

Possibilities for Thinking Differently in Primary Visual Arts Education

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Abstract A/r/tographic inquiry provides opportunities to understand the agentic qualities of both human and non-human beings in the meaning making process. This visual essay explicates a process of art making where both artist and art materials are recognised as affective agents. Through entangling these affective agents, possibilities for thinking and doing differently in primary visual arts education settings arise. In attending to the human and non-human intra-connected ecology of classroom, school and community, I ruminate on how we can make change in and through visual arts teaching in the primary school classroom.

Keywords *A/r/tography, Arts-based Research, Primary Visual Arts Education, Diffractive Analysis, Collaborative Practice, Visual Essay*

Figure 1 'contiguity' an artwork I created to render the blurring of boundaries and contiguous nature of this collaborative process of art making. A/r/tographic inquiry provides opportunities to understand the agentic qualities of both human and non-human beings in the meaning making process. This visual essay explicates a process of art making where both artist and art materials are recognised as affective agents. In attending to the human and non-human intra-connected ecology of classroom, school and community, I consider how we can make change in and through visual arts teaching in the primary school classroom.



Figure 2 visual arts professional learning event. This visual essay looks at the process of art making where both artist and art materials are recognised as affective agents. It is through the interweaving of these affective agents that possibilities for thinking and doing differently in primary visual arts education settings arise



Figure 3 autoethnographic, narrative inquiry and a/r/tographical data woven together. Four teacher collaborators (including myself) engaged in shared experiences of making and responding in and through the visual arts. Through woven assemblages of autoethnographic, narrative and a/r/tographic inquiry data this project asks the researcher and participants to make meaning of their experiences.



Figure 4 visual rendering of methodology. Fig 4 renders an overview of my methodology as a qualitative research project that has its beginnings in a constructivist paradigm. Through methodological becoming I encounter and adopt new materialist data analysis processes into my approach for meaning making of data assemblages. It is the meeting of sand and water in Fig 4, the edges where the paradigms meet one another.



Figure 5 Process over Product Part 1: Participant visual renderings on display at gallery. It is in this process of diffractive analysis (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1992) that new and different patterns of similarities and differences within our assemblages of generated data begin to unfold, similar to the waves crashing on the beach in Fig 4. The narrative and a/r/tographical data generated in these methodologies had been cut and woven together as assemblages. It can be seen in Fig 5 and 6 the coming together of parts created by one of the teacher collaborators.



Figure 6 Process over product Part 2: Participant visual renderings.



Diffractively analysing the affects of these intra-actions of woven data, between the participants, places and other contributors in these assemblages provide opportunities for alternative ways of thinking about visual arts education on the Northwest Coast of Tasmania.

Figure 7 Process over product Part 3: Participant visual renderings. It was in the process of reading and re-turning our data within the assemblages diffractively that showed nonhuman contributors as a significant part of what, how, where and when of visual arts teaching in our schools. These contributors were 'things' (Bennett, 2004; Nelson, Segall, & Durham, 2021) such as the place or space available in our classrooms, the visual arts resources available, time and curriculum. These other contributors held weight in our narratives.



Figure 8 Happy: Outcome of participant teacher working with their students after our inquiry process. Diffractive analysis of this research data allows for the acknowledgment that this research, could always be other. Meaning making becomes one of not simply descriptive revelation, but one where the intra-actions between participants, places and other contributors are becoming an entanglement of assembled parts.



Figure 9 Connection: Participant visual renderings. The assemblages are essential in understanding what these parts are doing, how they are interacting in this particular instance, and in response to the particular research questions. There are many possible ways that meaning could be made (Rosiek & Snyder, 2020) from our narrative and a/r/tographical inquiry data, in this instance of diffractive analysis it is within the relationality of our (participant, places and other contributors) particular intra-actions and narratives that unfold what meaning matters (Barad, 2007; Rosiek & Snyder, 2020). Rendered out in Fig 9 is one response to meaning making from our shared narratives and intra-actions, unfolding for this particular participant the importance of the connections and communications between the student and the teacher.



When re-turning to the data assemblages, intra-action in this research project can be found to happen on several different planes, there are our intra-actions as participants engaging in narrative and a/r/tographical inquiry. Within our a/r/tographical inquiry we are each intra-acting with each other, with our environment and with the art materials we have chosen.

Figure 10 Not just a paintbrush: Outcome of participant teacher working with their students after our inquiry process.



This painted quadriptych (Fig 11) explores our a/r/togographical inquiry process through the use of metaphor which is represented within these a/r/togographical renderings. The painted quadriptych can be viewed as a whole, where each painting blends into and continues with the next. The choice to make three cuts within the whole, dividing it into four parts, makes space for the in-between that is happening at these particular moments within the a/r/togographical inquiry represented within this quadriptych.

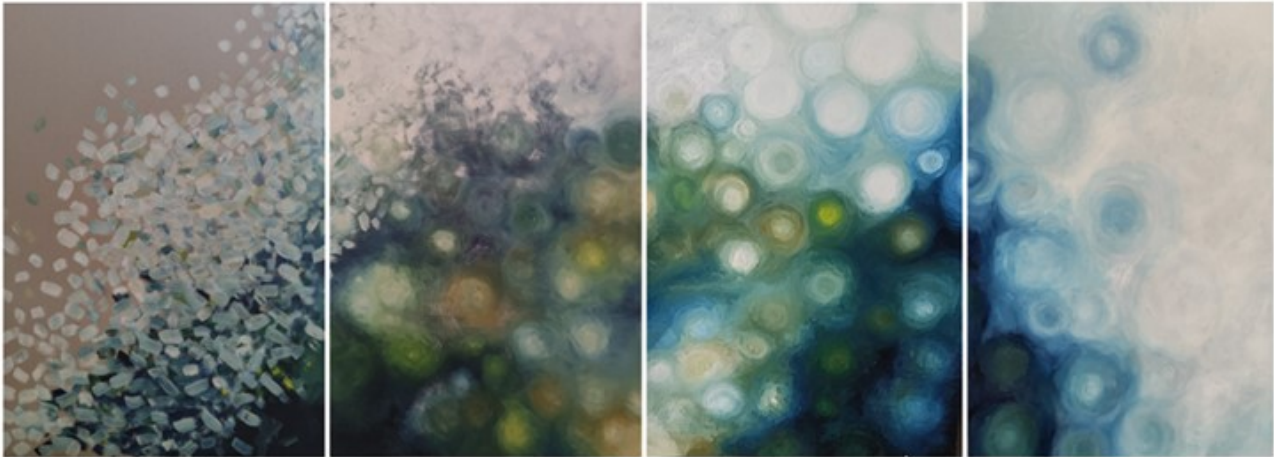


Figure 11 The Process: my painting as research while working with participants. Each part renders a territorialisation of a part of our process. These are territorialised as Isolation, Muddling, Simmering and Openings as key moments in our meaning making process.

Figure 12 Isolation. My a/r/togographical renderings as metaphor offer a visual example of human and nonhuman beings working contiguously in active research. I am responding to the intra-actions between space, place, people and materials as and while they are happening. I am making meaning of this experience through my intra-actions with paint, oil, brush and cardboard. The materials offered opportunities for another way of seeing and understanding our experience.

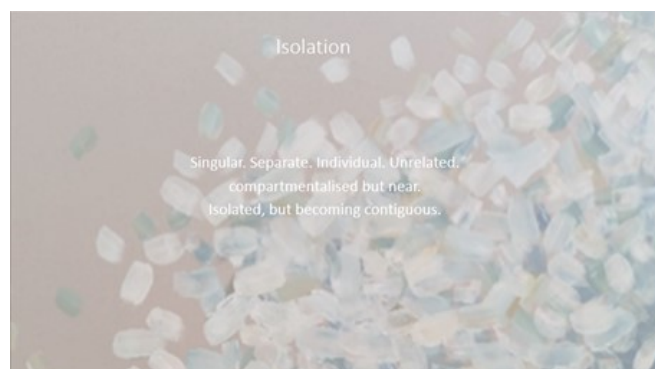


Figure 13 Muddling. I worked on these a/r/tographical renderings, each week in the same space/place in contiguity with the three teacher participants, these artworks morphed and transformed, collaboratively engaging with both human and nonhuman contributors to suit and represent the dynamics and conversations of this space and the meaning made.



Figure 14 Simmering. When returning to this quadriptych through the lens of diffractive analysis, diffractive thinking drew my attention to the other contributors intra-acting with us that affected the way we were engaging with each other. I particularly noticed the ways we engaged with our art materials in our chosen a/r/tographical inquiry space had the possibility to, “change thinking and change relationships between people, building more than human relationships” (Hickey-Moody, 2020, p. 731).



Figure 15 Openings.

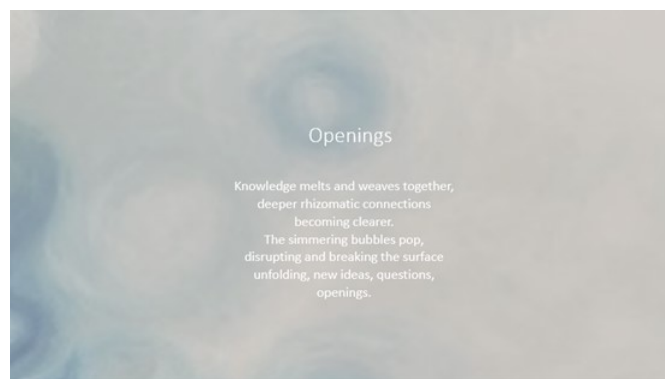


Figure 16 Perfectly Imperfect: Participant visual renderings.

The more than human relationships uncovered through re-turning the data through the lens of diffractive analysis evident in this research project are recognised as



participants, places and other contributors. Recognising all things that contribute to this research project, it became apparent that this includes: us as human participants; the invitation and recruitment process; Covid-19 pandemic; our teaching and a/r/tographical inquiry spaces; the available art materials; the gallery; and the Australian curriculum.



Figure 17 Perspective: Outcome of participant teacher working with their students after our inquiry process. In attending to the human and non-human intra-connected ecology of classroom, school and community we can better understand what impacts our visual arts education practice and make considerations for our future teaching practice.

Figure 18 Participants working with gallery director for exhibition. Figure 19 Participants working with gallery director for exhibition



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