

Speaking in Tongues: The Uncommon Ground of Arts-Based Research

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“Ambiguity and incompleteness are open-ended goals, relational ones whose aesthetic provides endless possibilities for creative and intellectual correspondences and understandings through craft, design, and fine art.”

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Speaking in Tongues: The Uncommon Ground of Arts-Based Research

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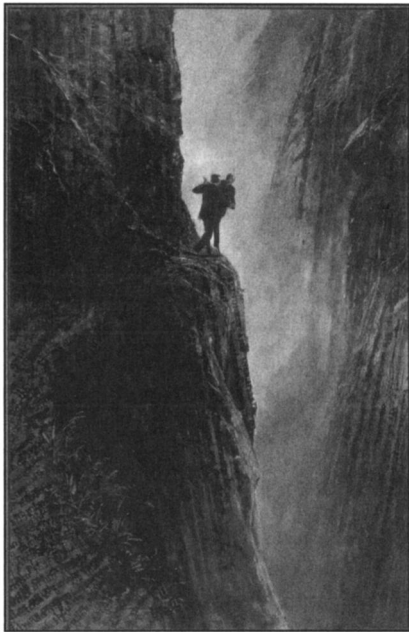
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In this article, we explore whether or not arts-based research engages different ideas and processes—different nouns and verbs—when the art form is understood as design, craft, or “fine” art. We propose that the fine, craft, and design arts each provide opportunities for conducting research, that their identities are built upon mutual support and willful self-separation—“I am a crafts artist not a designer;” that the distinctions mark the boundaries of our research but aren’t fixed; and, that they provide a framework for a comprehensive art education program in which the disjunctions among the three disciplines provide opportunities for critical discourse. The disorder, the complexity, and the contradiction that the three disciplines of craft, design, and fine arts bring to one another is further complicated by art educators’ and their students’ knowledge, primarily the memories and cultural histories that they bring to their craft, design, and fine art making practices and research. In doing so, the discourse about craft, design, and fine artmaking is forever unfinished in the classroom. This article is the authors’ attempt at introducing a writing style that best exemplifies the *ambiguities* and *incompleteness* of arts-based research. We have chosen aphoristic writing to provide art educators opportunities to enter the fray, to intervene in the openings between our writing by reading between the aphorisms that follow.



David Wojnarowicz, *Untitled (Buffalo)*.

Mark Tansey, *Derrida Queries De Man*, 1990.

We run carelessly over the precipice after we have put something in front of ourselves to prevent us from seeing it.

—Blaise Pascal (Aphorism from *Les Pensées*, in Groarke, 2007)

This story begins in 2006 when at a meeting of the Council for Policy Studies in Art Education focused on arts-based research, Elizabeth asked, “What about crafts?”. Until this time, the images and objects discussed at the meeting—performance art, paintings, site-specific installations—were all associated with what are sometimes called “the fine arts.” In addition, the language used, the critical methodologies emphasized, the minimization of functionality, and the emancipatory histories invoked, all drew from traditions associated with fine arts.

Elizabeth’s advocacy, expressed as a simple probing “What about...,” challenged the habits of speaking that framed this particular discussion of arts-based research. To her problem, John and Charles added, “What about design?” and suggested that further conversation about these distinctions could help to inform the field of Art Education. Nevertheless, as it turns out, John and Charles

mis-heard Elizabeth’s question. Where John and Charles heard “craft” as a general domain of visual arts activity, Elizabeth was actually questioning whether all acts associated with artmaking, such as repetitive processes, could be considered research. Elizabeth’s question and Charles’ and John’s mis-hearing are emblematic of: (1) the opportunity that slippages of language can provide to open up creative and critical discourse, and (2) the traction that has accumulated around language use in the visual arts areas commonly associated with crafts, design, and fine arts. Both questioning and mis-hearing are essential to arts-based research. By comparison, conventions for conversing about art education, like the American Psychological Association (APA) style and propositional formats, are borrowed from the social sciences. This article is our attempt at introducing a writing style that best exemplifies the *ambiguities* and *incompleteness* of arts-based research. We consider that both an emphasis on research reportage and a focus on the fine arts, as the research wing of visual arts studies, have limited the contributions that arts-based research can make to the field of Art Education.

We propose that: (1) the fine, craft, and design arts each provide opportunities for conducting research; (2) their identities are built upon mutual support and willful self-separation—"I am a crafts artist not a designer"; (3) they mark the boundaries of our research that aren't fixed; and (4) they provide a framework for a comprehensive art education program in which the disjunctions among the three disciplines provide opportunities for critical discourse. Following in the tradition of William James (1981/1907) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1973), we hold that terms such as "crafts," "design," and "fine arts" are tools that construct and mark identities, which are formed and established through interrelated networks of people, actions, objects, histories, and economies. Likewise, in writing about craft, design, and fine arts based research, we are inspired by Walter Benjamin's (1968) aphoristic methodology, which challenges chronological and analytic approaches to writing and conversing about history.

"What is an aphorism?" Literary theorist Louis Groarke (2007) defines the aphorism as "the art of terse expression" (p. 393), a philosophical genre that originated as early as the ancient Greeks with authors such as Heraclitus and Epictetus, through the Enlightenment with Pascal, and into the 19th and 20th centuries with Nietzsche, Benjamin, and Wittgenstein. While the aphorism is considered a literary tool, it nonetheless has implications for how art educators theorize and write about the disparate yet intersecting characteristics of research in crafts, design, and fine arts without limiting them to any hierarchical order or synthesizing into a solitary pedagogical construct. By way of aphoristic writing, the complexities and contradictions that each of the three disciplines contributes to the others invite a vigorous debate about their correspondences and intersections, discussions that can elicit significant relational pedagogies built upon transitivity and indeterminacy of the creative process.

In discussing the correspondences between transitivity and relational aesthetics, art critic Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) writes:

Transitivity ... is a tangible property of the artwork. Without it, the work is nothing other than a dead object, crushed by contemplation...[as an idea] transitivity introduces into the aesthetic arena that formal disorder which is inherent in dialogue. It denies the existence of any specific 'place of art,' in favour of a forever unfinished discursiveness, and a never recaptured desire for dissemination. (p. 26)

The disorder, the complexity, and the contradiction that the three disciplines—craft, design, and fine arts—bring to one another is further complicated by art educators' and their students' knowledge, the memories and cultural histories which they bring to their craft, design, and fine art making practices and research. In doing so, the discourse about craft, design, and fine art making is forever unfinished in the classroom.

Rather than extended prose, which is the "literary equivalent to the extended argument" (Groarke, p. 437), aphoristic writing comes closest to collage, the disjunctive narrative in the visual arts that art educators are knowledgeable about. Slight parallels between the two genres notwithstanding, the succinct, pithy utterance of the aphorism is complete, it "stands on its own without the support of an extended text ... [it] is lean expression, expression brought to a point" (p. 436). By comparison, the narrative of collage is composed of disjunctive fragments, which do not stand on their own, but invite multivalent readings in-between their juxtapositions. Nevertheless, whether fragmented or standing on their own, there exists a betweenness in both cases that provides opportunities for a plurality of interpretations and understandings as readers bring their own memories and cultural histories to reading between the fragments of collage or the pithy states of the aphorism. In doing so, the aphorism represents an important literary form

for art educators to communicate in writing, what comes close to the disjunctions of collage, especially their lack of concreteness.

Both the aphorism and collage have in common expression that is perpetually unfinished, inconclusive as compared with extended prose and the dictum. Literary theorist Gary Saul Morson (2003) describes the difference between the *dictum* and the *aphorism*. "The dictum says Something. The aphorism shows Something else...The dictum must be complete or it is nothing ... an aphorism ...is perpetually unfinished, always reaching beyond itself" (p. 428). Morson's concept of "Something else," suggests that mutual discourse among craft, design, and fine art points to their capacity to: (1) bear witness to one another, and (2) provide testimony about their respective theories and histories. As such, the conversation among them is always open to new possibilities of learning and understanding.

Groake's and Morson's characterizations of aphoristic thinking certainly parallel that of collage thinking. Groake (2007) writes:

Aphoristic thinking points beyond itself to a state of nonlinguistic understanding... [it] originates in inspiration and not in some more complicated act of cognition... it requires its own kind of forensic judgment, a nonarbitrary judgment that warrants respect but judgment that is not, in any absolute sense, conclusive or unassailable. (pp. 438-439)

In conceptualizing arts-based research in craft, design, and fine art as co-existing disciplines, we have chosen aphoristic writing to provide art educators opportunities to enter the fray, to intervene in the openings between our writing by reading between the aphorisms that follow. Just as John and Charles mis-heard Elizabeth's question "What about crafts?," we invite the slippage that occurs as readers respectfully mis-hear and mis-read what we say and write and add their own clusters of thoughts to our aphoristic vignettes. We believe that this aphoristic writing pays respect to and best

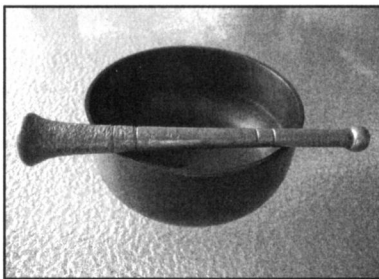
exemplifies the work/play within and in-between the arts-based methodologies of crafts, design, and fine arts.

Here we provide our one and only conclusion, which underlies our discussion of craft, design, and art in relationship to arts-based research. This conclusion constitutes a decision on our part to resist the customary propositional format of *Studies* and the APA style. The purpose of this stand is to argue for a writing and narrative structure of art education theory, for a form and content, which corresponds, at least in some instances, with the field's advocacy of craft, of design, of fine art. Like the exploratory, experimental, and improvisational processes of these cultural practices as "research," the betweenness of aphoristic writing invites correspondences that are inconclusive, ambiguous, and incomplete. Such resistance to synthetic closure opens a liminal and contingent space where readers' re-readings and mis-readings of our aphorisms, like John's and Charles' mis-reading of Elizabeth's question that prompted this article, can potentially connect with readers' own pithy stories. The research that aphoristic writing enables, as we refer to it in this first part of the article, is that which is conducted by the reader in-between the disjunctive associations between ideas, texts, and images contained in each of our aphorisms; in-between each individual aphorism; and in-between the article's disjunctive form and content and the reader's memory and cultural history. Hence, this justification for excluding a conclusion following our aphorisms constitutes a mea culpa, an outright confession on our part that our article does not add up, it does not have a goal to conclude, but, that it succeeds, like much arts-based research, solely on the basis of uncertainty. Ambiguity and incompleteness are open-ended goals, relational ones whose aesthetic provides endless possibilities for creative and intellectual correspondences and understandings through craft, design, and fine art.

Disquieting Objects

Charles: *Two Small Gifts*

Several years ago, a student of mine traveled to Japan to play in a rock 'n' roll band after graduation. Finding his creative energies in between fine art and music, he understood that the fragmentation of our lives could either land us in despair or provide us with opportunities to create new realizations, connections, and understandings from the disparity in the world. During the tour of his band, he visited museums where the historical treasures of Japan are found. He also experienced popular culture, the mass-produced toys, trinkets, and utilitarian objects that were available from street vendors, in stores, and curio shops in Japan's cities and towns.



Upon his return to the US, the student presented me with two small gifts. After carefully unwrapping the first one, I was delighted to find a small Japanese brass singing bowl and mallet, which are traditionally used to evoke prayer and meditation. It was not until I opened the second gift, however, that the true purpose of his generosity became apparent. It was a porcelain cup, caste in a slip mold, reproduced from a disposable paper coffee cup complete with the fold out handles. It became immediately apparent that his gift was not contained in either of the two objects, but in the meanings that were acoustically evoked in my mind through their ironic juxtaposition—in the empty space in-between the singing prayer meditation bowl and the porcelain reproduction of the paper coffee cup.

Elizabeth: *Nouns and Ghosts That Lead to Verbs*

Having my grandmother's diamond ring that was once my great-grandmother's pair of earrings reminds me of both my grandmother and my great-grandmother. My grandmother (I never met the great-grandmother) pointed to the ring on her knobby finger from the time I was a child, weaving the story of her father's gift to his wife on their first anniversary. Even during the Depression, after my great-grandfather had died and my great-grandmother lived with my grandmother, even when they had lost most everything, the earrings somehow survived, in and out of hock. My grandmother never wore jewelry other than on her ring finger, thinking it for painted women, so after her mother's death and once she had a steady job, she had the earrings made into a ring that stayed on her hand until the day she died.

I have never worn the ring even though I knew I would when I was eight, and she told me it would be mine one day. It is not because I do not want to be reminded of my grandmother, or of my great-grandmother Jessie after whom I'm named. But a diamond means business: its red, bloody glow from the mines is too much for me, even after 96 years. And a diamond signifies tradition. It eschews the pedestrian. I cannot wear the ring.

My friend Rory is a ceramic sculptor. Unlike a lot of academics, he makes friends with a lot of local artists. One of these community people, a retired art teacher, "so very nice, delightful," decided to make him a gift. In the tradition of good gifts, Emersonian gifts that are "a portion of thyself" (Emerson, 1925, p. 158), the teacher lady made him house numbers with blue flowers. Now Rory is a recognized artist. A well educated artist. He travels to New York, Chicago, London for shows several times a year, takes artist residencies in Europe. He's sophisticated. And he can't put those house numbers up. They're a little



too cute, their association with scented candles a little too strong. Too, he worries about what is signaled by such adornments.

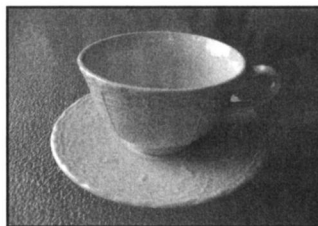
John: *Godley's Ghosts*



We are fortunate to have friends. They provide us with a safe environment for slippage to occur and for categories to erode in an environment where we feel safe. One friend, Lyn Godley, has had some success working in the field of product design, with an emphasis on lighting. Her suburban home is nestled in one of those tracts, with roads so similar that you need a GPS system to extricate yourself from their intricacies. Inside her home, inspired design is manifest in concrete ways. Her foyer greets visitors with a commanding set of color photographs of sea foam, 20 or so images, arranged in a grid, four abreast, five tall, climbing a wall up to 15 feet high. Lyn snapped these images from the stern of a boat, while on a much-needed vacation. Yes, these foaming phantoms float over her entrance hall for visitors, but for Lyn also, for whom they serve as a large post-it note inspiring her next lighting series. *These are the ghosts of Prophecy.* Down the hall is her studio, filled with tools, materials, models, and drawings. In the center, a roughly formed half-finished object, part light fixture, part formal dress, hangs above a work table. Its physicality is purposeful. Its resoluteness is witnessed by multiple attendant drawings hanging from walls, lying on tabletops. *These are the ghosts of Labor and Materiality.* From an interior window, light from an

upstairs room marks Lyn's office. There, a computer emits a low steady hum of electrical current. Always thinking, always positioned for editing, research, and computation, always on. *These are the ghosts of Order.* Lastly, back in the intimate and familial space of her dining room, is a shelf supporting a toy-like metal car. Built in the 1930s, it originally served as the model that accompanied the first successful patent application for that now ubiquitous device: the turn signal. Lyn's grandfather was its designer. *These are the ghosts of Tradition.* This friend's house serves as a map of design methodology, where prophecy, materiality, order, and tradition convenes. Lyn's suburban setting is a unique confluence, not exactly replicable in the home of any other design artist, but simultaneously closely related to the homes of other design, craft, and fine arts friends. Lyn could have been a fine artist, she just found its infinitude too ... limiting.

Charles: *Cup-lings*



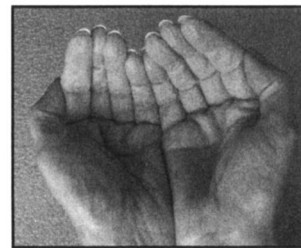
Context: An ordinary cup in an ordinary context.



Meret's challenge: Eros—cup, spoon, saucer, eating, drinking.



Isamu's challenge: A handle reaches out toward a reaching hand.



My challenge: And what about this cup?

Object/ Action/ Relations

Charles: *Uncommon Ground*



[*Sip coffee*] It was a dark brew, French Roast, I believe, with a robust bitter sweet flavor and, as I sipped from the cup, my mind began to wander from my task: to write and differenti-

ate between and among fine arts, crafts, and design research. [*Sip coffee*] Sometimes, the best place to be is in a relativistic space where the figure is difficult to distinguish from the ground, an undecided and ambiguous space where exploration, experimentation, and improvisation are possible. [*Sip coffee*] That is where I was on that morning as I sipped from my cup, in a space of uncertainty, as the effects of the coffee on my olfactory membrane, my taste buds, and the caffeine on my nervous system, took hold. [*Sip coffee*] Admittedly, I can be as controlling as anyone, for fear of abstractions, what I do not understand. I can be overly cautious about not falling off the deep end, into the abyss, or crossing over the border of my conditionality into a realm where the spittle, shit, and vomit of the object can lead to psychosis. [*Sip coffee*] Ironically, Kristeva (1982) describes this "cesspool" as the space from which the "body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border" (p. 3). [*Sip coffee*] I have cautiously obsessed on her thesis, yet loathe the reality of its experience, the messiness of the cesspool, which Kristeva describes.

Elizabeth: *Nouns, Verbs, Storytellers, and Craft*

Consider a plate. A pair of gloves. The chair you are sitting in. Plates, gloves, and chairs are objects, things. The plate holds, or contains, food served or eaten. The gloves protect the hands from cold, rough surfaces, glass, thorns, chemicals, germs. The

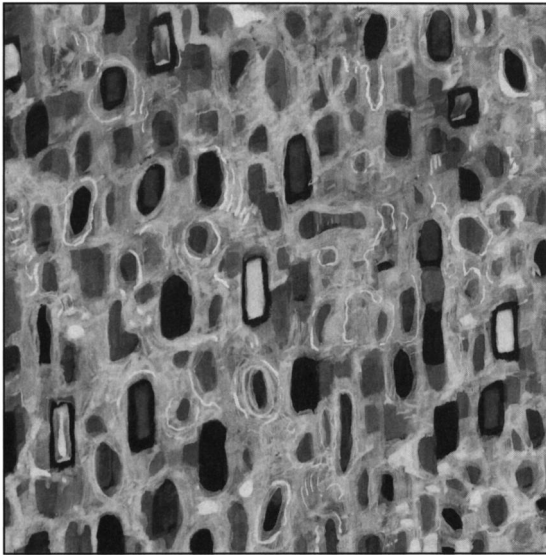
chair supports the body, may comfort us, lets us "take a load off," contains or sometimes restrains us.

Consider the materials: the plate is ceramics, or glass; it could be metal or grasses, even wood. The gloves are fibers: wool, cotton, silk, flannel; they could also be plastic, asbestos, high tech materials. The chair is wood, perhaps metal, possibly ceramic or even rock. Each is made of material crafted into things, functional and nonfunctional.

Craft is, by tradition, linked to functional objects: those that contain, like the plate; those that cover, like the gloves; those that support, like the chair.¹ Functional objects attend to and celebrate "creatural necessity" (Bryson, 1990, p. 62). Our habits of mind, our traditions of thinking separate these objects from those that hang on the wall or float in space with no meaning other than that assigned to them as signs. It's not that functional objects—craft or not—have no value as symbols (else why would people collect so much stuff?), or that they don't influence our lives (consider the refrigerator, or more obviously the car). It's about that human activity of classifying. Craft the verb (skilled making, process) suggests research actions that relate to process and skill in searching, connecting, reflecting, understanding, and intuiting, actions that are shared by artists, craftspersons, and designers. Craft, the noun (plates—torn or not; gloves—functional or not; chairs; and other objects), engages different histories than other art practices, indicating research projects that differ in some distinct ways from art research projects.

John: *Turning Outward*

Lately, I've taken up anew the practice of painting-as-craft. This is odd because I've always considered myself a poor craftperson and the tradition of painting, which I converse with in my work, is aligned with fine art. This opens the question of why craft would seem to be a good marker for my present approach to painting. The best that I can come up with is that by focusing on the tacit knowledge gained through the act of painting, skills developed over time, as opposed to abstract principles or big ideas, and by valuing



the encounter with materials as that point where personal history is problematized, I can differ the inhibiting authority of theory. Which is not to say that formal knowledge is not in play. Quite the contrary, it is American pragmatism that helps to guide this practice.

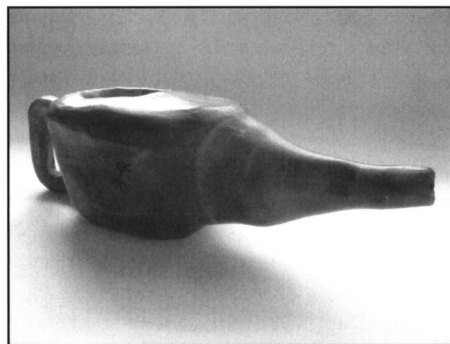
Richard Sennett (2008) advances this position, identifying with both neo-pragmatism and the craftperson. He broadens the idea of craft by suggesting that we value experience as a craft. Additionally, he avoids the solipsism of the craft fetish through two significant clarifications. The first is that experience-as-craft is outer directed, where makers (and viewers) are required to engage with that which is not them. The paper, the paint, the image, and the history of painting all carry their own authority, which come into play but are not reified or romanticized, the common critique of Modernism, by the craftperson. Success involves a history of skills (habits), which require application, restraint, and development to sustain meaningful work. The second is that experience-as-craft is not merely activity but an opportunity for thoughtful engagement, embedded in ethical and social considerations of the future.

I've come to see "craft" as an apt tool for speaking about the ethics of the visual arts and art education. Arts-Based Research requires a practitioner to move outside of oneself in indeterminate ways to address the changing conditions of the external world and internal perceptions. Experience-as-craft positions this as an embodied activity, built on habits developed to allow the interface of body and world a space to interact, whether the end result is painting, performances, pots, or code.

Disquieting Actions

Elizabeth: *Neti Pots and Other Handmade Things*

Porter paid \$8.99 (tax not included) for a neti pot. It came with some packets of salt mixed with baking powder, described on the package as "exclusive pre-mixed ultra-fine grain saline" that "dissolves instantly." Teapot shaped, a neti pot helps clean the sinuses. It was only Porter's acute condition that made him shell out the nine dollars for a plastic neti pot. He's a graduate student and monetary resources are thin. When he opened up the package, he reflected that it wasn't worth even eighty-nine cents, let alone eight dollars ninety-nine cents and carried "none of the ancient India *jala neti* mystique for which I was hoping." So Porter thought to make his own, better neti pot, of clay that he would smoke in his backyard. He would add a personalized design. The shape would be similar to the purchased pot, though the spout end wider to accommodate his larger nostrils.



An impetus for some craftspeople is a “make-it” phenomenon. It isn’t like the fiddle maker we drove from the town of Creel a couple of hours to a path in the remote Sierra who noted, during the trip, different woods used to make things, and in passing commented that in his village people pretty much made everything because they were so poor. Making things among wealthier people is borne of a pioneer, hippie, environmentalist, anti-consumer, and/or cost-saving mentality, and related to craft as object, object as function, and function as usefulness.² This phenomenon may inspire people into the crafts, into learning to throw or turn a lathe or crochet an afghan. These days, the internet is full of “make it” projects: robot dummies, robot animal sculptures, lamp art, noisy toys in tea tins, glow bone dog collar attachments, waterproof bike baskets, bike racks (outdoor and apartment-friendly versions), fashionable technology,³ heart bracelets, sling chairs, window boxes, garden journals, apple head dolls, wallpaper fans, bronzed baby shoes, cinnamon Christmas ornaments, recycled materials projects (using light bulbs, paper bags, old CDs, plastic bottles, etc.).⁴ There are magazines, blogs, books, TV shows, names—“maker culture,” and the lately trendy, DIY.

John: Seurat's Hand



Language is buoyant. My dentist tells me that his work is an art, Chuck Norris wants Martial Arts to satisfy right-brained graduation requirements, and we haven’t even ventured into the range of possibilities associated with design and craft. Two recent exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, one the work of Martin Puryear, the other the work of George Seurat, make it clear that craft-identified art forms have no providence over materials and techniques. Seurat’s drawings are a testament to craft, his imagery comes into focus as the rich blacks of the his conte crayons skim the surface, brush across, and dig into the paper’s resistant but ultimately compliant tooth. I picture Seurat poised, willful and intentional, his hand in communion with the conte crayon. Seurat’s hand is perhaps the origin of his work: the nervous desiring hand, a hand seeking remnants of past practices, a hand shaping the future, phantom desires in this fleshy limb. This is the act of prehension, where the body anticipates sense data (Sennett, 2008). The unit, Seurat’s hand, Seurat’s eyes, Seurat’s mind, Seurat’s conte are poised for an interplay set in 19th-century France. His artistry is summonsed to play by a thin and delicate sheet of paper, off-white and vulnerable, nuanced in texture, and resistant yet susceptible to collapse. The play begins. At times, the force of the white light of the paper rejects the advances of the thick black being of the conte, at times the paper yields its surface. Most often, however, the paper and the conte take each other’s measure, a wisp of conte across the upper surface of the paper. To play, Seurat surrenders to the paper, accepts its qualities, withholds his force, acknowledges its desires. From this play, fine art emerges, as the image of Seurat’s fellow citizens. The layers of conte support the white light of the paper, the life force of these figures. While the sun was the playmate of Turner’s hand, Seurat’s sought the presence of others in soft sheets of pressed fiber.



Richard Marquis, *Teapot Goblet*, 1989, blown glass with zanfircio and murrine.

Pablo Picasso, *Anthropomorphic Vase*, [also titled, *Vase With Two High Handles*], 1952, 36 x 14 cm/ 14.5 x 5.5", Earthenware clay, engobes, glaze.

Elizabeth: *Women, Goblets, and Verbs*

Among Picasso's ceramic work is *Anthropomorphic Vase* (1960). It has an elongated V-neck that sits on a rotund bulb mounted on an inverse-V foot. Two handles jut out at the top of the bulb. Like many of Picasso's paintings, *Anthropomorphic Vase* makes reference to a woman: the paintings on the face reference eyes-nose-mouth, breasts and pubis on the bulb, handles suggest arms. The gulf between men and women was, to Picasso, not bridgeable; coupled with his curiosity, it was an insatiable theme. Richard Marquis' *Teapot Goblets* (1991-1994) also have necks, bulbs, and feet. The necks are blown glass goblets, the bulbs are teapots, the feet are slightly inverted V-disks. Necks over bulbs over feet. Not women these sculptures, they are goblets rendered inutile by teapots, teapots made impossibly inservient by goblets, an "Alice-in-Wonderland idea" of "delightfully frustrating impossibility" (Risatti, 2007, p. 297).

In the Madoura Pottery in Vallauris where Picasso worked after the War, he is surrounded by pots and molds, completely engrossed. He works from memory, from a catalog of what has happened around him, without a model. Picking up a brush loaded with an iron-based slip, an eyebrow, then a second appear on the neck of this vase. A

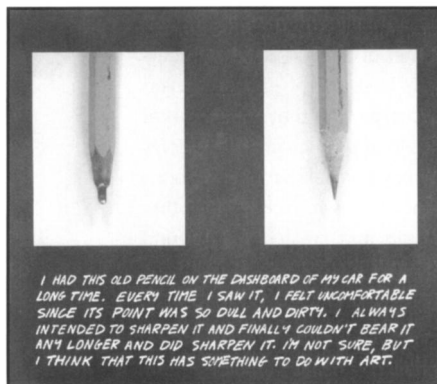
nose, a mouth. Taking up more slip, he glides the brush down the center of the pot where he veers off to the left, then back to the right, defining breast bone and a great area for the pubis. Another brush loaded with slip and he creates the curves of the outer torso; they parallel the pot's bulbous form. He sets the brush down, picks up another laden with darker slip and creates great round circles for breasts on the bulb of the vase. They are thick, heavily coated. He trails the handles with the remains of medium on the first brush. And so he continues.⁵

Richard Marquis takes a gather of glass on the end of his blowpipe. Seated at his bench, he makes a bulb by rolling it in a block, then stands and blows into the pipe forming a glass bulb at its end. Moving to the marving table, he picks up cane [decorative colored glass rods Marquis is famous for making ahead of time] as he rolls the hot glass across it. He reheats in the glory hole, then defines again his shape, blows the bulb larger, re-heats, narrows the round end to a narrow V. A punty brings a small gather of glass on another pipe and they transfer the bulb to the new pipe. Bottom becomes top, top becomes bottom. In the glory hole the lip is heated to pink-orange. At the bench, he opens with jacks what is now, clearly, the top of a goblet. The glass

has cooled and we can see the designs from the cane. He moves to a knock-off table and lightly taps the pipe near the moil to sever it. The goblet goes in the lehr, a cooling oven. Making the teapot's body follows much the same process. Marquis attaches the teapot to the goblet toward the end of the process.⁶

My students tell me they like to watch artists create: TV reruns of Bob Ross demonstrating landscape painting, *Learn to Paint/ Dare to Dream* episodes, the renowned Mehendi/Henna artist Rashmi Jain, YouTube videos. Differences between art, craft, and design never come up in these discussions. The techniques and skill to express experiences, ideas, and emotions is what they are after.

Charles: Dull or Sharpened



Let's get to the point, to the point ... f-i-n-e ... the word "fine" ... a-r-t ... the word "art," the OED defines "fine" as "free from foreign or extraneous matter, having no dross or other impurity;

clear, pure, refined." Then the OED defines "art" as "skill in doing anything as the result of knowledge and practice; human skill as an agent, human craft. Opposed to *nature*"...fine then, what's fine art... getting on to the point, the OED defines "fine arts" as "the arts which are concerned with 'the beautiful,' or which appeal to the faculty of taste; in the widest use including poetry, eloquence, music, etc., but often applied in a more restricted sense to the arts of design, as painting, sculpture, and architecture"... OK then, so that's fine art? But the noun "fine" is de-fined as "cessation, end, termination, conclusion, finish." Is fine art, art whose agent's craft has ended, is terminated, concluded, free from foreign

extraneous matter? Is that fine...art, the meaning of the word fine art? What's the point? What about John Baldessari's *The Pencil Story* (1972-73)? Is that fine art? According to critics and art historians who have chronicled Baldessari's work, that artwork of his is fine art. Is it free from foreign or extraneous matter, having no dross or impurity? That's a pretty dirty, worn-out pencil. It does look better, however, when sharpened sort of like having a haircut, a shave, or a manicure. All cleaned up except for the scratches in the paint on the shaft of the pencil. What about the text? Baldessari writes:

I had this old pencil on the dashboard of my car for a long time. Every time I saw it, I felt uncomfortable since its point was so dull and dirty. I always intended to sharpen it and finally couldn't bear it any longer and did sharpen it. I'm not sure, but I think that this has something to do with art. (qtd. in Coosje van Bruggen, p. 81)

Did Baldessari write the text with the dull or sharpened pencil? Was he thinking the dashboard a cabinet of curiosity, a museum? Why was it there for such a long time? What was his discomfort? What's the "point"? Dull and dirty, I guess the pencil doesn't qualify as beautiful. Sharpen the pencil? Sharpen the pencil? Sharpen the pencil? Sharpen the pencil? Did this so-called fine art work take human craft? Is it beautiful and pure? Does it appeal to the faculty of taste? What is taste and who has it? Does taste mean when you chew on a pencil and it tastes like wood or the yellow pigment painted on the surface of the shaft? Perhaps the teeth marks left on the shaft are fine art. Oh, that kind of taste. *The Pencil Story* is so-called fine art, but as you can clearly read in the slide illustration, even Baldessari is uncertain whether it has anything to do with art. Perhaps it is in this quandary, a much-desired blindness, that logic and rationally is temporarily suspended, and where Baldessari's pencil conundrum serves as the "walking stick" of research in fine art. I think so...and I believe he does too...

John: *The Stones of Prague*



In Prague's Jewish Quarter there is an old cemetery, where the deceased, buried one on top of another, are marked by a rambling group of tombstones. There is much to be remembered in this city where its past population of 43,000 Jews prior to WWII has shrunk to about 1,300 today. At that

site, people respectfully place on grave markers small stones and messages on rolled-up pieces of paper: the act and the word. Lewis Mumford (1961) argues that the burial site is the origin of the city, as nomadic people returned to mark their forbearers with cairns and stones: acts of faith and remembrance. "Returning" and "remembering" share a simple prefix with "research", and it is in this prefix that the resonance of arts-based research gains efficacy. The return separates research from search, as grave markings separate the city from the nomadic. In remembrance, differences emerge. The past is not the present. Opportunities for honor and insight are continuously available even in times of deep tragedy, as demonstrated in the children's drawings from the internment camp on display in the cemetery's synagogue. In research, it is both the traction (methods and results) of the discipline and the slip-page (novelty and variance) contained in the individual act that provides opportunities for insight.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Containing, covering, and supporting are the three definitive unifiers of craft objects, according to Risatti (2007).
- ² This is not to say that lots of United States Americans do not make things to save money. I am thinking of the importance of rasquache—the “making do” in Chicana/o art with materials and situations that are available (Ybarra-Frausto, 1991), for example, but also of all the home-made clothes and things I find at swap-meets, garage sales, and thrift stores.
- ³ These examples come from *Make: Technology on your time*. Retrieved May 23, 2008, from <http://blog.makezine.com/>.
- ⁴ These ideas come from *Make-stuff*. Retrieved May 23, 2008, from <http://www.make-stuff.com/>
- ⁵ This description is imagined from director Edward Quinn's (2002) and director Henri-Georges Clouzot's (1956/2003) videos of Picasso working and Edward Quinn's (1964) book about Picasso at work.
- ⁶ This description is imagined from input from my partner Roy Pearson, who has watched Marquis blow glass and is a glassblower himself, various internet videos of glassblowing, and my own glass blowing experiences. Marquis' exact process is likely slightly different.

IMAGE LIST

1. Mark Tansey, *Derrida Queries De Man*, 1990. © Mark Tansey. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery.
2. David Wojnarowicz, *(Untitled (Buffalos))*, 1988-89. gelatin silver print, 40½ x 48 in., edition of 5. Courtesy of The Estate of David Wojnarowicz and P.P.O.W Gallery, New York, NY.
- 3, 4. Ceramic paper cup, n.d. Japanese brass singing bowl with mallet, n.d. Photos by Charles Garoian.
5. French house number, 2009. Used with permission.
6. Lyn Godley's studio, 2008. Photo credit: Lyn Godley.
- 7, 10, 11. Cup. Cupped hands. Cup with coffee and spoon. Photos by Charles Garoian.
8. Meret Oppenheim (1913-1985), *Fur-covered cup, saucer and spoon*, 1936. Cup 4¾ in. (10.9 cm) in diameter; saucer 9¾ in. (23.7 cm) in diameter; spoon 8» (20.2 cm) long, overall height 2⅞ in. (7.3 cm). Purchase. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/ Licensed by SCALA/ Art Resource, NY. © 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ ProLitteris, Zürich.
9. Isamu Noguchi, *Tea cup*, 1952. © 2009 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
12. John Howell White. 700: Permeable, 2007. Egg tempera on panel. Photo credit: John Howell White.
13. Porter MacDonald. Porter's neti pot. Blown glass. Photo credit: Porter McDonald.
14. George Seurat (French, 1859-1891). *Cafe Concert*, ca. 1887. Conte crayon heightened with white chalk, 31.4 x 23.6 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. fund, 1958.344.
15. Pablo Picasso, *Anthropomorphic Vase*, 1952, © 2009. Ceramic. Estate of Pablo Picasso/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo credit: Erich Lessing/ Art Resource, NY.
16. Richard Marquis. *Teapot Goblets*, 1989-1994. Blown Glass. Courtesy of Richard Marquis. Photo credit: R. Marquis.
17. John Baldessari. *The Pencil Story*, 1972-73. color photographs and colored pencil on board, 22 X 27.25 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, NY.
18. The old Jewish cemetery, Prague, 2008. Photo credit: John Howell White.