Hochschild 1983) as an embodied experience which can impact researchers' intellectually, emotionally and physically (Gilbert 2001). This is an underreported element in research methods literature but highly salient to investigating sensitive topics such as within the Severn House episode. It can pose challenges and risks to the investigator such as navigating personal/professional boundaries (Grinyer 2005) and emotional management (Dickson-Swift et al. 2009). It may also involve aspects of self-disclosure during processes of rapport building. Further, researcher identity, biography and conscious/unconscious personal agendas are 2014). Attention to this perspective contributes to understanding different ways of knowing and raises a need to include reflexive consideration during the research process and its transparent publication.

Reflecting across all the episodes or cases introduced; implications for future development and application may be identified. Firstly, the introduction of photo-elicitation may offer benefits for longitudinal study whereby images of the artefact(s) produced could be discussed with the participant at a debriefing-style session, to aid exploration of their response over time. Drawing on the self-reflections surfaced, the capacity for arts-based methods to aid auto-ethnographic research is indicated, with a potential to reveal intricate tensions between the self and other (Davidson 2012). Opportunities for multiple, layered and interactive linkages using different methods, mediums and materials also emerges strongly (Foster 2008), enabling a visual and inter-textual vocabulary.

Novel articulation approaches such as the fugue metaphor and structure demonstrates a capability to unify text, providing a new conduit for hearing voices, building insight and developing understanding. Underexplored techniques such as cartooning warrant additional empirical investigation and guidance for use as a qualitative research and findings engagement tool, and as an aid for practitioners.

Potential areas of adoption include utilisation as a storyboard to build an interactive presentation or create backdrops for display, and employing cartoon-style illustrations alongside text or comic-book formats to communicate findings and convey core messages. Specific benefits are observed within Information Systems to foster rich dialogue on use case composition, development and prototyping.

Researchers, practitioners and scholars are encouraged to reflect on opportunities to employ or expand arts-based research methods within their work, whilst remaining cognisant to challenges and implications. The value of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches is brought into focus and may benefit from increased collaboration working within qualitative or mixed methods teams to advance knowledge and skill exchange. The capacity to enhance teaching and training for early career researchers is also indicated, for example to build performative interpretive skills and techniques (Roberts 2008). This may include raising awareness of coping strategies to manage emotional work, such as maintaining a research diary and working with a non-insider co-author with a relatively neutral and stabilising position. Sharing research experiences is 2014) with the arts an effective conduit for this purpose (Ewing 2013).

10. Conclusions

Combining philosophical and theoretical exposition with exemplars from pragmatic visual-narrative research, this paper richly elucidates the application and interpretation of semi-guided and organic arts-based methods as "experience-near" methods of inquiry (Estrella & Forinash 2007, p.382). This is underpinned by transparency, discipline and reflection (Mitchell, O'Reilly-Scanlon & Weber 2005) alongside epistemological, theoretical and methodological coherency to benefit authenticity of representation or performance, audience relatability and the warrants of assertions (Dewey 1920). Both the visual artefacts created and the unfolding of their production become a means of living, articulating and (re)presenting individual and collective stories of experience, needs and aspirations. As Ingold (2012, p.435) argues "in the phenomenal world, every material is a becoming". It is the inquiry and the aesthetic impact located within everyday, local, personal and workplace experience (Finley 2008) that is foregrounded, rather than an assessment of aesthetic quality (Dewey 1934).

Arts-based research is demonstrated to support a re-visioning of subjective issues in a means not possible from more traditional and linear descriptive methods of engagement (Butler-Kisber 2008). Purposefully designed to align with the particular context, participants can benefit from greater freedom and control to *move beyond* a sharing of experience, to a fuller expression and shaping of *their* story in a way that makes sense and matters to *them*. It serves to evoke meanings, not denote them (Leavy 2009, p.14), fosters intersubjectivity and can benefit the surfacing of conflict whilst supporting a move towards reconciliation, empowerment, adjustment (emotions and practices) and change (Estrella & Forinash 2007). This can scaffold a breadth and depth of storytelling where the eyes of the researched, not the researcher occupies centre stage, whilst enabling an e*nlargement of understanding* and reflection for both (Barone & Eisner 2012).

A broader application with more integral and/or integrative use of arts-based methods is therefore promoted to inspire non-habitual, experiential and pluralistic responses to re-vision, reframe, re-relate and re-evaluate, whilst catalysing ongoing representation and performance, interpretation, sensemaking, experimentation, learning, reflexivity and alternative forms of learning, knowledge production and narrative (re)construction. This is relevant to connect research and lived experience in a range of settings and can aid both capture and communication of the diversity and complexity of human experience (Knowles & Cole 2008, p.57). It can also enhance capacities to act by scaffolding a rich polyphonic understanding, cultivating contextual humility and promoting awareness and sensitivity to different perspectives, including those of self. This supports a cohabitative appreciation of different ways of knowing (Eaves 2014).

The qualities and diversity in arts-based methods, media and materials thereby contributes to a wider aisthēsis, whereby meaningful perception is enhanced across the senses (Roberts 2008). Alongside participant outcomes, this can make scholarship more accessible, stimulating, evocative and empathetic (Cole & Knowles 2008), whilst recognising considerations for training, design and conduct. Drawing on the theme of stereopsis, the impact can also be disruptive and transitional, supporting a move from "habitual blindness" associated with entrenched or familiar stances to "binocular vision" (Meisiek, Irgens & Barry 2008), enhancing *saper vedere* or knowing *how* to see, to benefit creator-participant, researcher and audience. Reflecting back on

Nicolosi's (2010) statement querying the terrain of *real* artists, this paper serves to foreground the multilayered, multivocal and multidisciplinary value, beauty and authenticity of arts and aesthetics as situated in everyday experiences of production, consumption and reflection. This provides a robust and engaging rationale for expanded application of arts-based methods across research, practice and pedagogy.

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