

I Hair You: creative acts as a way of communication.

Eu Cabelo Você: Ações criativas como um meio de comunicação

Yoriko Gillard¹

Abstract:

This article explores human hair as an art medium. I have been examining the relationship of trust and the power dynamic between the one who cuts hair and the one who receives the haircut. This situation reflects our daily life interactions in many ways particularly between professionals and non-professionals such as artists and non-artists and teacher and students. I found that in order to build a trusting reciprocal relationship, both sides must make an effort to understand the minds of others. This chapter includes photos of the haircut performance and poetry to present my arts-based research to help understand this human relationship.

Key words:

A/r/tography; Arts-based research; Interdisciplinary research; performance; poetry.

Resumo:

Este artigo explora os cabelos humanos como um meio artístico. Venho questionando a relação de confiança e a dinâmica de poder entre quem corta o cabelo e aquele que recebe o corte de cabelo. Esta situação reflete nossas interações da vida diária de várias maneiras, particularmente entre profissionais e não profissionais, como artistas e não artistas e professores e alunos. Descobri que, para construir uma relação recíproca confiável, ambos os lados devem fazer um esforço para entender as mentes dos outros. Este artigo inclui fotos da performance de cabelo e poesia para apresentar minhas investigações baseadas em artes para ajudar a entender esse relacionamento humano.

Palavras-chave:

A/r/tografia; Investigação baseada em artes; Pesquisa interdisciplinar; Performance; Poesia.

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Figure 1. Gillard, Y. (2010), *Intercultural ART*. [A High Chair, Hair of Eight People]. The University of British Columbia²– Photo credit: Yoriko Gillard

2 I gathered and presented 8 international participants' (Wood) identity (hair) at my exhibition, *Caught in the Middle* (2010), AMS Gallery UBC. This image was selected to use for the poster of *The Margin is the Center*, 39th annual AHVA Graduate Symposium and Exhibition, UBC (I was one of invited artists for my installation and performance.)

Preface

Carl Leggo teaches us, “We are born into stories, including the stories of family, community, and nation” (2008: 2). We create meanings through living in our memories with future hopes in present time. This past-present-future relation circulates in our daily wonders and contemplation. Hair is something I relate to in my stories of belonging in this world. As it is growing, falling, and changing its appearance naturally, I feel ‘hair’ has its own eternal power to relate with our mental spaces. We all have some memories about our own or other people’s hair. Hair as a metaphor of life, I try to understand other people. Why do some people keep their hair long? When do people cut or shave their hair? What about losing it? Are there any reasons attached to the act of ‘haircut’? What about the cut hair on the floor? Do people care enough about it to keep it? As soon as the hair is cut, does it become ‘unwanted’ detached waste for the person? I am a professional beautician trained in Japan, I studied about hair; design, skills related to different purposes, traditional occasions, and health issues. ‘Hair’ has its own voice that tells me about an individual’s narrative stories. It can be assimilated, recognized, negotiated, differentiated, contextualized, expressed, ignored and desired through human communication. Thus ‘hair’ is one of the mediums in which I hear stories in relation to other people to make sense of this world. “Your mother is so pretty but you don’t look like your mother!” Perhaps this comment has been haunting me for years while I have been dealing with the fear of losing my beloved mother who was seriously ill... how do we live in relation to other people? I cry in front of a screen and the newspaper so often when I relate to people and their situation in my mental space. This space is my private and public space combined, liminal space, where I try to understand this world we live in together. There is a reciprocal relationship among us as artists and as audiences, and by sharing our stories we can cultivate our feelings of trust more deeply. Art as life art practices should come from one’s heart in order to be trusted by diverse audiences. “... [T]he largest lesson that the arts in education can teach, the lesson that life itself can be led as a work of art” (Eisner, 1998: 56).

Mother

My desire to belong and relate to other people is rooted in the comment that I do not look like my beautiful mother, which I received so many times in my childhood. It was devastating to hear these comments over and over when I was desperate to belong with my birth mother who chose my life over hers. Her family and doctor wanted her to think twice before giving birth to me. Her decision to save my life was clear. I was born premature while she was suffering from a heart condition and the loss of blood due to the caesarian section. I was raised in a hospital until she woke up from a long sleep... This is the story I heard from my relatives not my mother. I have been scared about losing my mother since that time. My mother was a beautician who needed to give up on her profession due to her health. She has been suffering for a long time and doctors consider it a miracle that she has survived. In Japanese culture I was raised and learned to live reciprocally. The story of my mother-daughter relationship, giving a birth and receiving life is reflective of my sense of belonging to others in order to understand others.

*What does my art do?*³

I don't know Japanese culture...
I don't understand poetry...
how can poetry be art...
you laugh
many follow
I am lonely
contemplate
it is my mother
gave me a chance to write a poem
it is not about art

3 "What is a poem good for?" (2011) Carl Leggo, my PhD supervisor keeps educating us with this question instead of the question, "What is a good poem?" I was inspired by this and have been asking the question "What do my creative acts do in society?"

it is my story, my artful life
it is not about myself
it is my memory of pain...

western art
questionable
many voices
collided

English remains distant
see the roads full of gray
do I trust the skills I have
it depends on who I share

was secure with my skills
those feelings long gone
perhaps they never existed
in my dreams
miss my confidence
if I had it

contemplation
life of beautician
overlaps
irony...
eyes of stranger
pulls me in
colour of trust
liminal spaces

obsessed
belonged
comforted
trusted
cared
desired

negotiation
judgement
loss of power
you
and
me

and

us

interconnected

circle of eyes move around

once

twice

three times...

your lost voice

more vivid my senses

the finished products

settled eyes on them

are they secure of insecure

interconnection of other minds

gray scale

command of emotion

memories stay

in her hand

eyes follow

every corner

never mind

how I feel

secure with my memories

only care smiles on wood

– Yoriko Gillard



Figure 2. Gillard, Y. (2010). “ART” [Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia – Photo credit: Yoriko Gillard



Figure 3 and 4 . Gillard,Y.(2010).“ART” [Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia – Photo credit: *Yoriko Gillard*



Figures 5 and 6. Gillard,Y.(2010).“ART” [Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia – Photo credit: *Yoriko Gillard*



Figures 7 and 8. Hong, A.(2010).“ART” ([Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia –Photo credit: Annie Hong



Figure 9. Hong, A.(2010).“ART” ([Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia⁴
– Photo credit: *Annie Hong*

4 Photos (6, 7, 8, 12 & 13) are edited by me with Annie Hong’s permission.



Figure 10 e 11. Wong, J.(2010).“ART” [Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia⁵ – Photo credit: *Julie Wong*

5 Photos (9, 10 & 11) are edited by me with Julie Wong’s permission



Figure 12. Wong, J.(2010).“ART” ([Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia
– Photo credit: *Julie Wong*



Figures 13 and 14. Hong, A.(2010).“ART” [Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia – Photo credit: *Annie Hong*



Figure 15. Wong, J.(2010).“ART” (14) [Digital Photography]. The University of British Columbia – Photo credit: *Julie Wong*

I Hair You

chosen to become my wood
wood without mouth to speak
as a sculptor
felt your desire

you were not ready
you see...
left you quietly on the floor
with others
you looked secured

you were ready
I saw...
my arm reached you
you became my wood
I your sculptor
belonging to you

sitting silently
on the chair
our conversation circulating
us observing us in the middle
you, being observed by others

you were not aware
I saw
you stood outside the gallery space
how you pretended to ignore us
with your gaze settling on us
inside
outside
private
public
hearts and minds orchestrating

could not look at yourself
long after becoming a sculpture
you, a piece of wood on the floor
trusted, your choice of expression
whispering gently with your eyes
heard you clearly in my mind

eight of you gathered
in the circle freely
two mirrors awaiting you
watching over
the entire time

do you feel yourself
do you hear my voice

beautiful journey
unknown results
I hair you...
you hair me...

–Yoriko Gillard



Figure 16. Gillard, Y. (2011). *Cross-cultural sculpture (1/2): 'New Born' [Eight people's Hair]*. The University of British Columbia⁶ – Photo credit: Yoriko Gillard

Obliqueness Practices

Carl Leggo, an a/r/tographer, shares, “A poem invites me to be still, to remember to breathe, to hear and see and know with the heart...” (2005: 177). Through my own creative practices; visual art, poetry, performance, narrative writing, and music, I feel all my senses alive and connected to my bodily sensations. I am very sensitive during each encounter I have in my life. I hear the voices of others loudly in the silence in nature, classrooms, and anywhere I go. The concept of ‘haircut’ I used is not only to focus on cutting hair as a skill, but the communication skills we have to connect and relate to others. How do we trust each other through creative acts? Trust is relational and using this as a focus, artists and public pedagogues

⁶ 8 people’s hair I kept in a paper bag for a year. It became a cross-cultural sculpture by itself. I use ‘cross’ instead of ‘inter’ as this is not merely the cut hair interconnected but united into a new form of art, ‘New Born’. This sculpture was exhibited (2011) at Asian Library, Asian Center UBC. This sculpture was also exhibited at my graduation exhibition (2011) at UBC and the *Explore Asian* art exhibition (2011), Department of Asian Studies, UBC.

can offer material and embodied ways of investigating trust between humans. I am an artist, researching through my poetic life, to write (create) narrative stories in text, visual art, music, and performances. I hope to relate with others through all my creative practices that can also teach others how to live creatively especially in academy. My art is my research and my research is my teaching materials thus, A/r/tography⁷ is prominent in analyzing and synthesizing my daily life. "...with oblique sutures, a/r/tography interconnects, interacts, interviews, interweaves..." (Leggo, 2012: 2). The roles of artist, researcher, and teacher interconnect within my liminal spaces. These between spaces teach me the most about living honestly with the desire of belonging. I trust oblique, liminal spaces/gray zones/in between. I asked Rita Irwin a question, "What is 'liminal space' to you?" She said, "... it is 'ands' to me." I believe her 'ands' are not one way or two ways but multiple ways of rhizomatic connections, cross-connection. These kinds of connections create a deeper relationship, which includes differentiation, opposition, adaptation, assimilation, transformation, and all other conflicts we as humans experience in the world. Art is my life and my life is art itself to make strong Kizuna (bond)⁸. I hope to relate to many through my a/r/tographic practice and hope that *I Hair You* provokes many to inquire about this view, trust is relational, to connect with others reciprocally and creatively. As John Berger (1972: 2) states in *Ways of Seeing*, humans see and recognize things in the environment first in order to comprehend our world and secondly to use words to explain what we saw in order to communicate with each other. What humans believe we know is merely what we have decided to explain, define or name as our own perspective through our own culture and environment. Berger states:

We see what we look at and so relate to it. We also become aware so that we can be seen, and so are aware we are part of the visible world. This results in the understanding that others may see things differently. This two-way (reciprocal) nature of vision comes before dialogue. (1972: 23)

This "two-way (reciprocal) nature of vision" collides inter/cross/trans-sectionally in multicultural communities to celebrate provocative and inspiring dialogues of humankind.

⁷ In the article *The Rhizomatic Relations of A/r/tography*, Rita L. Irwin, Ruth Beer, Stephanie Springgay, Kit Grauer, Gu Xiong, and Barnara Bickel state, "A/r/tography is a form of practice-based research steeped in the arts and education." (2006: 70)

⁸ Kizuna is a Japanese word meaning 'bond' in English. To elaborate further it is a human to human and human to nature connection. The word became very important to Japanese after the Great East Japan Earthquake (2011) and is used to express the appreciation of reciprocal relationships we have especially during hardships we go through in life. Since 2011, I have been using this Japanese word Kizuna for my creative works to have dialogues with my audiences.

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