

Becoming A/r/tography¹

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This article explores moments of becoming a/r/tography. A/r/tography is a research methodology, a creative practice, and a performative pedagogy that lives in the rhizomatic practices of the in-between. Resisting the tendency for endless critique of past experience and bodies of knowledge, a/r/tography is concerned with the creative invention of concepts and mapping the intensities experienced in relational, rhizomatic, yet, singular events. Considering several recent research projects, this article explores what it means to be becoming a/r/tography. Rather than asking what an art education practice means, the question becomes what does this art education practice set in motion do? There can be no being a/r/tography without the processes of becoming a/r/tography.

Keywords: art and design education, arts based research, A/r/tography

This article unfolds a cartography of becoming a/r/tography by describing lines of *becoming-intensity*, *becoming-event*, and *becoming-movement* that entangle across time and place.² It is at once a journey over time and a journey in time, synchronous and asynchronous, imagining the past and future in the present sense of becoming. It is at once one project and a multiplicity of projects intersecting with possibilities. A/r/tography is a form of practice-based research within the arts and education (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin & Wilson Kind, 2005; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008; see also Sullivan, 2010). Drawing upon the professional practices of educators, artists, and researchers, it entangles and performs what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) referred to as a rhizome, an assemblage of objects, ideas, and structures that move in dynamic motion performing waves of intensities that create new understandings. A/r/tography transforms the traditional relationship between theory and practice by recognizing the movement found within a rhizome. Thus, theorizing and practicing become something other than what they were and exist in constant movement toward becoming (see O'Sullivan 2006; Springgay & Irwin, 2008; Triggs, 2012; Triggs, Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer & Xiong, 2011).

A/r/tography is a research methodology, a creative practice, and a performative pedagogy that lives in the rhizomatic practices of the liminal in-between (Irwin, 2004). These in-between spaces of becoming prompt disruption of duelling binaries, conceptions of identities, and the rush to certainty. Instead, invention becomes integral to social, cultural, economic and political processes that are reimagined as concepts situated within events. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) stated that concepts are "centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others" (p. 23). While traditional models of theory and practice may have identified particular ideas or concepts, theorizing and practicing concepts within the movement of events portrays a process of complicated relationality (O'Donoghue, 2009).

The transformational ideas of Deleuze and Guattari begin in the middle of life through the multiplicities of the material and immaterial. The folded nature of experience "is rendered meaningful not by grounding empirical

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particulars in abstract universals but by experimentation" (Semetsky, 2006, p. XXIII). Subjectivity is understood as multidimensional, collective, and plural. It is creative, ethical, and aesthetic "punctuated by moments when being *old* oneself simply would not make sense any longer" (Semetsky, 2006, p. 3, italics in original) since "when something occurs, the self that awaited it is already dead, or the one that would await it has not yet arrived" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 198–199). Describing the lines of intensity, movement, and events that entangle across time and place unfolds a cartography of a/r/tography. This article describes how *becoming intensity*, *becoming movement*, and *becoming event* are three rhizomatically connected conceptions of becoming a/r/tography, cartographically described through a walking methodology.

An important question is considered. Rather than asking what an art education practice means, the question becomes what does this art education practice set in motion do? There can be no being a/r/tography without the processes of becoming a/r/tography. Cartographically exploring the rhizomatic entanglements is an experiment I wish to explore in this article.

In what follows, I explore three lines of becoming: *becoming-intensity*, *becoming-event*, *becoming-movement*. Each line of becoming is not defined by the points it is connected to but, rather, by the space in-between, the middle, and the movement that reverberates within. Each line of becoming is situated within the intensity of an event in constant movement; movement toward possibilities, toward an unfolding of that which is yet to be known, toward the potential of potential. Even though each line of becoming is situated within a unique event, these lines of becoming are always connected, always affected by the other, and always entangled in lines of multiplicities. Allowing a/r/tography to unfold in the in-between spaces among the identities, practices, and processes of artists, researchers, and educators, and in the conditions of learning to learn, opened the way to conceptualizing becoming within the multiplicities of our work. Building on the work of Simon O' Sullivan (2006, p. 22) I suggest that rather than asking what does this art education practice mean, it is more appropriate to ask: what does art education in practice set in motion do?

Becoming-Intensity

The studies described earlier lead us to wondering how arts teacher candidates *learn to learn* within a program of teacher education. Teacher education has been primarily focused on learning to teach (see also Grauer, 1998). Although this will always be a part of teacher education programs, we were interested in understanding learning as folding and unfolding ideas recursively evoking new understandings. Learning "involves moving into and through an evolving space of possibility" (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p. 83).

Becoming pedagogical is the title of a federally funded research project³ nearing completion. Co-investigators for this study include an interdisciplinary team of scholars in visual arts, drama, music, and poetry. For the purpose of this article, I want to focus on work in which I worked closely with Donal O'Donoghue and Stephanie Springgay. *Becoming pedagogical* is all about lingering in this evolving space of possibility, recognizing that one never "becomes" but rather resides in a constant state of *becoming pedagogical*. Secondary art teacher candidates experience being and becoming artists, inquirers, and educators contiguously, disrupting the arbitrary boundaries of fixed disciplinary knowledge (Abbs, 2003). Recognizing the interstitial spaces between these

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identities allows for a generative flow of intellectual engagement where teacher candidates are learning to learn, or *becoming pedagogical* (see Rajachman, 2000, p. 121).

Becoming pedagogical is a phrase we use to connote a state of embodied living inquiry whereby the learner is committed to learning in and through time. We began this living inquiry of *becoming pedagogical* encouraging teacher candidates to question their intentions/actions as they relate to contextual artefacts and experiences acquired throughout the program. We believed processes of making and performing identities could transform the concept of learning into *becoming pedagogical*. This is especially important as teacher candidates engage with their personal and social aspects of knowing. By conceptualizing the identity of the teacher candidate as a researcher (see Britzman, 2003), living inquiry becomes a place for the teacher candidate to learn how to observe, question, analyze, and interpret. In doing so, teacher candidates move from desiring to “be” a teacher as expert to “becoming” a teacher as inquirer. As Britzman (2003) found, and our studies concur, as “teachers view their work as research, it becomes more difficult to take the dynamics of classroom life for granted” (p. 239). It is this active performative space of living inquiry that we are calling *becoming pedagogical*. It is performative (see also Garoian, 1999) through its materiality that embraces the arts *and* education as forms of inquiry. The objective of this program reform is to create a community of inquiry where teacher candidates will be committed to *becoming pedagogical* as they prepare to advance creative inquiry in schools (Irwin & O’Donoghue, 2012).

A team of a/r/tographers worked with artists and students to employ their artistic and pedagogical sensibilities and capabilities in ongoing, community-engaged, dialogic forms of research. During the first semester of a twelve-month after degree art teacher education program, we opened up a three-week space within the program for an encounter with two Portland, Oregon visual artists, Hannah Jickling and Helen Reed, whose art as social practice engaged teacher candidates in rethinking their conceptions of pedagogy and art. Jickling and Reed are interested in the pedagogical turn in contemporary art (see Rogoff, 2008). Their work seeks to recognize that education and art contribute to the complexity of the world rather than reacting to it (O’Donoghue 2008, 2011). They chose to concentrate on A. S. Neill’s (1960) *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* as a space to question what learning does. While they pursued two projects, I will concentrate on one in which students were each given a used out-of-print text and asked to study the marginalia (Jackson, 2002) and, subsequently, invited to participate in related field trips. As this encounter unfolded, all those involved inscribed their own marginalia for particular sections of the text, thus, creating a revised edition of the book (see Springgay, 2011b). The teacher candidates became a resource for the social practice directed by the artists. As they began to realize this, teacher candidates also began to question: who gets recognized for learning? what is the relationship between material practices, processes of engagement, and aesthetic products?

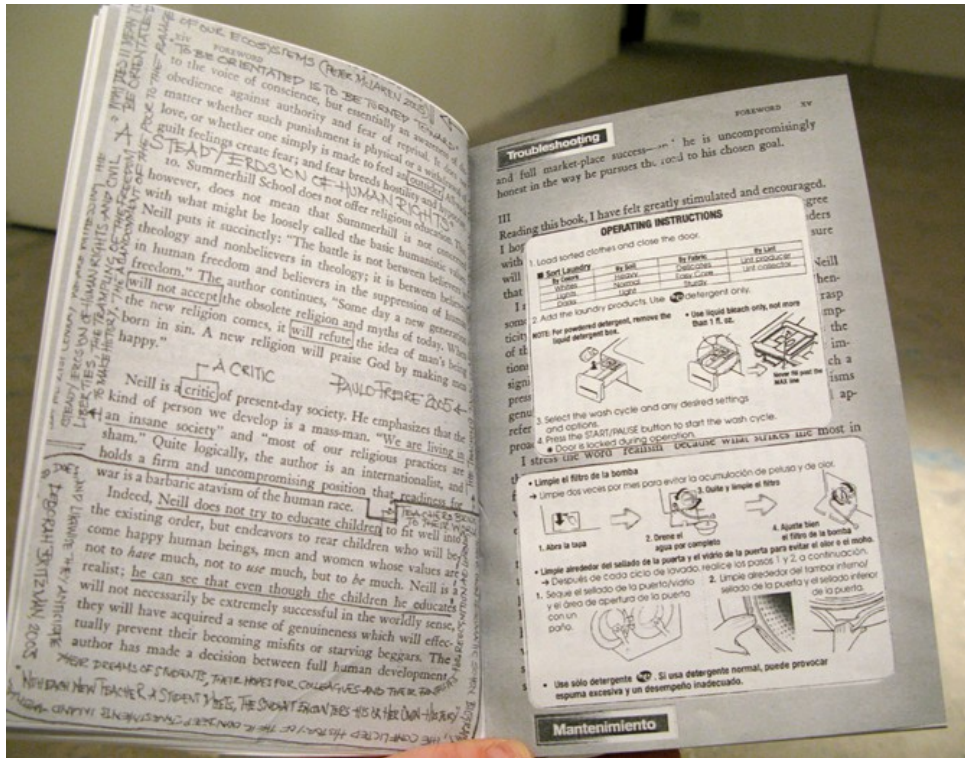


Image 1. Sample revised Summerhill text. Artist residency product under the direction of Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling (2011). Photo credit: Heidi May.



Image 2. Sample revised Summerhill text. Artist residency product under the direction of Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling (2011). Photo credit: Heidi May.

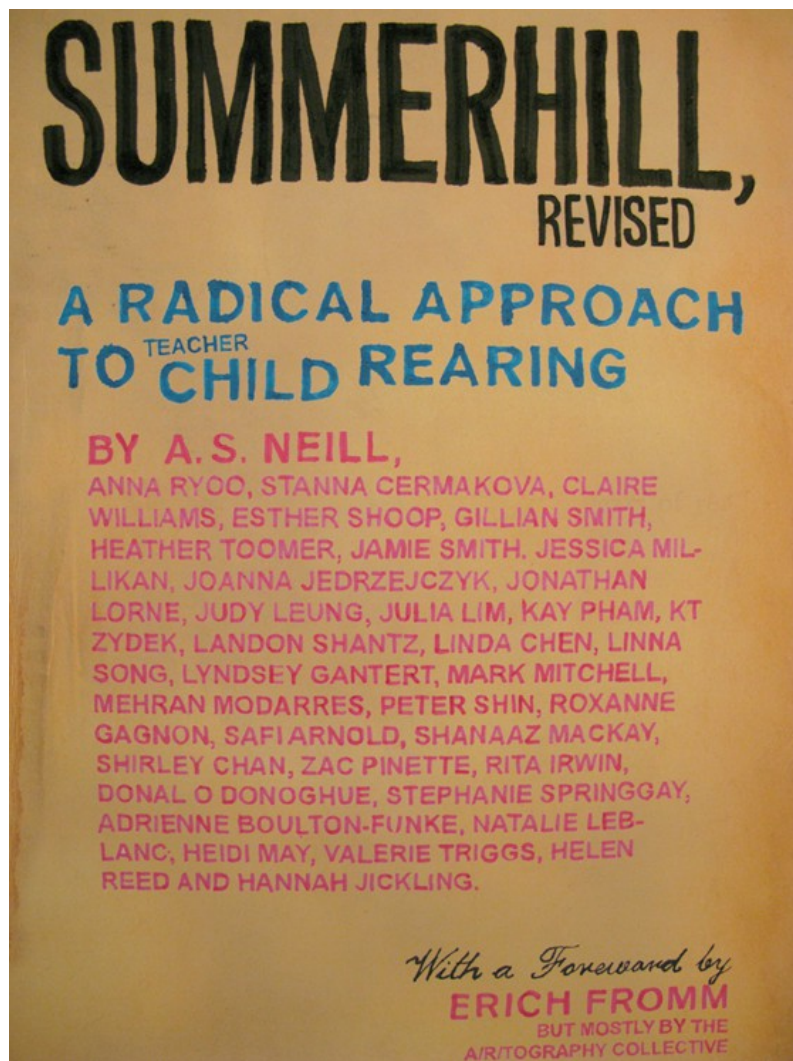


Image 3. Summerhill Revised: A Radical Approach to Teacher Child Rearing. Artist residency product under the direction of Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling (2011). Photo credit: Rita Irwin.

Provoking these questions even more was an invitation to take field trips to the "Summerhill Senior Residence" and the "Rasmussen Book Bindery" followed by an additional field trip to a nearby canyon where participants walked the trails discussing their experiences of pedagogy experienced throughout the day. These field trips enacted a walking pedagogy and a walking methodology that is "a reflexive and experiential process through which understanding, knowing and (academic) knowledge are produced" (Pink, 2009, p. 8; cited in Springgay, 2011a, p. 646). Walking allows researchers and participants access to experiences that are multi-layered, sensory, and affective which help us reach beyond the personal to social understandings. Teacher candidates, artists, researchers, and instructors participated in walking the cartography of a/r/tography. They were not aware of it at the time but they were mapping *becoming-intensity*.



Image 4. Summerhill Field Trip. Artist residency under the direction of Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling (2010). Photo credit: Heidi May.

While the project may be entitled *Becoming Pedagogical*, I see the Summerhill event as a line of becoming-intensity, the capacity “to affect and be affected” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. xvi) within the practice of a/r/tography. Teacher candidates experienced the in-between of two multiplicities of teaching to teach and learning to learn, and through an intensity of stuttering, “a milieu functioning as the conductor of discourse brings together...the whisper, the stutter...or the vibrator and imparts upon words the resonance of the affect under consideration” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 24 quoted in Semetsky, 2006, p. 60). Teacher candidates enacted stuttering between these ways of being and demonstrated how they were “more interested in the surprising intensity of an event than in the familiar serenity of essence” (St. Pierre, 1997b, p. 370), thus, constituting the complexity of becoming pedagogical. Becoming-intensity is about the capacity to affect and be affected through the dynamic movement of events with learning to learn.

Becoming-Event

Leading up to and perhaps complementing the *Becoming Pedagogical* research study was another collaborative a/r/tography project working with immigrant families in a local community. The project entitled *Richgate*⁴ explored immigrant families' experiences in a rapidly changing suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada (Bickel, Springgay, Beer, Irwin, Grauer, Xiong, 2010; Beer, Irwin, Grauer, Xiong, 2010; Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong & Bickel, 2006; Irwin, Bickel, Triggs, Springgay, Beer, Grauer, Xiong & Sameshima, 2009; Triggs & Irwin, 2008; Triggs, Irwin, Beer, Grauer, Springgay & Xiong, 2010; Triggs et. al., 2011). I worked closely with Ruth Beer and Gu Xiong, local artists and fine arts scholars, as well as Kit Grauer and Stephanie Springgay, art educators. Without going into detail about the entire study, I would like to reflect upon one aspect. Family members were invited to guide a/r/tographers on local walks that held significance to them. Often these walks retraced rituals of coming and going in everyday life, of past memories, and future intentions. In many ways, the walks visited memories contemplating what was once important while also considering possibilities and exploring the potential of the place. In mapping these contemplations and imaginings, a relational paradigm was invoked. Listening, viewing, tasting, smelling, and touching became important sensational ways of knowing and learning. Moreover, the walking methodology (see Springgay, 2011) provoked discussions and debates among family members, and later, among a/r/tographers. These dialogical events became critical lines of inquiry where we could discuss new pedagogies of sensation. "Regarding pedagogy as experimentation in thought rather than representation of knowledge as a thing already made creates a profound shift in how we think of pedagogical intent or volition – the will to teach" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 27). The creativity of all of these complicated conversations lies in the creative movement forward that gives rise to things, to the improvisation of being, to the unfolding of becoming (Garoian, 2008, 2010; Hallam & Ingold, 2007). To improvise is to follow the ways of the world, to unfold with the intensity of the movement in each event.

Lines of becoming entangle in *becoming-event*. Deleuze's multiple becomings happen in the middle, the in-between, and views creative thought as affirming life. In this way, thought is about considering possibilities, potentials, and innovation, and it is devoted to inquiry into events that expressively communicate to the subjective and collective. "Event is always an element of becoming, and the becoming is unlimited, similar to the rhizome whose underground sprout does not have a traditional root but a stem, the oldest part of which dies off while simultaneously rejuvenating itself at the tip" (Semetsky, 2006, p. 78).

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Image 5. “The City of Richgate” exhibit and discussion, Chongqing, China (2005).
Photo credit: Unknown.

Some of the ideas present in the *coming to becoming* section of this paper can be found in the metaphor of the rhizome. *Becoming event* does not reside in a single personal encounter: it resides in a multiplicity of events that are social and collective. *Becoming-event* runs alongside *becoming-intensity* as affect resonates, reverberates, echoes across time and space within and beyond the event. What is more, movement creates the potential for a plurality of problems rather than a single solution since a rhizomatic structure allows for any single line to be conceivably connected with many other lines. Life is full of entangled lines of events, intensities, and movements. In doing so, I am asking: what does this art education practice set in motion do?

Becoming-Movement

While the *Becoming Pedagogical* and *Richgate* studies overlapped one another and involved teams of a/r/tographers from the beginning, I pursued my own artmaking through a photographic project I called “Liminal Lights”. This series experimented with the movement of light, exploring the liminality of in-between spaces, allowing the steady movement of my walking to breathe into the movement of the event and the intensity of both (see Rovner, 2002), extending previous artistic projects I pursued through walking (Irwin, 2003, 2006). While many of the photographic images suggest a forest potentially in motion, purposefully blurred to move beyond the rhythmic event of walking, most images become abstractions depicting intense qualities of light and dark, stretching colours and textures beyond their seemingly motionless existence.

In these photographs, I use my camera as if it were a paintbrush as I quicken to understand my surroundings through motion—a motion that metaphorically evokes deep breathing. Ironically, this quickening slows me down by offering me a time and place to linger in the moment of creation, to pay attention to my breathing, to allow my breath to move the image itself (Sameshima & Irwin, 2008, p. 18).

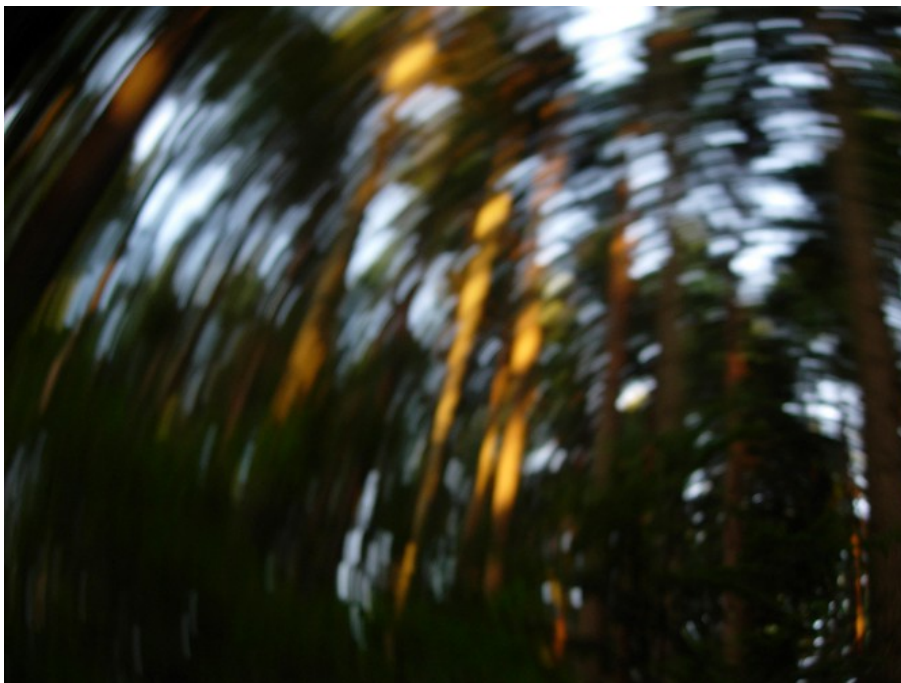


Image 6. Untitled by Rita Irwin (2009).

"Artists have always used the power of light to lure us beyond the shimmer existing on the surface of experience and towards its streaming into an event" (Triggs, 2012, p. 103).

"Through these photographs I explore the breath of the image, the breath of my body creating the image, and the breath of the concept of liminality within/between/through/of the image and myself" (Sameshima & Irwin, 2008, p. 18). My forest walks explored the liminality of the experience. The etymology of liminality is limen or threshold. A threshold is experienced in the midst of movement, being inside and outside, always opening up and moving away from the movement itself. To see movement is to feel the body in relation to potential. Feeling my body in relation to the forest was one liminal space, yet other liminal spaces existed as a result of the coming to becoming studies, as well as the *Becoming Pedagogical* and *Richgate* studies. In the liminal spaces between and among these events, in these studies I was in movement with others--others who were *becoming-intensity* and *becoming-event* alongside me. Rhizomatic connections were being made.

In the threshold of *becoming-movement*, I invited poet Carl Leggo and artist Valerie Triggs to work with me on extending the "Liminal Lights" series. While Carl frequently walks near his home, it is perhaps his writing that locates his movement in the world. He says that like Barbara Kingsolver (2002), "my way of finding a place in the world is to write one" (p. 233). Responding to my photographs, Carl wrote poetry rendering his insights into the images and his own walking experiences of the world. The liminal qualities of his writing allows one to feel the potential for movement, always longing for more, imagining the future, breathing into life itself.

Listening to Light

By *Carl Leggo*

once upon a time I saw light,
counted colors, combed dictionaries
for modifiers, coined countless adjectives

to name light in poems, held in dark memory,
but I knew always the light I saw was

the visible light only, its visibility rendering

invisible the places where light begins,
where it goes, since the whole wild experience
of seeing seems to stop with the firm earth

but now I walk daily the dike that writes a thin
line between Lulu Island and the Fraser River,
and tune my skin to listen

to light's lyrical lilt, sung in sun-washed,
moon-drawn, shadow-scribed lines,
resilient, resonant, measured without end (Leggo, 2007, n.p.)

I invited Valerie Triggs to work into my photographs in whatever way she desired. She chose to attend to the "zone of nonknowledge" (Agamben, 2011, p. 114) or the movement that was already underway. Rather than searching where to begin, she allowed the perception of movement to move her, and found herself collecting underbrush materials such as pine needles, moss and ferns, blending them together to create a kind of painterly material. Using her hands and this painterly mix to make marks on the photographs, she smudged "the materiality of qualities against each other" (Triggs, 2012, p. 116).



Image 7. Untitled by Rita Irwin and Valerie Triggs (2010). Photo credit: Kirsty Robbins

Throughout this process, Triggs was aware of the potential of movement to create anew, to alter perceptions, to see again differently, to change the viscosity of materials to become something else. Neither Leggo nor Triggs tried to exhaust the sense of movement in our connections. Instead, their artistic connections encouraged me to walk again, to inquire again as I was *becoming-movement* in my own work and our collective work. It was then that walking heightened my sensitivity to the aurality of physical spaces. I could hear the cathedral-like height of

the trees, the deep spaces between the trees and the faint movement of trees on a still day. I soon started to experiment with soundscapes to accompany the poetry and images (now co-created with Triggs). While every poem, image, and aural experience was an event for each of us individually and collectively, every viewer and listener would also see movement's movement because every event movement is relationally engaged. Masumi (2008) would say we are "seeing double" (p. 3). "The reality of the abstraction does not replace what is actually there but instead, supplements it" (Triggs. 2012, 114). This is the work of doing art—to continue producing the qualities of perception, regardless of critique, in order to augment our senses with the potential of more. In doing so, I am asking: what does this art education practice set in motion do?

Walking the Cartography of Becoming A/r/tography

"A rhizome, as a map, is to do with experimentation. It does not trace something that came before (again no representation) rather it actively creates the terrain it maps—setting out the coordination points for worlds-in-progress, for subjectivities-to-come" (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 35, italics in original). A map is not a tracing. It is about experimentation: altering, reversing, modifying, among individuals and groups, across time and space. Tracing resists experimentation and stabilizes a perception of terrain. Walking is a process of creating movement in space, a mapping experiment. A walking trajectory does not trace a direction and stabilize it, rather it propels us as sentient and bodied beings to create the intensity of an event. Walking as a research method (see Pink, 2009) is important to the last three a/r/tographic studies shared here. It opened up opportunities for inquiring artistically into the relationships between and among ideas, peoples, cultures, and environments.

While I am stressing the rhizomatic structure of a/r/tography, it needs to be said that the rhizome is not opposite to the root, rather, the rhizome is within the root and the root is within the rhizome. Both exist. There is space for structure, central systems, and territorialisation, yet, there must also be flexibility, decentralization, and deterritorialization. Indeed one exists because of the other and too much of one cements structure or utters chaos. The *coming to becoming* section of this paper metaphorically recognizes the rootedness of our practices: asking direct questions and searching for findings. It also portrays movement: a re-routing toward experimentation and the rhizome. It also begins to demonstrate what an art education practice set in motion does. It attends to the rhizomatic terrain of *becoming-a/r/tography* by attending to *becoming-intensity*, *becoming-event*, and *becoming-movement*.

The entangled studies touched upon in this paper describe liminal spaces where we can pay attention to what an art education practice set in motion does: it attends to *becoming-intensity*, *becoming event*, and *becoming movement*. These lines of flight rhizomatically connect and separate, stuttering utterances as differences are considered, and find similarity in the bodied movements of walking methods. They describe a cartography of becoming a/r/tography metaphorically understood as nomadic inquiry intensely experienced as inseparable from the place or space it occupies, that is, deterritorializing to such an extent that "the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 391). Moreover, because "becoming is always in the present, although the present *per se* is elusive, making becoming all the more difficult and challenging, one does not have to remember and does not have to predict" (Semetsky, 2006, p. 87, italics in original). An intensive capacity to affect and be affected resides in-between these lines of flight opening the way for art and art education to move in and through learning, in the "middle of things, in the tension of conflict and confusion and possibility" (St. Pierre, 1997a, p. 176). Individuation is always mapping onto collective assemblages and becoming is always mapping multiplicity, entangling lines of flight. *Becoming a/r/tography* is made

up of lines of flight, some mapped, some yet to be mapped, carrying us across many thresholds of liminality towards an as yet unforeseeable *becoming-intensity*, *becoming-event*, and *becoming-movement*.

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