SEÇÃO I

CONCEITOS E INDAGAÇÕES

Finding my way to a/r/tography

Encontrando o meu caminho para a

a/r/tografia

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to better understand the philosophy, theory and principles of a/r/tography and how they can be applied to individual or a community of art-based researchers working in the social sciences and humanities. In 2004, Rita Irwin coined the term a/r/tography and developed an arts-based research practice based on the philosophical underpinnings of Aristotle's "three kinds of thought: knowing (*theoria*), doing (*praxis*), and making (*poesis*)" (Irwin, 2004: 27). She extends these understandings to educational research (see Dewey, 1934) and expands upon arts-based research (see Eisner, 1979, 1991; Barone & Eisner, 1997) to consider the methodology of a/r/tography for artists, researchers and teachers to enact as a living inquiry. Irwin suggests a/r/tographers' working in a collective create the opportunity to reexamine, reconfigure and rewrite histories, which were previously misunderstood or invisible. The insights gathered provide multi-faceted perspectives, offering a rich understanding of aesthetic experiences, performativity and poetic expressions linked to intellectual scholarship. The implications of this scholarly work is that art-based researchers will gain a deeper understanding of a/r/tography's historical development and its potential to broaden social sciences and humanities research through interdisciplinary practices by bringing together communities of researchers from diverse disciplines.

Keywords: A/r/tography; Arts-based research
 Interdisciplinary research.

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é compreender melhor a filosofia, a teoria e os princípios da a/r/tografia e como eles podem ser aplicados a indivíduos ou a uma comunidade de pesquisadores de arte trabalhando nas ciências sociais e humanidades. Em 2004, Rita Irwin cunhou o termo a/r/tografia e desenvolveu uma prática de pesquisa baseada nas artes baseada nos fundamentos filosóficos dos três tipos de pensamento de Aristóteles: saber (teoria), fazer (práxis) e poética (poesis) "(Irwin, 2004: 27). Ela amplia esses entendimentos para a pesquisa educacional (ver Dewey, 1934) e expande a pesquisa baseada em artes (ver Eisner, 1979, 1991, Barone & Eisner, 1997) para considerar a metodologia da a/r/tografia para artistas, pesquisadores e professores como uma pesquisa viva. Irwin sugere que os a/r/tógrafos trabalhando em um coletivo cria a oportunidade de reexaminar, reconfigurar e reescrever histórias, que antes eram incompreendidas ou invisíveis. As ideias resultantes proporcionam perspectivas multifacetadas, oferecendo uma rica compreensão de experiências estéticas, performatividade e expressões poéticas ligadas à erudição intelectual. As implicações deste trabalho acadêmico é que os pesquisadores baseados em arte irão adquirir uma compreensão mais profunda do desenvolvimento histórico da biografia e seu potencial para ampliar a pesquisa em ciências sociais e humanidades através de práticas interdisciplinares, reunindo comunidades de pesquisadores de diversas disciplinas.

Palavras-chave: A/r/tografia; Investigação baseada em artes; Pesquisa interdisciplinar.

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Introduction

In 2007, I was in my fourth year of undergraduate studies at Emily Carr University of Art + Design (ECIAD) in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. By that time I had developed an interdisciplinary art-based practice had developed with the aim of exploring and understanding current social, political and environmental issues.

My approach to this endeavor combined researching relevant history, writing academic articles and creating conceptual artwork. Coming across Dr. Rita Irwin's a/r/tography website, there were connections between the concept of a/r/tography and my own art practice. When we met some time later, her friendly mannerism encouraged me to show her my work and explain my art practice. This conversation led to the question, "*Do you think I'm an a/r/tographer?*" She leaned across her desk and confidently said, "*Yes, you are an a/r/tographer.*" After leaving Dr. Irwin's office, a feeling of elation and good fortune came over me because a connection was made with a person who embraces arts-based research methodology in a unique way.

Following the appointment, this exploration of a/r/tography began with reading numerous articles and books, two of note were *A/r/tograpahy*: *Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry* (2004) and *Being with A/r/tography (2008)* and a wave of questions surfaced: *What exactly is a/r/tography? What are a/r/tography's principles and practices based upon? Who is practicing a/r/tography? How does my art practice encompass a/r/tography?*

What exactly is A/r/tography?

Through reading *A/r/tograpahy: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry,* (Edited by Rita L. Irwin and Alex F. Pinar), Dr. Irwin identified the acronym a/r/t to represent the multiple roles of artist/researcher/teacher. The book is a collection of authors who explore their autobiographical renderings through an intertwined relationship of being an artist/researcher/teacher in order to understand more fully their own creative and pedagogical positions. They are connected by their belief that the visual is central to the inquiry process. Collectively, these articles defined a/r/tography as "a research methodology, a creative practice, and a performative pedagogy that lives in the rhizomatic practices of the liminal in-between." (Irwin, 2013: 199). As Irwin explains,

> To live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher is to live a life of awareness, a life that permits openness to the complexity around us, a life that intentionally sets out to perceive things differently. (Irwin 2004: 33)

A/r/tography is a form of inquiry emerging from arts education, the arts, aesthetic and qualitative research methodologies. Over the years, a considerable body of literature on arts-based forms of educational research has aimed to theorize the work of artists and teachers as methods of creative inquiry and representation. There are few methodologies that focus of the creative process and recognize the educative potential for teaching and learning in a reciprocal relationship while exploring the relationships in-between the roles of artist/researcher/teacher as "fluid spaces" (Wilson, 2004: 41-59). This is what makes a/r/tography so unique. By weaving together these multiple identities, a/r/tograhers make art and conduct research, which enhances understanding, challenges knowing and creates new meanings. Thus, to be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to explore the relational ways of art making and research as a living inquiry.

What are a/r/tography's principles and practices based upon?

Irwin posits, that the principles and practices of a/r/tography are based upon Aristotle's "three kinds of thought: knowing (*theoria*), doing (*praxis*), and art/making (*poesis*)" . She then extends these understandings to educational research (see Dewey, 1934) and expands upon arts-based research (see Eisner, 1979, 1991; Barone & Eisner, 1997) to consider a/r/tography as an enacted living inquiry. She suggests living inquiry draws upon the personal experiences of art teachers, arts-based educational researchers and artists as they utilize the art-making process to ponder questions and theorize possibilities.

Irwin proposes employing the metaphor of 'mètissage' (2004: 30) to assist people in understanding the interweaving process, which takes place between the multiple roles of artist, researcher and teacher. She refers to this experience as living in the 'borderlands' (2004: 33) while internally struggling with combining personal and professional roles (2004: 29). Sometimes conflict occurs between these roles because traditionally in academia expressing feelings and personal experiences have been discouraged. At times, the mètissage process holds the "weight of carrying on academic disciplinary traditions and achievements while experimenting with and creating new

forms of knowing, doing and making" (2004: 30). However, she encourages those who are living in the borderlands to engage with self and others to creatively re-imagine their life histories in and through time, which suggests mètissage will lead them towards "leading a life of deep meaning" (2004: 30). *A/r/tograpahy: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry* considers the creative process of accessing inquiry more deeply through a/r/tography examples in which artists, researchers and teachers have engaged with theory and art-based research practice.

Who is practicing a/r/tography?

Being with A/r/tography (Springgay, Irwin, and Leggo, 2008) builds upon the previous text by discussing a/r/tography as an arts-based methodological framework that can be utilized to comprehend multiple fields of knowledge.This book focuses on practitioners in arts-based educational research and provides clear examples of academics that are practicing a/r/tography through art education individually, collaboratively, or as communities of a/r/tographers who create new knowledge across multiple academic disciplines. Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, and Gouzouasis suggest a/r/tography is a process based approach rather than following a set of established criteria formulated by a specific methodology. Irwin and Springgay "interpret concepts to be flexible inter-subjective locations through which close analysis renders new understandings and meanings." (Springgay, Irwin, and Leggo, 2008: xxviii)

The a/r/tographical theoretical foundations and deeper commitments expressed in *A/r/tograpahy: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry* are expanded further, whereby Irwin and Springgay propose,

> Mètissage is usually recognized in hyphenated relationships. The roles of artist-researcher-teacher often cause inner struggles as individuals attempt to carry the weight of disciplinary traditions while experimenting with and creating new forms of knowing, doing and making. Mètissage is an act of interdisciplinary. It hyphenates, bridges, slashes, and creates other forms of thirdness that provide the space for exploration, translation, and understanding in deeper and more enhanced ways of meaning-making. (Irwin, Springgay 2004: 30)

This leads a/r/tographers towards a more complex research methodological process Irwin and Springgay describe as a 'rhizome' (Irwin and Springgay, 2008: xx), whereby theory undergoes a critically engaged abstract system that is reflexive, responsive and relational. Additionally, to be engaged critically and have a successful a/r/tographic practice three principles are necessary; "self-study, being in community, and relational

VIS – Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em Arte da UnB
V.16 nº2/julho-dezembro de 2017,Brasília.
ISSN- 1518-5494 e ISSN (versão eletrônica) – 2447-2484

and ethical inquiry" (Irwin and Springgay, 2008: xix). Accompanying these principles, Irwin recommends an a/r/tographer should make but not necessarily adhere to: "A commitment to a way of being in the world, a commitment to inquiry, a commitment to negotiating personal engagement within a community of belonging, an a commitment to creating practices that trouble and address difference" (Irwin and Springgay, 2008: 80). Included are six renderings, which described concepts, created to support a/r/tographers when working collectively. The renderings intention is to outline a set of possibilities that may occur when working with researchers. The following section presents a brief description of each of the six renderings.

Contiguity: Refers to the relationship that exists between artist/researcher/teacher and the practices of art making. A/r/tographers focus on how these multiple roles connect and disconnect through performativity, visual and textual inquiry.

Living Inquiry: Concerns the way a/r/tography is expressed as a living practice; is enacted and experienced through the process of art making, research and teaching.

Metaphor and Metonymy: Combines symbolic meaning with textual understanding. These two elements combined neutralize their meanings, creating opportunities for new meanings.

Openings: Is the process of conducting living inquiries by penetrating research texts more deeply, negotiating the relationships between text and image and considering other ways of knowing. Often communities of a/r/tographers will undergo this kind of exploration as collective reverberating engagement.

Reverberations: Refers to the active state of creating new understandings through the interplay of encountering words, texts and communications.

Excess: Concerns an ongoing engagement with research through scholarly study and imagery that questions 'how things came to be'. This process creates 'openings' so that new representations can occur.

This book offers artists/researchers/teachers a methodological framework for approaching arts-based research as a living inquiry and provides examples of how this model can be utilized in a community of practitioners. The beauty of a/r/tography is that it offers individuals an opportunity to reflect upon one's personal inquiry while bringing together communities of a/r/tographers from a variety of disciplines. Collectively, they can reexamine, reconfigure and rewrite histories through an interdisciplinary research approach. Thus, a/r/tography has the potential to create

opportunities for understandings that were previously misunderstood or invisible. The insights gathered from these writings provide multi-faceted perspectives, offering a rich understanding of aesthetic experiences, performativity and poetic expressions linked to intellectual scholarship.

How does my art practice encompass a/r/tography?

Since meeting Irwin and reading these texts, I began to explore how my own art-based research practice could encompass the concepts of a/r/tography. In 2011, I was undertaking a Masters in Art Education at the University of British Columbia and attending Dr. Irwin's a/r/tography class. My term a/r/tography project entitled, *Places In Between*, explored the concept of suburbia in Vancouver's Lower Mainland area in British Columbia, Canada.

In this section, I will utilize the *Places In Between* project to illustrate a/r/tography's principles and methodology. This project focused on the suburban city of Langley, which is located fifty kilometers from Vancouver. While living there, I bore witness to the displacement of wildlife and people, due to the transformation of rural environments into suburban communities. This situation raised the questions: *What is the impact on the environment and world resources? What is the cost of the suburban lifestyle? Is it possible to balance preservation of the environment with the development of urban communities?*

The artistic process began by actively observing landscapes in transition, to understand what ways the environment was being impacted by urban sprawl. Historian Bill McDowell proposes, "We are surrounded by traces of the past, such as buildings, the landscape, artefacts, as well as printed and visual records" (Mc Dowell, 2015: 4). A/r/tography became my daily compass to enable me to navigate through these 'traces of the past' by walking, sketching, writing, and collecting photographs, geographical maps, and newspaper articles. In a sense, this collection became my field notes contained within a well-traveled sketchbook. For example, this sketch represents how the rural areas of the cities of Langley and Surrey were merging together as one large urban sprawl. At that historical moment the landscape was at a cross roads, as farmlands were being developed into multiple suburban communities. This sketch identifies the borders of the cities by mapping the streets grid lines, observations of the suburban houses colour patterns were observed and recorded by collecting paint samples, they were placed in juxtaposition to the drawings of wildlife to signify the impact on the environment. Sketching became a productive research strategy, which prompted my thinking and remembering and promoted new ways of seeing and understanding the world around me. These field notes were used to jog my memories, and to track

VIS – Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em Arte da UnB
V.16 nº2/julho-dezembro de 2017,Brasília.
ISSN- 1518-5494 e ISSN (versão eletrônica) – 2447-2484

what and whom I had encountered in the process of doing research. This sketch of my observations in the field, illustrates how a/r/tography became for me a living inquiry, enacted and experienced through a collection of observations in various forms.
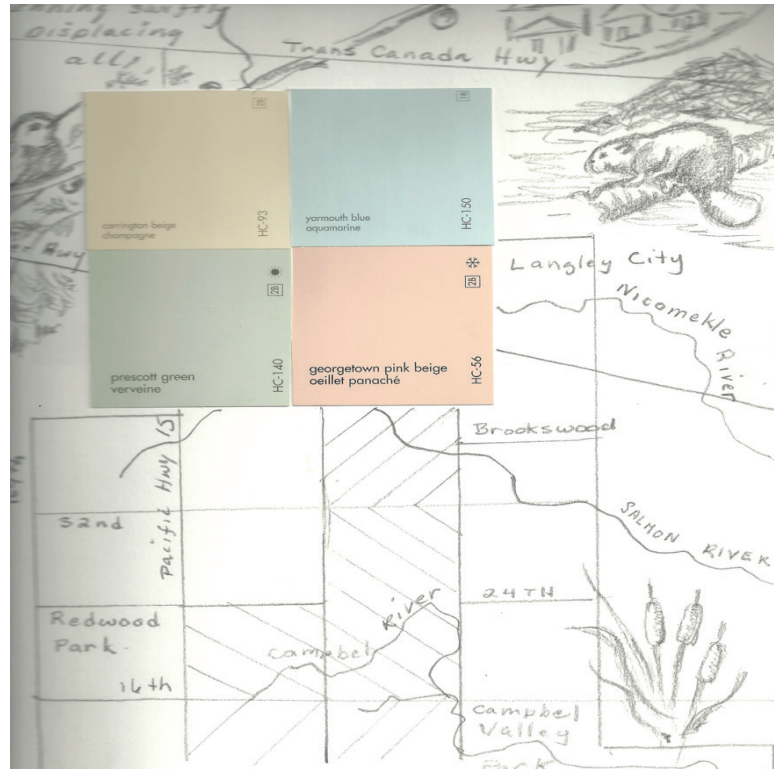

Figure 1. Baker, K. Sketchbook 2011

Working with images was also a vital aspect of the research process. For example, photographs were deliberately taken at different points in time with the aim of tracing change. The photographs served as a "memory-aid"[2] to remind me of what was once present, but are now past. Looking at them over time allowed for a bridging to occur at different stages of the analysis. For example, these three photographs (Figure 1, 2 and 3) were taken at the same site over a period of three months. At first, the area had a farm, forest, where a variety of animals lived. In this image, an otter peeks over a fallen tree, inquisitive, but cautious at the same time. The photograph captured a moment in time when the otter and my eyes met, where I felt the animal's vulnerability of being exposed. This encounter was memorable, as it documented a rare moment when a human being and a wild animal connected for only a brief moment as living beings.

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2   Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research

Figure 2. Baker, K. Otter 2011

The next photograph was taken a month later when the farm had been put up for sale and the owners had moved out. By this time, squatters had moved into the abandoned farm buildings. A different kind of community had emerged (Fig. 3). The homeless people I encountered living there projected their own kind of vulnerability, but I sensed was an undertone of harshness and a potential for violent outbursts. At times, I felt my own vulnerability walking through the homeless peoples encampment. On both sides of the farm, suburban communities had been built and townhouses and condominiums were for sale. Interestingly, in this picture you can see the squatter had utilized the realtors 'for sale' signs to refurbish the roof.

Figure 3. Baker, K Homeless Shelter 2011

Figure 4. Baker, K   Suburban Neigbourhood 2011

At the time, I began to develop a deeper understanding of place and space, which critically informed my own environmental ethical belief systems. A significant influence was the work of renowned environmental conservationist, scientist and author Aldo Leopold. In his publication *The Land Ethic he writes:*

> Harmony with land is like harmony with a friend: you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left. That is to say, you cannot love game and hate predators; you cannot conserve the water and waste the ranges; you cannot build the forests and waste the ranges; you cannot build the forest and mine the farm. The land is one organism, its parts, with each other co-operate with each other. (Leopold, 1993:145-146)

Contemplating the teachings of Aldo Leopold, I reflected upon the snapshot photographs of the everyday urban expansion. They depicted an austere urban wilderness. In juxtaposition to the photographs, I wrote my 'fieldwork' experiences in a sketchbook. One such experience was when I had come across a stream with a beaver dam nestled in a small forest tucked in-between two suburban communities and a Walmart.

The tall grasses cloaked the location where I watched a family of beavers hard at work collecting branches to reinforce their dam. Intrigued by this remnant of natural wildlife I returned the next day to continue my observations only to find the beaver dam had been bulldozed.

Despondent, I realized western human civilization still operates from an 18ᵗʰ century economic system, based on unlimited natural resources. The damage done to the environment is primarily due to capital gains taking precedence over environmental ethics. Seattle Times environmental reporter Lynda Mapes (2017) described this experience in her article, The hidden cost of development: some birds divorce, pack up, move out — with years of breeding productivity lost,

> Find suburbia depressing? It's not just you. When humans invade their forest homes, certain songbirds – including the Pacific wren and Swainson's thrush – flee the area, fail to breed bird babies, and even "divorce" form their long-term mates, says a 10 year study in the Seattle area. (Mapes, 2017)

Mapes identifies the repercussions of suburbia that Leopold cautioned society some eighty years ago. By investigating Leopold's research and philosophy, my own environmental inquiry was influenced, and encouraged me to formulate the following question: *Is it possible to balance preservation of the environment with the development of urban communities?* In order to explore this question, the next step in my a/r/tographical inquiry was to conduct social histography research on the development of suburbia.

KNOWING (THEORIA)

Social histography research provides a good starting point to understand the complexity of the problem, as a way to understand the historical manifestations of suburbia and the context of what took place. Historian Bill McDowell believes, "History enables us to view ourselves and society in a proper perspective to focus on the motives and consequences of them for other individuals or for society and to enhance our knowledge of the potential, as well as the limitations of human activities" (McDowell, 2015: 4). My aim in understanding the past is to understand what elements of the past influences the present and future. The research article produced through scholarly study is comprehensive, so for the purpose of this discussion, only exerts of the original article *Is Suburbia Sustainable?* will be used.

To understand the issues of suburbia, it is valuable to look at the history of how North American suburbs initially developed, their impact, and alternative urban community planning concepts today. In Richard Harris and Peter Larkham's article, *Changing suburbs: Foundation, form and function* (2003), suburban urban origins were created in

VIS – Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em Arte da UnB
V.16 n°2/julho-dezembro de 2017,Brasília.
ISSN- 1518-5494 e ISSN (versão eletrônica) – 2447-2484

the nineteenth century in tandem with industrialization (Harris, and Larkham, 2003). By the 1870's and 1880's, rapid industrialization led to the concentration of populations in cities. The upper classes sought escape from the unpleasant aspects of concentrated industrialization by building their own homes in the country. In 1910, the response to this social demand was to build smaller higher density cottages and bungalows built just outside the cities. The 1920's saw the widespread introduction of the automobile in North America, a development that further encouraged the dream of a home in the suburbs, a trend only briefly interrupted by the depression of the 1930's and by World War II. Although decentralization was well established before World War II, the most dramatic decentralization occurred afterwards when governments sponsored and provided incentives to developers for the construction of millions of housing units in the suburbs to accommodate both war veterans and the beneficiaries of a post war industrial boom. After 1945, entrepreneurs saw opportunities in suburban house building in almost every Canadian city.

In the 1950's other entrepreneurs saw the potential for high-rise apartments, and by the late 1960's and 1970's, developers were producing many commercial and retail projects along with the housing in the suburbs, leading to another stage in the development of suburbs, that of satellite cities where all a residents needs could be satisfied without travel to the large central city. As an industry, land development is a remarkable example of what can happen when entrepreneurs with large amounts of investment capital are given unrestricted opportunities for profit. It was a unique combination of labor and business, automobile companies and government sponsorship that created the suburbs of today. In this new century, questions of sustainability are arising.

According to authors Thomas Nechyba and Randall Walsh (2004), urban sprawl is cutting into precious farm and wild land. Canada's most productive farmland is mostly within 100 kilometers of the U.S. border, and this is also where urban sprawl is most rampant. In addition, precious wildlife habitat and species are increasingly at risk. Energy is a major input into the cost of almost any material or project undertaken today, and the development of the suburbs has been one of the greatest misallocations of resources in the entire world. As things are presently arranged the end of the age of oil may mean the end of the suburban lifestyle.

Today, in Canada and the United States, municipal governments are looking towards several urban design movements as a means of creating healthier and more sustainable communities. The most common ones are the Canadian Urban Institute, New Urbanism, and Smart Growth, each of which are non-profit agencies and have similar mandates. For example, in the City of Langley, located within Vancouver's Lower

Mainland, there is a growing community concern that the current development pattern is dominated by urban sprawl and is no longer in the of the local wilderness areas (REPORT TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL, 2006) (See Smart Growth BC ten principles: http://www.smartgrowth.ca/home_e.html), (See full version, http://kimberlybaker. ca/media/pdfs/Suburbia_essay.pdf).

A/r/tography's methodological framework offers opportunities to approach research in an interdisciplinary manner. For example, the social histography research explored the historical manifestations of suburbia past and present. This background information led to my understanding the historical roots of suburbia and what new concepts, such as new urbanism and smart growth development models were being employed to improve the future. Thinking through history offers utilizing elements of the past in the cultural construction of the future. In such, this research provided an informed foundation of knowledge for my a/r/tography project.

DOING (PRAXIS)

The next step was to incorporate this deeper theoretical understanding of suburbia in relationship with my doing (praxis) art practice as a living inquiry. Artist, teacher, and researcher Harold Pearse describes praxis as "a dialectic relationship between theory and practice that informs the other through an action of lived experience" (Pearce, 2004: 184). He implies the process of art making involves a reciprocal relationship between thought and action, where an exchange of "ideas, feelings, images, objects, and selves interact through media in a particular historical and environmental context" (Pearse, 2004: 184). Thus, praxis is a way of being and engaging in the world. Pearse's idea of the "reciprocal relationship," as expressed through diverse research and creative experiences was employed in the suburbia study through art making, writing poetry and prose and conducting scholarly research. The academic research led me to take action by attending city council meetings, environmental action groups and supporting wildlife rescue centers'.

Furthermore, the ways the Township of Langley was incorporating community development plans with Smart Growth principles and practices was considered. All of these elements created a fluid relationship, which ebbed and flowed between one another informing and influencing each other in this reciprocal relationship between theory and practice.

However, most of the engagement occurred between the artistic and research practice but

the teaching element of a/r/tography had not been incorporated. The challenge was to combine theory, research, art and personal experiences in a meaningful way to act as a form of public pedagogy. I turned to the writing of Dónal O'Donoghue, who insightfully wrote,

> A piece of work is not only produced by the artist, but by all those who come in contact with the work subsequently and who have an interest in it. Much like art, how do we do and represent research is inseparable from what gets communicated, and the opportunity for understanding and meaning is possible. (2008: 109)

After thinking about O'Donoghue's ideas, four main components to this inquiry were identified: photo documentation, sketchbook renderings', historical and contemporary research and engagement within the community. These components created a foundation to build upon when reconfiguring this accumulation of interdisciplinary knowledge into artwork.

THE ART/MAKING *(POESIS)*

In my attempt to create meaning, I thought about my roles as artist, researcher and teacher and in what ways making art brings them all together. From the onset, the images in relationship to the viewer were considered and what emerged was the idea of 'witnessing history.' The aim of this a/r/tographic inquiry was to provide the viewer with a pedagogical opportunity to pause and consider the transformations and consequences of mass suburban culture. The intention was to position the artwork in the social realm, where concerns about the impacts on the environment are shared.

Making connections (mètissage) between my field work and scholarly research by choosing materials that would represent metaphors to create symbolic meanings associated with the natural environment, displacement and suburban development. Two sets of 10″ x 10″ canvases were created. The documentary snapshots were printed on the first set, which addressed a specific history of the natural environment. Benjamin Moore & Co. exterior house paint that were the colours of the suburban houses were painted with a roller on to the second set of canvases. The monochromatic tones firmly placed these paintings in the linage of minimalism and the reductive aspects of Modernism. The paintings were intentionally positioned within the concept of minimalism in terms of design and architecture, where the subject was reduced

to its simplest elements. The monochrome paintings echoed the repetitive pattern of suburban houses, as they appeared lining the streets. The grid pattern symbolized geographical mapping of the suburbanization of North America. The documentary snapshot canvases were placed intermittently between the monochrome canvases (Fig. 5).

The intention was to visually disrupt the rhythmic repetition of coloured canvases and create 'an opening' for the tenuous relationship of the places-in-between to surface. These reverberations created an active state of motion in which the interplay of encounters between the two sets of canvases occurred. This panoramic mural was made on the scale that the body of the viewer would be confronted directly with the eyes of the wild animals in order to raise questions concerned with the ongoing relationship between the human and non-human world. A plain simple cedar frame encased the canvases together; therefore, they paid homage to the indigenous trees that succumbed during the urban development process. As a result of combining symbolic meanings with textual understandings and personal experiences collectively, the artwork represented a process of conducting a living inquiry as fluid spaces on the borderlands.
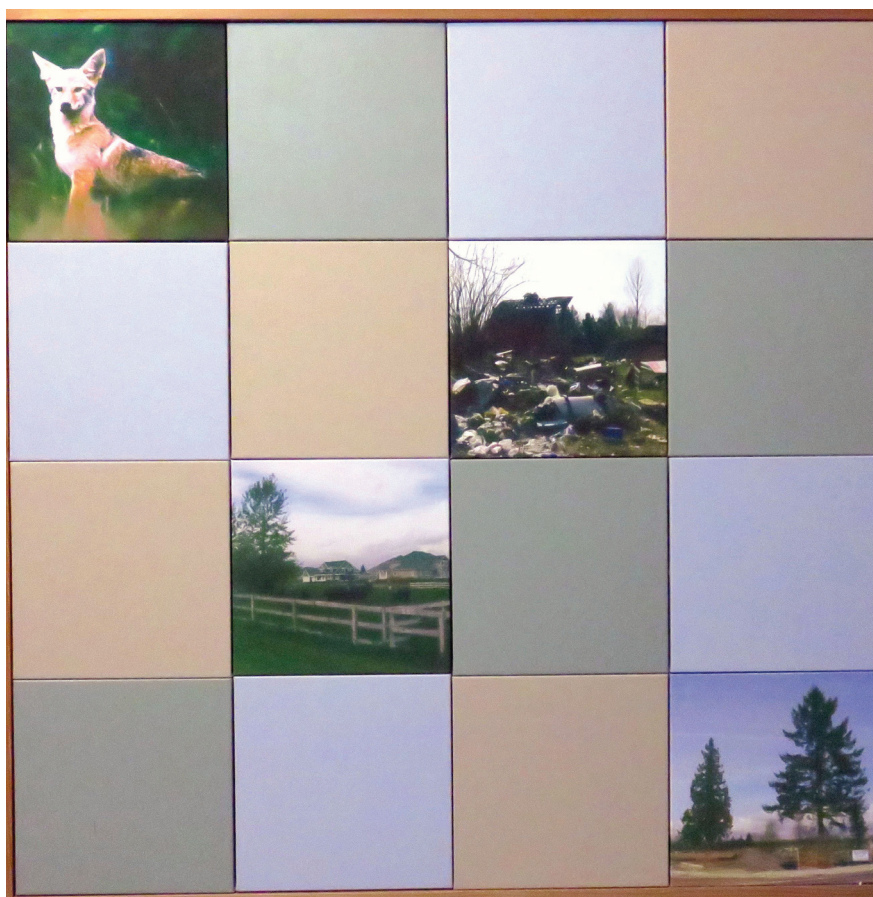

Figure 5. K. Baker Places In-between 4' x4', 2011

VIS – Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em Arte da UnB
V.16 nº2/julho-dezembro de 2017,Brasília.
ISSN- 1518-5494 e ISSN (versão eletrônica) – 2447-2484

This a/r/tography study as a living inquiry, I found the fluid exchange between artist/researcher/teacher encouraged me to work back and forth through these identities in a self - reflexive manner. This inspired me to think, act and reflect in a continuous cyclical method of inquiry. In doing so, a reciprocal relationship developed between the visual data collected, the artwork created, the research conducted and engagement with community groups. The historicity was integral to come to a deeper understanding of the contemporary issues of concern being addressed. Additionally, this study was approached in an interdisciplinary manner by accessing a wide variety of literature such as: a/r/tography, environmental ethics, history, geography, political science, contemporary art. In turn, a cross-pollination of knowledge occurred in the process, which resulted in gaining new knowledge of the multiple issues involved and a broader understanding of the potential solutions to suburbia. These understandings were brought together as a form of public pedagogy by artwork being created that encouraged people's understanding of the historical narratives of suburbia and extending an invitation to consider their own lived experiences. The artwork was presented in in the Arts 2011 exhibition at the Surrey Art Gallery in British Columbia.

Ultimately, finding my way to a/r/tography began with my utilizing the principles and methodology of a/r/tography as a road map for my arts-based research practice. However, along this journey, a commitment over time allowed for an internal and external exchange of ideas, knowledge and deep understanding to emerge. This creative process went beyond more commonly held research methods by accessing an intuitive approach to learning and teaching. Most importantly, although a/r/tography is an individually based process, at the same time, allowed for an engagement with a multi-layered complex world. Personally, the a/r/tography process was driven by my desire to propagate relationships with people and communities through the investigation of global issues, of which ultimately shape our collective destiny.

Where do I go from here?

This article explored my personal learning experiences of a/r/tography as an undergraduate and master's student. In my quest to understand a/r/tography, I made a commitment over time to explore the principles and practices within my own art practice. The readings were an introduction to a/r/tography's philosophical underpinnings: knowing (theoria), doing (praxis), and making (poesis). However, in the context of an art-based practice, the internal and external exchange that occurred between these underpinnings evoked a metissage that led to a deeper understanding and interpretation of the issues of the suburbia field study project.

Knowing (theoria) played an important role in the process, which began with asking these questions: *What is the impact on the environment and world resources? What is the cost of the suburban lifestyle? Is it possible to balance preservation of the environment with the development of urban communities?*

Questioning provided an opportunity to seek knowledge about environmental ethics and the historical development of suburbia. In doing so, a broader understanding of the way social, economic, and political systems operate was gained. This new knowledge influenced my thinking and the doing (praxis) as the artwork developed over time.

The doing (praxis) involved working back and forth between the six renderings. The relationship that grew between the historical research, fieldwork, and visual artistic practice was enacted as a living inquiry. In doing so, metaphors and metonymy filled the pages of my sketchbook. These symbolic meanings and textual understandings created openings to think about the research texts, the relationships between text and image and to consider them collectively through reverberating engagement. These reverberations created new understandings of the Smart Growth urbanism movements being incorporated into community planning strategies. This excess to scholarly study, fieldwork and visual practice demonstrated not only 'how things came to be', but created openings to create new representations of the concept of suburbia in the final artwork presented in the Surrey art exhibition. In this way, the visual artwork became a public pedagogy.

As Pinar posits, a/r/tography points the way out of a "fraught" present, into a creative and vibrant future we can now imagine (2004: 4). Pinar's thoughts reflect my personal experiences of engaging with the *Places In Between* a/r/tography project. At the beginning, I felt despondent when witnessing devastation of the environment. However, by exploring the concept and attached issues of suburbia through knowing (theoria), doing (praxis), and making (poesis), I came to a place of hopefulness about the future once I learned about the community planning policies that are in practice today.

This rhizomic experience led to the understanding a/r/tography as a complex methodology involving a critical ongoing dialogue between knowing (theoria), doing (praxis), and making (poesis) that is reflexive, responsive and relational. To conclude, a/r/tography should be seen as a valuable arts-based research methodology for raising theoretically questions and exploring them in robust interdisciplinary methods that have the ability to produce critically grounded and individually transformational outcomes. With these thoughts in mind, a/r/tography has the potential to offer students and practitioners in art education research the possibility of conducting transformational research in a new era in the 21st century.

VIS – Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em Arte da UnB
V.16 nº2/julho-dezembro de 2017,Brasília.
ISSN- 1518-5494 e ISSN (versão eletrônica) – 2447-2484

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