

APPRENTICESHIP TO SIGNS IN ART EDUCATION

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This research looks thoughtfully and deeply at the relationship between art education and signs, as defined by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1964/1998). Signs, as articulated by Deleuze (1964/1998), are violent disruptions to our way of understanding the world, causing us to think again and/or re-consider what we once knew (or thought we knew). This study looks generatively at how these kinds of disruptive and disorienting moments might be mined for possibilities in art education and remind us of our own relationality. As a post-qualitative lived inquiry, it asks how might art education be-with apprenticeship to signs and what might art education do-with sign-encounters? Using the theoretical lens of transcendental empiricism and new materialism, this study considers how art educators might hold open the space of sign-encounters for oneself and one's students by turning towards the rhizomatic cut and staying with uncertainty. It is focused on the doing-with, making-with, and thinking-with of art, pedagogy, and philosophy/theory, investigating their deep entanglements in spaces of disruption and ultimately developing frame-works for engaging in this kind of work in the classroom. Drawing from Erin Manning and Brian Massumi's theory of research-creation, this research was experienced in an emergent, layered, and complex way over the last two years, including the construction of this dissertation presented as an assemblage all of its own.

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by

Kate Lena Wurtzel

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to give unending thanks to my advisor and mentor, Dr. Nadine Kalin. I have very few words to stand for the amount of gratitude I carry for your guidance, encouragement, knowledge-sharing, mentorship, and friendship. Thank you for believing in continuously, and allowing me to find my own voice through this process. Your trust that I can do this was the greatest gift you could have given to me.

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To my husband, Jeff Hodges, words fall short for the depth of love and gratitude I feel towards you and our time together, especially this last year. Staying up each night to talk about art, music, philosophy, teaching, life, etc. carried me through some of the hardest times of our lives. This dissertation would not be what it is today had we not traversed this life together.

Last but not least, absolutely none of this would have been possible, if it were not for the love and support of family. To my children, thank you for being the generous, creative, open spirits that you are, reminding me to live life to the fullest. To my parents, Pam and Paul Wurtzel, thank you for always supporting this dream of mine and continuing to see my potential. To my in-laws, Karen and Dan Hodges, and my sisters, Lindsay Wurtzel and Jessica Galloso, for being a tremendous emotional support and tirelessly watching the children so I might make this magic happen. Each one of you made this possible in so many layered, beautiful ways. I am, and will continue to be, forever grateful beyond words.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before we begin, I ask that you take out your surfaces to create on (heavy-weight paper or otherwise), a piece copy paper, the CD, along with your chosen mark-making materials. If you are choosing traditional art-materials, I recommend choosing at least two materials that are water-soluble (watercolors, water-based markers, tempera paint, watercolor pencils, watercolor markers, etc.). If you were not sent a CD and CD player, please be sure to have access to the album *Promises*, a collaboration between Floating Points, Pharaoh Sanders, and the London Symphony Orchestra. Please keep the papers, the CD (or access to the album), and your mark-making materials close to you. As you read onward, you will receive additional information.

Materials Needed

- One piece of copy paper
- Scissors
- A surface to create on. I recommend pieces of heavyweight art paper (size is your preference), but other surfaces are fine.
- Marker(s) or pen(s) for writing words.
- 4 mark-making materials of your choice. These may be traditional art-making materials (preferably 2 of which are water-soluble), or other materials of your choice, such as dirt, mustard, chocolate sauce, etc. I encourage you to use materials that call to you in the moment and ones you could use to make marks on surfaces.
- Access to the album *Promises*, by Floating Points, Pharaoh Sanders, and the London Symphony Orchestra¹
- A dice with 8 or more sides (think Dungeons and Dragons)

¹ Not now, because it will not ‘make-sense’ yet, although I am not entirely sure it makes sense to begin with, but when you are finished reading this dissertation the first time, I invite you to return to this spot and watch this video blog entry by my husband, Jeff Hodges. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lt-Xj_Efko0 This video entry was created almost a year before I finished writing this dissertation and LONG before I decided to use *Promises* as part of this dissertation experience. It is funny how we loop back...sometimes I wonder if this entire journey is really about the deep and unending sensation of love.

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May 8, 2021
Dear Reader,

Before you enter into this work, and establish your own sort of strange loop or pathway through it, I want to invite you to consider a recent sign-encounter you may have experienced. Or perhaps, try to stay with any sign-encounter you may experience along the way. I encourage you to read, think, make, and do, with these sign-encounters in mind. Also, you should probably know the ‘images’ used throughout this text are what I call ‘process photos.’ This does not mean they are necessarily images of my art-making process, but rather images of the process of this dissertation coming together and truly trying to understand the relationship between signs and art education. The ‘images’ you will see throughout are a mix of screenshots or post-it notes of thoughts that were intra-upting my sleep throughout this experience, and process images of this research as the project travelled through different states of becoming. These images were carefully curated and chosen to be placed in specific spots throughout the document. Consequently, what I am offering to you is not necessarily going to be pretty pictures of end products or even process photos that are sequential and make sense. Instead, you will see the messy, layered, goopy, frustrated, emotional, tension-releasing parts, that speak more to the sensation of this research and dissertation writing experience than a representation of the physical manifestation of signs or the words on the page (although admittedly some relate more directly to the words on the page than others). Folded corners, drippy hot glue guns, sketched out diagrams, these are the quiet, funky, small, details that kept the research questions suspended for me and released me from the pressure of having to assign meaning so quickly. They slowed me down, gave me permission to notice. So, while you may encounter an image of a finished product at some point throughout the document, know that the bulk of these images will not be a show or exhibition of my work, nor will they be unpacked with explanations. They are

intentionally placed, and labeled un-titled, to serve as intra-uptions (a term explained later) for you dear reader, serving as a way for me to share my research-journey with you and to break up the reading experience. Because, truly, in the end it is not about my finished work, but rather about getting a sense of what this experience was like overall and my encouragement of you to go on your own journey of apprenticeship to signs with art education. Most of all, I hope you enjoy the experience.

With care,

Kate

DEDICATION: TO THE OPOSSUM

March, 2018

I stood on the sidewalk and looked at your body.
I saw your mouth agape and blood underneath your head.
I couldn't quite see the place of impact, but the blood on the street was enough to let me know
you had passed, and probably not too long before I arrived.
I am sorry.
I stood in front of you for a moment unable to move.
I became acutely aware of your presence, and the absence of your presence that was already
bringing about something new.
You were starting to decay, to shift, to change, to become something else.
Together, we were becoming something that would continue manifesting.
You, me, the road, the air, the blood, the gravel, your fur, your mouth, your teeth, your small
pink fleshy fingers, the grass, the time of day, the sunshine, the heat, the smells of Sulphur
dioxides being released into the air—an endless number of elements that felt sensationally
heightened, and ontologically flattened in one swooping moment.
I ran home to get my phone. By the time I returned your carcass was already gone.
All that was left was the blood.
I sat with your blood for a while before taking one photo and leaving.

April 21, 2021

Dear Reader,

I've looped back to the beginning myself (you may end up doing this too). In my own looping back, I've realized this dissertation has become my work of art. Meaning, it is the art I am continuously working on, not only in my actions but in the form it takes on the page. I keep coming back to it again and again as the ideas continue to mold and shape through the construction of this document. Even now, I continue to engage in the conceptualizing of art and theory as a co-constituted making practice as this dissertation takes shape. Consequently, this document is meant to be layered, transversal, complex, not as a means to withhold knowledge from you, dear reader, but because that is what the experience of life, research, art-making, and apprenticeship to signs is like. It is never one thing, never static, never finished. I use the term work of art, and not artwork, specifically to reference Barbara Bolt's (2004) distinction between artwork, as a finished product, and a work of art, here the term work used a verb that takes on "its own momentum, its own rhythm, its own intensity" (p. 1). This document, what you are about to read, is the pause, but I don't think it is the end. It is not a finished product in that the ideas will continue forward, the work will continue on, in ways I cannot predict. I did not anticipate viewing this dissertation in this way, but this process has revealed many new ways of thinking for me. I only hope that the assemblage pieces do not get lost, the points do not land on fixed surface from which they are discarded, and that you consider allowing these concepts to permeate your thinking, your making, and possibly your doing (or un-doing). So, without further delay...I give all of it to you, on the page.

moments like this, where we encounter something so significant that it disrupts everyday actions and norms, also creates an opportunity to re-think and re-consider. These moments might be large, as in global, or they might be smaller, more individualistic. Regardless of the size, they are entanglements with a force that cuts deeply, and that force is what the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze identifies as signs. These signs, I believe, have a place in the discourse of art education as a way of thinking with and through practice as we turn towards uncertainty, towards the space of the gash for ourselves and our students. When we don't shy away from the cuts, when we don't deny the ruptures, but rather take them up through committed, deep work, new possibilities present themselves. Through this deeper work, the impact, the sensation, the *affect*, of the sign encounter stays active, and enables us to traverse spaces that expand and contract. We move along lines of tension and release, of questions and answers, of knowns and unknowns, working directly with the fear and anxiety that comes from being in and with the cut of the sign. I am not going to lie, dear reader, the work is rigorous and uncomfortable at times; it might undo you, as it did me many times. Yet, after subjecting myself to the process of apprenticeship to signs for nearly the last two years, I am comfortable saying that the strike of the sign can also lead you to unanticipated places.

Specifically, I have come to understand apprenticeship to signs as actively working to stay in the space of the sign-encounter while remaining open to whatever emerges. I use the descriptor "actively" here, because I believe it takes conscious resistance to the natural desire to close things down, to find answers, to orient ourselves as quickly as possible. This is done as a means to avoid discomfort and uncertainty. Yet, if we can deny the desire to assign an answer or meaning to a sign immediately, new possibilities open up. When thinking about this concept in relation to art education, this means working in the space of the sign-encounter and seeking to

stay in the space as it expands and contracts, or leads to new signs. This, I believe, has the potential for opening up new ways of teaching and learning in the art room, so that as art educators, we might learn how to be in our own space of uncertainty and hold the same for our students.

Over the last two years, I have tried to imagine what if signs and art education became engaged in a sort of dance, in responsive movement with one another through all states of alignment and misalignment. What if art educators stayed with the movement of signs to look deeply at how art education might *be-with* apprenticeship to signs and what art education might *do-with* sign encounters? This research looks thoughtfully and generatively at how signs might orient one's teaching and making practices towards spaces of unknown, so that when we experience sign-encounters, whether they are global like the pandemic or smaller (yet significant) signs, we are not only led by what we can see, the visible, but also by the forces we cannot see, the invisible. Consequently, working with these forces—recognizing how we sense, feel, experience them through sign encounters—is an integral part of this research. Yet even beyond that, is the question of how do we keep those forces sustained and circulating in the space of art teaching and art making in a way that does not lead to complete chaos or madness. How might we burrow into the experience of a sign-encounter through art making and keep the sign active and alive? What are the conditions needed to hold open the cut of sign encounters for ourselves and our students, so we might turn towards the unknown, willingly, consciously, openly, and possibly even with creative wonder? In order to discuss these questions with you, however, I must first expand a bit on signs as they are expressed by Deleuze (1972/2000) and used in this dissertation.

When I use the term sign, I am referring to those events or moments that slice through

everyday actions, gestures, and movements, thwarting you off a path or perhaps revealing a path that was already present but unseen. The strike of the sign presents sensations that are deeply unsettling and cause one to think again. According to Deleuze (1972/2000), they are violent encounters that force us to consider the meaning of the sign and the complexities of the world. Apprenticing oneself to the sign, therefore, means intentionally submitting to the disruption of the sign encounter; it is the willingness to stay with the sensation of the sign to the degree that it decenters the self and enables one to reconsider relationality. These encounters can happen at any point in time and with any material (human and non-human alike). You might experience a sign encounter in the middle of your teaching, or your students might experience one in the middle of art-making. Through this research, I have come to realize that apprenticeship means committing to those moments and actively pursuing them in a way that de-centers the self.

The disorienting nature of the sign often highlights connections not visible through our everyday actions. *In other words, the disruptive nature of the sign provides us with an opportunity to rethink how we are in relation with all things, all matter, and gives space for considering possibilities that might seem unimaginable otherwise.* We have all experienced some form of these signs; they are forces that cause a caesura, a break in time and perception that creates a before and after, such as before the pandemic and after the pandemic. When placed in a positive light, they are often identified as aha moments, signs from above, or lightning strikes. In other words, signs are the experiences that stick in your mind and extend an outstretched hand enticing you to follow, to commit, to dig into them. These signs, as discussed by Deleuze (1972/2000, 1968/1994), are events that disrupt your movement and pull you outside of your own norms, so that space is created to think critically about your position and relationship with the world. *As such, this dissertation really is about with-ness, and while an encounter with a sign*

might appear at first to be an isolated event, it enables us to rethink our own with-ness in the world. The sign not only forces us to pause, as a result of the disruption, but also presents an opportunity to re-consider a more lateral connectivity between all things, all matter. This, I believe, is a key component of the sign, but only something Deleuze (1972/2000) hints at in his discussion of signs in relation to the writings of Marcel Proust. Yet, after conducting this research for nearly two years and trying to apprentice myself to signs continuously, I have come to understand this entangled connection between signs and the de-centralization of the self, more intimately.

The Rhizome

Decentering the self is directly related to the idea of the rhizome originally put forth by Deleuze and the French psychoanalyst Felix Guattari. They, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) identify this more lateral formation of connection as a *rhizome* or *rhizomatic*. The rhizome is the tubular root system of a weed that continues to spread outward with no central point or core and regenerates when it is cut. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argue that “any point of the rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (p. 7). We are rhizomatic. This computer is rhizomatic. The Coronavirus is rhizomatic. The signs I encountered and apprenticed myself to along the way, are rhizomatic. In other words, all material and matter are rhizomatic—they are *intra-connected*, existing in relation to one another and not as independent pieces with pre-existing relations. Here I use the term *intra* (over inter) as New Materialist Karen Barad (2003) used it to describe intra-action—the notion that matter is an active agent in the ongoing becoming of the world and not acting upon it as separate entities (p. 815). The term *intra* reminds us that reality is not separate from relations.

The rhizome, as a lateral formation, has been discussed in the discipline of art education

for some time now, but the way I am addressing it is a little different. Similar to other educators and specifically art educators (i.e., Boulton-Funke, 2015; Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, & Brickel, 2006; Strom & Martin, 2017; Wallin 2010), I am interested in the rhizome as a de-centralized form with capacity to move thought laterally across new planes and new territories. The difference, however, is that I am specifically focused on the rhizome as it relates to the strike of the sign. In other words, I believe the sign not only cuts the rhizome deeply, but embedded within that cut, within that jolt from everyday norms, is the reminder of our intra-connections—it highlights our horizontal (rather than vertical) relations and opens space to rethink connectivity. So that when we find ourselves engaging in those moments where we can feel the force of the disruption, the *affect* of a sign encounter, we also sense our own connections differently. We become more heightened to the existence of others and our non-fixed position within and amongst it all. *The sign enables us to sense our own de-centered existence just briefly by jolting us from what was once believed to be true and understood, or as Deleuze (1968/1994) might say jolting us from common or good sense.* The disruption reminds us of our rhizomatic with-ness. And while Deleuze (1968/1994) does not explicitly write about the connection between the rhizome and the sign, and only infers it when talking about learning and relations in *Difference and Repetition*, I believe reminding us of our more lateral relational existence through the affect of the sign encounter is a required characteristic.

Affect

I used the term affect above to point to sensations that are pre-language and pre-thought. Affect is shown to us in those moments when one has a bodily reaction that is not controlled by thought or language, but rather experienced in relation to other bodies transitioning through other states of becoming (Rousell, 2019). We do not, and cannot, know affect as a thing, per say, but

we can know it as a thing sensed and experienced. We can feel the evidence of affect, even though we cannot know it beyond our reactions to it. Brian Massumi (1995), one of the pioneers of affect studies, explains how affects are often understood as *intensities* and while we cannot know affect in recognizable forms of knowledge, nor always use discursive practices to name affect, we can know the effects of affect. As Massumi (1995) writes, it is “analyzable in effect, as effect” (p. 107, n. 2). Moments such as when you get goosebumps from a movie, feel a deep connection to a painting, or are moved in a bodily way by a piece of music—that is affect acting upon and within you. Affect, comes from the Latin word *afficere*, meaning to have something done to one (Frykman & Frykman, 2016). It is the concept that we have the ability for affect and to be affected upon.



(un-titled)



(un-titled)

Affect has the potential to highlight connections that are not necessarily visible and relationality that is not always tangible—it can remind us of how all things, all materials and matter, are intra-connected, existing not in a hierarchical structure but in a rhizomatic way. Therefore, when thinking about affect in relation to the sign, the strike of the sign produces an affect that is part of the encounter one experiences, indifferent to whether one perceives the sign as positive or negative. However, that affect can fade in the same way that the significance of a sign might fade if the corresponding work is not done. When the sign strikes, we feel the affect of the sign on our bodies but are left with limited discursive practices to try and understand, unravel, untangle the sensation experienced.

Often, and I believe mistakenly, affect is reduced to descriptive emotions or something to be found or sensed in representational images, but this is only a partial picture, a partial

interpretation. Just like describing the event of a sign encounter can feel incomplete, as if the narrative, words, or representational images do not quite touch upon the depths of such an encounter, we are left unable to express a full account of the experience to others and maybe even to ourselves. Consequently, to stay in the strike of the sign, to be-with the affect of the sign encounter in an open and malleable way, we have to take a performative and layered approach to the work. It is not a reduction of the experience into words or representative images. Instead, it is an expansion! It is performative, shifting us from a narrative space to one of layered “practices/doings/actions” (Barad, 2003, p. 802). For me, and for the purposes of this study, I identify these performative practices as thinking-with, doing-with, making-with, and writing-with. As new materialist Karen Barad (2003) explains, “performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve” (p. 802). And while I will go into the problem of representation and ontology a bit later in this document, I want to be clear that for this study, staying with the strike of the sign, and the affect of the sign encounter, means figuring out how to keep the force or vibration of sign encounters open longer through performative practices that encourage the rethinking of with-ness. Apprenticeship to signs is not just about burrowing in through concept investigation, but it is a commitment to engage in performative and materialist practices that resist ontological divisions and suspend any epistemological closure of the sign encounter through immediate representation or interpretation of the experience. This does not mean that we will never land somewhere, never loop back to representation in some form, but that we need to slow down the process of regeneration by resisting the urge to quickly lean on representation, by being in a space of openness and vulnerability, and by engaging in, with, and through layered work.

The Work

This research looks closely at what it is like to shift pedagogically towards these riveting, moving moments that create a fissure from our everyday reality and in turn emphasize our relation-with the world (and all the materials that constitute it), rather than our domination over it. To do this however, we have to consider ways in which to decenter the self and engage in a new kind of agency—a sort of shared post-Cartesian agency that admits to and aligns with another kind of self, one that is permeated with difference rather than driven by autonomy. This is challenging, and it is difficult to execute. There must be a commitment to the sign, not only in emotion, but also in action—apprenticeship to signs means doing the work of orienting towards spaces of uncertainty and disruption, instead of moving away from them. Simply acknowledging these moments as signs is not enough. It requires work to sustain a healthy engagement with them that is neither too far nor too close. I use the word healthy here intentionally. While the writing of Deleuze (1968/1994), and the combined writing of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), is often perceived as promoting madness and the infinite chaotic states of things, their philosophical arguments actually support balancing the impossible with the possible, the unknowable with the knowable, the transcendental with the empirical. As Deleuze (1968/1994) states, “signs are deadly when they are lost in the distance, but also when they strike us full force” (p. 23). In other words, there has to be a middle space—a space between the jarring and disruptive strike of a sign and the evaporation of its impact on one’s way of knowing and being. So that when we have those moments that create a cut or a crack, we stay suspended somewhere in the middle, like balancing on uneven legs on a chair, not simply seeking end points or immediate equilibrium. Later, this balancing and working in the middle is what I refer to as *the muddle* (or *muddle-ing*) and *the wobble*. These terms are about preparing and encouraging

oneself to stay in the center, to keep entering into and expanding from those pockets of existence where you do not have the answer or know the path but are prepared to do the work.

The work to which I am referring, is the work of keeping the sign encounter suspended for investigation and making a commitment to pursue it, traveling with any unexpected twists and turns that appear. This is apprenticeship. Typically, apprenticeship is associated with practices dating back to the Medieval ages in Britain with the rise of craft guilds (Wilson, 1965). This type of apprenticeship is understood to be a binding agreement between master and servant (apprentice). The agreement details how the master would provide for the apprentice's needs, including the knowledge gained, in exchange for labor in particular trades. The relationship between master and apprentice continued anywhere from 2 to 7 years until the apprentice eventually went through a process to become his own master and further the cycle (Wilson, 1965). More modern interpretations of this system are often associated with vocational education or vocational training, which can begin as early as secondary school in some places (Ailey & Rainbird, 1999; Fjellstrom & Kristmansson, 2019). For Deleuze (1972/2000) apprenticeship is still tied to learning (*apprendre* meaning to learn in French) but not in a way that means acquiring a skill or trade (Bogue, 2004).

The way Deleuze uses the term apprenticeship, and how I use it in this dissertation, means more than committing for a given period of time. *Rather, apprenticeship as it is used here is a matter of immersing oneself into one's own learning and working to stay in the space of affect and relationality that is not necessarily visible, but experienced and felt from the strike of the sign.* Or, as he (Deleuze, 1972/2000) explains, apprenticeship is the work of overcoming certain "stock notions" (p. 27). These stock notions are further identified as mistakenly placing or perceiving the sign to be in the object, when in actuality the sign itself is immaterial. He

(Deleuze, 1972/2000) equates signs with hieroglyphics, mysteriously pointing to what is within the strike of the sign, but also to something else that does not lie in the tangible and the conclusive. In this way, the sign could be considered im-material, vacillating on the cusp between pure difference (the immaterial) and the material world. And if this is the case, then to learn, to apprentice oneself to the sign, does not mean acquiring fixed knowledge through traditional modes and materials of teaching or learning. Rather, it is to seek out new ways of perceiving and understand the world through the strike of the sign. As Deleuze (1972/2000) explains, it is easy to “fall back into the trap of the object” and give in to object-sign associations (p. 38). This is a desire—there is an understandable want to assign meaning and placement to the sign so we might return to a space of certainties and answers, instead of staying with the questions and allowing ourselves to feel the discomfort or disorientation. I stand firm in this belief, that to be in the space of the sign, we must resist the desire to seek closed interpretation and instead engage in a sort of unfolding and re-folding of the strike as it relates to the self and the world at large. This is where art, specifically art teaching and art making, come into play.

Art and Transcendental Empiricism

Under Deleuze’s (1968/1994) philosophy, *transcendental empiricism*, there are two planes that exist, the virtual or transcendental and the actual or empirical. The actual is the one we can see, hear, taste, touch, etc. The virtual however, is where all possibilities already exist in uncontracted form and, generally, it is not something to which we have access. These two planes are in a relationship with one another; they are not separate entities but rather immanent to each other. Deleuze (1985/1989) expresses their inseparability as, “there is no virtual which does not become actual in relation to the actual, the latter becoming virtual through the same relation” (p. 69). In regards to signs, the sign is situated between these two planes. It is form and formless at

the same time, having a physicality to it but also pointing to something that is beyond the physical.



(un-titled)

While I go deeper into the philosophy in later chapters, the thing to note here is that art, like signs, holds a special position within these two planes. Art, and I would argue art making, have the potential to give us a peek into the virtual, the transcendental. With art and art making we are repeatedly striving to reach an essence, occasionally feeling or sensing it briefly. Again, and again, we return to art searching for something, while not knowing what that something is. This is the work of turning towards unknown spaces. *Whether viewing or making, art has the potential to move us beyond the confines of the actual and enables us to briefly touch the transcendental.* In other words, engaging with art can bring forth sensations and affects that try to capture something outside of the empirical. As Deleuze (2002) writes, “In art, and in painting

as in music, it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces” (p. 48). I interpret this statement to mean art and art making have the potential to sustain the immaterial side of the sign, engaging in the search for an essence that we don’t experience in our everyday life. Like signs, though, this can be lost to us if we do not work to keep the space of the sign, and the space of art-making in dialogue with one another, on the same compositional plane from which to work. To do this, I believe, we have to become sensitive to encounters `them for ourselves and our students.

Becoming sensitive to signs, allows us to work within the affect of the sign-encounter and resist falling back on the empirical. Deleuze (1972/2000) explains how “we miss our finest encounters” with signs, if we choose “the facility of recognition” over the investigation of whatever might be radiating from the impact of the sign (p. 27). We must resist assigning meaning to the sign encounter that is grounded primarily in that which we understand (our sense-making), that which we believe to be true or known (epistemology), that which we understand to be in existence (ontology), that what we know or think we know (our thought), and that which represents thought (representational images). To resist this desire, is to hold space for oneself—it is to be in the space of the sign-encounter in a curious and open way so that we may experience that which is beyond the known, the transcendental. By resisting what Deleuze (1968/1994) calls the *fatality of education*, where reproduction, interpretation, and sense-making preclude us from moving past the conceivable, we are working to stay in the strike of the sign, in the space of the cut, and not assign meaning so quickly.

In thinking about this in relation to the rhizome and intra-connections, the newly opened space created by the strike of the sign, presents a multitude of possibilities; it offers numerous, if not even infinite, ways in which the rhizome might regenerate. Yet, when you assign meaning to

the encounter, when you orient yourself as a way of avoiding uncertainty, through what Deleuze (1972/2000) calls “the facilities of recognition,” the range of possibilities that were once available to you narrow in that moment (p. 27). And if this is the case, if apprenticeship to signs inherently holds the potential to open up space through the resistance of recognition, then the art teacher is faced with an enormous opportunity and possibly even a responsibility (the verdict is still out on that one). I am including myself in this group, when I say *we* are presented with a unique chance to keep the sign operative not only for ourselves but for students as well! This, I believe, presents a tremendous occasion to re-image pedagogical possibilities in art education through the strike of the sign. Naturally then, the question becomes how might one keep the sign operative for oneself and for one’s students. By going through this process myself, I have realized there is no one right way to answer this question. Instead, in the following pages, I would like to suggest *frame-works* for re-considering art education as it relates to apprenticeship to signs.

Staying with the rhizome formation as a way of thinking through apprenticeship to signs, means regeneration of the rhizome occurs, but that regeneration is done in a way that resists a quick epistemic re-orientation for the sake of easing discomfort and finding stability. If instead, that resistance can become a generative and creative space, then whatever emerges is the result of endless possibility. This emergence of any number of possibilities is key. It is the idea that when we are faced with a moment that does not fit neatly within our understanding of the world, that we do not dismiss the experience, but rather keep our understanding of the experience open for any number of possibilities.

Consequently, and what I am proposing to you dear reader, is that we re-think how to keep the sign in circulation in art education, and how we might keep it open and operative for

ourselves and our students. What if, rather than trying to figure out the meaning of a sign, identifying a reason for its strike, we instead turn towards the cut. We turn towards the uncertainty and vulnerability created by this newly sliced open space. If we can do that, then I believe there is a chance to keep the affect of the sign, and the force of the sign, alive and generative in a sort of visceral way. Because if, at the end of the day, the sign's purpose is to create disruption that can be experienced, felt, witnessed, embodied, etc., then why not investigate that cut in a way that might not always be pleasant, and pain-free, but perhaps worthwhile.

Placed within the context of art education, this presents an opportunity for rethinking how we teach and where we might allow ourselves to be, not only carried by the sign-encounter, but conjoined with it, like a swimmer in the sea. In Deleuze's (1968/1994) seminal text *Difference and Repetition*, he uses the swimmer and the sea to suggest that learning is to be within the points of the wave, to find our rhythm and existence with it. Pedagogically this translates to, those moments where you are moved deeply. Perhaps it is from the light hitting a piece of trash on your classroom floor, or the way a paint spill holds the potential for diverting your curriculum. Instead of dismissing those moments, apprenticeship is the work of recognizing them and asking yourself to dig into them, keeping the sign-encounter open and not yet assigning meaning to the experience. This is not easy work. It is a deceptively simple idea theoretically, but it is difficult work to execute in practice. The work requires setting aside one's own agenda and following the agenda of the sign, which is by its very nature, and by the basic tenants of Deleuze's philosophy, on shifting ground.

This dissertation has many layers of inquiry, but at the foundation is the relationship between art education and apprenticeship to signs, asking how and where these two fold into one

another and might open space for new possibilities. More specifically, this dissertation asks what is the labor of keeping signs open, dynamic, and leading to whatever is next, whatever might emerge from the work. This is what I mean by keeping the sign generative—keeping it in circulation, alive, and serving the function of the sign itself. This function being, to work “violence” upon us and “forces us to think and to seek the truth” (Deleuze, 1972/2000, p. 16). In this case, violence being a disruption, a break, a slice, something that jars us from our current state of awareness and opens up space for thinking, doing, teaching, and making, differently. If this moment can be taken up, pursued, and followed in a committed manner, then possibilities and further openings (sign-related or not) will emerge. As such, the foundational question becomes, how do we keep this newly formed space open in, with, and through the teaching of art education so that we might burrow in and dig deeper, apprenticing ourselves to the sign encounter and to the affect experienced by the sign while resisting immediate regeneration? Regeneration will occur, as this is the natural course of things, but to stay in the cut means to resist or intentionally slow down the speed of regeneration, and grow laterally in new ways. Taking up the work encourages us and our students to regenerate not in the same spot prior to the sign encounter, but slowly and eventually in a place of new connectivity and lateral growth.

By intentionally turning towards the sign encounter, we are attempting to unhinge ourselves from traditional modes of thinking and doing, while being an willing participant in our own becoming. Becoming, in this context, meaning one exists in an unfixed state, never quite landing on one point or another. This form of becoming is part-of, and maybe even guided-by, the sign encounter. To do this, however, we have to give ourselves over to the sign and follow what Deleuze (1972/2000) calls lines of apprenticeship (p. 36). These are unfolding lines to be followed with voracity, to be taken up in a way that works with and through all that emerges,

including disappointment that is almost always a guarantee at some point in the process. I cannot tell you how to do this exactly, how to take up Deleuze's (1968/1994) words that, "(t)o learn is indeed to constitute this space of an encounter with signs," and enact or embody this in the art room (p. 23). However, I can offer you a structure and logic from which to work within.

The Frame-Works

As a result of this research, and the research process, I have identified four overarching frame-works for holding space in teaching and learning in art education. Each of these frame-works address a specific question related to the primary goal of working in and from the space of the sign-encounter. Additionally, I have provided further breakdowns for you within each frame-work in an attempt to answer the question of how. How might one apprentice themselves to signs in the classroom and enable students to do the same? The answers are not necessarily prescriptive, with step-by-step instructions, but they do provide you with slightly more tangible points to fall back on or pull forth, depending upon the situation.

These four, overarching frame-works overlap and intersect in many, many, ways, possibly even an infinite number of ways. You can find connections between them all. However, I have chosen to draw distinctions between them so that this dissertation becomes something recognizable, something usable for the classroom educator. Essentially, the frame-works are my attempt to unpack my own sign-encounters in a way that does not simply provide a narrative, but offer up a structure, and possibly a logic, for reconceptualizing with-and-through potential sign-encounters in your daily living, your teaching, your art-making practice, and your students' art making practice. I have intentionally provided a somewhat recognizable structure, with opportunities for first-hand engagement, so that you might have an experience towards understanding how apprenticeship to signs could work for art education. Please know, however,

that these are not hard lines of delineation. They are blurry lines at best. By not providing a direct narrative to you, I am also challenging myself to keep my own interpretation of the research malleable, while considering how I might structure an experience that holds space for you and your intra-action with this document. This is not a how-to or a guidebook. Rather, these frame-works serve more as conceptual structures. They are as much about framing, used here to mean a narrowing in or drawing attention to, as they are about the *work of the frame*.

In the art world, a frame serves to delineate and create a boundary for a particular space that typically contains some sort of image. The frame helps us narrow inward, bringing our attention to a defined area and creating tension between what is encapsulated with-in and what is left with-out, outside the frame. They point to both what is inside the frame, as well as what is outside the frame. And while I believe this is important when thinking about the framing of an image, argument, theoretical position, etc., it also limits possibilities within a constructed delineation of space and presents specific ways of orienting. Instead, the frame-works I am referring to are not solely about highlighting that which is in the frame, but rather the work of the frame. By the work of the frame, I mean the work of holding dynamic space of the sign-encounter open and expanded for yourself and your students, without falling into complete chaos. As philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz (2008/2020) explains, “(t)he frame is what establishes territory out of chaos that is the earth. The frame is thus the first construction, the corners, of the plane of composition” (p. 11). In this dissertation I am giving the frame-works to you, but in a way that asks both of us, you and me dear reader, to consider what is the work of establishing this territory out of chaos? How might we establish the corners and plane of composition without choking out the not-yet-conceived of possibilities? How might these frame-works suspend the strike of the sign, enabling us to prolong regeneration by being-with the

affect, the sensation, the relationality experienced from a sign-encounter? How does the framework itself resist becoming fixed, so that it too is in relation to dynamic fluctuations? These questions continue to swirl in my mind and fueled my passion and commitment to the work.

If you need a visualization, picture an open framework of a house that is not yet filled in with walls, insulation, etc. While the framework delineates space of inside/outside, that delineation is porous. The open frame is in constant relation to the division it creates by its very existence. It has its own degree of with-ness that changes as things change around it, inside it, outside it, and somewhere in between. This is not far from how Deleuze (1986) talks about frames in relation to cinematography, but for now I will set that discussion aside. For the purpose of this dissertation, the main point to carry with you is that the framework itself is in relation and is not fixed; it too is in a constant state of becoming. So that while I do offer up these structures as possible ways of holding space in pedagogical practice, I do not see them as fixed, absolute, or unchanging. They are meant to be ways of holding space for you and your students so that signs might be experienced, felt, prolonged, stretched, moved in multiple directions, felt from with-in, until something emerges. This is the work of the frame; it supports you in your own path of apprenticeship to signs and your ability to enable your students do the same in a malleable, dynamic, and non-fixed manner. The structure moves as you move. In some ways, you become the frame and the frame becomes you. The two are entangled in a rhizomatic dance, constantly shifting in relation and in response to each other.

The Structure

I consider this dissertation to be *assemblage* with *emergent properties*—it contains separate parts, that I have designed to stand alone and work together. The parts make up a whole, but they are not dependent upon the wholeness of the parts. In the words of Delanda (2016)

“(a)ssemblages are always composed of heterogeneous components,” and while it could be argued that the parts of the dissertation, the frame-works, are homogenous, the concept of assemblage also acknowledges the smaller, more heterogenous parts (p. 20). Delanda (2016) provides the example of a community. A community is made up of people, but it is also more than people—it is the artifacts, the buildings, sources of food, etc. This does not mean that there is no totality, but that the totality of the parts do not make a homogeneous whole. There is unity of parts, but not an assumed unification in what I have attempted to create here. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2000) talk about the literary work of Proust and what they call the literary-machine, in a way that parallels Delanda’s (2016) assemblage theory. They (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/2000) state,

We believe only in totalities that are peripheral. And if we discover such a totality alongside various separate parts it is a whole of these particular parts but does not totalize them; it is a unity of all those particular parts but does not unify them; rather it is added to them as a new part fabricated separately. (p. 42)

The parts interact, like magnetic pieces pulling together and wanting to form a homogenous whole, but they also have the potential to be disrupted, *detrterritorialized* from themselves, from that which is trying to form. This is one of the reasons I do not unpack all images included in the text, screenshot images of text written months prior, the memories described in footnotes, the moments depicted and the cracks running off into the margins for you dear reader. The reduction of the parts to homogenous explanations, especially ones from my limited perspective, nullifies difference and draws hard line distinctions between you/me, between subject/object, between event/interpretation, between sign/meaning. Which, to be completely transparent, is the opposite of my intentions with this entire research.

Instead, I focus on the emergent properties of this dissertation. The making of the dissertation was, and continues to be, emergent. There was very little that was pre-determined

over the course of the study and any time I attempted to pre-determine something in relation to the study, my efforts were thwarted and I returned to a state of unknown. Delanda (2016) identifies emergent properties as “the properties of a whole caused by the interactions between its parts” (p. 9). This research, and the construction of this dissertation, was incredibly emergent; it was the continuous coming together and breaking apart of jagged pieces. As the whole was emerging in its own way, the pieces kept shifting around. Similarly, I have spent a great deal of time thinking about how you might engage with this work with hopes of offering you an emergent experience of your own. One where you will have an opportunity to experience the parts (and the whole) in your own way, with loosely structured prompts for engagement presented throughout. As such, please think of this dissertation as having a frame-work for engagement in a way that is controlled by me as little as possible. While my initial desire was to share my journey of sign apprenticeship with you, and unpack each encounter per chapter, I recognize that writing my story in a linear fashion is problematic because we are not linear. Instead, we are relational—we exist relationally. We expand and contract. We move in ways that are connected with the world in which we live and retelling my story to you only re-inscribes a linearity that reinforces a human-centered approach over a rhizomatic one.

By me presenting a singular narrative with my interpretations of the sign-encounters, I am doing the opposite of the words on this page. I am providing a form of representation and interpretation that closes down the space of inquiry instead of suspending it as I have called for above. Additionally, a more linear unpacking of my sign-encounter is directly in opposition to the underlying tenants of transcendental empiricism, which positions all possibilities already existing (more on this to come). For this reason, I do not feel comfortable taking you on a long narrative recounting my own experiences with signs over the last two years, nor will I

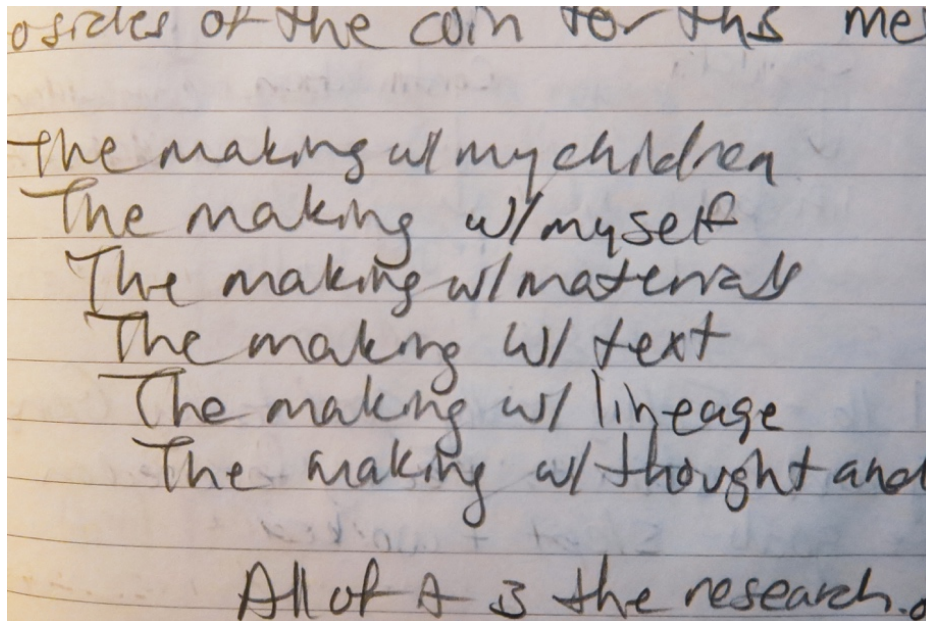
completely unpack each one for you, although, some select sign-encounters will be addressed within the context of each frame-work. Consequently, I am offering a different kind of experience for your consideration. An experience that hopefully will reveal my attempt to not only decenter your reading of the work, but also decenter myself through the writing process. I have chosen this format as an attempt to reduce my own sense of control, to disrupt the traditional reading structure, and to recognize how my becoming is always with others, as a co-constitution.

To make this happen, I have developed a bit of a game, or rather an alternative way of engaging with the text that requires some commitment to a bit of risk on your part. Should you choose this alternative route, you will be given options that will be directed in part by chance and some by constraint—two themes identified by Deleuze (1972/2000) when talking about Proust’s work and the strike of signs. He (Deleuze, 1972/2000) explains how the encounter with a sign is the chance component, but the search for what that sign means, the deciphering of the sign, is the constraint. In regard to this dissertation, I am using these two elements, chance and constraint, to give you a personal experience with the work. As a result, you have options available to you that are designed to disrupt your reading of (and my writing of) the more formal, traditional format should you choose to commit to this alternative way of engaging.¹


The first option is to read this dissertation through as normal. The second option is for you to create your own path using the paper fortune teller you presumably made moments ago (If you have not created one and wish to do so, please see footnote number three and the lesson plan at the back of the dissertation). However, before you continue, you should know that the

¹At this point, if you are choosing to pursue this alternative route, please turn to the back of this dissertation and follow the lesson plan instructions. Once completed, please return to the exact spot you left off at in the main body of the text. Feel free to mark your spot, if that helps.

footnotes are non-traditional, as well as the paper fortune teller. The footnotes do not contain extended source information or descriptions. Instead, they, like the main body of the text, make up an assemblage of vignettes that are intentionally not unpacked with loosely guided tasks or considerations for you to engage in.



(untitled)

So, here is how this all works. Should you choose the fortune teller path, please use your fortune teller to guide you through the order of the sections (chance). If you have not made a fortune teller at this point, and you wish to take the less predictable path through the text, please turn to the back of this dissertation and follow the lesson plan on how to make a fortune teller. At the beginning of each main section of the dissertation, including the four frameworks, you will come across this shape  with some instructions. When you encounter this shape please follow the instructions written beneath it. At the end of each main section, you will encounter the same shape but with different color filled in. When you encounter the other diamond shape, one that is not the same color blue, please return to your fortune teller, play it as you would a traditional fortune teller, and determine where you will go next. But, wait there is more! You

should have received a few items in the mail. If you are reading this and did not receive items in the mail, hopefully you were able to gather the materials listed on page iv. You will need these materials, including the album *Promises* and listening access, as we move along. Please keep these items readily available for your use. Also, from this point forward, the track numbers on the CD will be called *Movement* numbers.

Why Go to All This Trouble?

The approach I am taking with this dissertation involves elements of risk, unpredictability, playfulness, and commitment. These characteristics or qualities are required of you as the reader, but they are also required of me. In choosing to construct the work in this way, I am forcing myself to take risks. I also am forcing myself to embrace these qualities, the unpredictability in not knowing how you will experience this work, the playfulness with a topic that is of great importance to me, and the commitment to a form of engagement that is a little scary. I do this because I am working to unseat myself and to *do-with* you as the reader. Deleuze (1968/1994) states, “We learn nothing from those who say: ‘do as I do.’ Our only teachers are those who tell us to ‘do with me’ and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce” (p. 23). Consequently, by offering an alternate path to you, I am asking myself to do-with, to take risks in not knowing the outcome of your experience and to apprentice myself to signs with-and-through the research process, which included the construction of this document in this way. What started as my dissertation, as a pre-conceived idea, has not ended as my dissertation; this is the work of apprenticeship on many levels, all of which began with a sign-encounter and a dead possum back in 2018.

About two years ago, I crossed paths with a dead possum that changed the direction of my research all together. When I came across the dead possum in 2018, I felt something so deep

that I needed to investigate the sensation and consider it in relation to art education. I grew up mostly in Texas, so roadkill was nothing new to me, but something happened on that particular day and at that particular time. I felt an undeniably strong force that went, and in some way still does, go beyond words for me. As Deleuze (1968/1994) writes, signs “testify to the spiritual and natural powers which act beneath the words, gestures, characters, and objects represented” (p. 23). For a brief moment, the strike of the sign rendered the invisible connection between the possum and me visible and reminded me that there are things at work beyond thought, beyond representation, beyond the tangible and empirical. Occasionally, we are allowed to peek into this beyond-ness ever so slightly through the strike of the sign, but I contend that it is with-and-through the performative acts of thinking/doing/making that we keep this newly formed space of the sign encounter suspended and vibrant. Consequently, I am inviting you to engage with this material in a way that you might eventually ask your students to engage with the material of your teaching, with curiosity, with a commitment to uncertainty, and with a degree of attunement or sensitivity towards sign encounters and the affect they bring. The choice, dear reader, is yours.

Before I can end this introductory letter in good conscience, I need to address the why. What is the connection, the benefit, the justification, etc. for investigating signs with art education? Why is now a prime time for apprenticing oneself to signs? Why is art education uniquely suited for this kind of work? On one hand, the why now question is the easiest to answer. Unfortunately, current global circumstances in the year 2020, and now 2021, made it such that the kind of signs I am talking about, ones that are disruptive and jarring to the senses, are in abundant supply these days. But, answering the other two questions, why art education and why art educators, is a bit more layered. We could get further into this here, but I feel like I have overstayed my welcome already, and get the sense that you might need a break. Or perhaps I

need a moment to pause as well. Alternatively, I am asking that you hold onto that question for now and take a brief break if you need one.²

Before we conclude this portion, I want to say thank you. Thank you for taking this journey with me, not as a recipient of my experience, but as an active participant in your own. I know first-hand that turning towards the cut in the rhizome, feeling your own with-ness deeply and experiencing the affect of a sign, can be challenging and severely disorienting. I appreciate your willingness to go there with me. I do not know if you will have your own sign-encounter through this process, but I am eager to provide you with a frame-work for that possibility.³

Enjoy and let's talk again soon.

With care,

Kate



(Please return to your fortune teller to determine where you will go next.)

²Before you continue onward and determine your next step, please care for your needs and take a break in whatever form that looks like to you. You may use this opportunity to get up, stretch, walk about, go for a bike ride, cook something, get a drink, etc. Please do whatever you need to do as a means to process the above information for yourself. After your break, or before if you so desire, please return to the text and finish reading this letter.

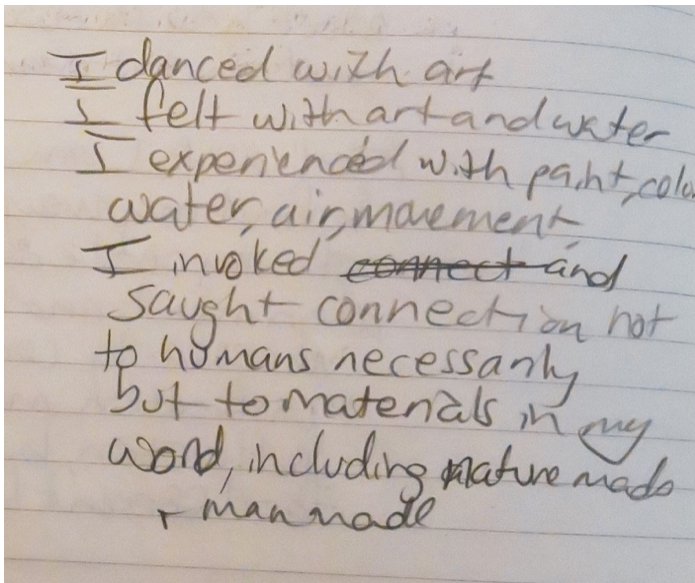
³ Once completed, please engage with your fortune teller to determine where you will go next in the text.

CHAPTER 2

A SPACE OF INQUIRY

◆ (See instructions below.)

*Instructions: Before you read this next section please roll the dice that was sent to you or that you acquired on your own. Whatever number you landed on will be the Movement number of the CD 'Promises' you will play while engaging in a making-experience. Feel free to engage in this activity before reading this section, on breaks while reading this section, or after you conclude this section of the dissertation. The choice is yours. As you listen to the Movement correlating to the number on your die, please engage in mark making using whichever material you wrote on your fortune teller that goes with this section of the dissertation. You may make the marks on either the paper sent to you, or on some other surface of your choosing. I encourage you to consider the idea of signs, maybe even ponder signs in your personal life, while listening to the music and allowing yourself to create without worrying about the end product. Also, if there is no Movement number to correspond with the number on your dice, please re-roll the dice until it lands on any number from one through eight (for some of you, depending upon how many numbers are on your die). *If this is not your first time rolling the dice and making marks, please note you may use a different piece of heavy-weight paper per dissertation section, or you may LAYER your marks all onto one or two heavy-weight pieces of paper. Enjoy!*



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Traditionally, this section would be called the statement of the problem (the why), but I prefer to think of this, not as a problem necessarily, but as a space of inquiry. This space of inquiry affords us a chance to look closely and deeply at the question of the relationship between art education and apprenticeship to signs, rather than the justification, and possibly even produce

or generate more problems over any fixed solutions. In doing so, I hope to keep my position open as the researcher to what might unfold with and through the writing process, as well as staying in sync with the theoretical framework of transcendental empiricism, which privileges questions over answers. Therefore, instead of starting with a statement of a problem, which implies the need for a solid or, at the very least, semi-fixed solution/answer, I prefer to consider this section a space of inquiry where we might engage in conceptual close looking, and stay attentive to any additional problems or questions that arise through the writing and analysis of this research.

Situating this section as an inquiry, rather than as a statement of the problem, affords some flexibility of thought. Inquiry, and especially living inquiry, as a thing or space of its own, holds the potential to generate further problems or questions through the use of experimentation, thinking, attentiveness, curiosities, wondering, etc. (Jardin, 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2017). Like Deleuze, the idea of inquiry privileges the problem over the solution and this is key. A solution creates a block, a barrier of thought that is attached to one direction, one path. Whereas a problem recognizes possibility. As he (Deleuze 1968/1994) states, “(t)here are no ultimate or original responses or solutions, there are only problem-questions, in the guise of a mask behind every mask and a displacement behind every place” (p. 107). He (Deleuze 1968/1994) continues on to say “(t)he power of the questions always comes from somewhere else than the answers, and benefits from a free depth which cannot be resolved” (p. 107). This is not about finding a justification, but about drilling into the question all the way down, from the metaphysical to the classroom. Therefore, rather than starting with a problem statement, I am producing problems for us to consider, ponder, play with, and sit with in the coming pages.

In this section, I specifically look at what art and art-making *does* in relation to signs and

transcendental empiricism, what the relation between art and signs might mean for the art educator, and lastly what art and art-making did for me in this research process. I believe these points of inquiry are important to grapple with because they open up space for us to consider how art teachers are in a unique position to mine these disruptive sign-encounters and to hold space for students to do the same. To best understand these points of inquiry, however, I would like to first return to the topic of art and transcendental empiricism briefly.



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A Brief Return: Transcendental Empiricism, Art, and Art-Making

Transcendental empiricism is a philosophy that grapples with the metaphysics of creation, the larger questions of what it means to exist, to be, to create. It asks what are the transcendental conditions that make something possible, conditions beyond the thing created itself and beyond common and good sense. These are ontological questions that seek to push thinking to the space between divisions, between empirical differences. These questions provoke us to conceptually collapse mind/body and subject/object binaries, by asking what presupposes

these divisions and what is outside, or pulled back from, that which we come to know empirically. To address this problem, Deleuze (1968/1994) basically offers up a larger system, or flexible structure, that consists of two previously mentioned planes that are immanent to one another, the virtual and the actual. The virtual is where all possibilities already exist in the form of uncontracted pure difference. Pure difference is un-observable difference; it is the difference beyond that which is found when contemplating the difference between two things, such as green and red apples. It is, in other words, difference in itself, or the transcendental field of difference out of which all differences become possible. The problem with focusing exclusively on differences is that it keeps us locked within good and common sense, which, in turn, is merely reinforced by the empirically observable reality around us. Pure difference, however, is the difference that makes differences in the actual plane; it exists as an excess of difference that is uncaptured by any particular set of binaries. Importantly, when this pure difference contracts, and becomes actualized, what becomes actualized is in the form of an observable set of differences that already have the potential of infinite possibilities within it. This in turn means the actual does not cut itself off from the virtual, nor does the virtual cut itself off from the actual. They are connected. They are imminent to one another. This connection, however, is not directly observable, and cannot be confirmed by common or good sense. And yet, for Deleuze (1981/2002), it can be *sensed*. We do have empirical access to pure difference, but only in terms of the force it exerts on our common and good sense and the strain it places on our faculties.

This sensing is where signs and art come into play. As Deleuze (1981/2002) writes “(f)orce is closely related to sensation: for a sensation to exist, a force must be exerted on a body, on a point of the wave” (p. 48). Sign encounters embody these forces that act upon and with-in us. They operate differently, not fully in the physical nor in the transcendental, but rather as

forces shifting and moving in-between planes and possibilities. Signs are dynamism at work, in ways that are not visible to the human eye and cannot be captured by common or good sense. They are forces in action that are barely perceptible by our faculties, and often we interpret these forces as problems or something we cannot easily fit into pre-existing ways of knowing. The strike of the sign overwhelms our everyday faculties causing them to explode or reorganize themselves and find a way back to stasis, to common and good sense. When we encounter these signs, and the disruption brought about by their force, they bring discomfort and uncertainty. And while some may perceive these forces as negative or bad, they are actually neutral. They are merely forces acting upon and with us, which, coincidentally, is where this discussion pivots towards art and art-making.

Art, within the system of transcendental empiricism, is not about the form of the work necessarily, but about forces sensed through the art and art making. Here, Deleuze (1981/2002) presents art as the rendering of these forces, and presumably art-making as the grappling with how to show these forces (such as Deleuze's (1981/2002) mention of the rendering the weight of the potatoes in Millet's painting of peasants) (p. 49). When combined with the concept of signs, you have a layered conundrum. The sign is a force, but also presents a force into our actualized lives when it strikes. Returning to the example of the pandemic and its disruptive impact on our society, the sign-encounter (in this case the pandemic), is both a force and renders a force on, not only our bodies, but also on our way of life and our understanding of how things are in existence with one another. It causes us to think again, to re-consider, to perhaps even contemplate our own relationality with not only the virus, but with all matter. Now, enter art and art-making into the picture. Art and art-making become the place where these forces might be rendered in a way that is not representative of the virus itself, of the sign-encounter as a direct translation, but of the

impact of the virus, the strike of the sign. The affect of the sign. Here Deleuze (1981/2002) uses the example of Francis Bacon saying he wished to “paint the scream more than the horror” (p. 51). Meaning, he wished to render the sensation of the scream, the part connected to the virtual plane, not a reproduction of the horror on the actual plane. The force of the scream is potentially unobtainable, but we can constantly work to try and touch upon it through our continuous attempts to render this force.

In this way, signs and art both occupy the spaces between the virtual and the actual, each giving us a peek into one and the other. The sign, as a force emitted from contractions of pure difference and intensities, reminds us of what is beyond the perceptible and the need to attune ourselves to the sensitivities of problems in new ways. Whereas, the art loops us back to the virtual—it reconnects us to the essences of things that we can never really get at, but continue to try and reach somehow. Even though the virtual is not accessible to us in our everyday lived experience, due to the barriers of common sense and logic, Deleuze (1968/1994) does offer art (along with states of madness and the paradox of nonsense) as one of the means by which we might access the transcendental, even if that access is temporary or fleeting.

Transcendental empiricism operates with the assertion that we cannot recognize that which we do not know empirically or that which we cannot anticipate. Recognition rests on common and good sense corresponding to what is given in experience, yet signs rupture this correspondence. Art offers us an opportunity to briefly tap into or touch the virtual plane that exists in excess of common and good sense, to experience the fleeting sensation of a possibility beyond the empirical. Think about the times you have been in the throes of creating something,

anything, and you feel that rush of excitement.⁴ You are energetically affected in such a way that you may even feel a tingling sensation. There is an acceleration and intensity you can sense, as if you are compelled by a force to seek out a form of expression, a way to translate the bodily sensation you are having or the forces you are feeling into some process and eventual form. You know something is there, at the tip of your tongue, the end of your pen, or the point on your paintbrush, but you still feel like it is just out of reach. This is where I believe *the why* lives. It lives in that moment where you push yourself to cross the threshold of creation and step into uncertainty, to try and find or touch the essence of something even though you know that essence will never really be actualized. The why is not because of some pre-determined structure or answer, but actually because art educators have a special opportunity to keep the questions in play, to really mine these sign-encounters and keep them suspended with-and-through art making, with-and-through the possibility of creation and the engagement with blocs of sensation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994). Yet, as art teachers we don't always engage in this kind of work. We hold tightly to what we know, and I use the pronoun 'we' here because I am guilty of it too. Sometimes it is simply easier to do what is recognizable, what does not throw oneself or one's students out of alignment. It is less stressful to stand in certainty, and take a human centered approach by imposing one's own will onto passive materials (material bodies included). But this clinging to the known and the recognizable, negates the potential that art and art making presents to us through the frame of transcendental empiricism. This potential, is the potential to have an encounter with the virtual and any new possibilities, new faculties, or new sensibilities that might unfold from these brief touches into the seemingly impossible.

⁴As a child, I would tell my mother I could feel energy in my fingertips when I was excited or making art, as if it was too much for my body to handle and I needed to "zap" things to get it out.



(un-titled)

While Deleuze (1981/2002) does not specifically talk about art-making much, he does talk about art and artists at great length in his book *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation* (1981/2002), and his (Deleuze's) and Guattari's (1991/1994) co-authored text, *What is Philosophy*. In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994). specifically address art as a “bloc of sensations, that is to say a compound of percepts and affects” that exist separate from the artist, but are intimately tied to the percepts and affects of the artist themselves (p. 164).

Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/1994) write:

They (sensations, percepts, and affects) are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself. (p. 164)

Art, as an independent block of sensation, is not a representation of life from the human point of view, but rather a being itself made up of percepts and affects. Percepts, not meaning human perceptions of objects, but as “independent of a state of those who experience them,” are not reliant upon our perception; they are free-floating without assigned meaning, existing not only in us, as material bodies, but in all material itself, including human bodies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 164). Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) articulate this as “the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of metal” etc. (p. 166). In this way, the material is not separate from the sensation but contains sensation of its own. Consequently, when mixed with other materials, such as applying the oil paint to a canvas or intense heat to clay, the line between sensation of body (tingling you may feel) and the sensation of material is slippery, blurry, indistinguishable. The material and the sensation pass through one another. This is because, if we stretch our thinking back out, pulling our sensibilities out towards the metaphysical, all matter is made up of pure difference.



(un-titled)

As those pure differences are contracted and come into being, into actualized being that we can touch, taste, smell, see, etc., it carries independent percepts and affects that we sense, or that act upon us in a bodily manner. As such, art is not a product of the artist, but a product of the artist and the art traveling together through the process of becoming in a co-constituted matter. In the same way as the art, as a block of sensation of percepts and affects, is co-constituted with the material in which it was made. It all goes back to pure difference, and that which is always in fluctuation. The division between art and artists starts to dissolve in the same rhizomatic way that self, and matter beyond self, begins to dissolve. They fold and unfold back into one another, disrupting the more humanist ontological position that privileges the human mind and personal expression, etc. (Rousell & Fell, 2018). This is an important shift. It means that whereas art is traditionally seen as a humanizing practice that “serves to represent the interior” of the artist onto passive materials (Rousell, 2019, p. 888), this more traditional approach does not align with the conceptual and philosophical threads holding this particular research together. These threads being the need to decenter the self by engaging in work, the creating, the art-making, that is a highly valued mode of transcendental empiricism.

Art and Chaos

For a long time, I couldn't clearly answer the question: what is the art *doing* in this research? I started this process thinking the art was a form of analysis, and perhaps on some level it was. However, what I have come to realize is that the art-making was actually the suspension of the in-between space, between interior and exterior, between sign and self-in-relation, between the molecular and what Deleuze calls the molar, between the deterritorialization and the reterritorialation of new ideas, between the rhizomatic cut from the sign-encounter to the regeneration of new ways of thinking, making, being—it was the expander. Art-making in this

research became the stent in the vein, holding the walls open so blood could flow in multiple directions and suspend space for inquiry. As Rousell (2019) writes,

the compositional power of art is such that new territories are created from the chaotic forces of the Earth (absolute disparity or difference in itself), but also that these territories can be deterritorialized, fragmented, dissolved and cast back into the chaosmos from which they were temporarily composed. (p. 894)

The chaosmos, here referring to chaos of undetermined forces, uncontracted intensities, states of pure difference that have not been sifted through yet and become actualized. Art is the framing and unframing of this chaos—it is the transforming of chaos into sensation that can stand on its own (Grosz, 2008/2020).

In *What is Philosophy*, one of the last works co-written by Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994), they address the relationship between chaos (the virtual, unknown) and philosophy, science, and art, describing how these three disciplines go beyond the chaos. But, it is artists and poets specifically that they cite as casting tears in the thin umbrella that separates the unknown, the chaos, from the empirical (in this case identified as opinions). As they (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994) write, “but poets, artists, make a slit in the umbrella, they tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit of free and windy chaos and to frame in a sudden light a vision that appears through the rent” (p. 203). And while in this particular text, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) encourage us to “plunge into the chaos” and take up these tears, it is art in particular that has the ability to move chaos into composition by cutting and crossing through this space of unknown and framing it in a particular way (p. 202). As they (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994) write “Painters go through a catastrophe, or through a conflagration, and leave the trace of this passage on the canvas, as of the leap that leads them from chaos to composition” (p. 203). Here chaos refers to that which exists before taking form. And while the idea of plunging into chaos may sound like it means to embrace complete madness, or sew up the tear again and find order once

more, I believe this is not the case.

I believe Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) are actually suggesting artists provide a newly sewn edge, a new shape for both the tear and the umbrella, a recalibration that blurs the distinction between materials. Where does the new edge begin? Where does it blend with what once was, and what it is to become, what it is not, yet? Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) argue that “Art is not chaos, but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos, a composed chaos—neither foreseen nor preconceived” (p. 204). This is the space of the sign and art. In the composed chaos, the composition that is not preconceived, emerges from the chaos of the sign-encounter, the disruption, the opening in the rhizome and has its own bloc of sensation, of percepts and affects. As such, we return to the first issue at hand about calling this section of a statement of the problem with the implication that there is an answer. But, there is no answer.



(un-titled)

Art-making does not provide the answer, but rather leads to more problems, more

questions, which, I believe, is why we return to it again and again. By capturing percepts and affects that stand alone and challenge our sense-making, art and art-making continues to push us, asking questions, holding space, opening unforeseen possibilities that are presented through the facing of these percepts and affects, these potentially transformable qualities that are both separate from our being and entangled with it. As such, then we have to ask the question, what does this mean for the art educator? If art and presumably art-making is composed chaos, with its own percepts and affects, then how does that shift things pedagogically for the teacher?

I've asked these questions of myself numerous times, and I have come to rest in the following thought/possible answer: art educators are in a unique position to become a flexible structure themselves, a place for both guidance and disruption, engagement and disorientation. Essentially, art educators don't just provide a structure, but they themselves become a flexible structure from within which students might work. And while I know that sounds incredibly abstract, and as if it might require radical change in order to happen, I don't believe that is actually the case. Instead, I think the movements required of the art teacher, to become this flexible structure for students, are subtle. Rather than dramatic overhauls of curriculum, it is really about shifts in thinking that then create shifts in pedagogical approaches. Asking students different kinds of questions, such as 'what is the sign asking us/you to do?' or strongly encouraging students to stay with the strike of the sign, are the subtle shifts to which I am referring. It is a recalibration of how one thinks about that which is already being taught and that which will be taught, creating flexible frameworks of experience built upon philosophical concepts and art-making.

This requires a paradigmatic shift that rests on the rethinking of one's own with-ness, and a reconceptualizing of the role of the educator as not the constructor of knowledge or provider of

direct content, but rather a pedagogical space-holder. Making this shift requires one to move from a more hylomorphic model, where methods of learning or teaching are placed upon students, to one that is more open to fluctuations in the moment (Atkinson, 2018). To engage in these shifts, however, I believe it takes a commitment to apprenticeship to signs on the part of the educator themselves, a sort of opening of the self before holding space for others. It is as if one has to undergo an apprenticeship towards the idea of their own becoming, giving in to the mixture of states inside oneself before being a space holder for others. Like the Hoberman sphere, one has to become a transformable object of flexible support, moving through states of expansion and contraction for themselves as they provide flexible frameworks for learning rather than prescribed ways of being or knowing.⁵

Pure Becoming

For Deleuze (1969/1990), pure becoming is a paradox where you can be in contradictory states at the same time, which is different from a type of becoming, a limited becoming, that happens in a linear, measurable, way. With pure becoming, time is no longer linear; pure becomings are events composed of both future and past simultaneously. And while I don't want to go too deep into this definition, I will provide the classic Deleuze (1969/1990) example of Alice, from Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland*. When Alice takes the pills and becomes both large and small, this is what Deleuze articulates as a pure becoming, or an *event*. Alice is in two contradictory states without distinction between before and after. Another, potentially more relatable example, is when you are doing something that engages you in a way that you can feel

⁵ The idea for the Hoberman sphere did not start as a toy or as a breathing tool. Yet, over time it has taken on these associations. Please use this time to take a short breathing break for yourself if you need it. You might imagine you have a Hoberman Sphere in your hands, expanding and contracting as you inhale and exhale. Or, perhaps your breathing break is simply a 'loop break' where you draw loops on the page as you inhale and exhale.

or sense the kid inside of you. You might be measurably an adult, but you are also becoming-child at the same time. I bring this up, because it is important to understand this scrambling of linear time in relation to states of becoming and why the concept of pure becoming, in turn, dissolves the idea of fixed states of identity that can be sensed through the disruption of how one knows or understands the self.

Typically, we conceive of ourselves as following a linear path, of having an identity that forms over linear time. However, with pure becoming, with these events, one's understanding of self is disrupted and de-stabilized. The self becomes a verb always in the making, in the transforming, in the contractions of pure difference into actualized possibility. And if this is the case, then there really is no self, there are only states of becoming. So, when I talk about this research being a 'self-study,' it is a study of self-in-relation; it is a study of becoming, not of what already is perceived to be, but of what is unfolding and yet to be. The art making, as a primary component of this research, therefore becomes the means for which to study the self in the state of becoming. Art frames and unframes sensations not only of the artist, but of constant states of pure becoming, not becoming that is linear, such as I become an adult over time, but pure becoming that are non-linear states of change and existence. Consequently, when I say art teachers needs to be attentive to their own becoming in order to act as a flexible structure for students, I am not referring to predictable states of change that happen in a linear path. Rather, I am referring to those moments when we ourselves stand in the space of disruption and experience simultaneous contradictory states that hold the potential to open pedagogical shifts for ourselves. We might not always be able to see the becoming happening in real time, or recognize it immediately, but I believe if we apprentice ourselves to the signs, eventually we can see these moments and stay within them more readily through the employment of the frame-

works provided in this dissertation. These frame-works enable us to recognize those moments, and stay with them, more readily. Let me provide a brief example that might help.

This research started as a photography project. I had been photographing my children working with materials for about a year, when something significant happened. My child said something so simple, but so powerful, that it caused a shift to occur. She said “Mom, can you put the camera down and paint with us?” That sentence caused me to sense contradictory states inside myself. I was mom and artist, I was photographer and researcher, all these things colliding in one space and in one moment of time. While I know this example could be explored in so many different ways, looking at my own relationship with the camera, the division between subject/object, etc. But for me, that cut, that force, was about being both big and small, both researcher and mother, art educator and artist, etc. That simple request created a heightened awareness of contradictory states inside myself. Of course, I could have refused her. I could have clung to the path I was on, taking photos for the dissertation, and not taking the plunge, not swallowing Alice’s pill, but I didn’t. I leapt into the uncomfortable space of the sign and put the camera down. From there, the research, and my own creative practice, took a turn—it pivoted in unexpected ways because I decided to apprentice myself to the moment where I sensed my own becoming. I recognized the collision of states and consciously tried to stay with the sign by engaging with my children, and this research, in ways that I did not, nor could not, predict.

This intentional turning towards is what I mean by noticing your own becoming and moving with it. Signs, as forces, can offer us a gift—openings, new cracks, new lines—that remind us of our own with-ness but also present an opportunity to sense our own becoming differently. Consider those moments when you sit beside your students in class and work with them, alongside them. Even though you are an adult, sometimes you feel transported back,

sensing your own path of creation as a child and having it collide with your current self as the instructor. These are the moments that, if experienced, perceived, and sensed as signs, we can pry open, pull them apart a little more, stay with them and see what emerges.



(un-titled)

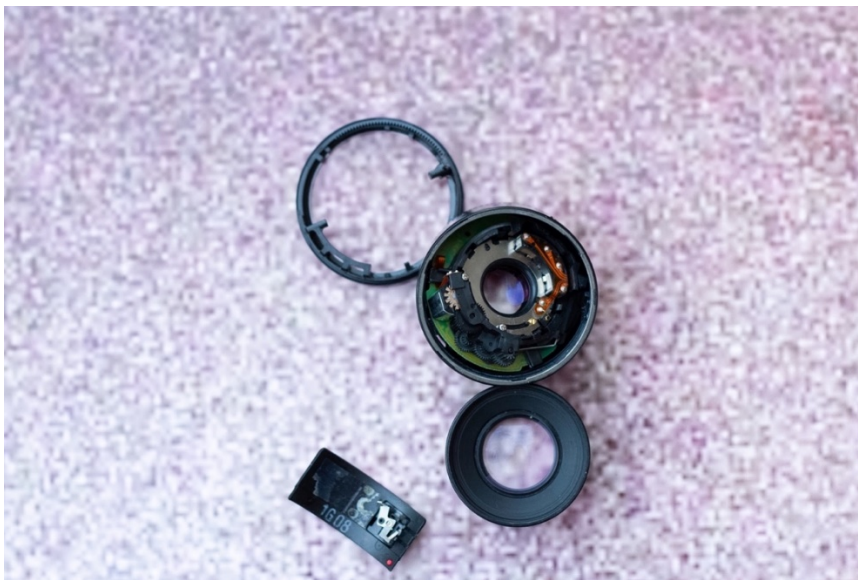
Times are Changing

The idea of staying with disruption in the classroom is not new on the academic level, and to some degree on the front lines in schools too. Especially as of late, with the global disruption of all our lives due to the virus and growing awareness of racial injustices, more and more I am seeing art educators, who are working in schools, discuss what it means to be in a place of uncertainty and vulnerability. In fact, a recent edition (2021) of the journal *Art Education*, begins with an editorial by Ami Kantawala titled, ‘Interruption and disruption and the possibility of change.’ This demonstrates how there is a trickle down happening and that the

potential for turning towards uncertainty in art education is starting to be seen more and more on the ground level. The experiences teachers are having in and through the pandemic and social unrest of the last year, are prompting many people to reconsider pedagogical openings born from moments of disruption (Hicks, 2021; Kantawala, 2021; LaJevic; 2021, Lopez, 2021). I think this work is wildly important and very much needed at this time. Similarly, authors and art educators, Amber Ward and Jennifer Garcia (2021) write about (post) pandemic dis/comfort with disruption. But these articles use disruption to talk about personal narrative and current opportunities for rethinking pedagogy. Whereas, I am coming at this topic, this problem, these questions of how to be-with uncertainty from a place of metaphysics, from the position that we are influenced by forces that we cannot see and that we need to do the work to stay with these forces, these sensations, through art and art-making. While topic of disruptions is gaining momentum in art education, situating it within the context of rhizomatic cuts and the philosophy of transcendental empiricism is still discussed primarily in academic circles. There are those, however, in the field who are addressing this topic and who lean on the writing of Deleuze and Guattari to frame their argument for disruption and becoming.

Over the last several years, there has been a growing number of art education literature published on the topic of becoming and following disruptions in one's practice. Authors, such as Dennis Atkinson (2008), talk about the need for real learning to "involve a disruption of established states of pedagogical knowledge and practice" (p. 238). This articulation of learning, Atkinson (2008) claims, requires a rethinking of pedagogy, an anti-pedagogy, that "accommodates learning encounters that precipitate new forms of learning" (p. 238). Atkinson's (2018) more recent work addresses the process and term becoming as an "expression of disobedience" (p. 238). Here, Atkinson (2018) explains how we need to pay close attention to the

more processual part of learning/teaching and the “incipience of learning,” which he openly states sometimes is not recognized (p. 20). Like Atkinson, who sees the processual part of learning as going unnoticed, I believe disruptions go unnoticed, or if noticed, they are recognized only briefly and then cast aside through either neglect or the need to close the gap quickly and assign meaning as a form of sense-making. But what happens if we put the metaphorical camera down, if we feel and see the potential in that moment as a sign-encounter and step into the newly formed space? I suppose in the end, what I am calling for is not only a form of commitment to the unknown, but the courage to step in, to cross the threshold, to take up sign-encounters as pedagogical openings and actively resist closure.



(un-titled)

Other scholars and art educators who are playing with these ideas about potential ontological shifts and disruption include Nadine Kalin (2018) who encourages us to take up the unknown that presents itself as antagonistic encounters—those times when you are unsure how to respond or what to do (p. 112). Others scholars include Stephanie Springgay (2015, 2017), Nikki Rotas (2015), and Sarah E. Truman (2017) who address this topic from the perspective of new materialism and consider the rethinking of research methods and methodologies.

Furthermore, there is a growing number of early childhood art educators, such as Sylvia Kind, Veronica Pacini-Ketchaway, and Laurie Kocher (2017), who also arrive at this same idea of encounters that provoke us to think differently with materials in the world (more on this within a different frame-work). My work is certainly in conversation with these authors—it is situated within the same position of working to decenter the human, listen or dwell with materials in new ways, and dig deeply into worldly intra-actions. However, where I see a gap in the literature, is in the conversation around the metaphysics behind these disruptions and specifically addressing the concept of Deleuzian sign-encounters. Currently, there is not much on how one might really mine these moments on the ground-level. There are those who have discussed Deleuzian signs and art education in academic circles, such as art educator Charles Garoian (2013, 2014, 2016), where he addresses Deleuze’s articulation of learning as the space between the sign-encounter and one’s response. In his writing, Garoian (2016) explains how the flows and intensities of signs refers outwardly towards a multiplicity of expanding signs and how we “do not reproduce signs, but repeat them differently” (p. 68). Although I understand his theoretical position, and certainly find common places where our work intersects, I am most interested in how to make this inquiry into something that is really impactful in the classroom and through practice. This is why I believe it is so important to dig into the relationship between art education as a whole and sign-encounters, while considering what this might look like in practice on the day to day basis. So that we stop divorcing theory from practice, and consider them not as separate entities, but as conceptual and philosophical threads that weave through the structuring of teaching and the structuring of living in general.

The Research Questions

This study really was an investigation into the ‘what if’ of signs and art education. What

if apprenticeship to signs became an integral pedagogical component of art education? What if we played with these two entities, not simply as co-existing concepts but in entangled and integrated practices? This research truly was a deep investigation into signs and art education, and as such, the research process itself brought forth two primary questions and some additional secondary questions. The two overarching questions determined through the process were as follows: How might art education *be-with* apprenticeship to signs, and what might art education *do-with* sign encounters? The sub-questions include: How might art educators hold space for themselves and their students so they may be-with and stay-with the rupture created by the strike of the sign? And, what if art educators engaged in performative practices that encouraged the rethinking of with-ness for themselves and their students? I will address these questions through the articulation of each frame-work and through our discussions on the relation between philosophical concepts, art making, and pedagogy. I have chosen to address these questions through the construction and re-articulation of my findings in the form of frame-works, because I believe the questions themselves may continue to go unanswered. This is not necessarily a flaw in the study, but a recognition that questions don't always have highly prescribed, fixed answers. Instead, they guide us and lead us to further spaces of inquiry, to more questions that continue to unfold. In some ways, one might even argue that there is an apprenticeship that occurs even between the researcher and the questions. There is a giving over of the self to the research, to the curiosities that drive the research, and the movements that unfold during the process.

Means of Inquiry

This research was never about a direct representation or reproduction of sign-encounters on the canvas, page, paper, or screen, but about finding ways to work with and from the cut of the rhizome, being in the space of the sign encounter with a degree of de-subjectivization and, as

it turns out, an intense amount of letting go. When I began this study, I was unsure of what I was doing. Coming from a more traditional understanding of research and a Master's thesis that employed qualitative methods, my original inclination was to conduct a study that had a very delineated, clear-cut, shape. However, as I moved through this process and pushed myself to recalibrate my understanding of research as a whole, I began to see how even though I was studying my own movement and lived experience, it was not actually a self-study, but rather a study of the self-in-relation, in relation to the oneself, to others, and to the world at large. Similar to how Ellsworth (2005/2009) explores the learning self, I am interested in the self in the making, the constant becoming of self through sign-encounters and the production of knowledge.



(un-titled)

The self-in-relation, is the self-in-becoming, and the self-in-relation as knowledge and understanding are emerging from the lived experience. This research was, and is, a study that called for means of inquiry that recognized the shifting nature of the 'self,' the becoming of oneself, and the entangled relationship between three primary elements—philosophical concepts penetrating layers of understanding, art-making as provocation and risk-taking, and art education as a space for creating new forms of knowledge that emerge through practice and uncertainty. As

the research process kept becoming, taking shape through the performative acts of thinking-with, doing-with, and making-with, I understood more and more how this research cannot, and should not, be categorized as something with clear delineations that does not recognize the tangled, messy, layered nature of research to begin with. It was, and is, filled with layers that communicate with one another, pulling back at times, pushing forward at times, maybe even reverberating in one place.

Like pulsating atoms moving along intra-secting orbits, the layers were, and are, vibrational. They are made up of not only paint, and dirt, and ripped up photos, but of concepts, suggestions, provocations, and unanswered questions. This is where the heart of the research lies, in all of its parts that cross over, under, and through one another, leaving trails and traces of themselves, some in view and others some yet to be seen. So, while the research may have started in one place, as conceived of in a particular way, due to the nature of transcendental empiricism and sign-encounters, it was nearly impossible to predict. Here, I am not only referring to the outcome of the research, but even the methodology. Throughout the process, the methods, or techniques as referred to by Manning (2015), presented themselves through material engagements, through sign-encounters, and through the pure act of living. As such, there was emergent property to the inquiry that I could not have anticipated but came to rely on. Similarly, there were methodological bias and attachments I had to let go of before really understanding what was happening, and what kind of research this work was in the process of becoming.⁶



(Please return to your fortune teller to determine where you will go next.)

⁶Journal Entry - June 19, 2020 (2am): Stop trying to put this research in a box. Have you learned nothing from this process of apprenticeship? I don't know how to break out of the desire to put things in boxes in my writing. Writing in spaces of vulnerability scares me in the same way as uninhibited painting scares me. Yet, deep down I know if I can be in a space of vulnerability, a new structure will eventually emerge. Over time, the writing will take form, just as it has with painting. Orientation, layers, borders, and corners, have become the framing, the organizing structure that emerged from the making/act of painting itself. The writing will find a frame too, just keep going.

CHAPTER 3

ACTIVE WAITING

◆ (See instructions below.)

*Instructions: Before you read this next section please roll the dice that was sent to you or that you acquired on your own. Whatever number you landed on will be the Movement number of the CD 'Promises' you will play while engaging in a making-experience. Feel free to engage in this activity before reading this section, on breaks while reading this section, or after you conclude this section of the dissertation. The choice is yours. As you listen to the Movement correlating to the number on your die, please engage in mark making using whichever material you wrote on your fortune teller that goes with this section of the dissertation. You may make the marks on either the paper sent to you, or on some other surface of your choosing. I encourage you to consider the idea of signs, maybe even ponder signs in your personal life, while listening to the music and allowing yourself to create without worrying about the end product. Also, if there is no Movement number to correspond with the number on your dice, please re-roll the dice until it lands on any number from one through eight (for some of you, depending upon how many numbers are on your die). *If this is not your first time rolling the dice and making marks, please*



(un-titled)

In the beginning I leaned towards post-intentional phenomenology for this study because it afforded the most flexibility (Vagle, 2018; Vagle & Hofsess, 2016). However, as I continued, phenomenology felt distant, like a concept that was untethered and floating outside of my understanding. Yet, at the same time that I drifted from phenomenology, I still could not answer

the question what is the art doing? Consequently, I shied away from claiming a methodology for quite some time and instead waited for the methodology to emerge from the process itself. Because this research takes the position that epistemology is inseparability from ontology, and that it must depend upon the quality of emergence, where approaches and practices are not defined in advance, I decided to hold off choosing in advance. Eventually after much thoughtful and careful lived consideration, I found alignment with research-creation, a methodology primarily used in Canada (Loveless, 2015; Sinner, Irwin, & Adams, 2019).

For me, and my journey with this research, it took time for me to understand what the art making was doing, how the art making was producing new forms of knowledge and new understandings. Early on, I did not feel like the art was driving the research, but the signs were, and yet, I knew they were inexplicably interlaced. Sometimes the signs were experienced outside of the art-making process, and other times they were deeply embedded within the art-making process. So, really what was the art and art-making doing? What was I doing? It took me time and patience before figuring out how to answer these questions for myself, let alone explain them to you, dear reader. I had to travel through areas of practice, embodying new ways of knowing, before I could answer these questions.⁷ As such, I could not predetermine the outcomes or even the research approach with prescribed methods; it all had to emerge from my apprenticeship to forces/dynamisms that I could not control, but could *be-with* through the lived experience. To do this, however, I needed to wait. Undoing takes time. It takes patience and the willingness to not take an answer upon face value at first, closing off to the forces at work. In talking about taking risks in art making, Atkinson (2017) brings up the notion that artists who are responding to

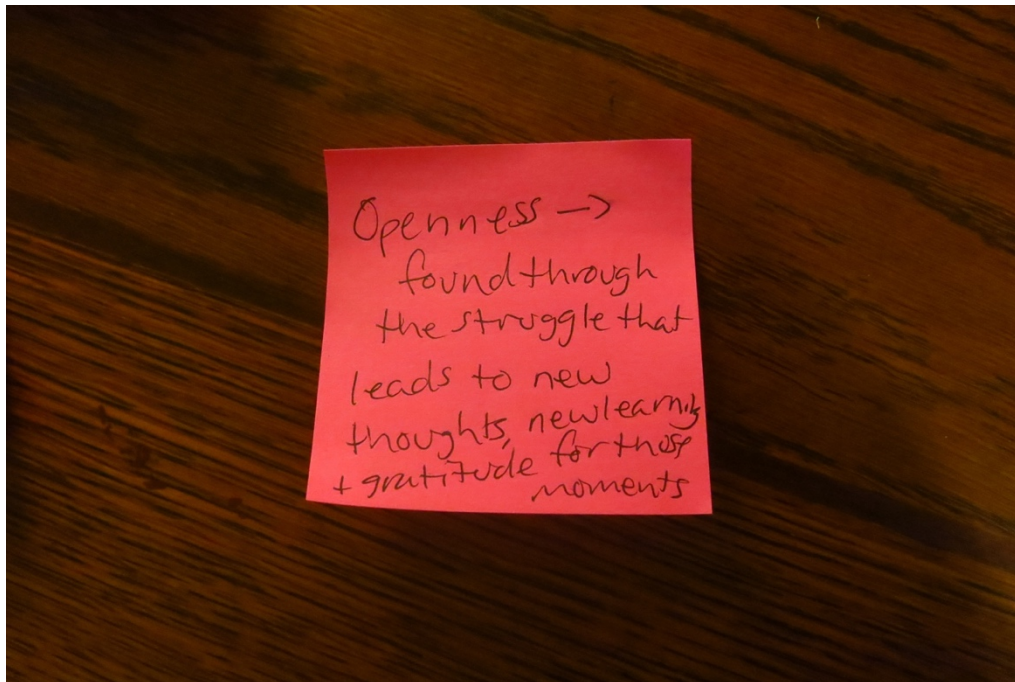
⁷About a month after I received my black belt in aikido, I recall turning to my sensei and saying, “I see things in the technique now that I did not see before.” At the time, it felt like a profound realization, a schism in my practice—a before and after. Now, having gone through this apprenticeship and dissertation writing process, the ability to ‘see’ differently after intense amount of studying and commitment seems like a natural progression.

materials, rather than pre-determining the path, must engage in waiting. This waiting, or what I would call active waiting, was a constant presence and a practice I had to apply. From my engagement with art-making materials to understanding where this work fits in methodologically, I found myself in constant active waiting. Not to be confused with passive waiting, active waiting is when you are still doing, you are still making, thinking, conceptualizing, teaching, doing in this world, but you are also quietly observing, witnessing, assessing, feeling, sensing, taking note, etc. Essentially, you are preparing yourself for the strike of the sign. The waiting is not simply to determine or assign a label to the study. Rather, it was, and is, a waiting to understand in a deeper, embodied, sort of way, where sense-making is secondary to sensations produced by the opening of the self to the research process and whatever form(s) that take shape along the way. To do this, however, I had to first shed some methodological attachments and biases I didn't even know I had, until I was standing in the middle of them and trying to find a way out.

Methodological Pants

I've always equated methodology to trying on pairs of pants. I know that sounds strange, but my previous understanding of research was traditional. You start by formulating a question and then find a methodology that fits your question—you essentially try on the methodology. But sometimes even though you can squeeze into the pants, it doesn't mean they are the right fit or the right style for you in that moment. For me, I had to stop trying on the pants. I had to stop trying to “figure it out,” like puzzle pieces fitting together to make a complete picture. If this research was truly about turning towards the cut caused by sign-encounters, and feeling the activation of possibilities presented by those cuts, then the methodology could not be pre-determined. Just as there was no way to know when the sign would strike, and what possibilities

that rupture would create, I could not know in advance the ‘methods’ from which I was to work. Consequently, I had to let go of the question ‘what methodology am I using’ and make space for something else to emerge. This letting go and waiting, I believe, is an important part of apprenticeship. For me, forcing the work into a pre-determined methodology felt inauthentic, and I needed to honor that disjointed sensation by being open and patient, waiting to see what resonated and what aligned.



(un-titled)

At some point in late 2020, I realized the need to apprentice myself to the research process and to the internal and external movements occurring within the boundaries of this study, which were admittedly fuzzy at times. I had to allow the methods and my re-orientation towards research methodologies to emerge from the process itself. This realization came to me through the work—it was through the making, thinking, writing, doing, that the labor of letting go and detaching from pre-formed ideas about research methods and methodology, began to happen. As I loosened my grip on previously established understandings, the research techniques from which

I needed to work became clearer. Let me provide a brief example of what I mean by methods emerging from apprenticeship to signs.

For most of my life, I've been told by doctors that I cannot ride a bike due an early diagnosis of cerebral palsy and the imbalances between the left and right sides of my body. My muscular structure is a constant work in progress due to the natural atrophying that happens with cerebral palsy. In other words, all I have ever known is how to fight against this diagnosis and the always-present threat of atrophying muscles. Over the years, I accepted this limitation of no bike riding from those I trusted and perceived as experts. These right/left imbalances have been part of my perceived truth for a very long time, a seemingly fixed piece of knowledge I held onto over the years. But one day shortly after we all went into lockdown, my neighbor offered a brand-new bike to me, and I accepted. Admittedly, I did not pursue the bike as a sign-encounter initially, even though I perceived it as one. I was scared. I assumed my truth was the truth, and that I was incapable of riding the bike. Until one day I felt an undeniable desire to try, and I simply got on the bike. I stepped into an unfamiliar space—the space between the right and left side of my body, between the binaries and fixed truths about myself. And the best, or coolest part, about that experience was that on that day, my nine-year-old daughter became my teacher. She taught me how to ride a bike. She showed me how to undo a truth I had held onto for so many years. Through our intra-actions, I learned how to let go and be in this foreign territory of my own body. Consequently, biking emerged unexpectedly as a large part of my 'techniques,' a term used by Manning (2005) when discussing post-qualitative research and what would be traditionally called methods. This is important to note, not because of the bike riding as a thing itself, but because of the emergent nature in which this came about.

To be completely honest, there were many times when I experienced a desire to close off,

to cling to concrete answers, to follow a clear methodological path, to know what I needed to do, but this approach did not align with the unpredictability of signs nor with the theoretical framework of transcendental empiricism. Instead, I had to keep observing, noticing, listening, moving, working, digging, painting, feeling, all the while, waiting. In essence, the only thing I had as a conceptual structure to hold onto, was not necessarily a methodology, but rather my understanding of what apprenticeship meant through the writing of Deleuze (1968/1994, 1972/2000).

Apprenticeship, as an idea, was steady but not highly prescribed. As a conceptual structure, it cut across all forms of doing, across painting and photography, across my interactions with materials, across my perception of the project, across my understanding of research itself. It was a structure that asked me to commit, to burrow in, to be loyal to the concept as it pierced through any compartmentalized understandings I held about methodology, and gave me something to which I could defer. Here, I am referring to apprenticeship as the continuous pushing of your faculties of what is recognized and represented to create new ones, building new senses to problems constantly, and creating new sensitivities to problems that arise. I was continuously trying to grasp the relationship between this understanding of apprenticeship with art education as they, the concepts, and I, and we, became more and more entangled in the research process. Through art-making, journal writing, bike riding, cooperating with others in collaborative works, engaging with the world sometimes quietly and other times with loud bursts of enthusiasm, apprenticeship to signs was always present—weaving in and out of reading, making, doing, thinking, and living. It became a way of being for me. I suppose it could be argued that apprenticeship was equally, if not more so, involved in this process than anything else (signs, art-making, journaling, thinking, etc.). Apprenticeship became my way, my flexible

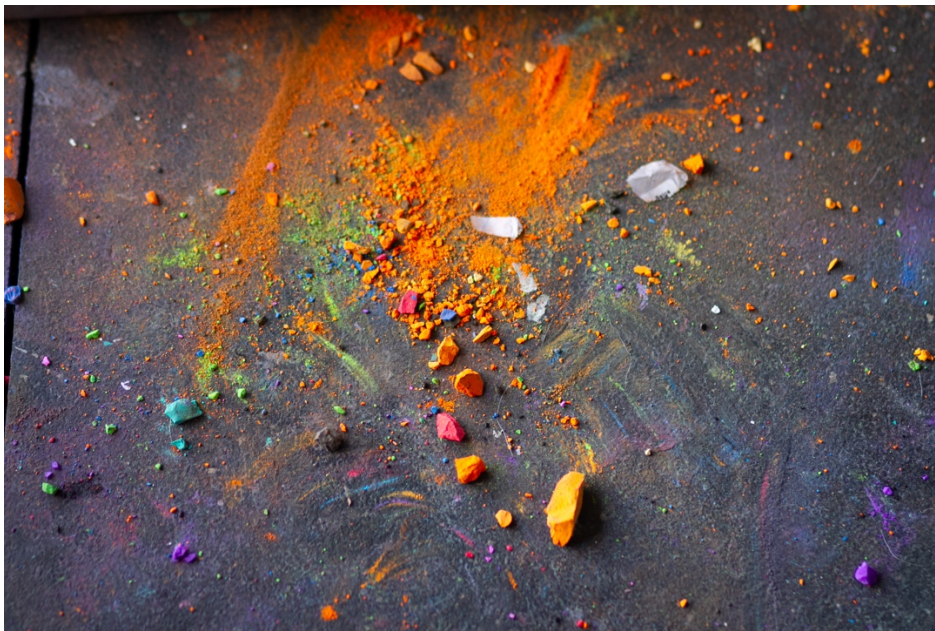
structure for engaging in what Deleuze (1981/2002) might identify as “the will to lose the will” (p. 76).

I envision apprenticeship to signs as piercing layers of being, of existence, like lines moving through planes that expand and contract. In many respects, apprenticeship to signs, as a concept, became a living entity, a living material from which to intra-act, and enabling me to stay open to whatever methodology eventually emerged as the one for this research project. Ultimately, the naming of the work was secondary, but the structure of the work was primary. And while I know that seems backwards from traditional research approaches (quantitative or qualitative), I believe it is very much in alignment with that which I was studying and trying to embody for months on end. In turn, by holding onto apprenticeship as a loose structure, I was better equipped to let go of my methodological struggle and allow the answer to emerge. That answer, was research-creation.

Research-Creation

Research-creation is a term widely used in Canada to refer to research that recognizes the importance of the artist-scholar work in and through the making process, and sees art-making as an integral part of living-inquiry. Originally coined to help with grant funding, this methodology is perceived in the same grouping as arts-based research, but arguably a bit broader and with, what I believe to be, a heavier focus on the intersection between theory and making (Manning, 2015). Research-creation, as a term, came out of the Sense Lab created by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi in Montreal. This term was specifically developed to address the rethinking of theory and practice as non-separate entities. The focus on theory and conceptualizing as a practice, is one of the main reasons I am comfortable identifying this work as research-creation and why I feel so passionate about pursuing this line of post-qualitative thinking.

This study of apprenticeship to signs in art education is heavily couched in both theory (thinking/conceptualizing) and art-making as research practices. This dual-emphasis caused me to struggle at first. I needed to find a space where both theory and thinking, perceived as a form of making, could stand side by side with art-making and its physical engagements with materials. I needed to be in a methodological space where both could shine brightly. It was not until I revisited the term research-creation, and began to investigate the nuances of research-creation, that my relationship to it as a concept began to change and grow.



(un-titled)

Research-creation foregrounds the relational qualities between that which is understood to be research, with that which is understood to be creation (Hanawalt, 2019). It asks not only about how art and art-making constitute new forms of knowledge, but pulls back the lens even further to ask “how practices (broadly) produce knowledge, and whether those forms of knowledge can engagingly be captured within the structures of methodological ordering” (Manning, 2015, p. 52). It is the space of middles, where the concept of research and the concept of creation form new relations without endings or beginnings (Powell, 2015). The two words,

research and creation, and the weight they carry, shift with one another. They pass through points of change together, circling between discord, harmony, and everything in between. In Aikido, a Japanese martial arts I have practiced for a number of years, there is an emphasis on the energy given and received between practitioners. This, to me, is research-creation—it accounts for the entangled and swirling, blurry lines between research components, between researcher and participants, between the self and relations, between that which is observed and that which is felt, sensed, experienced. Research-creation is never truly one without the other, there is a with-ness that is consistent, and even if at times that with-ness is stressed, perhaps even fractured, the dash still holds them together, keeping contact during times of dis-jointed energy and times of harmony.



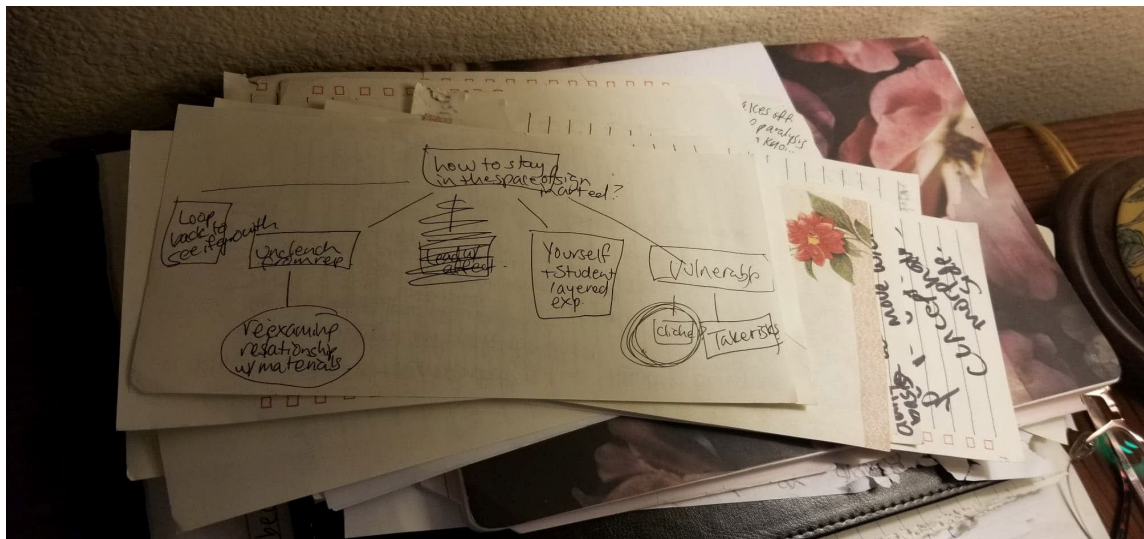
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Research-creation as a methodology is based upon a materialist ontology, recognizing the intra-connectivity between all matter and material (human and beyond human). It acknowledges theory and thinking with theory, as a form of making. It places art-making and physical

engagements with materials alongside conceptual thinking as a practice that also produces knowledge (Springgay & Rotas, 2015). As a methodology, research-creation places emphasis on practices that do not rely heavily on text and language, but instead pull in the conceptual, the philosophical, and the art-making as ways of informing, guiding, and moving with, and within, the research (Barrett & Bolt, 2013). As such, it is a form that has been used by art educators, such as Dr. Brooke Hofsess (2017) Christina Hanawalt (2019) and Kimberly Powell (2015), as well as scholars, such as Stephanie Springgay (2015, 2014), Nikki Rotas (2014), and Zofia Zaliwska (2015), to discuss alternative methodological approaches to education and specifically art education. I believe research-creation lends itself particularly well to art education, because it acknowledges the re-formation of knowledge through more performative practices over discursive ones, including the conceptualization of philosophy as a part of living-inquiry.⁸ As Thain (2008) articulates, research-creation is “an expanded perception of what we are already participating in” (p. 2). This quote in particular moves me—it makes me believe again in methodology as not separate from, but as part of, a form of inquiry that honors the messiness of the lived experience and the inability to pull strands out in an isolated way. As such, instead of pulling them apart, research-creation is an attention to or towards, looking closely at where things are in relation, where they exist in difference, or as Powell (2015) says, it is “an attention to novelty” and “moving our immediate perception into contact with sensation” (p. 536). It privileges what Massumi (2011) identifies as *thinking-feeling*, as a way of knowing and

⁸Journal entry - July 26, 2020 (midnight) I have been incredibly sad the last two days and can't seem to shake it. Tonight, I realized I have not painted anything for several days. The creating, the making, is missing, and it disorients me. I've come to depend on a rhythm of tri-action between painting, writing, and thinking. These layered practices have become my norm. Making, writing, thinking, making, writing, thinking—circling over and over again. I have disrupted my own process by taking out the making while trying to finish chapter one. I am imbalanced. I am disoriented. I am unsure. My habits, my I, is changing. I am beginning to identify as an artist. This is significant. It is like my learning to ride a bike during this crazy time. How can all this disorientation in the world, in my daily life, and in my dissertation create a willingness that was lacking before?

understanding. Staying with that thinking-feeling can happen in many forms, including those that are not textual or text-based. It is collectively, and at its core, experimental, acknowledging that in order to engage in new formations of knowledge one has to embrace new forms of knowledge making (Manning, 2016). Erin Manning (2016) explains how research-creation “generates forms that are extra-linguistic,” new constellations of knowing that may not be familiar or may not have a current evaluation system within traditional methodological structures (p. 133). This includes, but is not limited to, the idea that “philosophical theory is itself a practice, just as much as its objects” (Manning, 2016, p.?). The inclusion of philosophical theory as a practice, as a doing (conceptualizing) and as a making (thinking), is truly what drew me towards research-creation. In reality, it was not one over the other. It was not the act of painting that was the research, nor was it the philosophical thought that was the research. Rather, the research was in the shared space of doing-with and making-with both philosophical theory and art-making (mostly painting).



(un-titled)

It was in the moments when these relations became dynamic, when I felt less like the primary maker, the primary subject, the center piece of the study, and more like a component of

continuous transversal movements happening in and through the research as a lived experience. In one of the immanent critiques of research-creation, Manning (2015) compares research-creation to “balancing several books, or several passages, or several ideas, or several textures, at the edge of the desk, on the wall of the studio, and wondering how else they might come together and what, together, they might do” (p. 64). It’s the scraps of paper, the open book with tabbed corners, the post-it notes of quotes covering the edge of your computer, the recordings of late-night dissertation contemplations over cups of coffee and games of rummikub, the old drafts and current drafts finding new ways of being together. All of it. Research-creation is all of it; it is the coming together of that which is yet to be determined, mixed with the hope and faith that the fog will eventually clear, the mud will eventually trail off, and new understandings will emerge. In the end, it was this acknowledgement of shifting relations, with an emphasis on philosophical concepts as forms of making that are equally entangled with art practices, that drew me towards research-creation. Yet, even more specifically it was Mannings’ (2016) discussion on *technicity* that struck me, hard.

Technicity

Number six of Mannings’ (2016) ten propositions for research-creation is titled ‘Invent Beyond Technique (Activate the More-Than)’ (p. 135). Here, she argues for a shift from the term method(s), which implies a reducible way of being that works to define knowledge and privileges writing (as conscious knowledge) over other forms of making (as pre-conscience knowledge). She explains, “what we need are not methods for curating life-lived, but techniques for life-living” (Manning, 2016, p. 136). Technique, as I interpret its use here, is the repetitious act of coming back again and again, the rigor of the research, the techniques for life-living. Yet even within this rigor, there are differences. Meaning, I might come to a painting again and

again, layer upon layer, but each time I come to it, each time I sit with it or return to it, I intra-act with the materiality of the painting, and the act of painting, differently. The rigor is the repeated act that continues to be extended further with each repetition, and each repetition embodies and casts forth an internal difference that is always-already present.

Drawing from another section's discussion on the virtual plane and its connection to the actual plane, the eternal return, a concept first coined by Nietzsche as the eternal reoccurrence and then further developed by Deleuze (1968/1994), is the notion that through repetition possibilities open up and new contractions of intensities on the virtual level are enabled. *In other words, repetition produces the conditions for which we might access pure difference and a sense of pure possibility, where the outcome is unfixed and chance is accepted as a successive entity.* Each time the concept is recycled, it is slightly altered due to the contraction of pure difference. As Deleuze (1997) writes, "(t)he eternal return does not occur without transmutation" (p. 105). Change will occur through the act of repetition. The continuous doing-of an action or act, such as Deleuze's (1983) example of rolling a dice, opens space for all possibilities but also asks one to commit to the actualized outcomes. In some ways, it is a commitment to the future outcome. As Deleuze scholar and author Todd May (2005) describes it, "there is nothing specific that has to be there in the future, but so much that can be. The future is virtual difference that has not yet actualized itself into a particular present" (p. 62). This commitment to chance outcomes is a form of apprenticeship, driving one towards new creations by taking up any given outcome. It is also how I understand technicity. Technicity of life-living, over life curated, is the in-between, the not yet refined and curated product of living. Technicity is the repeated engagement of chance-taking that is part of life, part of everyday actions. Manning (2015) explains how technique is also "the place of risk" that may not end up going anywhere, but it is the engagement with the process

again and again, the creation of the process that “will have made a difference” (p. 64). It is the repetition, the creation of process, that brings about the techniques of life-lived.

If this is the case, then no matter how many times I repeat this study, or someone else takes on the work of apprenticeship to signs in their practice, the result will never be the same. This is because repetition has difference embedded within it, an internal difference between spaces of change and transformation that are unending. As cultural theorist and scholar Claire Colebrook (2002) explains, “The power of life is difference and repetition, or the eternal return of difference. Each event of life transforms the whole of life, and does this over and over again” (p. 121). In the same way that if you were to repeat your reading of this dissertation again and again, your lived experience of reading it will never actually be the same, even though you are engaging in the same actions repeatedly.⁹

Deleuze (1968/1994) uses the example of the artist, explaining how the artist comes to the figure again and again, but each time they “combine an element of one instance with another element of the following instance” (p. 19). The artist returns to the canvas again and again, returning to the philosophical concept again and again, each time with interlocking elements that put forth changes. Consequently, while this research is repeatable to some degree, it is not generalizable. And while this could be perceived as a limitation of the study, I believe it actually supports the underlying premise that ontology and epistemology are not separate. Ways of knowing are messy and entangled with ways of being. Through the repetition of making, the

⁹Every night we came together and played a game of chance and strategy,
We expanded. We contracted.
We welcomed and invited.
We never knew the outcome of our actions, but we knew there would be one waiting.
Night after night, forging a path for ourselves during a time of complete upheaval.
We created a space to hold onto, finding and giving ourselves to the process, to the outcome, to the turn of the tile,
the roll of the dice.
Strangely, we found stability through the repeated invitation of chance.
Our routine gave us the gift of stability and possibility.

rigor of continuously returning, we keep the process open to that which cannot be captured through words and pre-determined methods. We re-visit the messiness again and again, extending ourselves just a little further each time. This is what I believe Manning (2016) identifies as technicities.

When I first read about technicity, my mind started to spin, like someone had cut straight through to my center. I had been engaging in-and-with technicity all along, but did not have the words to articulate what I was doing. When I came across research-creation, and specifically the concept of technicity, my world shook. My body trembled as it is now, while I write this section. There is something so palpable about research-creation and technicity for me that it is genuinely hard to describe through the limitations of language. Consequently, I need to lean on Manning's (2016) articulations of technicity as, "the modality for creating out of a system of techniques the more-than of system, the experience of the work's opening itself to its excess, to what cannot be captured by repetition" (p. 136). She continues to say, "think technicity as the process that stretches out from technique, creating brief interludes of the more-than of technique, gathering from the implicit the force of form" (p. 137). This, technicity is what I was doing!



(un-titled)

I was coming back again and again to the concept of signs, to sign-encounters, to the painting-with, the doing-with, and the making-with of this lived inquiry. I was stretching across techniques and touching or tapping into the more-than, the implicit force of returning to these practices again and again, in a way that exceeds the boundaries of the act itself. Like the crossing of sensations and the repeated embodiment of force, technicity became the process of stretching technique for me even though I had no words to describe it at the time. So, while it took me a seemingly ridiculous amount of time to understand what I was doing, this research does have its own form of becoming—its own fluid movement that takes shape through the process of repeatedly standing in spaces of uncertainty, spaces of ruptures and cuts in the everyday life. Research-creation recognizes how knowledge production and understanding come through negotiations and layers of lived experience.

I believe in maintaining the ability to move and shift in response to, and in conjunction with, the movement of research, the movements of philosophy and concepts as they pass through planes of art-making, teaching, writing, and living. Does this mean I am against methodology in general? No, but I am cautious. I realize we need ways of sense-making, and for some studies, methodologies are needed. St. Pierre (2021), who is well known for her work in post-qualitative research, writes that in order to commit to post-qualitative inquiry we must “refuse any pre-existing research methodology” and “embrace the onto-epistemology and concepts of the philosophical tradition, including poststructuralism” (p. 164). While I understand the reasoning for her position, personally I am not comfortable denouncing or refusing pre-existing methodologies.

Methodology is a form of sense-making. It gives us ways to understand, to see, to fit things together and pull things apart. Yet, at the same time, it also denies the potential of new

formations of knowledge, ones that cannot be categorized with pre-existing models. Determining a methodology in advance turns away from certain sensibilities that aren't created within given structures and attaching to one over the other causes us to miss things, to miss details and inherent difference. Instead, I had to wait until I could understand this work, methodologically, in response or in relation to the lived inquiry. Pre-determining a methodology, inherently meant losing the potential of what other methodologies might have enabled. For example, if my research methodology was qualitative and I was relying on informal interviews of my children or my students, then I would miss the heavy lifting that I needed to do for myself. Missing that component, presumably, would have changed the outcome and possibly the direction of this study altogether. So, while I will not denounce all others, I will admit to being cautious and wary of highly structured methodologies and their broad application. This wariness, over time, enabled me to stay attuned to methodological turns in my own work, and eventually led me to research-creation.

Throughout this research, my intent was never to test the concept of apprenticeship to signs, but to sincerely be-with it, to learn from it, to consider what it might look like, act like, do, and *become-with* art education. For me and for this study, that required trusting in the process of art-making and trusting that philosophical concepts themselves will pass through planes of making, writing, conversations, deep-thinking and more, shifting as they move about, pressing up against my understandings of the world, and often pointing towards my own biases. After traveling through this process in a highly lived and embodied way, I see how research-creation is the recognition of repetition viewed through differences. If we can approach the work through repetition and difference, then we can better understand the changes in process. But when the rupture is too big, we lose connection. We get uncomfortable and we want to make sense of our

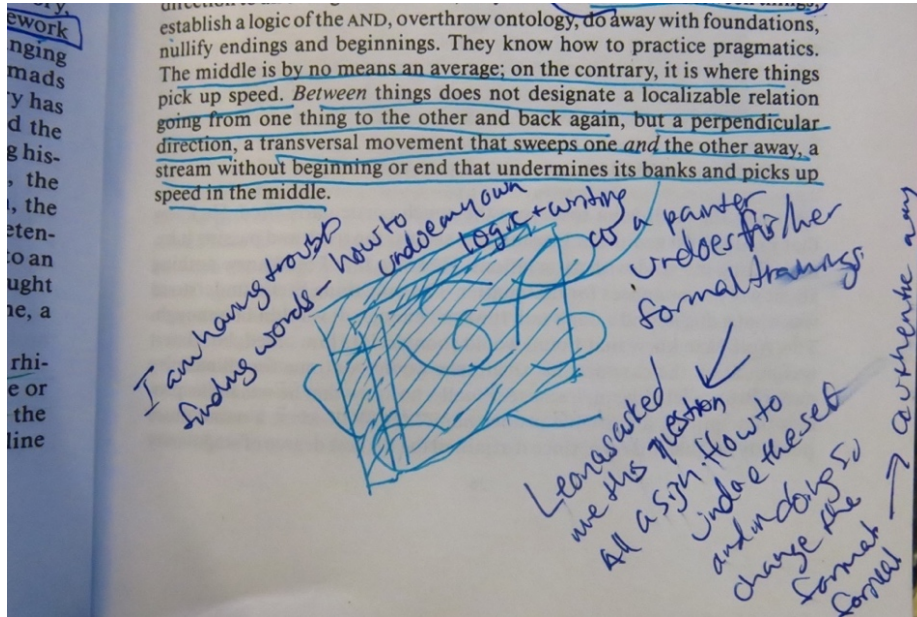
own discomfort. Instead, I believe as a methodology, research-creation allows us to stand in the sensation of the rupture and acknowledge its complexity, while experiencing an aspect of the sign and of art-making that is somewhere between the empirical and transcendental. It allows forces to work through you, instead of you working upon them, by resisting formalized methods and recognizing the messiness of research. The kicker, however, is you have to do the work.



(un-titled)

You have to wait it out, not as a passive entity but as an active maker and producer of relational knowledge, seeking to touch upon the side of pure difference through repetition and being a witness to your own change as well as changes in your students. This means we need to spend longer in our own practice, slowing ourselves down and turning towards the sign-encounter through a variety of means. We need to embrace the rigor of the work and actively wait for something to emerge as we engage ourselves and our students in the process that may be repetitious. Yet, embracing the rigor of the work does not mean deepening our attachments to methods, but as a collective whole reworking how we perceive the construction of knowledge and releasing ourselves from previous understanding of research and methodology overall. My hope is that by offering these frame-works to you, dear reader, we will be able to engage

differently in those moments that might tempt us to return to more traditional, isolated, ways of thinking and knowing, and instead, push onward into our own space of thinking and that supports new processes of valuation and investigation.



(un-titled)

Diffraction and Muddle-ing

If we are talking about recalibrating how we come to know, how we come to the creation of knowledge, in the context of signs and art-making, then we need to create new means for evaluation. Or, as Manning (2015) writes, “new ways of valuing what we do” (p. 53). I interpret this to mean we need to rethink how we evaluate these new forms of knowledge that might not have a system in place. For example, if someone were to ask me six months ago about the analysis of data in the context of this research-creation, that would have been difficult to pinpoint because traditional forms of evaluation do not work for this type of engagement. This formation of knowledge is attributed to what lies between, in between the thinking, doing, making. Instead, I had to shift my own thinking to consider where the evaluation of the experience takes place, and how I might place a new or different kind of value on those in-between spaces that I did not

take into consideration prior to this project. The necessity for this recalibration of what analysis means and where analysis happens within research-creation, did not occur to me until about a month ago, in Feb/March of 2021. I had a moment when I realized the question of research analysis, just as the question of research methodology, has to be rethought—it is relational. We have to think of analysis as happening in the transversal spaces, as lines of thought and lines of making move between planes of living. It is in this open space that analysis occurs. Yet, I couldn't understand that until much later in this process, until I was *muddle-ing* in the middle for quite some time.

This in-between space, embedded within the crossover between thinking and making, is where ontology and epistemology are suspended and judgements are not yet formed; it is where recognition and representation has not yet taken shape and where one might engage in a diffractive reading of insights through one another (Barad, 2012). Diffraction, a term originally brought into the field of new materialism and feminist research by author Donna Haraway (1997), emphasizes how patterns that interfere with one another can alter our lived experience and how we make meaning in the world. As Barad (2007) states, diffraction “attends to the relational nature of difference” (p. 72). It is the paying attention to difference caused by movement between surfaces, between old ways of knowing and new ways of knowing, between pre-Covid and post-Covid, between two-sides of any significant rupture. If we can pay attention to the difference, the splitting of the light, then maybe we can sustain the rupture long enough for clarity and significant change. This process of splitting open, the diffraction of light and arguably the diffraction of thought, is, I believe, a necessary component of one's commitment to staying and moving from the middle.

The idea of diffractive analysis comes out of new materialisms and its shift from

geometrical optics to one of physical optics (Barad, 2008). Geometric optics are based off of the laws of refraction, where the same is displaced elsewhere (think mirrors and reflection). With geometric optics, only the subject and object are taken into account. Alternatively, physical optics, according to Barad (2008), also pay attention to the apparatus in which they appear to us. With physical optics, the gap between subject and object has merged through a sort of entanglement of the two (Barad, 2012). Physical optics asks how does the reflection in the mirror happen, not only inquiring about the physical object of the mirror but also the bending of light that makes reflection even possible; it is the analysis of the conditions of possibility. As such, physical optics provides us with an alternative way of thinking about the lived experience. It is a reading of the lived experiences and insights through one another, noting patterns of difference and “where the effects of difference appear” (Haraway, 1992, p. 300).¹⁰ As Barad (2008) explains, “diffractions are attuned to differences—differences that our knowledge-making practices make and the effects they have on the world” (p. 72). Therefore, as our knowledge-making practices change, so too does diffractive analysis. If we shift our ways of knowing, then we have to shift our ways of analyzing knowing to include the stuff, the space, the bending of light, in the middle. This is the analysis of the space in-between your reflection and your physical body, which is relational and entangled.

While diffraction on its own can be claimed as a methodology, I am not using the concept as a methodology. Rather I am employing diffraction as a technique, a way of reading and analyzing the lived experience of this study—it serves as a way of noting differences and reading

¹⁰Every night as a child, I would ask my dad to tell me why the sky was blue. I don't recall the details of his answer, which seemed more like a story to my child-mind, but I do recall him saying it is not actually blue. We only see it as blue. This fascinated me. Why? What happens to make us perceive the sky as blue? Why do we perceive anything as we perceive it? In some ways, I am still searching for these answers, trying to stay in the middle. Again and again, I would request the story of the blue sky. Ingold (2011) explains “The sky then is not an object of perception. It is not so much what we see as what we see *in*. We see in the sky as we see in the light, because the sky *is* light” (p. 129).

insights with and through one another, which is not necessarily new to art education. Within the last five years, and I speculate with the growing number of art educators engaging in arts-based research, this idea has gained more traction. Art educators, such as Rita Irwin, Natalie LeBlanc, and Valerie Triggs (2019), talk about diffraction in terms of its relationality. They (Irwin, LeBlanc, & Triggs, 2019) explain how diffraction is “patterns made by overlapping disturbances produced by water, light, as well as the physicalities of other social movement” (p. 90) and argue that art education mentors and mentees have a diffracted relationship, shifting and moving in response to material conditions as well as social and cultural ones (p. 90). Here diffractive analysis is being used as the study of how things move against one another, noting difference and changes as shifts happens. It is my position, however, that diffractive analysis happens in the middle, in the space of conceptualizing and creating as practices that require a commitment to *muddle-ing* (moving and shifting in the middle), and apprenticing oneself to whatever may emerge

Muddle as a noun means to be in an untidy or disorganized state. As a verb it means to bring into disorder or a chaotic state (Meriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d). Here, I use the term *muddle-ing* as intentionally being in a disorganized state. It is staying in the transversal spaces intentionally as a way of valuing the middle, and re-valuing forms of knowledge that might not fit into other pre-established ways of knowing. Muddle-ing means to stay in this conceptually open space where one might resist the temptation to simply reflect, looking back or mirroring in one direction with a distinct division of subject and object. Instead, *muddle-ing* is to take a closer look at difference and engage in a diffractive reading of insights and the lived experiences. It is the willingness to stay within the in-between space. This diffractive reading, I believe, happens in and through the *muddle-ing*, and as such, new ways of not only evaluating, but actually

valuing those spaces, that process, and the formation of new knowledge can emerge. Muddle-ing can happen anywhere, in your thinking, in your making, in your doing. You might engage in muddle-ing while teaching, on walks with your children, on bike rides, with and through the making of art, as one's hands are covered in paint pressing against the canvas. Muddle-ing asks that you do not seek or settle for answers tightly wound up in logic and common sense, but that you stay in the muddle-middle, stay with the problems and the questions, open to shifts and pivots, to drips of paint that make themselves known, to paint that bleeds under the tape, to threads that come undone. Muddle-ing is a willingness not to have immediate answers and a willingness to be open to new problems as they arrive. To bring this full circle, I believe being in a state of muddle-ing is actually a necessary component for diffractive analysis to occur.

As we try to figure out how to take a sensation, a feeling, the affect of a sign-encounter and fold, unfold, and re-fold it into our understanding of the world, we must be willing to be in a disorganized state at least for a bit. We must come to the space of the middle with a willingness to touch upon the chaos, to feel the vulnerability. Similar to what Isabelle Stengers, Brian Massumi, and Erin Manning (2009) identify as meso, it is a practice of thinking in the middle. Like a shifting form traveling through states of becoming, we must engage the moments of uncertainty and *detrterritorialization*—those times when we tremble as we write, when we stab the canvas, when we cry on the floor, when we splash paint all over our bodies and dance. We must engage the unknown and uncertainty for just a bit, touching upon the transcendental briefly through the act of making and doing, but not leaning into it so much that chaos and disorder lead to a kind of nothingness—an unsustainable absolute deterritorialization (Stengers, Massumi, & Manning, 2009). In other words, this is not about inviting infinite chaos into your classroom, but rather a live-able and healthy state of muddle-ing that allows you to see difference and read

insights through one another, entangled in-with-and-through the lived experience.



(un-titled)

I state this caution about complete chaos in the classroom up front, because at some point there must be a coming back, a finding of the borders of the canvas, a temporary stasis of orientation, a framing that begins to emerge and take shape. At some point, the diffractive analysis has to travel through a practice that lands the words on the page, the paint on the canvas, the closure of your class, the product created and hung in the hallway. There must be a moment when the muddle-ing stops, at least temporarily.¹¹



(Please return to the fortune teller to determine where you will go next_

¹¹Please spend some time muddle-ing with your fortune teller by folding and unfolding it repeatedly. Note how the edges respond to your fingers, how the paper feels, how it softens, bends, or tears. Observe how new creases come forth, new smudges, slight variations each time you engage with your fortune teller. How are you becoming-paper in this moment? Please repeat this gesture as much or as little as you choose. Once you are finished, please engage with your fortune teller once more in the traditional format, and determine where you go next.

CHAPTER 4

FRAME-WORK: UNCLENCHING FROM REPRESENTATION



(See instructions below.)

*Instructions: Before you read this next section please roll the dice that was sent to you or that you acquired on your own. Whatever number you landed on will be the Movement number of the CD 'Promises' you will play while engaging in a making-experience. Feel free to engage in this activity before reading this section, on breaks while reading this section, or after you conclude this section of the dissertation. The choice is yours. As you listen to the Movement correlating to the number on your die, please engage in mark making using whichever material you wrote on your fortune teller that goes with this section of the dissertation. You may make the marks on either the paper sent to you, or on some other surface of your choosing. I encourage you to consider the idea of signs, maybe even ponder signs in your personal life, while listening to the music and allowing yourself to create without worrying about the end product. Also, if there is no Movement number to correspond with the number on your dice, please re-roll the dice until it lands on any number from one through eight (for some of you, depending upon how many numbers are on your die). *If this is not your first time rolling the dice and making marks, please note you may use a different piece of heavy-weight paper per dissertation section, or you may LAYER your marks all onto one or two heavy-weight pieces of paper. Enjoy!*

This frame-work addresses the question: how do we unclench from representation in our teaching of art education for ourselves and our students so that we might stay with the strike of the sign? It is a discussion on how to offer spaces and experiences for your students that do not rely heavily on representation and interpretation for their artistic engagements and quite frankly, your teaching. So that when a sign strikes, the desire to lean on representation for perceived validation, security, truth, certainty, and even possibility, as well as the desire to apply closed interpretation, is suspended, and our urge to engage in both practices is unclenched. Please do not misunderstand, this frame-work is not calling for the doing away with all representation in the art room, nor is it meant to discredit the importance of representation, but rather place representation in question with, and in conversation with, affect and sensation produced by the strike of the sign. However, to understand why loosening the grip of representation is important for apprenticeship to signs in the context of art education, I need to explain a few things. The

first issue being the problem with representation, and its underlying ontological assumptions, and the second being the challenge with interpretation, and epistemological closures interpretation can bring to sign-encounters in the art room. Lastly, I will address potential entry points for releasing the grip these two have on pedagogical practices, and how these entry points might be used in the art classroom with signs.

The Problem with Representation and the Image of Thought

In his seminal text *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1968/1994) argues that philosophy has been enslaved to representation and the image of thought from the start. According to Deleuze (1968/1994), the image of thought and common sense serves as a way to help us make distinctions in the world but inherently limits our ability to conceive of anything beyond thought itself. Deleuze (1968/1994) discusses the well-known Descartes phrase, “I think therefore I am”, as a prime example of this limiting paradigm. In Descartes phrase, the words I think refer to an action based on common sense that appeals to all people and is presumably executed by all. Frequently stated phrases such as everybody knows and no one can deny it, reinforce these presuppositions about thought and the image of thought for all (Deleuze, 1968/1994, p. 130). For Deleuze (1968/1994), this image of thought and common sense is problematic as they limit our ability to think beyond thought itself and close off the potential encounter with the transcendental, the virtual plane of pure difference. In this case, difference does not mean the difference between two objects. This kind of difference is empirical and would indicate that difference is secondary; it comes after the recognition of two objects and their existence in the actual world. Instead, for Deleuze (1968/1994), difference, or what he calls pure difference, is primary. Pure difference is both being and non-being (Deleuze 1968/1994, p. 64), operating on the previously mentioned transcendental plane where all pre-beings, pre-

actualized things exist. And while art and art making offer potential access to this plane, common sense, made up of representation and recognition, arguably shut down that potential.



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Within the context of transcendental empiricism, common sense contains the presupposition that all people can see distinctions based off their own experiences; this includes ideas about schooling, learning, art making, etc. Common sense tells us what school looks and feels like. It keeps us in a place of acceptance without questioning until something happens to misalign our faculties and forces us to think about schooling, learning, art making, in new ways. According to Deleuze (1968/1994), common sense is made up of two parts, and it is these two parts that prevent us from moving beyond the image of thought to ask what would it be like to have a new notion of thinking and truth. He identifies these two parts as recognition and representation. The first half, recognition, is when one's faculties are united and consistent with one another. These faculties include things such as perception, memory, understanding, etc. Deleuze (1968/1994) states, "Thus, imagination, reason, and the understanding collaborate in the

case of knowledge and form a ‘logical common sense’” (p. 137). When the image or perceived image of something is in alignment with one’s feelings, common sense is generated. It is all the faculties working in accordance, or as he (Deleuze, 1968/1994) states “in the form of harmony” with one another (p. 137). Yet, when these faculties are not in accordance with each other, common sense and the image of thought begin to waver.

The other half of common sense, representation, as it is identified in *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze, 1968/1994), takes the form of comparisons to things already known—it is the half of common sense that enables us to create analogies and typologies of things. These typologies in turn lead to judgment. We place value on things or experiences and then generalize based off of that assignment of worth. The world is represented to us through experiences, and these representations inhibit us from rethinking thought itself. Representation is always in relation to what is perceived to be known, and consequently, difference becomes secondary. As Deleuze (1968/1994) states, “difference becomes an object of representation always in relation to a conceived identity, a judged analogy, an imagined opposition or a perceived similitude” (p. 138). In other words, difference used in this way is only in comparison of two things, arising from two identities, and the ‘re’ in re-presentation stands for presentation again and again. Pure difference (or difference itself) is not conceivable beyond that which is perceived or recognized. Deleuze (1968/1994) continues on to state, “For this reason, the world is characterized of its inability to conceive of pure difference and repetition by itself” (p. 138). In essence, we are trapped in a dogmatic image of thought where one can only recognize the things they have come in contact with, drawing on representations based off of experiences. This is exactly why diverse representation is important, but it is also exactly why our heavy dependency on representation inherently keeps limitations in place—it is both an active ingredient of how we understand the

world, and a repellant for understanding the world in new ways.



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The problem of representation has been discussed by philosophers, artists, social scientists, and many more working in the humanities for years. From Aristotle to Kant, from post-Kantianism to post-structuralism, representation has been discussed and addressed over the years and in multiple ways (Jelaca, 2015). Scholars such as Michel Foucault (1970) and Judith Butler (1990) have challenged representation and representationalism in their own work. However, Deleuze (1968/1994) takes a particularly strong stance against representation because of its ability to keep one locked into common sense and the image of thought. In relationship to art and art making, this presents a dilemma. On one hand, it can be argued that art making is one of the few practices that holds the potential to give momentary access to the transcendental, and

yet art and art making are often perceived as representational either in form or practice. This is a conflict of interests—it inherently becomes a struggle to unclench oneself from representation within a structure that reinforces representation. In other words, the representation circles back on itself. If we can only see what we already know, and cannot see things we haven't already seen, then we are trapped in what is recognizable and what is re-presented again and again. In essence, representation causes re-presentation and re-presentation solidifies representation. If we are caught in this limited cycle, then we can never see beyond the representation. The sign, however, holds the potential to break the round robin cycle if we are willing to commit to it.

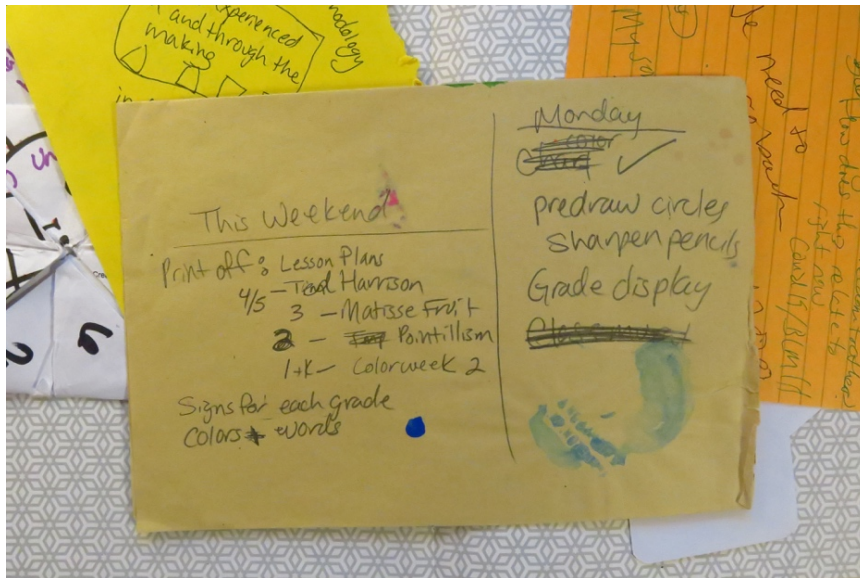
Representationalism

For the purposes of this dissertation, I would like to give a brief account of representationalism and make a distinction between when I use the word representation and re-presentation. Representationalism is the philosophical position that the mind perceives images (representations) of objects existing outside the mind, not necessarily the objects themselves. As new materialist Karen Barad (2003) explains, “representationalism is the belief in the ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent” (p. 804). It is the gap between representations, that which is perceived to be represented, and the mind of the representor. The problem with this position is that it assumes the idea of knowledge and objects existing outside of the self as independent entities. It is a “problem of the relation between thought and being, or mind and world” (Jalaca, 2015, p. 1). This argument over representation reaches as far back as Plato and Aristotle. However, for the purposes of this study, I am not going to go deeply into the historical arguments on representationalism, but rather point to the underlying problems with this position for art education and for this study in particular.



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The ontological gap underlying representationalism, translates to a divide between mind and object which is in opposition to the central argument of this dissertation, that signs remind us of our more lateral, rhizomatic, relations with all matter and material in the world. As such, the strike of the signs has the potential to cause us to re-think, and I would even argue re-sense, our connection. This results in the opening to new possibilities not thinkable before that moment. For new materialist authors such as Dona Haraway (2008, 2016) and Karen Barad (2003, 2007), this de-centralizing of the human is the flattening of ontology; it is the undoing of the perceived human at the center of being and knowing and a closing of that gap between mind/object. This is important to the concept of apprenticeship to signs. An ontology based on representationalism, with a divide between the world and the mind, cuts off the potential for re-thinking our intra-connections at the knees. The potential of the sign's force is truncated before we even get started on doing the work to stand in this newly formed open space. For the art teacher, this division between mind/object looks like more teacher-directed, procedural, imitation-based lesson plans. You see the object, you perceive the object (or image) as separate from the self, and you re-present it on the page.



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As a seasoned art educator, I can vouch that these lessons are more familiar, and easier to explain to students, teachers, admin, parents, etc. Kindergarten art lessons modeled after French artist Mondrian's grid paintings easily work for teaching about primary colors and vertical and horizontal lines. These lessons are descriptive, fit in nice clean boxes, and are overall less scary for the instructor; they are easier and more controllable for a tired teacher who might be anxious about classroom management. I know this, because I have done this. Yet, the problem is that these more teacher-directed, procedural, lessons reinforce the object/mind division and place the human in control, essentially closing off uncertainty, unpredictability, and any openings for re-thinking through the strike of the sign. The lessons are recognizable and reinforce right and wrong; they do not stretch the thinking of students or teachers by much. As such, ways of doing and making become distinct and with clear delineations from other daily actions. I am guilty of these actions. I have clung to representationalism and the more procedural lessons in the past. I did this not because I did not have other ideas, but because I was scared to let go of control and follow the signs. I was fearful of standing in the space of uncertainty, the space of my own flattened ontology. As the instructor, I was moving from a place of representationalism out of

fear, and perhaps exhaustion, and reinforcing the circle of re-presenting representation.

Representation and Re-Presentation

For this study, I use the term representation to refer to Deleuze's (1968/1994) explanation of representation as "I think" and the four elements that the phrase "I think" encompasses. These four elements are "identity with regard to concepts, opposition with regard to the determination of concepts, analogy with regard to judgment, resemblance with regard to objects" (p. 137). Paired down, these faculties become: I conceive, I judge, I image, and I perceive. And when these four faculties are in alignment, representation is accepted without question and without the consideration of the transcendental or even pure difference. Pure difference, not difference between objects, become secondary and once again thought is satisfied through common sense (representation and recognition). In other words, representation does not push us past what is recognizable, what is potentially transcendental or on the virtual plane, if all faculties are aligned through the re-presentation of representation. When our faculties are aligned, representation and recognition keep us locked into the actual plane and limit our ability to access the transcendental.

Re-presentation, as I use it here, is the recycling and re-enforcing of these four elements that constitute "I think." It is the perpetuation of representation and recognition that keeps us securely in the image of thought and our faculties aligned. The problem or disconnect, however, arises when one of those elements gets thrown out of joint, when we try to re-present our understanding of representation and something goes awry. As an art educator working in public schools, and as a mother to three young children, I have seen this problem of representation, and representationalism, come up time and time again. You probably are familiar with these moments too. Times when a child, or even an adult, who is frustrated and calls out, "I can't draw _____ (fill in the blank)" or "I can't paint _____ (fill in the blank)." These statements are typically

followed by a harsh general statement about the self, such as “I am not good at art.” In these moments of understandable disappointment and sometimes anger, representation has failed the student, and in turn, the students perceive themselves as having failed the pressure of representation. The object is viewed as separate from the self, and therefore the inability to represent it in a way that is understood or ‘acceptable’ causes disappointment, generating a desire to sear off the discomfort by shutting down or giving up. In these moments, art making rapidly moves from a place of open, rhizomatic, with-ness, to a closed, direct, more conclusive line of thinking, knowing, and doing. Art making becomes a place of answers, of rights and wrongs, of binaries and judgment, rather than a place of questions and sign suspension. As a result, the opportunity to engage in one’s own with-ness, with a more expansive vision of possibility, is exchanged for one of limited representation that often reinforces binaries and a more human-centered domination over materials. We see this breakdown happen in the art classroom time and time again.



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The re-presentation of representation in the art room reinforces the need to feel secure

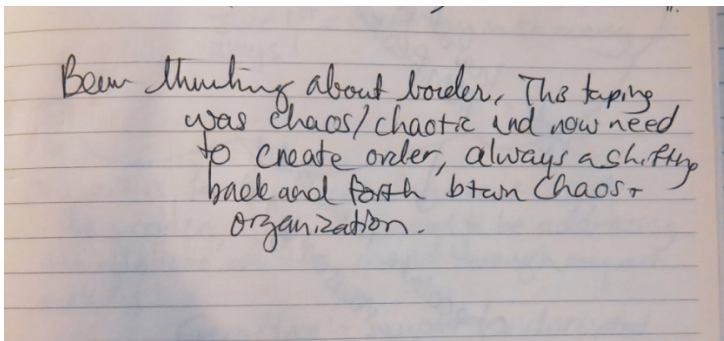
and return to what is known, what appears to be achievable. “I want to get it right” or “I can’t get it right” are frequently overheard statements in the art room. And while we might tell students “there is not right or wrong in the art room,” it is important to understand the subtext of these statements. The desire to get things right assumes the existence of representation outside of the self and points directly back to our dependency on representation for interpreting the world and our place in it. There is a natural desire to fall back on certainty, to close the rhizomatic gap, which is understandable. It is no wonder students feel pressure to represent, to conceive, to judge, to form compartmentalized information and typologies of understanding. Ways of being, ontological matters, are presumed separate from ways of knowing and perceiving, when really this is a false separation. Barad (2003) points to grammar as an example of this conundrum. She (Barad, 2003) explains how the assumption that grammatical structures and categories “reflect the underlying structure of the world” is seductive and quietly reinforces the idea that words, along with other forms of representation, re-present pre-existing things in the world (p. 802). In turn, this presumed underlying structure further suggests that ways of being and knowing are separate entities, not co-joined in the making of the world, the doing of the world, the action of being in-the-world, and being with-the-world in an ontologically flattened way.

Alternatively, this study takes an *agential realist position*, a concept originally started by the Danish physicist Neils Bohr and extended with-and-through the work of Karen Barad (2007). This position relies on the notion that existence is not separate from phenomenon, that matter is agentic and generative, and it is only through our intra-actions (not inter which implies outside existing entities) with matter that we can come to understand our ways of being and knowing in the world. In other words, to feel our existence and with-ness with matter, we must get our hands dirty! We must engage in what Barad (2007) identifies as performative alternatives or “a

performative understanding of discursive practices” (p. 133). These alternatives are “matters of practices, doings, and actions” that “insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being” (Barad, 2007, pp. 133 & 135). With agential realism, we are not merely reflecting on the world, but we are engaged with it, and from these engagements comes new understandings and new knowledge, including the engagements of thinking, observing, and theorizing. If this is the case, then ontology (the study of ways of being) cannot be separated from epistemology (the study of ways of knowing). The two are entangled with collapsed boundaries that create a third option, an *onto-epistemological approach*, or as Barad (2007) identifies an *ethico-onto-epistemological approach*, that acknowledges how knowledge and being cannot be teased out.

Taking an onto-epistemological lens, means recognizing that our intra-actions with matter and materials cannot be separated from our knowledge of it, hence material intra-actions versus interactions which implies materials existing outside of our engagements with them. In the editor’s note of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983a) *What is a minor literature*, the author Robert Brinkley explains how “typically the interpreter is an agent of a dominant social code; the interpretation reproduces the material it considers as instances of the code” (p. 14). In other words, interpretation re-inscribes previously established interpretations and continues to, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983a) express, *territorialize* our understandings of the world based on coded cultural spaces. Interpretation is essentially a feedback loop that preys on one’s desire for interpretation in the first place and reinforces an understanding of the world couched in the representational divide between self and object. Therefore, we have to find a way to *de-territorialize* and open up spaces that suspend interpretation and give ourselves the time and space to stand in the strike of the sign. Naturally, there is a knee-jerk reaction to assign meaning

to the strike of the sign, or at the very least make everything seem in harmony once again. We have a desire to close off discomfort by applying interpretation. But acting upon this knee jerk reaction (which is sometimes arguably a coping mechanism if the sign is perceived negatively), only seals back up the cut, and denies the force of the sign. In other words, we need exit strategies and pathways for redirecting our own urges to shut down, close off, and keep ourselves trapped in representation/interpretation. *I believe these exit points—where we might divert our energy away from representation and find new sign-related holes to burrow into—is through intimate experimental material engagements and an attunement toward material intra-actions.*



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In the context of transcendental empiricism, the concept of deterritorialization is directly

related to the idea of the rhizome mentioned above. According to Deleuze and Guattari, (1980/1987) the rhizome is made up of lines of segmentarity that is stratified, organized, territorialized, etc. (p. 9). With deterritorialization, the “segmentary lines explode” (p. 9), and create these sort of post-explosion lines that Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) calls lines of flight. But even these lines are inherently part of the rhizome as well. They are not outside the structure even though they are from the rupture itself. In other words, even lines that unravel us, such as the possum encounters, continue to tie together again, so that when there is a rupture or a break thanks to a sign-encounter, the potential for reintegration or restratification is always-already there. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) explain “individuals contain microfascism just waiting to crystallize” (p. 10). The trick, however, is to make sure that the process of crystallization is not simply reintegration without change, without modified thinking. This kind of reintegration only reinforces power structures, reinforces previously formed knowledge based off of representation, and closes off the openness needed for following signs. Through the cut in the rhizome, the strike of the sign presents an opportunity for change and growth, but it takes work. This work, this patience, is the labor of staying with the sign, of committing to the directions of the sign and apprenticing the self to the sign, so that deviations and disruptions are not lost through the turning back towards representation too soon, without real change through alternative reintegration connections.¹²

Unclenching and Current Trends in Art Education

To some degree, these arguments are not new to the field of art education. However, the

¹²As a child, before bed every night I would lay on my back and my mother would insert a key into a small, plastic, flesh-colored expander on the roof of my mouth. She would turn the key ever so slightly. I remember the click of each turn, and the feel of the ridged plastic expander against my tongue. Gradually, my mouth widened enough for all my teeth to grow in and we were able to take the expander out. I no longer have the expander in my mouth, but I often wonder if my teeth have begun to migrate, closing the gap once again or perhaps taking on a new shape.

context in which I am suggesting them is different. For some time now, art educators have been addressing the need to pay attention to material intra-actions as a means for opening up ways of learning and creating more learner-directed experiences. This is particularly true in the case of early childhood art education, as well as art education movements such as Teaching for Artistic Behaviors (TAB) and Choice-Based Art Education (CBAE). Scholars, such as: Jayne Osgood (2019); Marta Cabral (2018); Christopher Schults (2018); Hayon Park (2018); Linda Knight (2017); George Szekely (2015); Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind and Kocher (2017); and Clark, Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Hodgins (2014), encourage and advocate for spending extended amounts of time with materials in the interest of play, curiosity, and as ways to de-center the human. The TAB and CBAE movement, also asks us to reconsider materials in relation to curriculum planning and classroom structure (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018). Both TAB and CBAE are learner-directed approaches that focus on rethinking the teacher/student dynamic and undoing traditional curricular structures. With these, the child is positioned as the artist and the art room as his/her/their art studio space (Bedrick, 2012; Gates, 2016; Jaquith & Hathaway, 2012). TAB and CBAE specifically ask what does an artist do, emphasizing process over product primarily. Additionally, approaches such as Studio Habits of Mind, as discussed in *Studio Thinking* (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2013, 2007; Hogan, Hetland, Jaquith, Winner, & Nelson, 2008) offer similar arguments, presenting distinct ways of thinking and structuring the classroom in a manner that reinforces those dispositions. For example, the habit or disposition called ‘engage and persist’ looks like slowing down your art making and completing what you started. Additionally, educational theorists and philosophers, such as Gert Biesta (2015, 2018), David R. Cole (2018), and Christopher Naughton (2018), also call for a rethinking of arts in education through the lens of philosophy. Biesta (2018), who leans more towards Derrida and

Heidegger, specifically asks readers to consider an arts education model that is not child-centered nor curriculum-centered, but rather ‘world-centered,’ looking critically at what it means to be in dialogue with the world and not be at the center of it (p. 15). Along similar lines, art educator and scholar Tyson Lewis (2018) also calls for a re-tooling of art education through the *inoperativity* of materials themselves, suggesting we might temporarily release material of their previously conceived use and find the impossible or inconceivable through that suspension of known understanding. Lewis’ position is the most aligned to this study, but with the primary difference being the location of the sign and its unpredictability. Lewis (2018) and I share a focus on disruption that creates space for re-consideration and engaging in an undoing of sorts. However, the way in which we are framing it is different. Whereas Lewis is suggesting we find ways to neutralization and suspend traditional notions of learning and teaching by rendering certain materials inoperative, and seeing what arises from that inoperativity, I am calling for a slightly different approach. Through this study, and this dissertation, I am suggesting we have to commit to the signs first, to the variant of the unknown, and move from a place that is sign-directed. For me, and for this study, it is about not knowing the signs in advance, and allowing ourselves to turn towards or be guided by the strike of the sign, including those experienced with and through material intra-actions.

This study places the sign not in the material itself, but in those unpredictable moments when life is cut, torn, ripped open in a surprising way. As Deleuze (1968/1994) points out, the sign is both virtual and actual. It is form and formless at the same time, having a physicality to it but also pointing to something that is beyond the physical. Drohan (2010) explains how under transcendental empiricism the sign is positioned between the impression producing it and the essence produced by it (p. 278). Art, according to Deleuze (1972/2000) has the ability to tap into

this beyond-physical, essence, side of the sign. He (Deleuze, 1972/2000) states, “art gives us the true unity: unity of an immaterial sign and of an entirely spiritual meaning. The essence is precisely this, unity of sign and meaning as it is revealed in the work of art” (p. 40). I understand this to mean that it is through the art, and I would add art-making, that the meaning of the sign is revealed to us. Therefore, art making becomes the performative act that has the ability to sustain the immaterial side of the sign and keep the force of the sign open, as long as we can resist the urge to place a blanket of representationalism over the encounter.



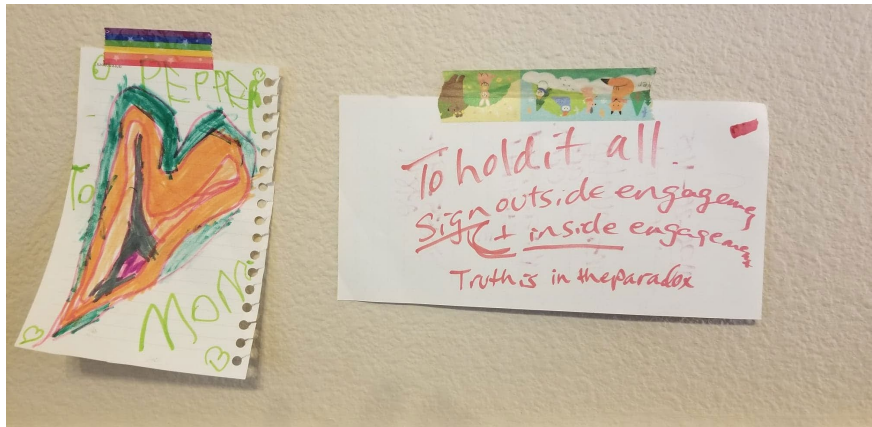
(un-titled)

I imagine at this point, you are probably saying that sounds good, but how? How do we unclench or loosen the grip of representationalism and representation so we might stay in the strike of the sign a little longer? From this study, I have come to believe that in order to do this, in order to

recalibrate our relationship with representation and interpretation, we need to be honest about how our human-centered engagements with materials drive and reinforce these divisions, and re-approach how we hold space for ourselves and our students through slower, more intimate material intra-actions that enable, enhance, and expand one's own sense of being-with.¹³

That is Great, But How?

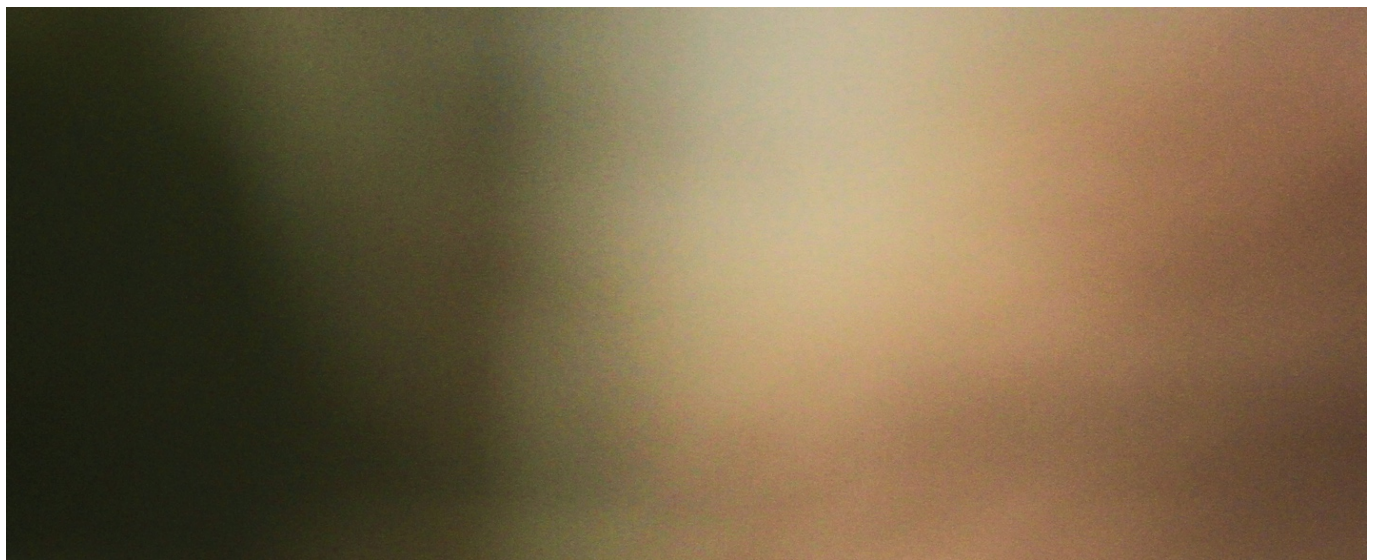
To enable this shift, we must allow ourselves to be unearthed, to be uprooted from a hierarchical engagement with materials and replanted in a horizontal manner. Somehow, we have to create space that enables our relations, and our students' relations, with materials to change, so that we listen more closely, engage more fluidly, and lead with affect and sensation over representation and binaries (more on binaries in another frame-work). It is a subtle shift, but I have found through this research that this recalibration can hold open the strike of the sign in a gentle, supportive way. This does not mean leading with affect over representation isn't uncomfortable at times, but it does mean the discomfort is something to be acknowledged and not necessarily resolved.



(un-titled)

¹³At this time, please set aside your designated material for this section and choose one other piece of any art material to *be-with*. For example, if you have oil pastels as one of your four mediums, please take out ONE oil pastel from the box. Please set a timer for three minutes and simply *be-with* that one art material, in whatever form that looks like to you (holding it, using it on the page, smelling it, rolling it on your leg, drawing with it on a wall, dipping it in water, etc.).

We cannot achieve this unclenching from representation if we are closed off. As such, we must remind ourselves that it is okay to step away from a more empirically based art education way of teaching. It is ok to lead with affect, intuition, and a desire to feel, over a desire to present something recognizable and maintain faculty alignment. Therefore, my answer to the question “but how?” is not a magic formula nor is it a one-to-one answer. This is not a dissertation with pre-packaged curricular ideas. Instead, I will answer the ‘but how’ question in this way: After undergoing apprenticeship to signs I encountered for nearly two years, as a means to try and understand the relationship between signs and art education, I believe we need to shift where we place emphasis in, with, and through our teaching of art and art-making. We need to give ourselves permission to step into spaces of experimentation, attunement, vulnerability, and uncertainty as teachers and as artists in order to create a generative space for ourselves and our students. A space that is conducive to following signs and one where our relation with representation has shifted. One way to do this, I believe, is to challenge our relationship with materials and provide support for horizontal material engagements that prioritize affect and the discomfort of disorientation, over the security of representation or interpretation.



(un-titled)

For this framework specifically, I would like to focus on material experimentation and material attunement as having the potential to suspend the strike of the sign open for longer. And while I had hoped to resist relying too heavily on representation throughout this dissertation, I would like to provide you with an example of how material experimentation, can act like a surgeon's retractor, holding open the skin, muscles, tissues and bones until they are ready to be fused back together in a new way, a new form of becoming.

A Broken Lens: Material Experimentation and Letting Go

Since childhood, I have always loved photography. As a young child, I took photography and drawing/painting lessons every summer in Massachusetts. Art was my thing, and photography in particular came naturally to me. I remember desperately saving up my chore money to buy my first camera and develop my own film. I felt comfortable and confident with my photographic skills, even when I switched from film to digital in 2009. By that time, I had figured out what brought me the most success, usually measured by social media likes and requests for portrait sessions, engagement photos, etc. The digital camera had become my form of expression, as well as my emotional and financial security. Now, fast forward to 2019, and my photography practice begins to shift, crater, fade. I began to notice how my images never change that much. I used the same compositional tricks over and over again. My interactions (not intra) with the camera did not grow or expand in new ways. In other words, I was constantly regenerating, not noticing or staying in the cut of signs. Until one day things changed, and I was forcibly thrown into the space of the sign.

On this day, my favorite lens unexpectedly broke, and I could no longer rely on it. The lens that I perceived as an extension of my own body and of my own eyes, was in several pieces on my driveway. I felt angry. I felt sad. I felt anxious and a little lost. Additionally, I had recently

completed a graduate level photography class that brought about much grief and frustration for me. In hindsight I can see how this grief was due to my own lack of growth, but at the time I felt stuck in a cyclical space. I was unable to articulate clearly my photographic intentions or branch out into any form of photo-experimentation during the class. I was holding onto what I knew to be successful. I clung to the security of what I knew instead of turning towards the discomfort and slowing down the regeneration. I relied on a photographic path filled with representation, that had worked for me in the past, and one I could safely push on when ready. But that is the thing, dear reader, signs don't wait for you to be ready! They don't work on your time schedule. They simply happen in, through, and with your engagement with the world. These unexpected encounters occur through the disrupting of your daily habits and the uprooting of normalized understandings. You can choose to look the other way, to regenerate rapidly and in the same spot (in my case, have a new lens delivered to me overnight through Amazon). Or, you can choose to stand in the space of the sign, to lean into the discomfort and make yourself vulnerable to the pursuit of signs.



(un-titled)

Fortunately, I was already in the throes of this project when my lens broke and when my relationship to this tool that I knew so intimately was severed. As such, I sought to move within the space of the cut and resist the desire for quick regeneration (ordering a new lens). The strike of the sign, which manifested as a broken lens, released me from my preconceived ideas about my relationship with the camera and about what constitutes a good picture. In that releasing, in that freedom, came a turn or a pivot in my photographic work. The sign encounter shifted my work from documenting my children's creative intra-actions with materials of all kinds, to creating blurry pictures made through a variety of lenses constructed by my children and me. We made lenses out of aluminum cans and experimented with different size puncture holes. We placed the camera on automatic while spinning in chairs to see what images were produced. We played. We rejoiced in our material curiosity, and for a while I let go. I felt my rhizomatic connection on a deeper level through the act of letting go. I no longer worried about constructing the perfect image, or representing the perfect shot, but focused more on releasing control through the process of image making. Although I did not choose to make my favorite lens inoperative, I did capitalize on the forced inoperativity provided by the strike of the sign. By actively attempting to let go, and committing to whatever emerged under these new sign-directed conditions, I placed value on affect over representation and took a risk I presumably would not have taken otherwise.

Those blurry pictures took my work in a whole new direction, but that is another story for another time. The thing to note here, is that ordering another lens, and picking up where I left off, would have been an easy and painless return. I could have closed the rhizomatic gap and pushed aside the discomfort without much change to my work or my thinking. Instead, I decided to move from the space of the cut and keep that space open through material experimentation,

consciously trying to unclench from representation and hold open the space of the sign encounter by being-with the materiality of my camera (and my children) in new ways.

Material Attunement

Material attunement is the listening to more-than-human life. As Brigstocke and Noorani (2016) explain, “(a)ttuning to more-than-human worlds requires a radical decentering of authority, acknowledging the ways in which nonhuman forms of agency coauthor heterogeneous worlds” (p. 5). Staying attuned to materials means actively trying to be-with materials in your world and in your forms of making differently. The idea of attunement is often associated with phenomenological ideas of dwelling or worlding (Stewart, 2011). Heidegger (Heidegger & Figal, 2009), in particular, discusses attunements as ungraspable and fleeting (p. 85). The term is also associated with new materialism scholars, such as Donna Haraway (2008), Jane Bennet, (2009), and Karen Barad (2008), whose work involves an onto-epistemological position (explained more fully in another section) that recognizes the entangled nature of being and values encounters and affect in-and-through the lived experience (Brigstocke & Noorani, 2016).



(un-titled)

So, when I talk about staying attuned, it is about exercising a deep listening to the lived experience that goes beyond the sense of hearing. I cannot hear materials speak back through traditional understandings of the word, but if I can deeply “listen” to materials in an embodied and transversal way, possibilities begin to present themselves.



(un-titled)

In *Posthuman attunements: Aesthetics, authority, and the art of creative listening*, Brigstocke and Noorani (2016) discuss attunement as being affected by one’s environment. As they (Brigstocke & Noorani, 2016) state, “(a)ttunement also involves orientations to difference, dissonance, and suspension” (p. 3). More specifically Brigstocke and Noorani (2016) provide this understanding of attunement as, “When objects, forces, and spirits that exceed the spaces and times of human experience press themselves on us with increasing force, this creates heightened challenges for attuning to our environments” (p. 3). I believe this presentation of attunement is most closely aligned with my position for this study and how I am using the idea of attunement as a means for unclenching with representation. Deeply listening to materials, being attuned to them, is not only being attentive to the physicalities of the material, the materiality of it, but the affect produced, carried, and pressed upon our own bodies as we come into being with

it, becoming acutely aware of the qualities and resonances of the material. We have to pay attention to what Barad (2003) calls the matterings of matter—inquiring about how matter comes to matter as an “active participant in the world’s becoming” (p. 803). Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart (2011), who traces her ideas on worlding back to the phenomenologist Heidegger, takes a similar approach. She (Stewart, 2011) argues things matter because they have “qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements” (p. 445). However, it is really up to us to take note and try to be with these qualities, these forces, these relations in new ways.

I believe strongly that to engage in this kind of work, we must slow down, paying attention to our physical responses and how we are in relation with the mattering of matter. This is where we muddle once again. In order to notice our own diffracted selves as we come into contact with materials, both human and beyond-human, there must first be a willingness to stay in the center, to reach in, to get quiet/patient, to muddle in newly formed spaces, to pay attention to the signs and how they show up. This is tricky. It requires preparing to let go of the position of human over material, letting go of the point of view that humans use materials, and instead, consider how we enter into a relationship with materials (with matter) that may seem irrational or non-sensical. We attune not only to the materiality of the material, but its affect, its temporalities, its resonances, which can be challenging to do in practice. Therefore, if attuning to materials means paying attention to their affective qualities, then it is important to consider and discuss what Kathleen Stewart (2011) identifies as the affective subject. As she (Stewart, 2011) explains, an affective subject is a person who waits in the company of others for things to arrive, one who learns to sense out what’s coming and what forms it might take, one who aims to notice what crystallizes and how things ricochet and rebound in a social-natural-aesthetic ecology of compositions and thresholds of expressivity. (p. 194)

The affective subject, which I would prefer to call the *affective practitioner*, is attentive to the assemblage of life, which means looking closely at how we come in and out of contact with materials and being patient with ourselves and the world at large. This attentiveness and patience is not always easy to accomplish as part of our daily and artistic practice, which, I believe, is where signs, as forces of disruption, can actually assist in the process. They direct our attention towards certain openings, spaces, and possibilities if we are willing to do the work of releasing or letting go of our attachment to representation and be more attuned to those materials with which we encounter. In summary, the sign strikes and we begin to burrow in and muddle around. Within this space of muddle-ing, however, there is a unique opportunity to be more attentive, more attuned, more expanded in our rhizomatic relations with materials in the world and with the sensation of the sign—two elements that are always-already entangled.

This concept of material attunement as a means for unclenching from representation, along with my journey in and through this research, has genuinely shifted my ways of being in the world. My teaching, my presentation style, my play time with my kids, my own art making, have all changed in some way due to this shift. And while attunement and affect are challenging concepts to describe using the limitations of language, they have had an immense impact on me as an artist, educator, etc. Since this project, I find myself thinking about pedagogy as an opportunity to create spaces for students to spend longer amounts of time with materials, not simply in the way of experimentation, but to be-with them differently. I ask students to consider their relationship with materials in a bodily way, considering senses, feelings, the “atmosphere” of an encounter, the resonances of an engagement (Frykman & Frykman, 2016). I am constantly seeking ways to craft learning experiences that shift, disrupt, and engage our relations with materials in softening, unexpected, and potentially re-orienting ways. For me, attunement in

pedagogical practice, has become a way of experiencing and privileging the affective qualities over presumed uses of materials with which we come in contact (including other humans).

Additionally, I have become more attuned to my pedagogical practices, looking closely at my relationship to practice as a whole and how I might take up this gift of an opportunity to be, or continue becoming, an art educator.



(Please return to the fortune teller to determine where you will go next.)

CHAPTER 5

FRAMEWORK: SURRENDERING TO THE CLICHÉ



(See instructions below.)

*Instructions: Before you read this next section please roll the dice that was sent to you or that you acquired on your own. Whatever number you landed on will be the Movement number of the CD 'Promises' you will play while engaging in a making-experience. Feel free to engage in this activity before reading this section, on breaks while reading this section, or after you conclude this section of the dissertation. The choice is yours. As you listen to the Movement correlating to the number on your die, please engage in mark making using whichever material you wrote on your fortune teller that goes with this section of the dissertation. You may make the marks on either the paper sent to you, or on some other surface of your choosing. I encourage you to consider the idea of signs, maybe even ponder signs in your personal life, while listening to the music and allowing yourself to create without worrying about the end product. Also, if there is no Movement number to correspond with the number on your dice, please re-roll the dice until it lands on any number from one through eight (for some of you, depending upon how many numbers are on your die). *If this is not your first time rolling the dice and making marks, please note you may use a different piece of heavy-weight paper per dissertation section, or you may LAYER your marks all onto one or two heavy-weight pieces of paper. Enjoy!*

Reframing the Frame-Work

Before we start discussing this frame-work, I need a moment to reframe everything and remind myself of what we are doing here. Perhaps, you need this too; I don't know. Sometimes I can get swept away in the details, in the explaining and over-explaining of terms. When really these over-explications prevent a deeper dive, and have the potential to dissolve this dissertation into a dictionary of sorts. So, let's pull back a little, reframe the frame-work and continue onward.

This all began with a curiosity about the relationship between signs and art education. What if these two entities were entangled and moved in relation with one another? As the research gained momentum, the research process brought forth the following guiding questions: How might art education *be-with* apprenticeship to signs? What might art education *do-with* sign encounters? To stay with these questions, I pursued the following: How might art educators hold

space for themselves and their students so they may be-with and stay-with the rupture created by the strike of the sign? And, how might art educators engage in performative practices that encourage the rethinking of with-ness for themselves and their students?



(un-titled)

Thinking-with these questions in mind, and apprenticing myself to signs for a little shy of two years, I have begun to form frame-works that may enable art educators to stay in the cut of the rhizome a little longer and help their students do the same. In this particular frame-work I argue that we are inundated with a clichés every day and either find ourselves buying into the cliché (such as the cliché of the art teacher looking a particular way) or we find ourselves resisting the cliché. Deleuze (1972/2002) argues that we are already in the cliché, and we need to find a way out of it, not by fighting the cliché, but by recognizing them, collecting them, taking them up, and abandoning the self to them. By giving oneself over to the cliché, by surrendering the fight against the cliché, we can begin the process of extrapolating ourselves from its grip.

Being honest about my struggle with the cliché to a considerable amount of time for me to admit. But, once I could acknowledge the struggle, I was able to further suspend or stay with certain sign-encounters longer and continue to press on them gently, like molding clay or gently moving my fingers through clumps of paint. I could come back to my own questioning of the cliché, and its relationship to the sign, again and again.

I FEEL LIKE I HAVE LOOPED BACK AND THIS WHOLE DAMN THING IS ONE GIANT CLICHÉ. I AM TRYING TO EMBRACE IT. BUT I AM FUCKING SCARED. I HAVE SPLICED IT OPEN AGAIN AND AGAIN, PULLED OUT ITS CUTS AND PLACED THEM SIDE BY SIDE. NO HIERARCHY CAN BE MADDENING.]

At some point in this process, I realized that my resistance to clichés was holding me back, closing me off from the potential of staying with sign encounters. If you think of cliché as a material, I was not listening or staying attuned to the material of the cliché.¹⁴ However, once I could follow the excess of clichés, embracing what I perceived as the cliché art teacher and cliché actions, there was a new-found freedom, a release of sorts. I was released from what Deleuze (1981/2002) identifies as the prepictorial ideas, *figurative givens*, and my inquiry into signs moved differently, unexpectedly (p. 71). It morphed and shifted into an expanding variety of practices and further illustrated the rhizomatic connections. By not fighting the cliché, by not feeding my internal resistance to it, my own relationality became more apparent. By recalibrating my relation with the cliché as a material from which to intra-act, I was able to remain more receptive to them in a neutral, no-mind, sort of way and this releasing of resistance assisted in staying with the sign-encounter longer, without closing off or assigning meaning too quickly.

¹⁴What clichés do you internally resist? How has resisting these clichés closed you off from certain possibilities or even created a loop back to other clichés. Where in your life might you try to lean into the cliché, surrender to it a little bit more as a way of opening possibilities and staying with sign-encounters?

The Apron

One of the first few sign encounters I had, involved a cliché article of clothing, my art teacher apron, and the cliché childhood form of the fortune teller. Specifically, my red art teacher apron had an embroidered paint palette on it, along with my name. While the details of those sign encounters—the stories of how they occurred—are not actually that important, what I carried from that experience, the paradigmatic shifts that occurred as a result of those encounters and my attempts to stay with them, is the emphasis here. Let's start with the apron.

My passion is art education. I love teaching art to people of all ages, but I never wanted to be the art teacher who wore big funky jewelry and dressed or acted a particular way. I resisted buying into the cliché of the art teacher because it pointed to certain assumed characteristics, behaviors, ways of dressing, etc. I had a vision of what an art teacher was like already projected in my mind. Like an artist coming to a canvas, and having an idea of what they want to paint already predetermined, I had what Deleuze (1972/2002) calls a prepictorial given (but in reverse). The prepictorial givens are “all the givens [*données*] that are on the canvas before the painter's work begins” (Deleuze, 1972/2002, p. 71). The artist who comes to the canvas knowing in advance what they wish to paint, the prepictorial givens, in turn privileges certain probabilities. For me, I pushed aside what I did not want—the cliché I did not want to become—and in doing so, I was actually still privileging certain probabilities, just ones that were opposite of my understanding of the cliché art teacher. In other words, no matter what the prepictorial image is, it always privileges some probability and causes an imbalance, a closure to new possibilities. What I neglected to see was that the clichés were always there, already acting upon me; they had been there all along. It was my resistance to the cliché that was not allowing me to continue becoming and changing; my fight against the cliché blocked my ability to see beyond

the cliché. Like the *image of thought* described by Deleuze (1968/1994), the cliché, or rather my resistance to it, prevented me from reaching possibilities beyond that which was perceived as a given. This resistance, however, only brought about other clichés to fill in the gap, the void, the opposite side of the binary.



(un-titled)

Deleuze (1984/2003) addresses the struggle with the cliché in the context of Cezanne and his repeated attempt to render beyond that which was perceived. Deleuze (1981/2002) argues that this was part of French artist Cezanne’s problem, and his subsequent imitators. He, Cezanne, fought the cliché on the canvas. He tried to attain some sort of resolution to a problem. Deleuze (1981/2002) continues to say that Cezanne wanted to achieve something “more true to life,” and was able to achieve this only in some of his still life compositions where he presents the “appleyness” of an apple that cannot be imitated (pp. 72-73). Deleuze (1981/2002) goes on to explain how those who then took up the work of Cezanne and tried to imitate his style only contributed to the cliché rising up once again. The cliché lives on through the fighting of it, rather than the surrendering to it. Deleuze (1981/2002) speaks about Cezanne’s fight as rendering the essence of something, to touch upon the virtual and go beyond formal representation. For Deleuze (1972/2000) essence is “in itself difference” and therefore can never be identical to itself

(p. 48). We, as artists, come back to it again and again, showing how difference and repetition are not so separate from one another. But if that repetition is embedded within the fight against the cliché, the resistance actualized on the canvas, it is an endless cycle. The resistance becomes futile because we will always land back into an already present cliché.

But, what happens if we stop fighting? What happens if we stop resisting the cliché and instead embrace it as part of our apprenticeship to signs? How does surrendering to the cliché in the context of sign-encounters open up our teaching and making practice? How might we muddle with the cliché? Accepting the wearing of the apron, the drawing of the cliché corner sun or repeated rainbow by that one kindergartener, how does the acceptance and surrendering to the cliché shift things internally and externally. How does taking up and embracing the cliché of coloring at the table every night, enable other possibilities? As Deleuze (1981/2002) writes,

The greatest transformation of a cliché will not be an act of painting. It will not produce the slightest pictorial deformation. It would be much better to abandon oneself to clichés, to collect them, accumulate them, multiply them, as so many prepictorial givens: “the will to lose the will” comes first. Only when one leaves them behind through rejection can the work begin. (pp. 75-76)

From this research, I can confidently say there is something freeing in the embodiment of this will to lose the will, and that there is a connection between clichés, sign encounters, and one’s willingness to re-think relationality. Although it may take me a lifetime of practice to fully understand their entangled ways, I strongly believe that if we can shake ourselves free from our attachment and resistance to the cliché, somehow, then we become more open to the affect of sign encounters and stay better tuned-in to any new encounters that might occur along the way.¹⁵

¹⁵Journal Entry - June 12, 2020 (1am): Dear Olon, Today you reminded me to let go again. Thank you. You walked up to the painting I was working on and asked if you could paint it with your fingers. I hesitated, but then remembered that apprenticeship can happen in the smallest, the most cliché, of moments. So yes, yes you can paint it with your fingers, and I will sit beside you and eagerly await to see what happens, what unfolds. I will surrender to your tiny fingers covered in paint, your big eyes of curiosity, and to this moment, as cliché as it might feel to me at the time.

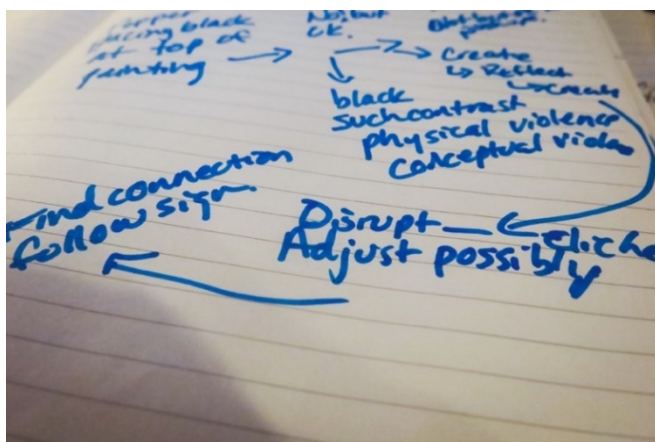
Embracing the will to lose the will, the desire to commit, to surrender to the cliché instead of fighting against it, has the potential to keep one more attuned to their own relationality. If we think about the cliché as a form of representation, then it keeps us limited to what we know or what we think we know by way of what we can perceive. But, if we can flip the script, if we can allow ourselves to take up these clichés without internal judgement and without resistance, then new spaces, unknown space, becomes available to us. Something else has the ability to emerge that is not driven by cliché, or even anti-cliché, but by forces unseen and the willingness to stand in uncertainty. There is a joy and freedom in surrendering to the cliché that enables other things to happen, including the development of your own receptivity to additional sign-encounters and a willingness to stay within the space of the cut, the unknown, the rhizomatic opening. When I could finally let go of my own resistance, when I could put the apron on and really give myself over to the cliché of the art teacher, there was a shift. I found new ways of thinking, or re-thinking, my relationship to the cliché of the art teacher. I reconsidered what it meant to become an art teacher for myself. It was not just the phenomenon of putting on the apron, but of surrendering to the cliché as a way of finding my own sense of becoming.



(un-titled)

So, if the fortune teller and some of the footnote prompts seem cliché to you, that is okay; it is intentional, in the sense that I have tried not to resist the inclination to be cliché on my part. But your willingness to take them up, to play with them, to be-with them in ways that extend your relationality beyond their cliché quality, is up to you. My hope is that you take them up with joy and an open mind, to acknowledge, observe, and connect with whatever emerges for you through the experience of the cliché fortune teller and the cliché footnote prompts.

Please do not misunderstand me; I am not saying that as art educators, we need to turn towards a curriculum filled with cliché lesson plans that imitate Van Gogh's *Starry Night* or teach students how to draw castles and rainbows. But rather to have an awareness of when we are fighting the cliché internally and recognize that any pendulum swing in the other direction, any reactionary stance, will only lead to further clichés. Even if looping back into clichés is masked as anti-clichés, one is still caught in the cliché loop. Alternatively, when you gain awareness of being tied to the cliché, there has to be a surrendering that occurs, an act of abandoning the self to clichés encountered. Let me provide an example from my own teaching practice that may help explicate further.



(un-titled)

Early on in my teaching career, I was vehemently against corner suns. Suns that peeked out from the corner of the page, hinting at their presence but not fully committing to their

existence. My students constantly wanted to employ the corner sun in their drawings and I was determined to break them of this habit. Until one day, I had a disruptive moment in my teaching where I realized my determination to resist this corner sun was actually producing an attachment in myself and in my students to the anti-corner sun, an alternative sun. This alternative sun, however, had morphed into yet another cliché form; it became the circle sun often seen wearing sunglasses with the lines around it, both short and long. As Deleuze (1981/2002) writes, “Every imitator has always made the cliché rise up again, even from what had been freed from the cliché. The fight against clichés is a terrible thing” (p. 73). Even, if for a moment, these suns were released from their cliché-ness on the page, my intense resistance to it contributed towards something (another cliché) taking its place. In Deleuze’s (1981/2002) discussion on Francis Bacon’s work, he explains how Bacon, like Cezanne, renounced his paintings “as soon as the enemy reappeared” (p. 73). This is the enemy of the cliché.



(un-titled)

Alternatively, he (Deleuze, 1981/2002) offers us the idea of entering into the canvas, willfully entering into our relationship with the cliché. It is here that Deleuze (1981/2002)

explains how “Bacon abandons himself to it (clichés), and not without delight” (p. 74). I believe the second half of this sentence, not without delight, is actually vitally important. By letting go of judgement and allowing yourself to enter into the clichés of the canvas, the clichés of life, with curiosity and joy instead of resistance, there is a greater chance to stay in the middle, to engage in what I refer to elsewhere in this dissertation as *muddle-ing*. By releasing the fight against the cliché, and suspending judgement of the cliché, we stay suspended in the space of middles, in the space of signs and uncertainty.¹⁶



(un-titled)

¹⁶Journal Entry - July 18, 2020 (2am): Dear Covid-19, You occupy space in my brain. I am able to push you away during the day, but at night you creep into my thoughts as I try and go to sleep. You are like lingering remnants of a long-lost lover that I resist thinking about in order to keep my sanity and stability at home. The more attention I give to you, the less stable I am for everyone else. And yet, you are always present. You are the disruptive gift that keeps on giving. Maybe I need to stop working against thoughts of you, and instead work with them. Like the cliché, I need to give in to you, surrender to what you bring. Perhaps this is already happening, and I am only now finding language for it.

The Sign and the Cliché

I think it is worth taking a pause here to address the relationship between the sign and the cliché. From this research, I have found that the sign and the cliché have a messy, entangled relationship, both as concepts and as entities one encounters in-and-through the lived experience. Deleuze (1981/2002, 1972/2000) does not necessarily write about this connection, but I believe there is something worth investigating here. From my first-hand experience conducting this research, I have found sign-encounters have the potential to disrupt my relationship with clichés. If we conceive of the cliché to be a form of representation, one that keeps us tied to the actual plane and ultimately produces the arrival of additional clichés, then leaning into the sign-encounter is part of the antidote. Disruptions of sign-encounters, I argue, carry a subtext pointing to one's attachments to clichés, or an attachment to the position of anti-cliches. Sign-encounters hold the potential to make us face our own relationship to clichés and work towards embracing probabilities in a more equal, untethered, way. They, sign-encounters, have a way of calling us out. If we stay with them long enough, if we do the work and dig deep enough, they point to our pre-conceived notions and our privileging of certain positionalities, especially human centered ones. The sign-encounter has the potential to pull back the curtain on our own biases, our own privileging of certain possibilities over others, and sometimes, it occurs in a painful and conflicting way. So, when I finally realized the internal discord between art teacher clichés I fought against, with the act of putting on my apron every day, I was struck, hard. Over time, however, I came to realize the force of the sign-encounter involving the apron, and the facing of my own resistance to the cliché art teacher, actually shifted things for me. From that disruption, and where it led, I began to rethink my practice and my relation with the cliché. The sign encounter ultimately led to my surrendering joyfully (not without delight) to the cliché as a way

of staying in the space of uncertainty and seeing what might emerge. I put on the apron and went for it! And once I could let go of those givens, those clichés already on the canvas, new potentials and new possibilities in my thinking and in my art-making opened up.



(un-titled)

Free Marks and Chance

To stay in the strike of the sign for longer, and resist quick rhizomatic regeneration, I believe it is necessary that we find a way out of the cliché and out of our own resistance to the cliché. In order to do this, Deleuze (1981/2002) offers a suggestion. In his (Deleuze 1981/2002) study of Francis Bacon, he argues for the inclusion of “free marks,” ones that aren’t predetermined and ones that demonstrate “action without probability” as a way to release the hold of the cliché (p. 76). Probabilities used here refer to givens, the clichés already on the canvas, the dice before it is thrown. These free marks, however, depend upon the element of what Bacon identifies as manipulated chance in order to pull the artist away from the burgeoning clichés that are always-already present. In other words, to choose to engage in chance, to play the fortune teller, to make marks that are not connected with a predetermined visual image, is to

engage in something that is not yet pictorial. Rather, it is in the process of becoming pictorial. As Deleuze (1981/2002) writes,

it (chance) will become pictorial, it will be integrated into the act of painting, to the extent that it consists of manual marks that will reorient the visual whole, and will extract the improbable Figure from the set of figurative probabilities. (p. 77, italics from original)

In my own art-making with this research, I found this concept to be true, but challenging at times. As I engaged in the act of making, one painting after another, I admittedly often struggled with the cliché-ness of the paintings. I would become very frustrated because I could sense, or on some level feel, myself slipping back into a cliché form—this was probably, in part, due to my initial internal resistance to the cliché. I was stuck in a strange kind of cliché loop, and the involvement of chance, either invited or forced, broke this loop for me on a consistent basis. Chance became a way out of the cliché. Sometime this chance came in the form of people coming and going, in and out of my work space, wanting to participate in some way. These intrusions often would pull me out of the space of the cliché loop that I would find myself stuck in and enable new possibilities to emerge.

Comings and Goings

Throughout this study, there was a strange phenomenon that developed. While the research started as a study involving my own children and looking at our intra-actions with materials, the deeper I went into the experience—reading, thinking, writing, making (sometimes alone and sometimes with others)—the more I realized this work is actually about myself-in-relation, and that an unexpected sort of dialogic duality was occurring. I was moving between expansion and contraction, between self and self-in-relation, between external space and internal space. As the research expanded outward, usually in the form of people wanting to flow in and out of the creative process, and as materials encountered expressed what Jane Bennett (2009)

calls “thing power” (p. 2), I grew quieter on the inside. I thought about ‘things’ more deeply and experienced a sort of internal expansion. I allowed my mind to move into spaces that had been taped off before, like a post-crime scene with yellow tape, spaces that were previously unavailable to me. I went further inward as the research expanded outward, and there seemed to be a dialogue between the two.

The more time I spent engaged in the material-discursive practices of making and writing nearly every day, rigorously, the more possibilities presented themselves. Often, these possibilities showed up as the comings-and-goings of other people, other material bodies, who wished to be co-creators in the project. On a fairly regular basis, people of all ages (family, friends, neighbors, out of town guests, etc.) would physically enter the garage studio space and ask if they could engage in the process of making together. With a strange or surprising degree of regularity, people would repeatedly enter in and out of the frame, moving in and out of the space of the canvas, the space of the garage, the space co-ness and with-ness both energetically and physically. Sometimes the entering in of someone who wished to co-create would happen when I was stuck in the cliché loop described above. Other times, the interruption, or intra-uption as Nadine Kalin (personal communication, 2020) might call it, would come before I made any mark on the canvas.

Intra-uption is a concept first developed by Kalin (personal communication, 2020). Born from the idea of e/scapes from Ulmer, Nordstrom, and Tesar (2017), intra-uptions are those small cuts into the homogeneity of an experience—offering places for redirection that bring us out of our singular, self-directed mindset, and highlight our everyday, rhizomatic connections. Intra-uptions cannot be planned in advance, but the willingness to take them on can be intentional. Intra-uptions are the moving in and out of materials bodies and materials, the

transversal crossing of my lines with the lines of others (human and beyond human).



(un-titled)

They are temporally unpredictable, but arguably very much needed. For me, the intra-ptions shook me from the cliché loop and broke me free from the web of preictorial givens to which I felt tied. When I did not resist the intra-ptions, and surrendered to the potential they presented, expansion happened both internally and externally. So much so, that at times it felt like a dissolving of the self-in-relation through intra-actions.¹⁷

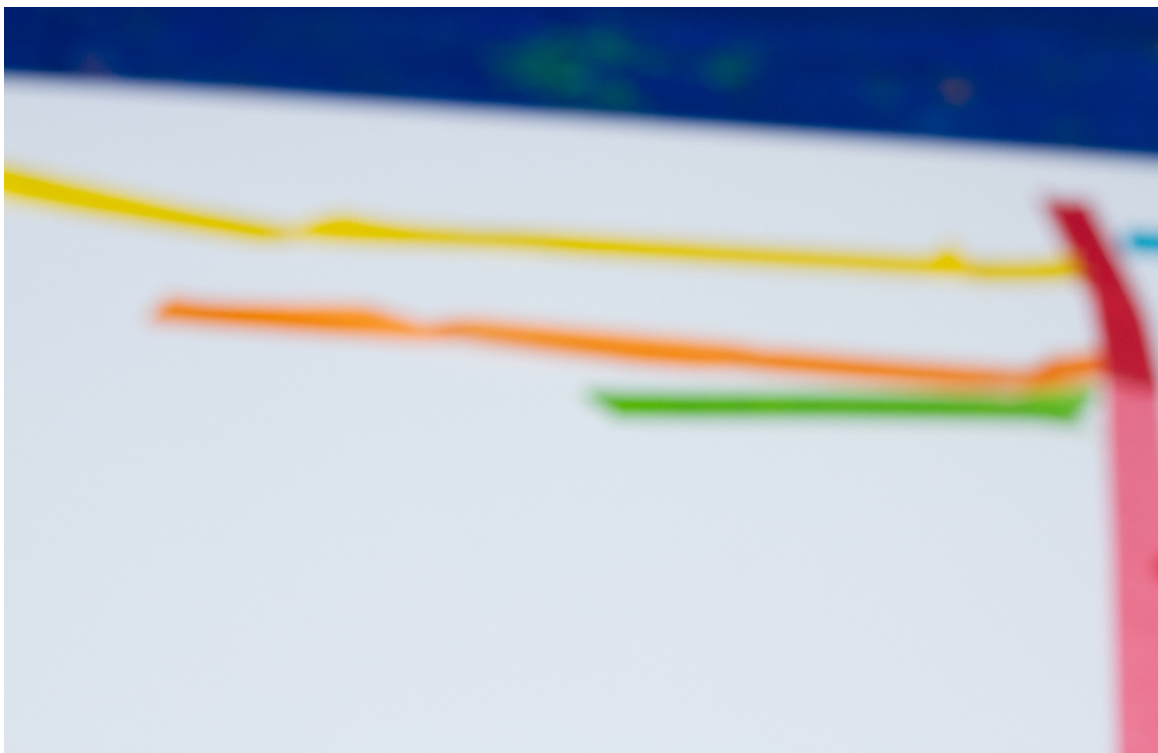
As a study of self-in-relation, chance, and its relationship with the cliché, was not a component of the research I anticipated confronting but clearly, one that needed to happen. I needed to take a chance (a risk) and allow chance (uncertainty of actions or outcome) to be part of the unfolding study. By not closing off, not shutting down or resisting times when people

¹⁷At this time, please allow yourself to be intra-upted by someone/thing else. What will you do? Where will you go? How might you intra-upt yourself? What are the benefits of your intra-uption?

wanted to co-create, I also challenged myself to engage with the idea of chance in alternative ways. Meaning, it wasn't just about taking a chance, a risk, but also about engaging in what I now lovingly refer to as chance-based activities (or what Deleuze (1981/2002) refers to as *manipulated chance*). From rotating our bodies around the canvas every three minutes and making a game of it, to assigning colors to number combinations and then rolling a dice, I, and whoever I was co-creating with, often invited chance into the frame, into the process of making and co-creating. These engagements left me/us with free marks on the canvas. They cracked that cliché loop and enabled a more present, free floating, state of mind. Personally, as these co-creations continued to happen, I became less and less attached to prepictorial givens and felt myself struggle less with my relationship to clichés. In some ways, the wave-like crossing of lines, in and out, over and through, lines made with bodies, with paint, with movements, with energy and curiosity, these were lines of the living. They were what anthropologist Tim Ingold (2015) calls the lines of knowledge in-between, personal knowledge that is sometimes “noisy” and “turbulent” but can also yield incredibly beautiful moments (p. 148). The crossing, swirling about, of my lines with the lines and movements of others (human and beyond-human), pulled me out of the cliché, out of my pre-formed ties to the white canvas already filled with figurations of life. Over time, my resistance softened, and I began to see this strange phenomenon as a critical component of this unfolding, emergent, research process.

Inviting in chance meant living in ways of thinking, making, writing, and doing that released the product from the process. Chance had the potential to unhinge the prepictorial figure and cliché from the canvas, serving as a tool for detachment, but requiring a commitment to the outcome, such as the dice throw discussed in another frame-work. Sometimes inviting in chance looked like engaging in a playful game, and other times it looked like taking risks, allowing

others to join in the process and not be in control. Times such as when my husband asked if he could throw a towel with red paint on the canvas, or when my son asked if he could dip his fingers in paint and place them on the canvas, each intra-uption created a new layer to the experience that took the work in unanticipated directions. In these comings and goings of material bodies and otherwise, I had to lean into the disorientation and not cling to a pre-determined vision. I had to invite chance into the painting process through the intra-uptions of others, as chance itself was becoming pictorial.



(un-titled)

In regard to art education, there is a great deal of literature on incorporating play, experimentation, risk, and joy into the making and mark making process in one's classroom. Authors such as Szekely (2015), Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, and Kocher (2017), Hofsess (2015, 2018), Garoian (2013), O'Donoghue (2015), Knight (2008), Kind and Lee (2017), encourage similar ideas of experimentation and play in the classroom with both pre-service teachers and

teachers already working in the field. Often, these authors are coming from a similar new materialist position (or an experiential learning perspective) and employing theories put forth by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) as part of their theoretical frameworks. However, where I think the difference lies between their conversation on play and chance with this work, is in my deep dive into the metaphysical side of the cliché as a form that keeps us tethered to that which is perceived to be, that which is known. And how by investigating our relationship to these clichés through the invitation of chance and joyfully surrendering to them, we can actually stay in the space of the sign encounter, the space of learning, a little longer. In order to best illustrate this concept, I actually need to share a sign-encounter experience with you that I consider a failure. By trying to stay with this particular sign-encounter, and not having a clear idea of what I was doing, I learned a great deal and grew to understand my relationship with clichés better over time.

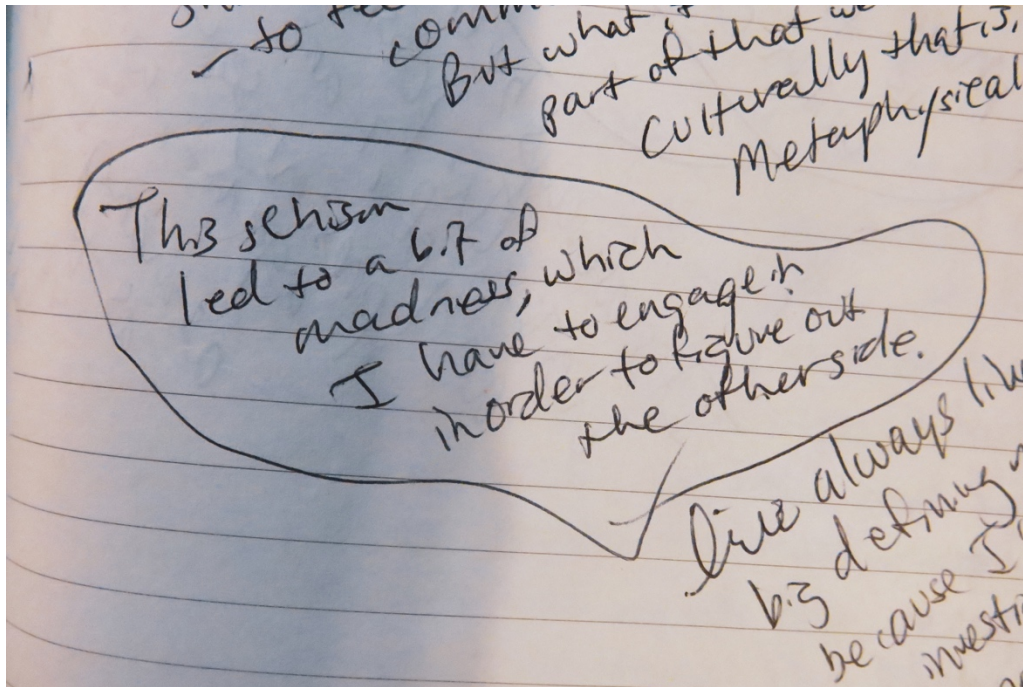
Fortune Tellers and Coloring Pages

I am sharing this cliché-related, sign-encounter, ‘failure’ with you because I believe it highlights a time when I was closed off—resistant to the cliché and to my own processing of the sign in a way that might release control and invite chance into the making space. As such, the time I spent trying to stay with the sign-encounter, trying to apprentice myself to its force and stay with the cut of the rhizome, took on a flatness and led me deeper into the cycle of clichés. I struggled to find my way out and had to temporarily let go of the sign before understanding its significance. From this seemingly unsuccessful apprenticeship experience, I learned a great deal and believe it to be a pivotal point in this research, which is why I have chosen to share it with you.

On March 24, 2020, I decided I would not attend a Pilates class, for fear of contracting

Covid-19, and instead, I would go for a jog. On my jog I found a tiny paper fortune teller. This little fortune teller was bright blue and made from a used, slightly worn, and visibly dirty, post-it note. When I opened up this tiny treasure and undid its folded edges, the post-it note was mostly bare. There were no fortunes to be told or numbers to entice engaged users. All that existed on that tiny post-it note, presumably once folded by small hands, was a drawing of an ice cream cone with closed eyes. As I picked up the fortune teller and explored its shape in my hands, I was struck by a memory from a few weeks prior.

Before the world went into lockdown, and when I was still teaching in the classroom, one of my third-grade students finished his work early and was making one of these paper fortune tellers from a scrap of paper. As you might imagine, I was on normal full-speed ahead in my elementary art classroom. I moved quickly, as I ran around to check on students and intermittently clean up forgotten supplies that had casually migrated to the floor. As I passed one student's desk, who happened to be sitting close to the classroom door, he stopped me and asked if I wanted to play with him. I could have kept going. I could have continued to pick up supplies or even prepare for the looming transition to the next class. But instead, I stopped moving. I remember contemplating it for a fraction of a moment, before saying yes. I paused, I considered, and I agreed to the challenge. Embedded in that yes was a commitment to the student and his needs over my desire to keep moving. One little fortune teller, one small scrap of paper folded by small hands was now the center of our interactions. Needless to say, I chose my fate. I picked a number, then a color, followed by a number once more. Under that last folded flap, my fate was sealed—ten pushups in front of the class. Because I was committed to the outcome, to the fate I had chosen, I took the bait and did the ten pushups.



(un-titled)

At the time, I did not view this interruptive fortune teller moment as a sign. Yes, it was disruptive to my physical movements and my goal-oriented objective of monitoring students while cleaning up, but I did not perceive this interaction to be a sign that would cause significant change to my thinking. However, after finding the second tiny fortune teller on my jog, I was struck by how these two instances are entangled with one another, and how their entanglement deepens the entire fortune teller experience—like layers of paint that speak to one another through ebbs and flows, through times of opacity and translucence. Together, collectively, they constituted a sign, and as such, I was moved to continue investigating this small cliché form that is so familiar to many, reminding us of when we were children and desperately wanting to know our future spelled out on little folded paper petals. This desire to stay with the cliché form of the fortune teller led me to yet another cliché form, which was coloring.

After the second fortune teller encounter, and with the onset of the global shutdown, I found myself determined to stay with the triangular shape of the fortune teller and use it in my

artwork as a way of investigating the sign-encounter. To do so, I sought out an art making form that helped to orient me both emotionally and physically. Ahmed (2006) talks about orientation as finding one's way home, or employing "homing devices" (p. 9). By taking up the cliché practice of coloring, I was inadvertently finding comfort during a time of social and political upheaval. I was 'coming home' through the familiar and the cliché, even though I could not see that aspect of the experience in the moment. During this wildly unsettling time, I was creating a familiar place within the unfamiliar space of our lives, reverting back to the practice of coloring that brought so much joy and quiet comfort to me as a child. Yet, I did not think about my actions, my movements and gestures, in this way at the time—I only viewed them as my trying to stay with the space of the sign encounter.

I DIDN'T DO THESE THINGS CONSCIOUSLY. I CAN ONLY NOW SEE THEM THROUGH THE CYLCE OF READING, WRITING, MAKING, AND THINKING.

For about a month after the fortune teller sign-encounter, I sat and drew its shape over and over again. Every evening I would come to the kitchen table with paper, two boxes of sharpies, and a ruler (no pencils allowed). I listened to the news, or music, and tried my best to allow the image to emerge in the moment while maintaining some connection to the fortune teller shape. Sometimes I drew it as a flattened diamond shape and other times as a mountainous range, like glaciers revealing themselves through the water. This continued every night until I hit a dead end. While this process did yield some interesting results, it lacked the depth of sensation for which I was searching. Like Deleuze's (1981/2002) account of Cezanne and Bacon's relationship with clichés and pre-pictorial givens, I kept coming back only to find myself passing judgement and continuously trying to deform the shape without shaking free from it. In the end, I found myself back in a cliché. The last image created was one of a body, a figure, in the center of

the page. It was a lovely drawing, and now proudly hangs on my sister's wall, but I was still tied up in the cliché. I had come full circle in regard to clichés and needed to walk away. I was angry at the work, at myself, at my inability to get past the cliché due to my own fight with it. As such, I had to abandon the work of drawing, shifting towards new ways of making, thinking, and writing that did not bring as much comfort or orientation. Essentially, I had to stop digging into what the fortune teller sign-encounter might mean and release myself from its hold, which caused a sensation of disappointment.



(un-titled)

This sensation of disappointment is actually part of the process and something to be aware of if you choose to engage in this kind of work. Deleuze (1972/2000) addresses the disappointment encountered with apprenticing oneself to signs directly, when he states, “(d)isappointment is a fundamental moment of the search or of apprenticeship in each realm of signs, we are disappointed when the object does not give us the secret we were expecting” (p.

35). Here he (Deleuze, 1972/2000) talks about disappointment in the context of Proust's character who faces personal disappointment in the literature. Deleuze (1972/2000) explains, "Those signs we had not been able to relish or to interpret so long as we linked them to Berma's (Proust's character) person—perhaps their meaning was to be sought elsewhere" (p. 35). The disappointment comes because the force of the sign is greater than the object from which we associate it. The fortune teller sign did not yield the transformative experience for which I had hoped, and disappointment ensued. Even though logically I knew the sign wasn't in the physical object itself, but rather in my intra-actions with it, I had to set it aside for a while and move on to whatever presented itself next. I needed to temporarily pause with the fortune teller and sit with my disappointment. It wasn't until much later, while leading a workshop in 2021 on being in spaces of vulnerability, that this cliché form would actually re-enter my horizon and become a sort of apparatus for my ways of knowing and being in the world.

Here, I use the term apparatus in the context of Karen Barad's theory of agential realism, discussed at length in another frame-work. In summary, or in review depending upon your path through the text, agential realism is the belief that objects and phenomenon do not exist outside of their intra-action (versus inter) with one another. As such, ways of knowing (epistemology) and ways of being (ontology) are inseparable. Within this inseparability, the apparatuses are the "*material conditions of possibility and impossibility of mattering*; they enact what matters and what is excluded from mattering" (Barad, 2007, p. 148, italics from original). The apparatus makes mattering visible by acting as an agential cut and producing boundaries. Barad (2007) summarizes this as "apparatuses are boundary-making practices" (p. 148). I see the fortune teller, or rather engagement with the fortune teller, as this boundary-making practice. Through the leading of my workshop, the lived experience, where we made and used fortune tellers to talk

about moments of vulnerability, and through the process of writing this dissertation and considering how you, dear reader, might engage with the fortune teller, my relationship to this form has taken on new meaning and new layers of understanding. In some ways, the fortune teller as an agential realist apparatus acted upon me in unpredictable ways, ways that were not evident in my initial repeated drawings and abstractions of its form. I had to let go. I had to quit fighting against the cliché nature of the fortune teller, before it could reveal itself differently to me, acting not only as a directional tool, but as something that opens up that which is not yet known.



(un-titled)

Before closing out this section, I would like to express to you that this particular entangled component of the journey has been incredibly hard. As part of my apprenticeship to signs, I have scrutinized my relationship with clichés and simultaneously tried to release my resistance against them. I've worked to surrender to the cliché through the embracement of joy, which is my interpretation of Deleuze's (1981/2002) word's "not without delight", and by integrating chance into the making process (p. 74). Sometimes this work was successful, and I

could break away from tightly woven clichés, while other times it was less successful.

Regardless of the outcome, however, I value the fortune teller experience and continue to hold onto the tiny blue fortune teller in my desk drawer, along with the belief that if we surrender to the cliché, we can stay with the sign encounter a little longer and discover new possibilities for ourselves and our students.

When I was caught in this loop of clichés, I could sense it in my thinking and in my body. I was no longer in collaboration with materials, but placing my human power over them. I slipped in and out of these relations, sometimes opening up myself to whatever emerged, and other times closing myself off from the sensation of the unknown through the reliance on clichés. As I was making, thinking, writing for months on end, there would be times when I would close myself off. I could sense my own desire for quick regeneration. Typically, this occurred when the rawness of the sign-encounter, and what the encounter was asking me to face about myself, became too much. As such, I would unintentionally fall back into the fight against the cliché, and find myself in the loop once again.

The fortune teller sign-encounter taught me so much in the end. Although initially I considered the sign a failure, and probably judged myself for it, I do not view the experience as bad or non-useful. Over time, I have come to realize how failed sign-encounters are part of the research process. The disappointment becomes our teacher and we can either choose to cling to that feeling or recognize it and carry the lesson forward. As an educator, I hope to model the latter of the two.



(Please return to the fortune teller to determine where you will go next.)

CHAPTER 6

FRAME-WORK: RELEASING ORIENTATIONAL FEAR



(See instructions below.)

*Instructions: Before you read this next section please roll the dice that was sent to you or that you acquired on your own. Whatever number you landed on will be the Movement number of the CD 'Promises' you will play while engaging in a making-experience. Feel free to engage in this activity before reading this section, on breaks while reading this section, or after you conclude this section of the dissertation. The choice is yours. As you listen to the Movement correlating to the number on your die, please engage in mark making using whichever material you wrote on your fortune teller that goes with this section of the dissertation. You may make the marks on either the paper sent to you, or on some other surface of your choosing. I encourage you to consider the idea of signs, maybe even ponder signs in your personal life, while listening to the music and allowing yourself to create without worrying about the end product. Also, if there is no Movement number to correspond with the number on your dice, please re-roll the dice until it lands on any number from one through eight (for some of you, depending upon how many numbers are on your die). *If this is not your first time rolling the dice and making marks, please note you may use a different piece of heavy-weight paper per dissertation section, or you may LAYER your marks all onto one or two heavy-weight pieces of paper. Enjoy!*

Dear Covid, (same night, 3am)

You got me. ~~Eleanor~~ came downstairs while I was working just now, and my stomach knotted up with fear. Damn you. So much fear. Shutting down for the night.

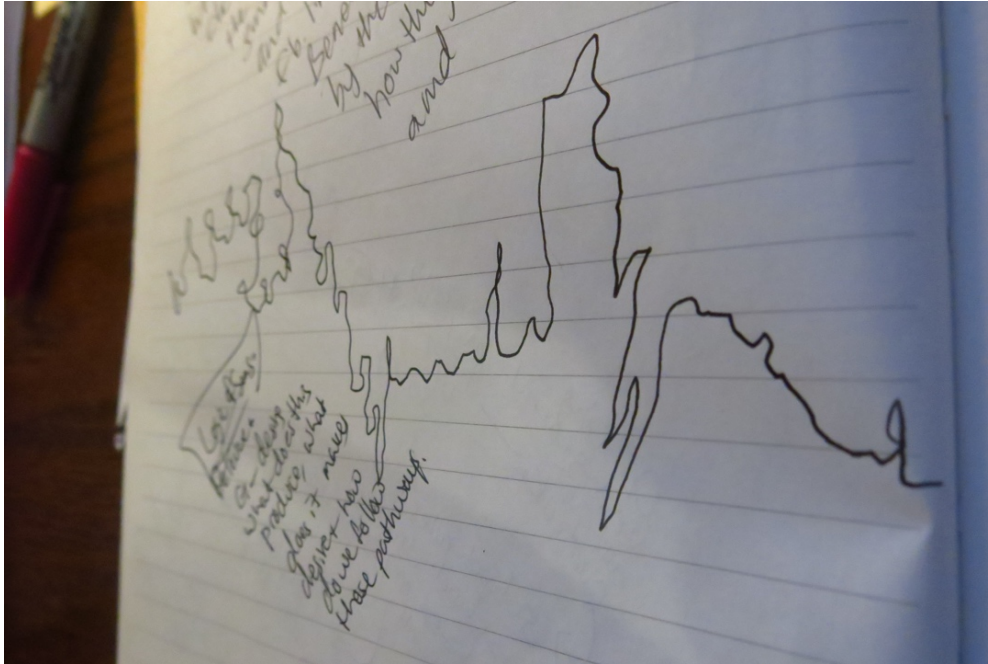
Orientational fear is a term I developed for whenever I had the desire to orient myself towards something, towards a way of knowing, towards a prepictorial given, towards the figures and clichés already on the canvas, towards literal representation of a sign (such as a painting of a dead possum). *Orientational fear* is recognizing the sensation in the body, the fear that wells up during disruptive moments and causes panic. Doing things such as trying to determine the direction of a canvas in advance or seeking the emotional stability of knowing or predetermining a methodology, are directly tied to *orientational fear*. They are actions that satisfy the fear, but in turn do not expand possibilities. I began to notice how clinging to orientation meant pacifying my discomfort caused by sign-encounters in a way that enabled this living inquiry to feel safer, more comfortable, and controllable. This was not necessarily what I wanted to invite into the

process. Comfort, safety, and control are not inherently bad. However, I was asking myself to stand and work on the edge between the known and unknown, and these sensations kept me from that precipice. Instead, they put me squarely and safely standing on solid ground. Once I became aware of how the fear was permeating my thoughts and movements, I was able to recognize its arrival sooner and slow down the sensation. I began consciously to acknowledge its presence and worked to release the desire for rapid stability, the urge to quickly seal up the rhizomatic schism caused by the sign-encounter.

Phenomenologist and scholar who writes on queer theory, feminist theory, and post-colonialism, Sarah Ahmed (2006) discusses orientation at length in her text, *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. She explains how orientation is a search for the familiar, for transitioning the strange into the familiar in a bodily way. It is about finding one's way through uncertain spaces that mark upon the body, including memories, and making the strange familiar by extending our bodies in space. Ahmed (2006) specifically addresses the orientation of bodies in spaces and uses the example of finding our way in the dark. If we are familiar with the layout of a room, then the inability to see isn't as much of a problem. If, however, we are unfamiliar with the contents or layout of a room, then we find ways to shift towards familiarity. We might walk a little slower, shuffle our feet, feel our hands along the wall, steady our breathing, etc. In this way, orientational fear is like being in a dark, unfamiliar room (sign-encounter space), and wanting to quickly find a light switch, to throw oneself back into the familiar, the known, the certain. But, by releasing orientational fear, we are turning on other ways of knowing, other means for producing knowledge, even if that requires we take a little longer, or shuffle our feet a little slower. When we allow ourselves to linger in the unknown, to release the need for immediate orientation, to muddle in the middle, we are attempting to honor

how one point of view, one way of knowing, is not a given, and instead let the sign-encounter, and whatever follows, lead the way.

Re-Orienting the Body



(un-titled)

I can't talk about disorientation, reorientation, or even orientation in general, without speaking about the body and referencing the work of the phenomenologist Merleau Ponty. Although I am not claiming phenomenology for this study, I need to honor the work that has been done in the field of phenomenology around the body and orientation. Merleau Ponty's (1945) contributions to the field of phenomenology in his critical text, *Phenomenology of Perception*, suggests that the way we come to understand the world is corporeal—through the body and through embodied actions (prelinguistic) that we come to perceive the world and our relation to it. Merleau-Ponty (1945) argues that perception happens on a body level before having “reflective knowledge of it” (van Manen, 2014, p. 128). Ahmed's (2006) discussion on Merleau-Ponty's work points to the idea that bodies are not simply residing within a space, but

also inhabit space. As she (Ahmed 2006) states, “(r)ather bodies are submerged, such that they become the space they inhabit; in taking up space, bodies move through space and are affected by the ‘where’ of that movement” (p. 53). And while this dissertation is not necessarily about a specific space, the relationship between the body and the sign needs to be acknowledged as a space of its own.

A cut in the rhizome, a tear in fabric, an incision of any surface, a rupture of almost any kind, creates new edges and new openings. A space, that was not present before the gesture of cutting, slicing, rupturing, etc., is now formed and accessible. Sign encounters are these cuts—slices into ways of being and knowing that can occur anywhere and at any point in time. The sign is non-discriminatory; it can strike in your home, in your studio, on your daily walk, in your classroom, etc. When signs strike unpredictably, they create a space within a space. They disrupt the familiar and present the unfamiliar. This space within a space can occur anywhere and at any time. You could be in incredibly familiar spaces, ones that you already inhabit and are already oriented towards, but when the sign strikes, it has the potential to disorient the familiar and, at least temporarily, create a space within a space. Ahmed (2006) talks about moments of disorientation as switching dimensions, where “one moment does not follow another, as a sequence of spatial givens that unfolds as moments of time” (p. 158). Disorientation happens when our habits, the repetition of our actions that enables us to predict what will happen next, are disrupted. This disruption has an affect upon the body in most situations. It is a newly created space that can be felt, experienced, and sensed in an embodied manner.

When I encountered signs throughout this study, I often felt or experienced the encounter in a very corporeal, pre-linguistic way that heightened and privileged sensations over words or other forms of representation. Signs, as forces, have the potential to thwart us temporally and

physically, often reminding us of our relationality, our intra-connections, and causing reactions experienced within the body (discomfort, anxiety, an unsettled feeling, frustration, maybe goosebumps, etc.). These corporeal reactions can cause someone to close off, or as Ahmed (2006) calls it, to become “defensive” (p. 158). There is a desire to orient towards something that feels known, secure, provides sense-making, and keeps one outside the space of disorientation. This is orientational fear. But, if we give in to this fear, then we are placed directly back into the sort of categorical ways of knowing we are trying to decenter in the first place. As such, no progress is made, no new possibilities are taken up, regeneration happens with a quickness and there is little space for the impossible, the invisible, to become manifested in the actual, the possible. Alternatively, I am suggesting that we resist this desire to re-orient the self through the acceptance of disruptive moments and the sensations they bring, and that we release orientational fear by becoming more willing to look deeply at sign-encounters. Instead of reaching for the light switch, let’s stay in the dark and get creative for a bit. Let’s become re-oriented towards the sign-encounter, towards the newly formed space, rather than simply closing it back up and returning to that which is known, that which feels safe and assured. Below is an example of what I mean by reorienting towards the sign-encounter when you find yourself in a space within a space. This is an example of when I had to face the unfamiliar within the familiar.

Turning the Canvas

One afternoon while working on a painting in the garage and talking with my sister, my daughter entered the garage space. She asked if she could paint for a bit and if she could turn the painting. She asked to TURN the painting! The request was momentarily shocking. To turn the painting meant to completely disrupt the orientation I had already set in place for both my body and the materials with which I was working (paint brush, paint, canvas, etc.). This seemingly

simple request gave me some hesitation, and in that moment of hesitation, I realized we, as humans, have orientational fear. I recall looking at her, looking at the painting, pausing and then taking up that moment as an opportunity. I said yes. I agreed to turn the painting! At which point my sister, who was sitting back and casually observing the event, looked at me and said, “(w)ow, you really have changed.”



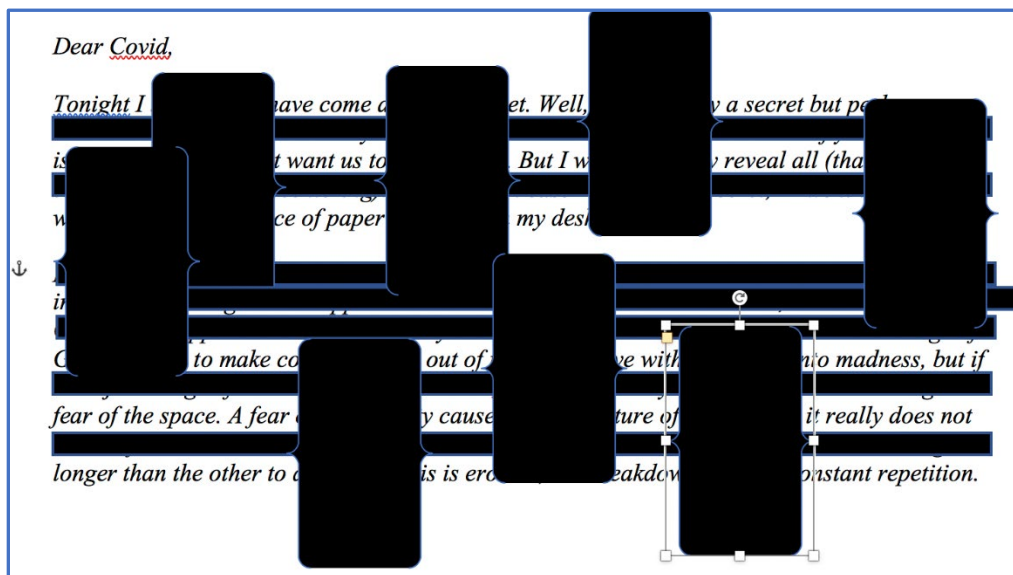
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There is something that happens in the act of turning, turning bodies, turning concepts, turning a canvas. When you find yourself standing at the precipice of a pivot point, there is a moment when you have to allow yourself to turn, to move away from one direction and towards another.¹⁸ Something shifts through this internal permission-granting, in allowing oneself to let go of a certain way of knowing, and embrace a different way of knowing, thinking, feeling, doing, and making. In the situation described above, I was turning away from the known and

¹⁸When I was younger, my parents had a print hanging above their bedroom mirror that depicted geometric shapes stacked on top of one another. The shapes were neutral colors, grays, browns, white, cream-colored, etc. I remember staring at that image regularly and wondering why they hung it in a particular way. To my senses, it could be hung any which way, with any chosen orientation. Admittedly, I may have snuck in every once and a while to turn it a different direction. I was curious and not attached to a particular way, yet. Maybe that is the answer, maybe we are simply seeking means to undo our ways of attaching and knowing that become concretized as we get older. I will never figure out the mystery of that print, but I will carry the curiosity it produced in me forward.

turning towards the unpredictable.

This turning, I believe, is an important part of releasing orientational fear; it requires that you be in a space where you do not take a stand (a fixed way of knowing), and instead pose questions. The non-stand, stand, is to ask, what are the formations of knowledge production, or as Massumi (2008) asks in his discussion on perception, what is the thought-feeling that I am encountering, the thinking-feeling that slips behind actions and assumed ways of knowing? To this, I would add the question, how might I decenter myself enough so that I stay aware of these movements—the affects of a sign-encounter that have the potential to go unnoticed or be suppressed as a way of avoiding disorientation? How do I actively be in the space of uncertainty and deny the urge to stand firmly in one place? How do I become an observer and a participant at the same time—a witness to my own becoming? As Manning (2015) writes, “this ‘taking a stand’ too often becomes the death-knell of creative acts of reading (and, of course, of making)” (p. 63). Instead, she (Manning, 2015) offers up that we take a different kind of stand, one that “engages sympathetically with the unknowable at the heart of difference, one that heeds the uneasiness of an experience that cannot yet be categorized” (p. 63).



(un-titled)

For me, and for this study, stepping into this kind of sympathetic engagement with the unknown is the way to release orientational fear. Not through combative fighting, not through aggressive resisting, but through non-attachment to the outcome. It is to take a stand that says I will joyfully move from the space of what might not yet be recognizable. As Manning (2015) points out, this is not easy work, and it requires a willingness to take risks. She (Manning, 2015) compares this sympathetic engagement to stomping on grapes in order to create wine. When you stomp on grapes, the wine might turn out bad and you will have stained feet, but ultimately, you have created a process, a way, to be in the middle of an uncertain experience that does not have a guaranteed outcome. Even if the painting ‘fails’, the wine is sour, the product or outcome is not to your liking, at the very least, you have created a process and taken a risk hopefully, with joy. You turn the canvas and continue onward, shifting your relations away from that which is already known, and towards that which is yet to be understood. You, the canvas, and whatever other materials and material bodies are in play at that moment, take on a new orientation together.¹⁹

Needing Orientation

There are times in our teaching when orientational fear serves us; it keeps us on track and maintains order in the classroom. But there are other instances, like pockets of time within the course of everyday teaching, where releasing orientational fear may actually serve us better than sustained and planned movements. It is those moments—those forceful indentations to the surface of our reality—that I am suggesting we capitalize on. When perceived as sign-

¹⁹At this point, I encourage you to pause and invite someone (or something) into your mark-making process, so you might co-create in a responsive way (perhaps revisit the *Movement* number for this section with your co-creator). Try to stay present and open to the shifts occurring as you release the need for orientation through the invitation of collaboration and alternative ways of thinking/producing knowledge.

encounters, they hold the potential to expand our thinking, our making, and our doing, not only on a personal level, but with student engagements as well.

Imagine being with a group of eighteen kindergarteners who just finished creating self-portraits using tempera cakes. Water saturated with color is splashed and dripped all over the tables because they followed your directions and made the tempera cakes “nice and juicy.” Big circles of color become indistinguishable from one another as little ones momentarily forgot to wash their brush between each color. You run around the room trying to help students clean off their tempera cakes and keep going, keep creating. Now imagine clean up time. It is the last ten minutes of class and you hand out the wipes. Students begin to wipe down the tables, absorbing all those fabulous drips of color and water. Their little hands, some still with those tiny toddler dimples just barely visible, pressing the towel into the surface of the table, absorbing all those traces left behind. Next thing you know, one child opens her wipe and shrieks with delight as she sees her towel differently; it is no longer simply a tool for cleaning tables, but a place of surprise and delight. The simple, white wipey, and the little girl are in the process of becoming together, each leaving an impression upon the other. The left-over paint—now absorbed into the fiber of this wipey—has revealed so many new possibilities. This realization quickly spreads around your room. Like wildfire, the joy and the curiosity surrounding these wipes is contagious. You look around and see all the children opening their towels and shrieking with delight. You nervously glance at the clock. Two more minutes and then time to line up, followed by your next class, which of course is already waiting for you outside your door because their sub dropped them off early. You are facing a dilemma. Do you surrender to the complete, joyful, disruptive chaos unfolding in this moment, even though that inner voice is reminding you of the line outside your door? You want to stay here, you want to savor this point in time, you want to

capture the energy and affect that is nearly tangible in the air, but you know you have another class waiting, and the clock is ticking.

These are the moments when we, as art educators, understandably reach for orientation. In some ways it feels like the only option. We have a schedule to keep, a structure to maintain, a job to do. But, what if before you call for lineup, and put a halt to this happy chaos, you take a moment to look around? What if you took an extra minute to turn towards the disruption, to deeply observe not only what you see, or perceive through vision, but what you feel, the sensations, the affect of the moment. What would happen if you allow yourself to re-orient towards the disorientation, steadying yourself on the possibility embedded within it? Ahmed (2006) explains disorientation as, “moments in which you lose one perspective, but the “loss” itself is not empty or waiting; it is an object, thick with presence” (p. 158). It is thick with possibility. The towels. The colors. The small hands. You try to hold onto it all, soaking in your observations and temporarily storing them away in your apron pocket. This is what I believe Massumi (2013) means when he talks about seeing more than what is seen. For Massumi, (2013) he talks about this in relation to the spiral. Upon looking at a spiral, we see the form, but we also see the movement, the thing *behind* and *with* the form. The two cannot be separated out. So, when you face this disruption, you don’t see only the children running around soaking up as much extra paint as possible on their towels, you see what is behind, underneath, with and through this cut into your sense-making. You see laughter. You see joy. You see something bigger than your lesson, something expanding beyond your agenda, and it pains you to reign it in. But, you know you must at some point. You decide to collect the towels, even though you have absolutely no idea what you will do with them. They have become too precious to throw away. At last, you redirect the children towards the door, promising to hold onto these floppy,

wet, treasures until you see them again (secretly hoping the towels won't mold in your classroom in the meanwhile).



(un-titled)

At end of the day, when all the kids have gone and you are sitting there in the silence of your room, you pull the towels out once again. You sit with them in the silence, the kind of silence that is still filled with the sounds of the day, the movement and chaos of paint, faces, hugs, stickers, and so much more. It is a silence that is still rich with sound and sensation. You

lay the towels on the tables to dry overnight. Gathering your things, you turn off the lights and just before closing the door, you say thank you. Thank you for the gift of disruption, for the disorientation and possibility of doing more, of stretching yourself further. And as you go home, knowing you did the best you could do, you allow the thick presence of the towel experience to permeate your thinking, your preparations for the next day, maybe even your pedagogical understandings.

Engaging in this kind of work, where we take up disorientations as opportunities for possibility, has been discussed in the field in the past. Typically, it shows up in art education literature around material explorations and following what Deleuze and Guattari (year?) identify as lines of flight (discussed more in another frame-work). As art educator Smith (2016) explains lines of flight “create fissures and fractures in ready-made organization of thought and open up to new creative cartographies in life” (p. 49). Smith is looking specifically at how teachers might take up these cracks or fissures by staying with experimentation in a way that breaks through the habit of thought. And while lines of flight and signs are certainly functioning in similar ways, to be clear I don’t see them as the same entities. Lines of flight are cracks or fissures. They are ruptures that hold the potential for deterritorialization, like the beginning rumblings and small eruptions of a volcano that will eventually reform and take a new shape. Lines of flight are the initial cracks, allowing new possibilities and ways of rethinking to bubble to the surface, but they are not the full explosion of the sign-encounter. To my senses, a line of flight is like the equivalent to allowing your children to experience the joy of the towels, and maybe even take some class time to explore them, but not allowing the towels to really unearth you, cause you to rethink your pedagogical practice. Those are two-different mind sets. The line of flight is the crack in the glass, whereas the sign-encounter is the jagged piece of glass that slices the tender

skin on your hand unexpectedly; it is the generating of new tissue, that will never quite feel or look the same as it did before. Sign-encounters are forces that stay with you in unpredictable ways, creating significant, unforeseen changes to your way of being and knowing.



(un-titled)

For the field of art education, there tends to be an emphasis on rhizomatic ruptures and relationality with materials in early childhood art education literature (Olsson, 2009; Thompson, 2014). However more and more, I've been seeing the expansion of this conversation on uncertainty and experimentation in the field, beyond early childhood. I believe this is, in large part, due to the pandemic and the ripple effects of 2020 we continue to face on a global scale. Authors and art educators, such as Veronica Hicks (2021), are asking how we might take despair and transform it to meet our self-care needs. Art educator, Lisa Lajevic (2021), also questions how we might take the disruption of Covid and online teaching, to create new possibilities of

growth. These ways of thinking with and through pedagogical openings are part of releasing orientational fear. It is a form of resistance that must take place before the release. The difference between their work and mine, however, is that I am situating this idea within the philosophy of transcendental empiricism and leaning on concepts that deeply disrupt our sense of relationality with materials in the world (human and beyond human). In the latest 2021 publication of *Studies in Art Education*, Donal O'Donoghue (2021) suggests that we study "aspects of the field through particular concepts" and that in doing so, we might "illuminate it in ways that it has not been previously visible" (p. 5). I see so much potential in viewing the concept of transcendental empiricism, especially in relation to signs, not only for the field, but also on the ground, in-the-trenches, first-hand practice. Just as other art educators, such as Hayon Park (2021), uses the work of Rancière to rethink early childhood art education, I am employing Deleuze's concept of apprenticeship to signs as a way to attend to new pedagogical perspectives and possibilities. By taking up sign-encounters in ways that permeate our skin, our minds, our thinking, our making, our doing, and our practice in the world, I hope to bring the concept of signs into conversation with the field at large.

Releasing Orientation and Enjoying the Wobble

When I began writing this section, I labeled it resisting orientational fear. As I wrote through the section, and now return to the beginning, I realized it is mis-named. It is not resisting orientational fear, but releasing it. Releasing orientational fear is not about combatively fighting the sensation of fear and the desire for re-orientation. More so, it is about noticing when that urge, that desire to reorient is present in yourself, in your mind and in your body. Releasing orientational fear is to recognize this very natural/normal urge to plant oneself in a fixed way of knowing, to acknowledge the desire for orientation, to treat it with grace, and then to consciously

set that desire aside. Saying, I see you. I understand and acknowledge your presence in this moment, but I choose to be here. I choose to be in the space of disorientation and allow myself to see and feel differently, in ways that I cannot predict. This is to release—rather than resist—orientational fear. It is the turning of the canvas, the collecting of the towels for whatever comes next. Essentially, it is surrendering to what Massumi (2011) identifies as “lived relation—a life dynamic” and understanding that sign-encounters always-already have abstract possibilities to be embraced (p. 42).

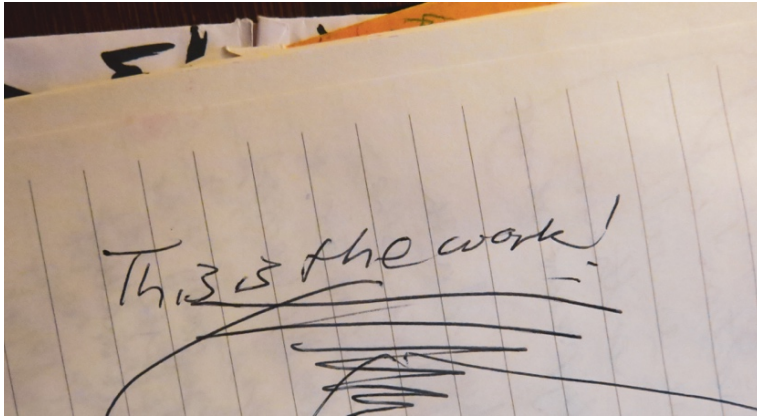
To be able to release orientation fear, however, requires a willingness to be in a sort of *orientational wobble*. I began using the term ‘the wobble’ as a way to talk about those moments where you are disoriented but are willing to muddle, to stay and investigate actively, patiently, with a sense of commitment to the sign and its disorientation. This is that balancing between two legs on the chair moment mentioned earlier.



(Please return to the fortune teller to determine where you will go next.)

CHAPTER 7

DEAR READER: AN IN-BETWEEN



(un-titled)

Dear reader,

This is the last frame-work, or it's the first, or its somewhere in the middle for you. I do not really know. What I do know, is that not knowing the path you might take through this work is a constant thought and struggle for me. I am situated between what I know to be (the text and my experience) and what I don't know to be (your full experience). The pieces of this dissertation existing as sections of an emergent whole, as an assemblage held together by shifting lines of thought and forms of engagement, is extremely challenging. As Delanda (2016) explains in his assemblage theory, "we need to conceive of emergent wholes in which the parts retain their autonomy, so that they can be detached from one whole and plugged into another one, entering into new interactions" (p. 10). These emergent wholes, Delanda (2016) argues, are not reducible merely to their relations to the overall whole as a defining characteristic. And yet, this is incredibly challenging to put into practice. The assemblage, I believe, is life—the living inquiry. The writing has become, in time and with work, the analysis of this lived experience, but yet the writing is not OF the lived experience; it is not mere descriptions. The process of writing, the creation and construction of this dissertation, also has its own type of emergent whole in relation

to the lived experience of the study. The two are both separate and entangled. Yet, even within that emergent whole, are more parts of the assemblage, more emergent wholes in the form of frame-works and sections. These parts, these frame-work and sections, are not totalizing, they are not unifying but may act in unity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983b). Consequently, if one finds unification in them, this unification adds to the parts as emergent wholes all of their own.

In this section, which I am writing last, I don't know how to reference things I may or may not have referenced for you already, depending upon your path. It is a dilemma, because at some point, all the points actually do cross. Ultimately, they all come in contact with one another in the middle space. It's like a web of unpredictable moving lines—like light being diffracted through an installation of prisms. If I could build a room full of visible diffracted light for you, bouncing off of walls and surfaces continuously, that is what this middle space, this place of emergent wholes, would be like. This document is linear in form, and yet I have disrupted my knowledge of how you will read and intra-act it. So instead of fighting against the thing I cannot predict, I need to allow it to happen by not assuming you have taken a certain path. In other words, I do not wish for this section to dissolve into mere paragraphs referencing earlier sections through my assumptions of your reading, but I fear it might end up becoming that. Because referencing what I assume you have already read or know, is my way of turning towards that which has already been written. This is my way of establishing some orientation (like points on a line). I am struggling against the urge to orient myself within my own forced disorientation.



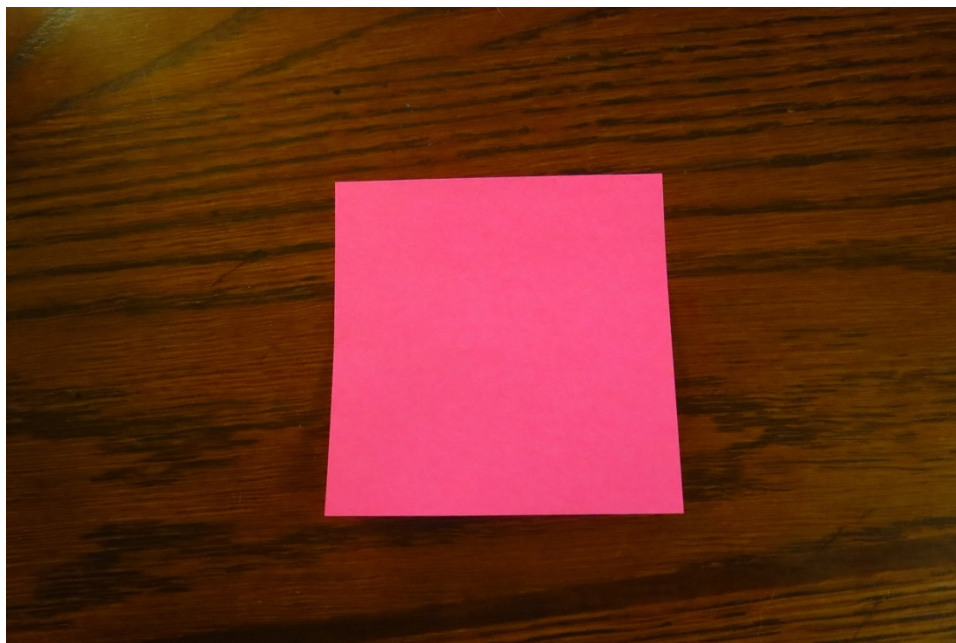
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CHAPTER 8

FRAME-WORK: SHEDDING THE BINARY

◆ (See instructions below.)

*Instructions: Before you read this next section please roll the dice that was sent to you or that you acquired on your own. Whatever number you landed on will be the Movement number of the CD 'Promises' you will play while engaging in a making-experience. Feel free to engage in this activity before reading this section, on breaks while reading this section, or after you conclude this section of the dissertation. The choice is yours. As you listen to the Movement correlating to the number on your die, please engage in mark making using whichever material you wrote on your fortune teller that goes with this section of the dissertation. You may make the marks on either the paper sent to you, or on some other surface of your choosing. I encourage you to consider the idea of signs, maybe even ponder signs in your personal life, while listening to the music and allowing yourself to create without worrying about the end product. Also, if there is no Movement number to correspond with the number on your dice, please re-roll the dice until it lands on any number from one through eight (for some of you, depending upon how many numbers are on your die). *If this is not your first time rolling the dice and making marks, please note you may use a different piece of heavy-weight paper per dissertation section, or you may LAYER your marks all onto one or two heavy-weight pieces of paper. Enjoy!*



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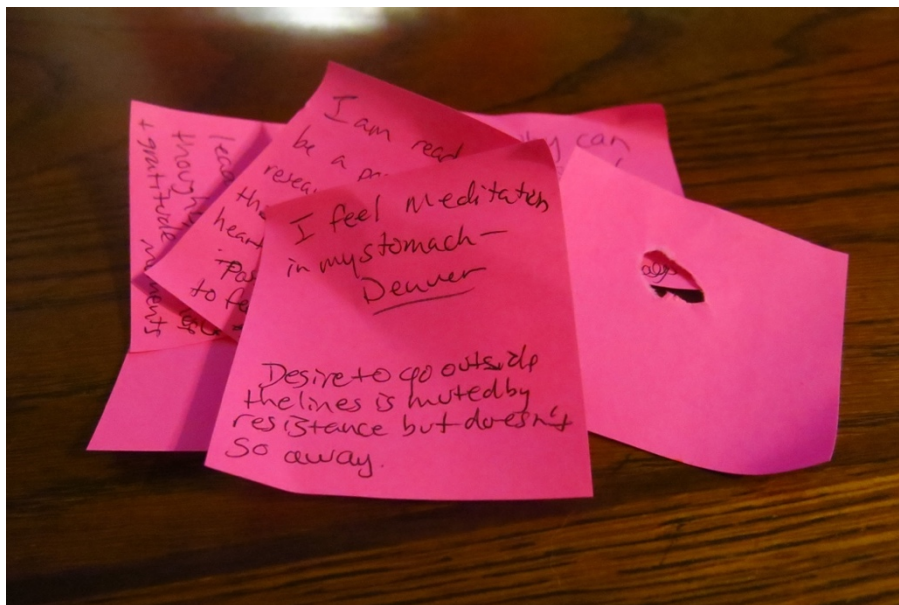
If you ask my youngest son, who is three, what he wants to be when he grows up, he will answer “I want to be a mom-dad.” I affirm him by saying, “I think you will make a wonderful mom-dad” and kiss the top of his head. When I say it back to him, I am careful not to correct the

way in which he says the two words together. I refrain from adding an ‘and’ between them and separating mom from dad, and dad from mom. And while I know Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) talk extensively about the word AND, and its ability to place “everything in variation,” in this case inserting the term ‘and’ would activate the word as a cut or division, rather than a connector or conjunction (p. 98). Using the phrase ‘mom AND dad’ would treat the two terms as separate entities, which is not the way I believe my son presents the concept when asked what he would like to be when he grows up. Instead, he always says the two words very quickly as if they are smashed together or at the very least, linked. I would like to think this desire to be a ‘mom-dad’ is a result of my husband’s and my teamwork during the last twelve months, which admittedly has been rough at times. Yet even beyond what it may, or may not, say about our parenting, the most intriguing part is how my son naturally, and very innocently, stripped the binary of its division, which makes the duality somewhat pointless in the first place. He dissolved the duality, replacing mom/dad (or mom and dad) as two separate entities, with what I can only assume is a dash linking the two into one, a ‘mom-dad.’

Upon first glance, shedding the binary and re-thinking the possibility of binaries co-existing differently, such as my son has done, might seem unrelated to art education and sign-encounters. However, I believe there is something between these elements to be played with, discussed, unearthed, investigated thoughtfully and with sustained curiosity. So, as I have done in other frame-works, I would like to spend a little time breaking down the relationship between what I envision as overlapping circles, and investigate together how shedding the division between binaries might enable us to stay within the space of a sign encounter longer in the art classroom.

In thinking conceptually about how all of the pieces of this dissertation move in, around,

and through each other, I have to go back to the strike of the sign as a place to start. Even if this is a false place to start, because arguably it is all just a bunch of middles, the sign-encounter provides some structure and grounds my thinking. It provides an entry point into the movement of the dissertation and the movement of thought. If I start with the strike of the sign, the relations between the dynamic pieces become a little clearer. Consequently, let's briefly revisit the sign-encounter and the possibilities presented through these disorienting cuts into our ways of being and knowing.



(un-titled)

The sign strikes, and you experience a strong sense of disorientation and disruption. You may feel this disruption in the body, in your thinking, in your making, in your gestures, in your daily routine, etc. This disorientation causes you to feel out of joint, but it is also a space of possibility and learning. As such, I am arguing that we stay within the newly formed space of the cut, which inherently holds the potential for im-possibilities to become possibilities. The disorientation experienced from a sign-encounter, however, can cause one to cling to that which is secure and known. For the most part, when we feel off-balance, there is a desire to steady

oneself, to fix the wobble. This is an understandable, normal reaction. However, when we give ourselves permission to stay with the uncertainty, rallying against the natural desire to steady oneself and remaining open to rethinking relationality, something new emerges. The trick, however, is putting practices in place to assist in this effort. Those practices being the practice of muddling and staying with the wobble, so that new forms of attentiveness might develop from the strike of the sign.

From this study, I have found it can be beneficial to shy away from turning towards binaries for answers and stability. Returning to the dead possum encounter mentioned in the introduction, when I came in contact with the dead possum, there easily could have been a re-establishment of stability by leaning into the division between human and animal. If I had dismissed the dead carcass encounter all together, or pushed away the state of confusion by remembering and reinforcing our animal/human divide, my reliance on binaries could have significantly altered this dissertation. Instead, I pursued the sign-encounter by not turning away from the disorientation and really trying to understand what was happening in that moment. Staying with the confusion was, and continues to be, my attempt to release the divisive form of the binary, so that the lived experience is no longer about moving towards one point or another, but rather about oscillating in-between states of becoming.

If we examine the root of binaries or dualities, they are about the construction of the subject/object divide. The subject/object divide has been tackled by many discourses, but for my purposes, I will look at the conversation around binaries and dualities in new materialism and how the re-thinking of binaries is deeply embedded in the trenches of transcendental empiricism. Here, I use the term binaries to stand for modern dualisms that underpin many of our understanding of the world (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012). Dualisms, binary oppositions, such

as mind/body, self/other, back/front, right/left, beginning/end, man/woman, child/adult, major/minor, light/dark, black/white, good/bad, chaos/order etc. bring about a sense of structure and sense-making in our lives, but they limit possibilities for thinking. To try and shed binaries is not just about working between them, between two points, but about working in-between them, to make each one “variable coefficients” or in “continuous variation” with one another (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 95). Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2015) distinguishes between the terms *between* and *in-between*, explaining in-between as interstitial, and with no determined destination. He (Ingold, 2015) explains the difference in the following way, “Where between is liminal, in-between is arterial; where between is intermediate, in-between is midstream” (p. 147). For this frame-work, I will focus specifically on in-between, as an imperceptible space of fluid movement, only perceptible when given form. Yet, even the form as the perceptible shape given, the sculpture formed from clay, the painting made from paint, cannot account for the in-between; they are only physical manifestations of possibilities already present in that interstitial space. In this frame-work, specifically, I am suggesting that as art educators we try to stay in this space—the midstream of the sign-encounter. I have referenced the act of staying in this middle space as muddle-ing in another section of this dissertation. For now, however, I am going to set that term aside and instead, focus on the Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/1987) discussion on binaries in music, as well as new materialism’s emphasis on breaking through dualisms, specifically pointing towards Donna Haraway’s (year?) idea of emergent naturecultures, to guide us through this frame-work. We will take a deep dive into what it means to work in-between binaries as continuous variation, and place this continuous variation in conversation with sign-encounters in art education. To begin this deep dive, I would like to look at two very fundamental elements in life and in art education—lines and points.

Lines and Points

If we are to assume that a line connects two points, then the line is, as Deleuze and Guattari state, “subordinate to the point because they serve as coordinates for a point or as localizable connections for two points” (p. 295). The line is not free of the points. These points are presumed static, and the line between them serves as a link between the two. However, what happens if we “free the line,” and liberate it from those two presumably fixed points? (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 295). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argue that this freeing of the line is the intention of every artist and musician. But if we are to free the line, first we have to recalibrate our understanding of the line.

The line, as a means between two points, is the result of dualisms and binaries that are constructed as part of our social structure. Freeing the line from two points, would mean radically rethinking the line and rethinking the binary as a social construct. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argue, “it is a particularity of modern societies, or rather State societies, to bring into their own duality machines that function as such, and proceed simultaneously by biunivocal relationships and successively by binarized choices” (p. 210). And while this dissertation is not about social and political infrastructures, it does warrant recognizing that if we want to shake the line free from its anchors (points on a binary), and work in the space of the middle (the *intermezzo*), we need to first consider how to get outside of this duality that is very ingrained in our society. This is a challenge, especially when it comes to language and describing things. For example, even in this dissertation, which pushes hard in the direction of rethinking relationality, there is still the struggle of how to articulate the concept of being-with matter and material in a non-binary way. How do we talk about the an onto-epistemological position without referring to all matter in categories of human/non-human or human/beyond human? The

binary is problematic, so how do we shake free? This is where I argue the sign-encounter can actually assist us, but again, it is up to us to do the work.



(un-titled)

The work is the work of trying to stay in the middle—to *be-between* as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) call it, or as Ingold (2015) identifies, be *in-between*. A sign-encounter as a force of disruption has the potential to shake us out of an inherent, socially constructed, binary position, but that is only a potential, a possibility. We have to do the work to consider ourselves in relation outside of the binary and see if that is even possible. This requires that one is in a constant state of passing through, never fully tethered to one point or another. And while upon first glance, this might appear as utter madness (constantly landing nowhere), it actually can be really profound. After having embodied this work for nearly two years, and really trying to understand in a deep way what apprenticeship to signs means for art education, I can say confidently it does not mean you will never land anywhere and be in a state of complete

madness. However, it does mean that you cannot rely on landing somewhere for very long; you cannot grab onto a fixed piece of knowledge as such. Instead, you have to envision it as a passing through, a fluidity around and in-between points of understanding. To be in this state of passing through, means to be in a state of becoming (as discussed elsewhere in this dissertation), and to be in a constant state of becoming, means allowing your lines to move fluidly around and through what you perceive, or previously perceived, as fixed points. I am not going to lie, this work can be incredibly frustrating and discouraging at times, but the gratification comes in realizing that the work is never complete. We are always in a state of becoming, which can be an incredibly beautiful and rich way of existing.

In regard to transcendental empiricism, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) use diatonic vs chromatic music in order to illustrate this difference. It is the difference between moving from one point to another, a dualism with a degree of predetermination and finality, versus staying within two points by dissolving the relationship between the points to begin with. In this way, shaking free isn't just a recognizing of when you are engaging in more dualistic actions, but really trying to break free from the form or structure of binaries. They (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987) use music, and specifically Beethoven's break from the diatonic scale to the use of chromaticism, as a way to talk about the idea of shaking free from binaries and the potential for re-aligning in new ways. I believe this illustration helps tremendously in understanding what I mean by shaking free of binaries and how Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) address the term constant variation.

Diatonic and Chromatic

Although I am not a music theorist, I do have a basic understanding of the diatonic and chromatic scales and how they came to be in relation with one another. A traditional diatonic

system in music posits specific major and minor scales based on standardized interval patterns. These patterns travel from, and return to, a specific key. For example, if you start playing in the key of C, you move away from it during a composition, and yet, there is an expectation that you will return to the key of C at some point. In this way, a diatonic system is the engagement with two points, containing a sense of pre-determination and a promise of stability. Whereas, chromaticism is the dissolving of boundaries between different keys—it disperses or, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) might say, it deterritorializes the diatonic scale, only then to be reconstructed or reterritorialized in its own way. As they (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987) state,

By placing all its components in continuous variation, music itself becomes a superlinear system, a rhizome instead of a tree, and enters the service of a virtual cosmic continuum of which even holes, silences, ruptures, and breaks are a part. (p. 95)

Here chromaticism, or as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) later call it, “generalized chromaticism,” is used to show how placing variables in continuous relation with one another, in ways that are not confined by the parameters of a duality, can lead to new relations that are not predetermined or have a sense of finality to them (p. 97). I believe this is a key concept for shaking off binaries and rethinking the system as a whole. By placing elements in constant relation—not as two points on a line or major and minor key signatures—we are asking ourselves to take away the subject/object division and stay with the sensation of something being unresolved for longer than we might wish. In doing so, new nuances appear and different conceptualizations of the in-between become possible.²⁰ What once stood in opposition, such as holes and ruptures being the negation of a complete form, become part of the form itself, not as opposition but as inclusion and expansion of what a form can be or become.

²⁰If you choose to do so, please feel free to watch the following video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yT47eZ5LUhY>. (I invite you to skip over minutes 4:45 through 6, as they seem like a paid promotion.)



(un-titled)

If we think or place this idea within the context of visual art, shaking off the binaries in visual art would be moving away from representation (also addressed in another frame-work) and moving towards more abstract, subject-freeing, forms. This is where Deleuze (1981/2002) discusses modern artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian, who had a desire to release the subject and break free from conventional forms, conventional dualities, by using abstraction to pre-established system (Deleuze, 1981/2002, p. 84). Pushing this idea even further, Deleuze (2002/1981) offers up abstract expressionists, such as Jackson Pollock, who take abstraction to the extreme and push painting, lines, and color (or color patches) to their limit. He (Deleuze 2002/1981) says, “with Pollock, this line-trait and this color-patch will be pushed to their functional limit: no longer the transformation of the form but a decomposition of matter, which abandons us to its lineaments and granulations” (p. 86). He (Deleuze, 1981/2002) continues to say, “(t)his time, it is at the point of closest to catastrophe, in absolute proximity, that modern

man discovers rhythm” (p. 86). This last portion of the quote is, I believe, a key component and possibly a bread crumb from Deleuze. It is telling us that even within the dissolution of pictorial organization, from this ‘catastrophe painting’, something else emerges. A new way of understanding, a new code for making, a new way of experiencing the movement and gesture of painting, is folded back in on itself.



(un-titled)

Of course, with any kind of breakdown, or dissolution of structures and norms, there is a fear of complete nothingness, complete dissolution. Consider taking away all known or pre-established rules in your classroom, or completely dissolving the binary of teacher/student; both movements are scary to consider because you know as a teacher, they would result in complete chaos and madness! Consequently, this dissolution of any or all structure is not what I am advocating for as an antidote to binaries, nor do I think it is actually what Deleuze is advocating for either. Instead, at the very least I am arguing for thinking critically about where you may be locked into a binary structure in your own practice and trying to shake free of this structure so that new relations are established. A kind of *reterritorialization*, that still has qualities of the old but broadens or re-envision possibilities, may occur if we do the work to step away from the binary structure as a whole. Yet, to interpret or understand the idea of releasing the self from the binary as requiring complete chaos is a misconception. Rather, I believe it is about rethinking the binary structure all together and releasing the self in order to “reinvent new modalities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 96). Basically, it is a matter of freeing the line by rethinking the relationship between the line and the points as continuous variation, not as final destinations.

This concept of rethinking the binary is very much in alignment with post-humanist thought and new materialism, which was formed out of the radical reconceptualization of dualisms from the beginning. Specifically, new materialism addresses the binaries or dualisms of nature/culture, matter/mind, human/in-human (van de Tuin, 2012). As van de Tuin (2012) states, “Reworking and eventually *breaking through* dualism appears to be the key to new materialism” (p. 97, italics from original). This breaking through, however, comes from releasing the linear or narrative structure that things exist in opposition of one another (negation is still a position), and instead, thinking in variable coefficients or continuous variation. Returning to the example of my

son stating he would like to be a ‘mom-dad’, it is not about considering these two as separate entities working in relation, nor about thinking about them as universal concepts, but about rethinking their relation as constant variable coefficients. Like Donna Haraway (2016b) emergent naturecultures, which she addresses through a conversation about the dog/human relationship, mom-dad are in some ways, “companion species” (p. ?). They are in a co-constituted relationship with one another, which is different from existing as two separate categorical points. Instead, mom-dad are in continuous variation with one another, moving fluidly as material in the world, not only as independent theoretical constructs. Here, Haraway (2016b) offers up the example of Andy Goldsworthy and his land art as a way to address the human-culture division. As she (Haraway, 2016b) states, “For him (Goldsworthy), the history of the land is living; and that history is composed out of the polyform relatings of people, animals, soil, water, and rocks” (p. 114). Haraway (2016b) continues on to say, “(p)rocess and dissolution—and agencies both human and non-human, as well as animate and in-animate—are his (Goldsworthy’s) partners and materials, not just his themes” (p. 114). For artists and art educators, this is an important distinction. The shift from the diatonic to the chromatic scale, and the shift from lines of representation to lines of abstraction, these categories are not simply themes or ways of creating boundaries in our thinking. Rather, they are materials and partners to be *explored-with* and *experienced-with* differently through living, teaching, and creating.²¹ We are in a co-constituted relationship with materials in our world, including all materials and material bodies in our classroom. Consequently, when we consider how to shed binaries, there must be a recognition of this co-constitution or what Haraway (2016b) calls *emergent*

²¹At this time, please take your paper(s), especially the ones that have water-based materials on them and place them outside if it happens to be raining. If it is not raining, please consider another creative way to include water as a co-creator or partner to be explored with (for example, spraying them with your hose or placing them in the shower). How might you and water co-create?

naturecultures (p. 93). She (Haraway, 2016b) provides the example of a dog and the dog's trainer experiencing happiness together through the labor of training. The training becomes a space where something new comes into the world through this relational practice where "all participants are remodeled by it" (p. 145). In this case, and in the case of the classroom, it is less about who or what the participants are (human, dog, grass, oil pastel, teacher, dirt, spray paint, student, tape, child, adult, etc.) and more about the remodeling and reshaping of our co-constituted experiences. As a result, we might have an opportunity to find ourselves in continuous variation with our own pedagogy and all that teaching art entails.



(un-titled)

Intentional Ambiguity

I imagine at this point you are probably thinking, that sounds great, but how might we do this work within the actual, physical realities, and limitations, of the classroom? How does one implement such states of undoing and re-doing? How do we shed the binary in our thinking, in

our making, in our teaching? What kinds of teaching and making practices might enable us to be not simply between two points, between a major and minor scale, between representation and complete abstraction, but *in-between* forms? These are big questions. These are the kind of questions that keep me pushing on this path of study, and keep me moving with and through the lived process of thought. After undergoing this dissertation process, the resolution I have come to is that even if we can never completely shed the binary in our teaching of art education, I do think we can create some *intentional ambiguity* in the arterial, middle spaces, that will enable us to get outside of pre-established binaries as they are assumed to be.

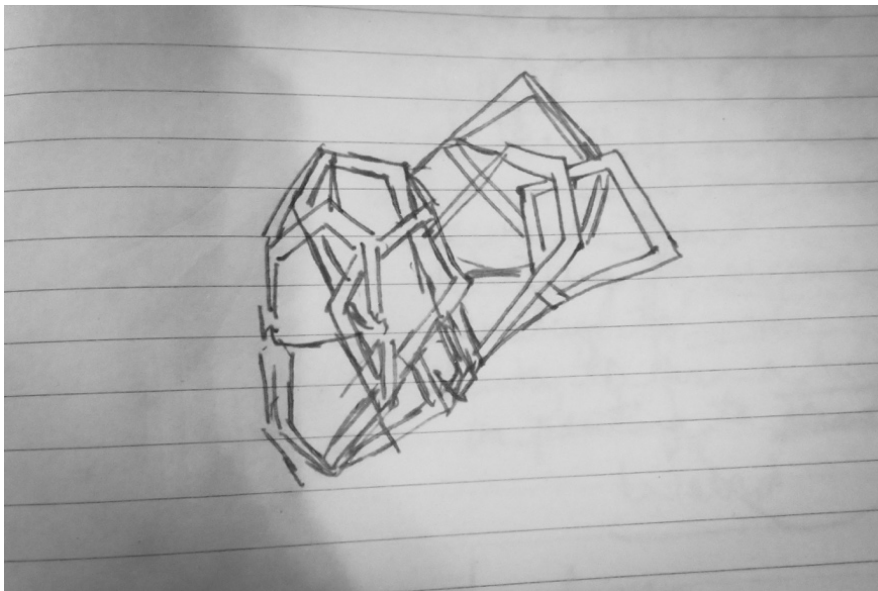
In talking about ambiguity, and especially in relation to binaries, I have to take a brief moment to recognize the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1947/1976), who had a huge impact on feminism with her text *Ethics of Ambiguity*. In general, Beauvoir's (1947/1976) work leans towards issues of gender and sex divisions, and is used readily in the discourse of feminism (Nicholas, 2021). In *Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947/1976), she problematizes divisions and strongly suggests that while these dualities are not necessary, humans tend to seek out dualisms as ways of perceiving and understanding the world. Placing her work in conversation with Deleuze brings up some interesting ontological cross-overs, but I want to be cautious about going down the rabbit hole too much here. Because, at the end of the day, Simone de Beauvoir's position is still too human centered for what I am addressing and is primarily focused on freedom of the subject, which is in opposition to Deleuze who is trying to gain freedom from subjectivity. Whereas Beauvoir (1947/1976) is looking at ambiguity from the position of existentialism, I am speaking about it in the context of transcendental empiricism, and specifically looking at its pedagogical potential as a means to address relationality and take up the challenge of shedding the student/teacher dualism, at least temporarily.



(un-titled)

Upon first glance, it seems that ambiguity would be the complete opposite of what one might want in education and education theory (a perceived binary, yet again). Suzawa (2013) argues that the inclusion of ambiguity in the classroom speaks to alternative theories of knowledge, different ways of thinking about both learning and teaching, and that we should embrace ambiguity as part of our pedagogical practice. Learning, traditionally, is spoken about as the acquisition of skills or knowledge that is fixed. However, the on-the-ground, in-the-trenches educator knows this is not actually the case. Learning and teaching are complex, messy, layered, and complicated. As such, ambiguity, used here to mean inexact and open for interpretation, has the potential to engage learning and teaching in a way that is unpredictable, not scripted or pre-determined. Scholar Alike Nocoloaides (2015) identifies this kind of learning—learning that is not highly defined—as “generative learning within ambiguity” and argues that ambiguity in learning requires a stillness towards the present moment in order to

search for meaning (p. 180). Additionally, Nocoloaides (2015, 2008) argues that a sort of “codetermined knowing” emerges when dealing with ambiguity (p. 189). This codetermined knowing, however, is dependent upon the tentacles of ambiguity reaching into areas of understanding that could not be reached independent of the ambiguity, with more clear-cut highly defined knowledge and ways of learning. To put it simply, sometimes we need to work through the muddy, unanticipated, unclear, not-highly defined learning opportunity to form new ways of knowing and new ways of being with one another, to break the line free from the points.



(un-titled)

When I speak of intentional ambiguity in this dissertation, I am describing the conscious act of providing loose guidance, a porous frame-work for students, that supports personal inquiry, relational investigations, and the potential to rethink the teacher-student dynamic outside of a binary form for both students and ourselves as art educators. This is not to be confused with teacher neutrality (Noddings, 2013), which is the taking a of a neutral stance by the teacher, nor to be confused with choice-based curriculum (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018), which focuses on the students as artists and teaching is structured towards artistic behavior (also discussed in another frame-work). Intentional ambiguity, rather, is the act of giving students a learning experience,

assignment, or some other means of engagement, that challenges the traditional assignment or engagement structure and throws the student/teacher binary out of alignment. Let me provide an unexpected example that I stumbled upon during my writing of this dissertation—something that emerged while I was genuinely trying to embody what I was writing on a continuous basis and be true to the frame-works I was, and am, putting forth. While originally the example I am about to share with you and this particular frame-work on binaries, were not intended to be linked, ultimately, they became intimately connected.

In December 2020, I took on a new position as an adjunct at a university teaching a foundational art education course. In designing the course syllabus, I decided to try something different for myself, to assign an intentionally non-specific assignment called Emergent Expression. I had no idea at the time that this assignment would work itself into the dissertation, but it has emerged as an important example and an assignment I find myself often pondering. The description of the assignment begins as follows, “(t)his is an intentionally non-descript assignment. As an educator, and as your instructor, I will not dictate how you begin, proceed, or end this assignment. All I will do is receive what your expression is, and becomes, throughout the semester” (Wurtzel, 2021). I continue by asking the students to touch upon the work for ten minutes each day and document any shifts in their work weekly. Originally, this assignment was created as a way to offer up a space where students could reflect daily on where they are in their own growth and understanding throughout the semester. I envisioned the assignment as regular touch points, becoming a thing, a space, or a gesture, students would return to repeatedly for themselves. I anticipated some challenges with this assignment because of its open-ended nature, but what I did not see coming was how this assignment would weave itself back into the writing of this dissertation.

July 26th (1:59am)

Today I had three diverse and divergent thoughts. I need to record them here.

- 1. If I die, please have a celebration of my life, my beautiful entanglements with everyone, and life in general.*
- 2. I realized my issue with the rectangular canvases. They already have a predetermine orientation of only two spaces. I keep coming up against this idea of binary, but most importantly the space between binaries. Squares don't have a predetermined orientation*
- 3. Today I identified as an artist. Habits have changed, Habits are always changing—my "I" is changing. It is not easy work. None of this is easy. The rigor is always there. But the reward is so tremendous. Reward not being the dot on the other side of this experience, the X on the stage where I will stand and be handed a piece of paper framed in a soft fake leather folder. Instead, the reward I am talking about is the daily reward of moving forward, of accomplishing something, of trying to find my voice in a sea of so many voices. THESE are the rewards.*

As I was thinking and writing through this portion of the dissertation, I was struck hard by the realization that the Emergent Expression assignment, had intentional ambiguity embedded within it for both myself and the students. In some ways it has become the manifestation of intentional ambiguity, and challenged me as their instructor to step outside of the binary relationship by not providing exact criteria or parameters. Here, my use of the term intentional ambiguity is most closely aligned with the work of art educator Dennis Atkinson (2017, 2018), who encourages an emergent arts practice *without criteria* or at the very least with a diminished emphasis on external criteria. For Atkinson (2017), the releasing of external criteria is done in an effort to have greater access to the “internal necessary transcendence that emerges from the immanence of experiencing” the force of art and characterized by what he identifies as the *affect of risk* (p. 143, italics from original). The affect of risk is the willingness to engage in relationality by responding and waiting through the process of art making. As Atkinson (2017) explains,

These relational dynamics indicate that in the flow of experience there is an unpredictable virtual power of becoming, a that-which-is-not-yet which becomes, in unforeseen and unanticipated ways, something that happens beyond established conceptions of practice and which has the potential to create new worlds of practice. (p. 143)

Atkinson is offering what he calls a *pedagogical inversion*, where the value and emphasis

of the experience shifts from external criteria, to how processes matter for the learner and how the “immanence of a learner’s practice denotes how something emerges and matters” (p. 42). Conceptually, this is the closest description I could find to what I mean by intentional ambiguity. By engaging in intentional ambiguity, each student is allowed to determine their own engagement towards the future, their own relationship to that which is yet-to-be. The ambiguity presents opportunities to release orientational fear and potentially be in the wobble, should students take it up that way. Conversely, as the instructor I am also afforded an opportunity to be in touch with the yet-to-be and all the uneasiness that brings for me as well. As Bayley (2018) acknowledges in her work on post-human pedagogies, this kind of undoing, or not knowing what is expected with hard, rigid, criteria, can be anxiety-inducing on the part of both the students and the teacher. Because, ultimately in this process, I too am required to face my own assumed position within the binary; any attempt to shed the form requires that I develop alongside and with the students, stretching and growing through pedagogical discomfort and continuous variation myself

I mentioned the emergent expression assignment up above in relation to ambiguity, but the concept of emergence also became an important for thinking about how one might work outside of a binary structure and be in the space of the sign encounter. I want to be clear, however, before continuing onward. I am not saying we can one-hundred percent, get outside the binary, because I am honestly not sure about that. But rather, that we might find the space of middles, a space that is not an either/or, by engaging in intentional ambiguity and allowing emergence to occur.

July 30-
The structure emerged from the process of me writing it.

Emergence is part of assemblage theory—it “describes an aggregate property of elements, none of which demonstrate that property inherently within them” (Loveless, 2019, p. 25). Emergence relies on a lack of relational predetermination and is, as DeLanda (2016) writes, “the properties of a whole caused by the interaction of its parts” (p. 9). DeLanda (2016) continues to explain how in an assemblage, the parts “retain their autonomy” even through emergence (p. 10). Under the context of new materialism, and especially the work of Karen Barad (year?), emergence is fundamental in that it speaks to how all matter is intra-connected. When addressing emergence from an agential realist position, she (Barad, 2007) states, “(w)ith each intra-action, the manifold of entangled relations is reconfigured” (p. 393). Emergence relies on intra-actions that are relational, performative, and “reconfigured” (Barad, 2007, p. 393). Nothing emerges from non-movement, from static gestures. And if this is the case, then emergent parts of an assemblage can never be in a binary. If relations are constantly trying to be reconfigured, then to practices emergence is to free the line from its two points, to release the words on either side of the dash or slash.

This does require some work on our part, however. Taking on emergence as a way to shed the binary means acknowledging an onto-epistemological position, that calls for performative understandings of knowledge production and ways of being. It is stepping into the world as part of the emergent process—stepping into your own emergent becoming, rather than operating from the outside. As Barad (2007) states, “(w)e don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside the world. We know because we are of the world” (p. 185). It is through this “of the world-ness” (p. 185) that meaning (and mattering) emerges. We begin to understand the world as being in-phenomenon, in a state of becoming of its own. Emergence, therefore, is the blurry-ing of the body-material boundaries that is part of becoming; it is the defying of fixed positionalities

and subject/object divide, placing a pause on one's reliance on a binary system to understand the hard lines between self and other. To do this, however, requires time, patience, and a commitment to the way of emergence itself. By this I mean, a dedication to the indetermination of relationality and the unpredictability of creation that allows for the unfolding of experiences through the structures of living and teaching.



(Please return to the fortune teller to determine where you will go next.)

CHAPTER 9

DEAR READER: AN IN-BETWEEN

Dear Reader

The space in-between the sign-encounter, painting, and art education was unavailable to me until this research process was undertaken and this dissertation written. I do not mean the actual physical space, nor do I really mean lines that connect these three points. I mean the affect between these “polyform relations” was unavailable (Haraway, 2016b). I believe this unavailability was due to my not being fully open to the intra-connectivity between the self and the self in relation to all matter. I couldn’t allow myself to sense the mattering of matter as Barad (2008) says, and I denied the affect of thinking-feeling, as Massumi (2008) writes. But somewhere along the course of this work, the taking up of the unknown and uncertainty and placing it squaring within art education and pedagogical questions, I came to be-with the in-between differently—to sit with it, to orient towards it, to welcome it, to analyze it continuously through my thinking, making, and doing. Because at the end of the day, before I turn out the lights, this really is about the self-in-relation; it is about standing, moving, and maybe even marveling from the in-between space of the sign-encounter, and recalibrating one’s own rhizomatic relations.



(Please return to the fortune teller to determine where you will go next.)

CHAPTER 10

LOOPING²²

◆ (See instructions below.)

Instructions: Please see footnote

The Return of the Opossum

I didn't even stop.
I passed your body on the street and pedaled back to the house as quickly as I could
I grabbed my large digital camera and took off once again.
I recall feeling the weight of the camera on one side of my body, as it hung diagonally across my
body.
By the time I returned once again, you were gone.
No blood. No stain. No fur. Simply gone.
I got off my bike and walked up and down that strip of sidewalk at least ten times.
Nothing. I found nothing.
I looped back as quickly as I could and there was nothing.
Just gone.

When I encountered a second dead possum, almost two years after the first encounter, I quickly biked home to grab my camera. By the time I returned there was nothing left—no form of representation. Nothing to capture in the photograph, no carcass to glorify, no human/animal divide to accentuate through the lens. There simply was no trace. I recall sitting on the curb and feeling perplexed, maybe even a little disappointed, but then I realized the absence of the dead possum was the whole point. These two encounters, seemed to encapsulated the whole essence of the study, highlighting how the lived experience is always returning, always folding and unfolding again and again, but never quite in the same way.

I imagine these encounters with the two possums not in a line, but perhaps as moving

²²Using the materials designated above the word looping on your fortune teller, please feel free to take a meditative 'loop-break' before or as you read this section. As you move through other sections as well, feel free to take 'loop breaks.' I envisioned your loop break as you listening to a *Movement* number and drawing loops on the page, but honestly, if 'looping' in some other way calls to you, like looping in the dirt or looping in steam on a mirror, etc., I encourage you to follow an alternative way.

points on an open loop that is continuously connected and entangled with other loops, not as closed circuits like that of design thinking, but as endless possibilities for movement and momentum. I use the word loop over circle, because a circle is closed and implies a return to the same spot, even if there are some changes along the way such as with action research methodology. Whereas a loop keeps things open, unsolved, moving, and fluid. Here, I lean on Tim Ingold's (2015) discussion on loops as momentum. These two sign-encounters, these two points, had momentum. Together, they kept the sign encounter space open, as if the first sign never really came to a close, but rather continued to slow down and pick up speed at various times.



(un-titled)

I had looped back to the first opossum sign-encounter, the start of this research. I had looped back to the house that afternoon. I had looped back to my dependence on the camera. I had looped back to my reliance on representation. Even after all this work, I looped back to old ways of being and knowing, where I wanted to 'capture' the moment. This disturbed me, causing

internal discord. Had I not learned anything? Had the security of orientation and binaries lured me in so quickly? I remember sitting next to my bike being upset with myself for falling back on the need for representation so quickly. But after some time, I realized this was the sign, after all. The lack of body and blood was the sign, and its absence was my teacher. I needed to see the nothingness and remember how this dissertation is about dwelling in disorientation and *being-with* that which is both visible and invisible in new ways. The absence of any remains, the nothingness to photograph, was a reminder that relationality is not about reinforcing an assumed hierarchy and binary. Rather, it is about the with-ness we can sense from sign encounters and the inherent disorientation they carry. The sign was not in the body of the second dead possum, it was in the force of its absence and the discord that absence caused. This was the true disruption.

August 9th, 11:25pm

Signs don't exist outside of process, if we are always in process. They cannot exist outside of the thing they are within. Or can they because they are virtual and actual. Therefore their "existing" is outside, but not in the traditional sense. It is an existing as possibilities in the virtual sense.

In the end, it is all about returning anyhow, looping back with change. As Deleuze (1968/1994) writes, "(r)eturning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself" (p. 42). The constant returning, the constant looping back, is the what Deleuze (1968/1994) identifies as the eternal return, back to pure difference (discussed elsewhere). In relation to pedagogy, scholar Rubén Gaztambide-Fernandez (2010) writes about how we need looping strategies of interruptions and imagination to shake us from complacency in teaching, to break us free from logic. And while my work is in conversation with this idea, I am addressing the loop within the context of sign-encounters, or at the very least the physical manifestations of them. For me, the sign emerges not as something outside of the loop, but rather as part of its own loop (perhaps

even intertwining loops). The challenge, however, is you simply cannot predict when the sign-encounter loop back will occur. Which, leads us to one of the main limitations of this study.



(un-titled)

Since I began this work, I have been asked repeatedly, when do you know a sign-encounter has ended. When do you know it is time to move on to the next one? It is my understanding from this work, that signs, and sign-encounters, do not simply end; they shift around, layer on top of each other, continuously forming new shapes, new lines of entanglement. Sign-encounters linger on our bodies, in our minds, through our thinking, with our making. They permeate our planes and wiggle in and through our striated layers. They don't end, but they may as Deleuze (1972/2000) writes be considered "less profound" (p. 35). There will be times when a sign strikes, but fades faster than you anticipate. This does not mean it has ended, but perhaps it has gone dormant for a bit, only to be revived some other time when you least expect it. This could be considered a limitation of the study. This feeling as if it never ends, could be perceived

as a limitation, but I actually think that feeling is a good thing. It indicates or points to the notion that habits, or what Deleuze (1968/1994) identifies as “I,” are changing, and that perhaps regeneration with transformation has occurred. So, to answer the question about when do signs end, I don’t think they do. In *Proust and Signs* (1972/2000) Deleuze writes, “(t)hose signs we had not been able to relish or to interpret so long as we linked them to Berma’s person—perhaps their meaning was to be sought elsewhere” (p. 34). The sign doesn’t end, but the search for the meaning, the pressing upon the sign-encounter again and again, sometimes needs to take a pause and let go of for a while. Yet, realistically, at some point there has to be a slight closing of the vessel, a pinching of the skin. There has to be a time and space where you turn towards your own reading of this lived inquiry of the self-in-relation to signs and art education.



(un-titled)

I believe this study is repeatable, in the sense that all things are already in a state of repetition, and yes, one could use the same general structure to engage in similar, repeatable,

work. Is it repeatable to the exactitude of the signs I went through? Absolutely not! Each person will go through their own sign-encounter journey, their own determination of where this journey begins and ends, or loops back, for them. I can't determine that for you, dear reader, or anyone else for that matter. Yet, even though its structure is repeatable, it has generalized repeatability, that does not mean the work is not valuable. Nor does it mean that the 'results' won't yield valuable information. Quite the opposite actually. I strongly believe the varying experiences each person will have, with their own rhizomatic cuts in their own life, which is what makes this work so important and relevant.

Where to Go from Here?



(un-titled)

For me, I hope to extend this work further, following wherever it takes me and apprenticing to the next twists and turns. I believe we need to keep pushing on spaces of uncertainty and utilize disorientation as opportunity, especially in our unstable world right now.

Additionally, however, I think we need to continue pushing on spaces of relationality and the expansion of the self, and see where these lead us in the classroom.

For you, in regard to where you go from here, I don't really know. Whatever you do, make it good and next time you are standing at that precipice, remember it is ok to let go and become a witness to your own becoming. Thank you for being amazing participants. I hope you enjoyed the rest of your experience with this dissertation, regardless if this is the beginning, middle, or last stop for you. Doing this research, writing about this work, has been life-changing for me. Good luck on your journey of apprenticeship to signs. I hope it is a beautiful, unfolding, experience for you as well.



(If this IS NOT your last stop, please return to the fortune teller to determine where you will go next. If this IS your last stop, thanks for everything!)

With love,

Kate

APPENDIX A
CREATING A FORTUNE TELLER

Materials Needed

One piece of paper 8.5 x 11

Scissors

Writing utensil(s) of your choice

Learning objectives:

- Participants will learn how to make a fortune teller.
- Participants will re-think the potentials of a fortune teller.
- Participants will consider the role of chance and risk taking as a pedagogical framework.
- Participants will consider the role of chance and risk taking in the creative process.
- Participants will reflect on their previous interactions with fortune tellers and how those interactions compare with the current one.

Introduction:

Often, we think of fortune tellers as having direct outcomes, fortunes that are revealed to us, or tasks that are given to us through this small, folded form. This dissertation presents an opportunity to rethink the use of the fortune teller, not as something that predicts, but as an apparatus that points to what matters—the relations between possibilities. As Barad (2007) writes, “(a)pparatuses are the material conditions of possibility and impossibility of mattering; they enact what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (p. 148). If we think about fortune tellers as apparatuses used this way, then the fortune teller’s role is to create edges or borders of an experience, but not give highly defined direction or navigation. As such, the mattering of matter, the coming into view of that which matters is emergent and unpredictable when one intra-acts with the familiar paper form of the fortune teller.

Facilitation: Making your Fortune Teller/Cootie Catcher

- *You may follow the written directions below or go to youtube and look up a video on how to create a fortune teller.*
- Place an 8.5 x 11 piece of paper in front of you vertically on a surface.
- Fold one of the top corners across diagonally until the top corner meets the opposite edge of the paper. You should end up with a shape that looks like a triangle on top of a rectangle.
- Next, cut off the bottom rectangle and please set it aside.
- With the square in front of you and fold one top corner across diagonally, unfold it, then refold it the opposite direction so that you end up with an X folded across your square.

- Next, turn the paper over so that the two diagonal folds will be folding the paper away from you. Take the four corners and fold them inwards towards the center. Use the intersection of the folds as a reference for where the four corners should meet (center point). The result should look like a smaller square.
- Repeat the previous step on the other side. You must turn the paper over and fold the new corners inwards towards the middle, making an even smaller square/diamond. The part you see now is the inside of the paper fortune teller.
- Fold and unfold the square in half both ways. The outside part of the paper fortune teller should be on the outer part of the fold. This will ensure that the fortune teller will work.
- Open up the bottom of the paper fortune teller and push out the flaps. This is where you will place your fingers.

Facilitation Part II: Filling in your Fortune Teller

- To fill out your fortune teller/cootie catcher, please write the four following words on the outer most layer of your fortune teller. The words are: Signs, Art Education, Deleuze, and Apprenticeship. Please write one word on each flap.
- On the following layer, please choose 8 numbers, and write one number or number combination, such as 28, in each triangle. I strongly encourage you to consider numbers you feel drawn to in the moment. Also, I recommend flattening the form for this step—it will be easier to write the numbers on a flattened surface.
- Next, please lift up the last layer (under the numbers). When you flip up the numbers, you will notice there are triangle flaps and then one large inner square broken into four sections with two triangles per section. Please follow the instructions and pictures below to label the inner section of your fortune teller.
- For labeling the inner most square: On the inner most square please designate/label the eight triangles in the following way (the order and placement of the words in each triangle up to you.)
- Unclenching 2. Surrendering 3. Shedding 4. Releasing 5. Active Waiting 6. Spaces of Inquiry 7. Looping 8. Dear reader: An in-between
- For labeling the triangle flaps:
On the triangle flaps, please identify 4 different materials you will use throughout this dissertation reading experience (see pictures). You may choose traditional art materials, or other materials of your choosing (such as dirt, bubbles, mustard, etc). If choosing more traditional art materials, I recommend choosing two that are water-based, such as watercolors, watercolor pencils, etc.

Implementation: How to use your Fortune Teller/Cootie Catcher with this dissertation

- Typically, fortune tellers are somewhat conclusive—they end with a fortune, a product, a statement, an outcome. They either hint or directly comment on one’s path

in life with a degree of certitude, such as “you will have three children and a mansion.” *However, in this case, I am asking you to try and suspend that understanding of a fortune teller for a moment, and instead see it as a tool for opening the un-considered, or yet-to-be-considered, possibilities.*

- To play your fortune teller, place all four fingers in the paper pockets and move your fingers in a vertical and horizontal motion, enabling the fortune teller to make a vertical and horizontal opening. Please practice moving your fortune teller in this way before you continue onward.
- Before returning to the text, please know you will be using your fortune teller to help move you through the text. All other directions will be explained within the context of the dissertation (main text).

Assessment:

- After reading this dissertation, and engaging with it, please take a moment to consider the following questions Where/when did you encounter pockets of risk and how you did you navigate them? Where/when did you feel resistance towards engaging with the material of the dissertation or the art materials in front of you? Where/when did you find yourself opening up to the experience? Did you encounter any of your own signs along the way? If so, how might you extend your encounter with the sign after (and beyond) your reading of this dissertation?
- Please jot down a few of your answers on a piece of paper that you can revisit again and again. Or discuss your answers with a friend and see where the conversation goes.
- If desired, you may even try making/designing your own fortune teller as an extension of this experience and consider how you wish your fortune teller to operate in your world. How might it guide you? What kinds of openings could your fortune teller enable or sustain?
- Lastly, please allow the experience of reading and engaging with this dissertation to sit and marinate within you for a while. I encourage you to try and utilize these frameworks when you are faced with your next sign-encounter—play with them, experiment, lean into the frame-works and the sign, and most importantly give yourself permission, allowance, to be-with the yet-to-be, that which is in the process of becoming (including the becoming of yourself).

APPENDIX B
STEPS FOR MAKING A FORTUNE TELLER

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