

**DANCING IN THE BELLY: PERFORMATIVE INQUIRY IN
PREGNANCY**

by

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is an experience that calls us to pay attention; to witness with our mind, body, and soul. Attending to our lives through a process of sensing, perceiving, and comprehending is a creative process that can be named embodiment. Art making invites people to practice and develop skills in sensing, perceiving, and comprehending through its unique process of inquiry. Performative inquiry is a mode of inquiry that guides researchers and participants through moments of recognition and interstandings through engaging in the arts. These moments of recognition and interstandings help identify ideas, experiences, and thoughts that are perceived important enough to attend to. Performative inquiry is a process of learning and expanding our capacity to sense and understand phenomena. In this project researcher and participants were called into a community of inquiry, they used art making to focus on intersubjectivities and unique experiences present in the physicality of being pregnant.

Keywords:

Embodiment

Modes of Being

Sensing

Perceiving

Comprehending

Pregnancy

Performative Inquiry

DEDICATION

Sleeping child you are your own now

But remember your body is woven from the threads of your ancestors

Listen to the language of the highlands

Calling you to care for what is yours

Watch Raven's flight

To learn the magic of change

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LISTENING THROUGHOUT GESTATION: ARTFUL EMBODIED INQUIRY AS A PATHWAY TO PARENTHOOD

Rubbing the belly: Invitation to the reader

Yet, why is no woman's labor as famous as the death of Socrates? Over all of the millennia that women have endured and suffered and died during childbirth, we have no one story that comes down to us with attendant reverence, or that exists in pictures—a cultural icon, like that of Socrates holding forth to his companions as he realises the cup of hemlock. In our western and westernized culture, women's labor is devalorized beginning with Genesis. Eve's natural intelligence, curiosity, desire, and perhaps sense of justice cause her to taste the fruit of good and evil, the apple of knowledge. Thereafter, goes the story, all women are condemned to bring forth children in pain. Thus are women culturally stripped of any moral claim to strength or virtue in labor. (Erdrich, 1995, p. 34)

This text weaves philosophies that acknowledge pregnancy as a source of understanding together with the stories of nine pregnant women and their partners.

When a woman invites a person to rub her belly she invites that person into the realm of sensation. They both turn their focus to signs of movement and change through feeling, listening to, and watching the belly. Just like that shared moment, when a researcher invites people into arts based research they invite

them to attend to movement and change by sensing, perceiving and comprehending an experience, an issue, or phenomena.

The catalyst for inquiry may be a question, an event, a theme, a feeling, a piece of poetry: a phenomenon which we explore through questions: *What if? What matters? What happens? So what?* These questions are not separate from the action but embodied within the action-interaction of performance. (Fels, 1998, p. 29)

I see arts based inquiry as a multilayered journey of listening and responding to experiences, issues, and phenomena. Experiences, issues, and phenomena are the subjects of research that call researchers to attention; into inquiry. It is helpful to shift the word *subject* to *form* because *subject* comes with a history of observation and subjection, form can be read simply as something that we sense. Forms as experiences, issues, and phenomena embody their own essence; they each have a qualitative signature. It is that qualitative signature, which arts based researchers track during their inquiry process. The researcher tracks the form by sensing, perceiving, and comprehending with their whole self. Both researcher and form unite during the inquiry, this relationship calls forth new understanding, and most often new questions that further the inquiry.

In indigenous mythology Coyote is a lusty character driven by a sensual hunger for change through provocative and challenging experiences. Coyote is always wandering through a landscape sniffing around for the next adventure, and when he/she catches a scent he/she follows it. Coyote does not have goals; he/she has a desire to see where the scent or impression will take him/her. Coyote learns through and is changed by sensual experience. Just like Coyote I

came to this project without goals, instead I chose to follow its invitations. I was invited by three questions. What if I called a group of pregnant couples together to bear witness to their pregnant experiences? What if we used art as a process of inquiry? What if I engaged as a research participant as well as a researcher?

This project began with an invitation from my body to witness its own movement and change during pregnancy. My pregnant and post-natal body had a strong voice during the research process as well as the writing process. In this research project my body, soul, and mind are woven together throughout the inquiry and text as both researcher and research subject. I have represented the fluid modes of being and understanding within the research journey (including the writing process) by shifting between italic font and arial font throughout the text. The italics represent my memories of becoming a mother and being a pregnant researcher. These stories are present to attract the reader into the realm of pregnancy. The italic script also speaks to the questions and wonderings that emerged through the inquiry that called me to attention, questions that offer no answers, but invite us to future inquiries. The text in arial font speaks to the research project as it unfolded. The first two chapters contain thoughts and ideas that are introduced by headings. These headings contain metaphors, which are explored further in a narrative or an image and a note that is my experience, these narratives call me into inquiry, to engage with questions that arose out of the form in the experience. Through out the reading of this text please think of Coyote shifting into modes of being that speak to the questions

and issues at hand. I draw from many different conceptual frameworks and authors to engage with the different questions that arose during this project.

This text is a creative process, through writing each chapter and engaging in the editing process I came further into relationship with the questions presented to me in pregnancy, as yet new questions unfolded throughout the inquiry. The reader is asked to take notice of these questions as they emerge in the text instead of looking for answers; these questions are what have come to me through the inquiry, and call us to attention. I invite you to read this text as if it is a living body. The breath is in the invitation to wonder and carry the text forward in your own inquiry.

Growing into ‘mother’: Embodiment as a process of sensing, perceiving, and comprehending

I remember being overwhelmed with fatigue during my first trimester. My finely sculpted muscles had melted into a thick pool of sludge on the couch in front of my television. My ego/mind screamed for my body to continue fulfilling all my projects. At that moment my body was too busy creating a new body to attend to my whims, I felt abandoned! I had wanted to be pregnant, and had known my identity would be forever changed, but I did not know how to greet this new way of being. I needed to find a new paradigm, I needed to find a way to

learn from my experience as a pregnant self. While pregnant and in my masters program I began to look for some paradigms that could help me learn through experience.

*The physical body is not a passive site, it is a site of sensation.
(Grosz, 1994)*

The pregnant body is an active landscape that calls a woman to pay attention.

Embodiment is the practice of experiencing and interacting with sensation; it is living with the entirety of our being (Abram, 1996; Crowther, 1993; Grosz, 1994; Schroeder, 1998, 1995). Embodied phenomenology is a lived reflection; it is life as inquiry (Rosch, Thompson & Varela, 1992). “Embodiment is about connecting to the geography of our souls, through an embracing of a physical way of apprehending and articulating our world” (Schroeder, 1998, p. 5). Mind, body and soul unite as a sensing and perceiving process. I use the term embodied self to describe the fluid amalgam of mind, body, and spirit. Mind as cognitive process, body as physical process, and spirit as the essence of the self and what moves us (Neufeld, 2008). This embodied self learns through engaging in and witnessing experience.

To understand embodied learning I began by investigating how humans collect knowledge and understanding through active embodied engagement. Crowther (1993) suggests that attention, comprehension, and projection are the key elements in sensing and perceiving. In order to experience sensation one

must choose to exercise attention. Attention (noun) or attending (verb) is the intentional focusing on a sensation. Attention is akin to inquiry, which is a process of non-judgmental fluid engagement with a subject (Eisner, 2008). Sensing is using the senses to experience and form relationships with physical phenomenon. Perceiving is the action of taking the subject into our selves, and filtering it through our cognitive processes. Comprehension is the ability to organize stimuli; it is where our cognition meets our sensed subject (Eisner, 1998). Comprehension, like knowing does not produce rigidity but is an action that brings forward fluid living conclusions (Eisner, 1998). Lastly, projection propels stimuli into the future using imagination (Crowther, 1993). Projection is the “ability to extend and apply what they have learned to other domains” (Eisner, 2002). The action of attending, comprehending, and projecting stimuli is the embodied process of sensing and perceiving.

Schroeder (1998) suggests that embodiment utilizes attending, remembering, sensing and playing. Attending is a “mindful wondering about the project of life” (Schroeder, 1998, p. 33). The memory is a landscape of experiences that have already been ordered (Eisner, 1998). This landscape influences and is influenced by new experience just as a forest is influenced by spring seedlings. Remembering is to call forward the re-remembered subject from our memory or imagination (Schroeder, 1998). Sensing is a conversation with a sentient being and the world around it, it is the act of listening/touching/feeling with the whole being (Schroeder, 1998). “Play teaches us to ‘go with’ something, to listen to where the writing is going, this is the act of improvisation, for the heart

of play is improvisation” (Schroeder, 1998, p. 46). Embodied learning begins with an active engagement with the world around us. We meet life by looking, touching, tasting its elements, we sense life. We perceive life when we invite it into ourselves and order it in ways that create meaning. Comprehension happens when we situate the experience and understanding in the landscape of the self.

The practice of mindfulness is an embodied inquiry; it is the practice of training the attention. Embodied reflection, termed ‘mindful meditation’ is comprised of two actions: *Shamatha*, the focused and quiet relating to one object; and *Vipashyana*, the openness to insight that invites wisdom and maturity into the moment (Rosch, Thompson, & Varela, 1992; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindful meditation can help us let go of the *kleshas*, which are the poisons of the mind that cloud our understanding and actions (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). By being open and aware of our body, mind and spirit’s relationship to momentary experience we can achieve freedom from habit and kleshas. “Mindfulness means that the mind is present in embodied everyday experience; mindfulness techniques are designed to lead the mind back from its theories and preoccupations, back from the abstract attitude, to the situation of one’s experience itself” (Rosch, Thompson, & Varela, 1992, p. 22). By inviting our mind, body, and soul into relationship we shift theories into ways of knowing, being, doing, and preoccupations into focused awareness and passionate interest.

Choosing your maternity dress: Embodiment as a mode of being

In my pre-natal group we were invited to watch a video of a women giving birth. On that night we all vibrated with emotions during and after hearing her beastly yowls. We all shared dread and thirst for the moments in birth where we were beyond the capacity to construct our behaviour. We knew from stories and this video that birth was an experience that demanded absolute attention with no room for social pretences. It was both exhilarating and terrifying to prepare for a moment where we had to cast aside our egos in order to respond to life.

Politics are “the creation of a shared public world of speech and action [which] has a complex and ambivalent relationship to this embodied condition [pregnancy]. (Scarth, 2004, p. 1)

I feel myself becoming less a person than a place, inhabited, a foreign land. I will experience pain, lose physical control, or know the uncertainty of anesthetic. I fear these things, but vaguely, for my brain buzzes in the merciful wash of endorphins that preclude any thought from occupying it too long. (Endrich, 1995, p. 9)

To be pregnant a woman will shift her expectations, ways of behaving and relating in response to her changing body.

Embodiment is a way of being, a mode. A mode is the method in which we attend; the manner in which we orient ourselves using conceptual frameworks (V. Kelly, personal communication, June 12, 2009). It is the paradigm, the landscape of possibilities in which to navigate an inquiry, action, or

understanding. Eisner (1998) presented the aesthetic mode as a way of greeting experience. The aesthetic paradigm depends on joyful inquiry into the qualities of life. “The joy of inquiry is the driving motive for their work. Scientists, like artists, formulate new and puzzling questions in order to enjoy the experience of creating answers to them” (Eisner, 1998, p. 36). People engaging in inquiry decode and encode meaning from experiences because they value both the process of learning and the subject with which they are engaging. A product of this desire to learn can be a stronger ability to sense, perceive and cognitively process experience: the outcome is aesthetic literacy (Eisner, 1998). “We become increasingly able to know those qualities we call aesthetic by our developed ability to experience the subtleties of form. We come to know aspects of music and literature and science by being increasingly able to experience their nuances” (Eisner, 1998, p. 37). By strengthening aesthetic literacy we expand the paradigm/the mode in which we engage with our experiences. If we greet life with increasing aesthetic literacy we can both reflect on and reveal the qualities of life with an expanded capacity to understand (Eisner, 1998). Art making, scientific inquiry, and living in an aesthetic mode is an active, joyful engagement with life that can increase our capacity for understanding.

Cajete (1994) labels the inquiry process of sensing, perceiving, and comprehending as “tracking”. “Tracking involves observation, common / natural sense, following an intuitive yet discernible direction, and developing intuition and visual thinking” (Cajete, 1994, p. 120). Tracking then leads to visioning; tracking and visioning are in a continuum of inquiry that involves attending to a subject

and then “quieting” or ordering it inside the embodied self in order to bring it back out into the world (Cajete, 1994). This process of inquiry develops understanding and an increased ability for further understanding. The product of the inquiry can invite other people into further inquiry. Tracking as an aesthetic mode of being is both a product and a process. Eisner (1998) presents form as both a noun and a verb, thus product and process. The product of aesthetic inquiry as form is something that we can sense, which has appeal. Form calls us into inquiry through attraction. Attraction is a call to engage, to react; to feel, feelings of disgust and feelings of desire are both relevant to aesthetic inquiry. Form is also process; “to engage in an activity occurring over time, guided by attention to changing qualities whose end is to produce a structure, either temporal or spatial, that gives rise to feeling” (Eisner, 1998, p. 36). To form is to sense, perceive, and comprehend a subject as a way of ordering it and transforming it into knowledge and understanding, tangible or intangible. The action of forming is to greet a subject, bring it into the self and birth it back into the world in its newness. When we live in an aesthetic mode the form is a living self that houses understanding developing through creative inquiry that invites others to engage in that inquiry.

Pregnancy is an experience that invites inquiry because of its relatively swift and vast impact on the mind, body and spirit. For example, in pregnancy women see signs of transformation, feel movement, and experience change almost daily. Pregnancy can be an aesthetic mode because a woman can experience her body as a site of sensation (Vannini & Weskul, 2006) and then

create meaning from her embodied sensations. Not only is pregnancy personally aesthetic, it is also a mode that can be witnessed and shared by a woman's community. A woman's pregnancy can be an aesthetic mode experienced and interpreted by herself and her community. Pregnancy provides a unique opportunity to practice mindful focus and playful curiosity, as well as an increased sensitivity to and capacity for understanding life. Pregnancy is thus a temporal opportunity for understanding life and increasing our capacity to be aware of life's nuances.

The ability to sense, perceive and comprehend our own selves is fundamental to embodied learning. Attending to the self and reflexivity are inquiry processes that investigate our selves and our effects on collective learning and knowledge (Nagy Hesse-Biber, Sharlene & Pratelli, Deborah, 2007). Mindful attending and reflexivity are essential for humans to act in a cohesive relationship with themselves, their environment, and their community. By mindfully attending to pregnancy we can increase our capacity to engage with our children.

Written in our DNA: Pregnancy as intersubjective embodiment

One night my husband and I were out at a concert with another pregnant couple. My pregnant friend and I were standing to the side of the crowd when

she turned to ask me if she could feel my belly. We both reached out to explore the contours of the others belly and she exclaimed “Oh! Yours is much different than mine.”

The objective of research is “to work closely with people, maintaining an inclusive reality, open and flexible, consisting of a diversity of perspectives, and enhancing their understanding, and ability to control their own reality. (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 503)

The mystery of an epiphany, the sense of oceanic oneness, the great yes, the wholeness. There is also the sense of a self merged and at least temporarily erased. (Erdrich, 1995, p. 148)

Pregnancy is one of the many human experiences that is shared through out culture, race, and history. The sharing of pregnant narratives can deepen people’s capacity to understand and practice agency.

The invitation to engage is also a challenge to witness something that is outside ourselves. Brazier (1995) suggests that coming to terms with the fact that something other than ourselves exists is one of the most challenging learning moments in a human’s life. The ability to witness others with non-judgmental curiosity is the learning process labeled empathy. Other human bodies resonate with and are influenced by our own movements and modes of being. These shared modes of being are access points for learning about human experiences (Abram, 1996). These access points open both selves, resonating the shared experience through or in both embodied selves. Both selves are then able to witness the other self as a site of experience and significance.

By witnessing one's own and other's subjective experiences one becomes aware of intersubjectivities: "phenomena experienced by a multiplicity of sensing subjects" (Abram, 1996, p. 38). Intersubjectivities are shared lived experiences. Pregnancy is not only one of the most transformative experiences in a woman's life; it is also an access point of intersubjectivity. Perhaps this is why most women so readily seek out a chance to share their birth stories and the excitement of pregnancy with other women. They investigate intersubjectivities by mindfully greeting their experiences (sensing), and then mutually order their experiences (perception) through sharing their stories. It is through exchanging birth stories that women investigate as well as compose their intersubjectivities.

The unified body, mind and spirit play an active role in mediating our experience. This is evident in the transformative process of pregnancy. As I sit and type beside my sleeping child I can only marvel (and sometimes grieve) at the transformation both of us have undergone. My body intuitively followed a biological map written in my DNA. I remember eagerly expecting to communicate with my new child as soon as I had conceived, however I did not experience her as a separate entity until I felt her move. I then felt her choices, separate from my own, influencing my body. When we mindfully interact with 'other' our embodied selves influence the modes and outcomes of those interactions, just as we are subject to the influences of the other. In those interactions we experience and compose sites of shared experience and significance. When we greet those interactions with mindful curiosity we open our selves to learning.

Reading the stretch marks: Meaning making in the pregnant body

Most mornings during my pregnancy I eagerly waited for my husband to wake up so I could share my dreams with him. There is only one dream that still sits in my memory. I dreamt of breathing in the periwinkle sky from the snowy glaciers of the Coast Mountain Range. Then in a flash I was swimming far away from the shores of the gulf islands. I remember feeling completely comfortable in the ocean waters but aware of my distance from safety. I did not have a clear message from that dream, but I was left imbued with an understanding of the family heritage my child was being born into. I was also left with an impression of who my child was within that context. I identified with the mountain archetype and knew that my husband was of the sea. I did not need to distil the dream into knowledge, I simply needed to live the experiences it gave me and sit with its metaphors that in turn open up new interstanding. New possible ways of entering into conversation and reflection.

A mother or a father, in describing their labor, relates the personality of the child to some piece of the event, makes the story into a frame. (Erdrich, 1995, p. 45)

Pregnancy is one creative journey where the process of creation is equally housed in the body, providing a unique experience where meaning making is informed immensely by the flesh.

Dreaming as an example of tracking and visioning is an embodied process of sensing, perceiving, and comprehending. Through the sensory process of dreaming I engaged with the imagined essence of my daughter. Eisner (2002) invites all modes of tracking and visioning as valid modes of creating meaning. He suggests we “include all those processes through which the organism becomes aware of the environment or its own consciousness” (p. 9). When the study of human experience investigates the entire process of cognition understanding human experience is not limited to the finite system of logic. When education includes multiple modes of inquiry it provides the opportunity to consider the infinite and the finite. We no longer need to accord priority to the predictable, the controllable. We can acknowledge the spontaneous multi-layered realm of human experience (Abram, 1996; Eisner, 1998).

By utilizing aesthetic modes of inquiry and being we look for clarity and understanding instead of truth and facts. The arts provide access to qualities of life that literal language has no great power to disclose. It follows, then, that an education of the life of feelings is best achieved through an education in and through the arts. (Eisner, 2008, p. 7)

Learning through aesthetic modes promotes a heightened capacity to respond to life as a process.

Mindfulness philosopher David Brazier (1995) has noticed our bodies are chronically hurrying to catch up with our minds: our minds lunge towards goals, expectations, and consumption consequently leaving our bodies lagging behind. van Manen (2003) suggests that the study of human experience can use both body and mind as instruments of engagement and inquiry. “The body you have, the body-object, can be opened up and investigated, like any other object. The body you are, the body-subject, is based on your subjective experience of being an embodied presence in the world” (Bosnak, 2007, p. 48). Embodiment and mindfulness philosophies invite body and mind to unify. This is a philosophy housed in the *lived* body, in lived experience. The mind and body attend to the experience at hand. Spirit joins the union of body and mind as movement, the essence of the embodied self.

In pregnancy the body-object is subjected to public scrutiny, the body-subject however is often ignored. “Discourse on pregnancy omits subjectivity, for the specific experience of women has been absent from most of our culture’s discourse about human experience and history” (Young, 2005, p. 46). This absence can result in women’s alienation from their own bodies. Embodied inquiry provides women opportunities to investigate how they relate to, evaluate and shape their bodies. To incorporate reflexivity into their actions could mean that they actively investigate the effects their behavior has on life, the environment and other people. The result will be a subjective understanding of themselves as embodied presences in this world. This reflexivity will open the possibilities for empowered pregnancies where women inform themselves and

work collaboratively with pre and post-natal professionals, as well as respond intuitively and openly to selves and their children.

Embodied learning and reflexivity are active journeys of inquisition enacted by the pads of our fingers, and the hairs on the back of our necks. They engage our subjective eating/smelling/walking selves as mediums for gathering new knowledge. Embodied learning values subjective embodied experience, it acknowledges that all learning stems from and returns to the subject and not a conceptual object. We learn and teach by, through and in living.

To respect the embodied self as the house of cumulated knowledge opens researchers up to the joy of learning (Grumet, 1988). The pregnant self is a temporal process contextualized within a lifetime of growth and change. As the body lives, it transforms through intuition, biology, and comprehension. Learning happens through action and being. To engage in inquiry means to both call the questions and issues into being, and it means to live the questions, to be the questions. Through living and creating the questions researchers can come to create and embody understandings and interstandings developed through the inquiry. If we negate the body's right to learn through doing and being the result is dependency on knowledge housed outside of the body. This can diminish our literacy for sensing and making meaning from life, thus diminishing our access to the fullness of life. In pregnancy this tragedy manifests as diminished capacity to respond to birthing and the essence and needs of our children.

The body is also a path of access, the maternal body is a sight of significance and understanding (Lockford, 2004). It is a life-text (Monaghan,

2006) that can be read to gain access to knowledge, understanding and meaning. A pregnant body is literally a path of access for and to the baby inside, as it is a mirror reflecting and refracting the ideologies, knowledge, and the evaluative processes of its context. We learn social norms, evaluative processes, and modes of being; we then shape our bodies and actions accordingly. The way we dress, interact, carry and comprehend ourselves can be read like a diary of all that we have learnt in our lives. If this performance is acted through an aesthetic mode/ an embodied mode the body becomes an active participant in the shaping of ideologies, knowledge, and evaluative processes.

Curious engagement with the information pooled in our embodied selves and experiences births the process of embodied inquiry. Active engagement with the body shifts it from an object to a subject.

The body is a meaningful object and a visibly available indicator of an acting subject within an interactional context. The body is the dominant vehicle of social interaction and must be taken into account in all analyses of social and personal identity, constructions of the self, emotional experience, the acquisition and display of power and other issues of special interest to interactionists. (Sanders, 2006, pp. 280-281)

By engaging with the body as a growing and changing subject/form we can gain insight into how society functions, and meaning is made. Embodied learning uses a subjective lens to understand the communities and societies in which our selves exist.

A woman's experience of pregnancy is mediated by race, class, social status, and body image (Hooks, 1981). "Body image is a signifier of the concept

a person has of the reality of their body. It is a combination of ideologies of beauty, gender, age, physical ability and sexual preference” (Vannini & Waskul, 2006, p. 184). Body image cannot be understood apart from the procedures used to measure it.

Not only do these procedures highlight the epistemological underpinnings of how we can know the body by specifying dimensions and indicators of body image they also shed light on how the body and body-image are ontologically fashioned. (Vannini & Waskul, 2006, p. 184)

Responsible embodiment is a constant process of evaluating the procedures that influence one’s own body image.

To be embodied is to acknowledge that we influence others. “Bodily, materially, sensation, and the way we ‘inhabit our skin’ all have a meaningful impact on our intersubjective sense of the world around us” (Grosz, 1994, p. 144). There are few times in human experience where that more evident than during pregnancy. The way a pregnant woman inhabits her body influences her own self as well as the self being created inside her. One of the most important things she can do is practice embodied inquiry into her self, as this facilitates agency. Miller (2005) suggests that we should view “reflexivity as a component of agency”. “There is a distinct phenomenal difference between the experience of performing an intentional act and the experience of making an unintentional movement” (Mylopoulos, 2006, p. 1). To act with intention is to act with agency. Reflexive embodiment feeds reflexive agency.

If people are products and producers of social systems, can embodied inquiry help people reflect on the social systems in which they exist? It may be

possible for people to act as the containers for new skills, insights, and experiences that are shared through intersubjectivities and art making. If society, as a collection of embodied selves, attends to its systems and institutions through aesthetic inquiry would the result be open flexible systems that respond to life instead of restrict it? Humans can be respected as embodied knowledge and understanding. They can also value learning from bodily experiences instead of only respecting insights from the mind. Humans can then witness the aesthetic potential and reality of their body (Vannini & Weskul, 2005). They can enjoy their body's sensual essence; regard it as inherently valuable all the while increasing their own and societies capacity for learning more. Pregnancy is no different, "the pregnant woman experiences herself as a source and participant in the creative process" (Young, 2005, p. 54). When social systems recognize and encourage the united autonomy of the embodied self, humans will better be able to get on with the process of living.

Listening to the first heart beat: Art making as inquiry

I have practiced creative inquiry as an artist and art therapist for many years, I looked forward to pregnancy as an exciting new theme to investigate. My first pregnant art piece was a sculpture that spoke to ripening, and germination. Through the creation process I realized my focus was shifting from

my own individuality to my place in a continuous line of entities that have and will pass through this world. Through my flowering body came my child, the seed of what is to come. I also became aware that my ripe maiden body was shifting seasons, I developed a deeper understanding of mortality. I wanted to savor pregnancy, and art has always been my favorite way of rolling a flavour around on my tongue. Art is my way of looking at the essence of something. How can we ascribe meaning to our experiences without limiting them into one logical interpretation?

We die. We die rich with lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we've entered and swum up like rivers. Fears we've hidden in—like this wretched cave. I want all this marked on my body. (Zaentz, 1996)

Pregnant women actively engage in creation through and within their embodied selves. This creative journey leaves marks and meanings behind.

Embodiment is a mode that uses metaphor to create and understand meaning. “Metaphor allows for the place of movement within the text. Just as the body has its own internal movement, metaphor brings pause, rhythm, colour, texture, and mystery to the text. The reader is invited to a dance through the text, which ultimately shows rather than only explicates” (Schroeder, 1998, p. 19). Meaning is not fixed (Rosch, Thompson & Varela, 1992); metaphor welcomes indeterminacy, paradox, subjectivity and intersubjectivity into the creation of meaning. By actively using and reading metaphor we increase our

capacity to understand and accept the presence of “other” in the world, the reality of paradox in life, and the lack of control that comes with indeterminacy.

Things are dependant on language because their existence is defined by language (Eisner, 1998). Art making is a language that allows space for infinite possibilities to dance through our reality. Art can also be a “designated imaginative space where freedom is experienced” (Kuryluk, 1997 p. 117).

Creativity in art can help find pathways to new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and expand boundaries; resulting in a broader horizon for artists and their audiences (Eisner, 1998; Kuryluk, 1994; May, 1975; Sullivan, 2005). Art acts as a space where risks can be taken and explorations made in a way that is perceived as less threatening than life outside the aesthetic realm (Eisner, 1998). “Through the arts we learn to see what we had not noticed, to feel what we had not felt, and to employ forms of thinking that are indigenous to the arts” (Cajete, 1994, p. 12). This gives the artist the gift and responsibility of exploring experience to develop understanding, insight, and action. Art refines our senses, as we practice art making we expand our ability to see subtlety, imagine possibilities, problem solve, express our selves, and tolerate complexity (Eisner, 2002).

Art making explores the essence of a subject as well as the artist’s relationship to the subject (Berger, 2001). It is a process of exploring interconnection and thus mutual responsibility. “They interpenetrate one another in their sharing and elaboration of dreams, image, and creative response” (Cajete, 1994, p. 142). In indigenous societies exploring relationship and

interconnection was essential to health, wholeness and understanding the meaning of life (Cajete, 1994).

Art making as inquiry can utilize compassion as a way of exploring our inner landscapes (Cajete, 1994). The curious investigation of form invites us into relationship with our *bodichitta*; our most vulnerable hearts (Chodron, 1994). Art making as reflexive mindfulness can be a practice of relating to our bodichitta with open curiosity instead of closed habit (Rosch, Thompson & Varela, 1992). When we relate to our bodichitta we see the pain and joy that is inherent in human experience, we feel the pain of our neighbours, our enemies, or friends; resulting in an awareness of the responsibility inherent in the inter-relatedness of all beings (Brazier, 1995). Art making helps people find the intersubjective nature of lived experiences, hopefully promoting a heightened sense of responsibility to engage compassionately with the world and those we share it with.

What artists choose to recognize as important can shape what is important to society, consequently the arts can be a site of potential change. For example, artists like Barbara Kruger, and the Guerrilla Girls worked very hard to expose sexist inequality in the Western art world (Lynton, 1980). This both fuelled and supported the feminist movement's goal to allow women equal prospects in all avenues of society. Augusta Boal (Boal, 2002 & Scapp, 2006, 2003) created a performative art form where oppressed people could communicate their experiences and their needs. This form of participatory theatre was designed by Boal to give voice to the Brazilian poor, he provided a

forum for relationship in a culture of segregation. This art form (Theatre of the Oppressed) was so successful as an agent of social change it has contributed to community action across the globe. If politics are considered social interactions containing authority or power (Foucault, 1978), art can shift authority and power into the hands of creative people. Creative people through art making, scientific investigation, and aesthetic modes of living then offer the power inherent in the seeds of change as a gift for the hearts and minds of all people. If those creative people commit to art making as reflexive mindfulness, compassion will be much more prevalent in our interactions.

Arts based research has been among the forefront of a kind of an expansive and pluralistic exploration of new research methodologies in the academy (Eisner, 2008; Fels, 1998, 2007; Mcniff, 1998). Researchers have begun to experiment with intuition, process, and interconnection between subject and researcher (Gray, Ivonoffski & Sinding, 2002; Sullivan, 2005). Art making is a wonderfully tangible and observable methodology of inquiry that incorporates intuition, process, and interconnection. It is a process of reaching out towards the essence of a subject and then inviting it into the artist's self, it is a creative process of sensing and perceiving. Eisner (2002) connects sensing and perceiving to cognition, art is a methodology of gaining insight. Art helps the artist collect information, which can be lost, and form a relationship with it so that information and artist transform each other, creating insight, which can not be lost (Neufeld, 2008). Artists often identify their creative process as a methodology for gaining understanding of their subject matter (Berger, 2001;

Cajete, 1994; Sullivan, 2005). Art making is an intimate inquiry into a subject that provides a tangible and observable record of investigation and insight.

Successful art-based inquiries as sites of learning are recognized for resonance, accessibility, dynamism, and plurality (Gray, Ivonoffski & Sinding, 2002; Sullivan, 2005). Humanity's relationship to art has permitted a multifaceted understanding of human experience. Art also brings a compassionate flexible methodology for research that acknowledges the indeterminate nature of perceived reality.

Art is a way of knowing; it is a process of acquiring insight as well as a process of epistemology (Bhimani, 2006; Cajete, 1994; Eisner, 1998, 2008). Art investigates knowledge as well as represents it. By involving artful inquiry in pregnancy, parents and health service providers can engage in reciprocal relationships where everyone is essential to both intersubjective and subjective functioning and understanding. Narrative inquiry is an example of artful inquiry that uses storytelling to sense, perceive, and comprehend form. Narrative inquiry has been used to inform medical practitioners about the nature of interactions between healthcare users and care providers, common needs and experiences of clients, and the struggles and challenges inherent in health care (Carolan, 2006). Using stories as tracking and visioning is an effective and satisfying example of aesthetic and embodied modes of living and creating form.

I will tell you something about stories, the Lauguna storyteller Leslie reminds us. They aren't just entertainment/Don't be fooled/They are all we have, you see/All we have to fight off/Illness and death. You don't have anything/If you don't have the stories (p. 2). (Silko, 1997 as sighted in King, 2005, p. 14)

Watching the belly in the mirror: Considering the therapeutic nature of the arts

Many times in pregnancy and early parenthood I grieved the loss of my identity. I could not grasp at a cohesive narrative of ME. A friend who I resentfully called “the mother goddess” scoffed at my tragic loss of self as artist and performer. She felt proud and comfortable in her creative process as a mother, she had never really attached to a career or hobby before parenthood, so I didn’t think it was fair, she hadn’t really lost anything, she had only gained a new label, “mother”. I desperately looked to my career as an art therapist to find out how my new experiences related to my old and emerging self. How can art making help us find movement in the process towards wholeness when we are stuck or struggling with a particular idea or experience?

As an art therapist “I experiment and assess what works for people, what is the most successful in accessing the imagination, what is most effective in transforming difficult and threatening feelings into satisfying creative expressions. (MicNiff, 1998, p. 72)

Pregnancy is a challenge from the self to witness experience through a new lens.

Art has naturally therapeutic qualities, understanding the benefits and challenges of therapeutic art making promotes responsible and skillful

engagement with the inquiry process. Cajete (1994) explained that art in indigenous societies provides a “pathway to wholeness” for both artist and audience. The process of creative embodied inquiry brings forward the unexpected, both comfortable and painful in nature. The pathway to wholeness enters the realm of the bodichitta, which contains love and joy as well pain, jealousy, and anger. A person can get stuck on this path and stay in pain for a long excruciating time. The secret to movement is curiosity; curiosity allows us to engage with both suffering and comfort without becoming attached or stuck. Non-attachment and non-judgment are modes of being that allow us to learn from all experiences both painful and comfortable (Chodron, 1994).

In indigenous education there is a practice of tracking and visioning (Cajete, 1994) animals as the embodied examples of qualities and modes of being. The bat enacts the journey to and from the places that contain all of the dark, lonely and painful parts of humanity. The bat uses radar for navigating, reaching out, and waiting for response (Andrews, 1993). The bat engages seen and unseen resources to create an image or map of the pathway towards bodichitta. Facilitating the journey to and from the bodichitta is integral to a deeper understanding of life. Curiosity is the open non-judgmental motivation or movement in the journey that prevents getting stuck along the way.

Dachinger and Ulman (1975) defined art as “a means to discover both the self and the world, and to establish a relationship between the two” (p.12). Art therapy combines therapy and art to create space for change, self-awareness, and a reflection of where a person belongs in his or her world. Artful inquiry

facilitates non-judgmental curious engagement with the embodied self, through its processes of sensing and perceiving and its methods of creating meaning from experience. People who engage in art making use creative spontaneity to investigate modes of being and relating to others and their environment. This access to possibilities expands the self, moves towards wholeness.

Rose Mary Gordon describes the cycle of creativity as “a conscious struggle (the original idea), followed by muddled suspense (when things don’t work out), leading to illumination (sticking it out and being open to new thought), and reunification (working at the new idea)” (cited in Baillie, 1994, p. 58). Her map of creativity can also be a map of the embodied learning process. The artist learns to accept disappointment and become less rigid in response to what emerges during the process. Cajete (1994) explains that the artist’s tasks consist of “representing, sharing, and celebrating” (p. 142). Before an artist can get to those tasks he or she must develop a deep relationship and understanding to his or her subject. In therapy the subject is the self in relationship to the world, so art making begins with an investigation into the self and ends in representation, sharing and celebration of the self.

Hillman (1995) believes that fantasy and imagination contain, or are expressions of the passion, acceptance, and understanding of life, death, and the self that enables spontaneity. Intuitive and spontaneous actions occur when people allow themselves to respond to a situation with the resources they have at that time, without the hindrances of judgment or defensiveness. By

strengthening our intuition we empower our ability to respond to change instead of be controlled by it.

Therapeutic art making is an orienting process that promotes wholeness (Cajete, 1994). Carter (1996) explains wholeness as a quality, which allows systems or individuals to achieve goals according to consistent values, actions, and expectations. The system or individual is a grouping of parts that when whole can act together in order to function. This quality does not limit the system or individual as it can evolve as long as the system or individual accounts for and resolves any inconsistencies that arise (Carter, 1996). By engaging in Performative inquiry individuals can gain insight first into their values, methods, and expectations; then respond to change with integrity of self. Art therapy is a facilitated process where the therapist provides opportunities for the client to practice tracking and visioning in order to develop increased capacity for sensing, perceiving, and comprehension so that the client can become adept at navigating their own pathways to wholeness. The journey along pathways of wholeness is the foundation and goal of indigenous education, which is likely why leaders in art therapy and arts based research like Moon and McNiff turned to indigenous education as a methodology for therapy and research (Cajete, 1994; McNiff, 1998; Moon, 1990).

When we are moving towards wholeness we can access more of our inner resources. When we are in relationship to our world we can access more of the resources that are available to us. Quality of life is improved when individuals

can experience their whole selves with compassionate flexibility, and access the resources needed to attend to life's challenges.

Birthing doula: The role of the facilitator

I find facilitating groups very challenging. My focus turns to fixing mistakes I believe I have made; my body vibrates with apologetic anxiety. I know that my job is to listen to the needs of the students in order to respond to their learning moments. Unfortunately instead of inviting moments of learning in, I watch the spaces in between learning moments as if they are symbols of my ineptitude. How can both moments of learning and the moments in between learning be invited into learning?

In performative inquiry, we realize our journey/landscape through performance and then map - recognize our explorations through discussion, reflection, remembering, writing, re-imagining. There is no detached observer in performative inquiry: researcher and participants together “bodymind dance on the edge of chaos” (Fels & Stothers, 1996) into knowledge and beyond, an ever-spiralling circle of creative interstanding. (Fels, 1998, p. 5)

Embodied learning requires active listening, it is a journey of responding to questions, phenomena, and impressions that arise out of the inquiry.

Berger (2001) presents art as an investigative process where the artist seeks to learn about their subject, medium, and self through the creative process. He uses the metaphor of stomach to show the artist's studio as a place of digestion, where the artist consumes experience in order to excrete it in a new form. With this metaphor Berger represents Cajete's (1994) tracking and visioning with humour and irreverence in a perfect example of how art and metaphor attract us into inquiry. *Coyote sniffs the air, tracking a subject so that he/she can devour the subject and transform the subject and himself/herself in the process.* Our minds wander through the digestive process while considering sensing, perceiving and comprehending. We begin to understand that like food, experience can fill us, nourish us and then come forth in a form that will fertilize our environment. Engaging with the experience of pregnancy researchers and pregnant a woman can be a nourished by as well as nourish through allowing others to witness her experience.

When we practice tracking and visioning we develop our library of knowledge and our capacity for learning. Through shared inquiry we can share our learning: we can begin to teach each other. In Lakota culture the wolf embodies the qualities of learning and teaching. The wolf actively seeks out learning, and engages with the unknown in order to further its own knowledge. Wolf medicine is however not complete until the wolf understands its subject well enough to teach others about it (T. Olman, personal communications through out 2002-2009). When those who embody wolf qualities use art making to promote wholeness they also, metaphorically speaking, follow the journey of the bat

through out darkness. The labels of researcher and therapist begin to merge; this may be where the term facilitator becomes more appropriate. I see a facilitator as someone who has developed their inquiry skills and as a result can call understanding out of their participants by engaging them in a similar inquiry process. Facilitators have come to know the path to and from the underworld well enough to provide hope for participants who are navigating their own journey towards wholeness. The facilitator does not need to be whole, but must know the process of relating to both the light and the dark parts of their selves well enough to be able to facilitate it in others. The embodied researcher acts as a mentor by engaging in inquiry with the participants; their shared inquiry is expanded by the researchers trained inquiry skills. If the process is effective then participants become researchers able to further the inquiry. In the case of pregnancy by developing skills in sensing, perceiving, and comprehending parents can expand their ability to track and teach their children these skills.

There is a fine line between bringing a participant or therapeutic client towards wholeness and leaving them stuck in a mire of pain and attachment. Therapy is a constellation of “procedures designed to assist favorable changes in personality or in living that will outlast the session itself” (Dachinger & Ulman, 1975/1996, p. 12). In embodied learning, facilitators can focus on providing moments where participants can practice inquiry into experience housed in the embodied self. Through facilitating the creative process we can allow participants “an avenue for learning that capitalizes on one of the most basic and ancient contexts for developing self-knowledge” (Cajete, 1994, p. 148).

Cajete (1994) compares the art student to an apprentice. They must go through an incremental process. They must first prepare to become aware; after which they guide their spirit to connect with the intent of their project. Then they focus their attention on the resources and materials with which they will complete their project. Next they follow a set of guidelines, and dedicate time and space to the project. There is a point where the apprentice must surrender to the realities of the task. This is when the creative process demands focused will from the artist. After the apprentice has again found movement he or she can pack the symbol or art piece/process with meaning. All the while they are learning patience, intent and attention. The last stages are completion, the give away, and appreciation and use (Cajete, 1994).

During apprenticeship, art making must be mediated by a teacher or mentor who sets up the conditions for learning. These stages of creation embody the process of living with mindful awareness. "In this way art became a process of spiritual training that involved the spiritual development of the artist at every turn" (Cajete, 1994, p. 156). It is in this spirit of understanding that I invite others to engage in art-making through performative inquiry.

Tracking and visioning enhance mind, body and spirit. Living with embodied awareness enhances physicality, mental spiritual capacity and consciousness. The mentor or facilitator or researcher sets up conditions in which participants can ingest new knowledge and invite it into their selves creating new insight. Cajete provides an explanation of how indigenous

education provides a venue for expanding learners' capacities for sensing, perceiving, and comprehending.

When teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in tasks that practice such skills and attitudes, they are providing opportunities for the development of mind. And when they organize the tasks students address so that students learn to connect what they have learned in their school to the world beyond it, they are developing their students' ability to extend and apply what they have learned to other domains, a process that in the psychological literature is referred to as transfer, an ability teachers are encouraged to foster. (Cajete, 1994, p. 13)

Embodied education is not listening for the "right" answers, but recognizing the subtleties in individuals' actions and communications. The focus of educator and researcher shifts to attending to learning opportunities. What researchers sense, perceive, and comprehend in relationship with individual participants can then be reflected back to the participants in order to facilitate moments of insight. This reflection can be performed through discussion and/or by improvisational response to the participant. Together researcher and participant can locate themselves in their own process, experiment with their chosen modes of living, as well as identify their personal and intersubjective challenges and moments of insight.

Similarly, embodied researchers create and maintain respectful, welcoming space, engage and transform conflict, read experiences as messages, invite expression, hold hope, listen and witness, attend to others and cultivate creativity (McNiff, 1998). Embodied facilitators hold the space and

respond to the actions of their participants in order to facilitate learning that resonates in the embodied selves of researcher and participants.

Embodied participants meet the opportunity of embodied learning with honesty and curiosity. Learning is an interaction with vulnerabilities, strengths, and experience. The embodied participant engages with and takes responsibility for his or her own journey. Embodied learning requires the participant to actively seek out understanding and knowledge instead of uncritically accepting information offered by an authority figure. A facilitator's role is to know the process of learning well enough to create an environment where the student can develop the skills needed to critically and mindfully engage with life. England (1998) uses the metaphor of the labyrinth in her pre-natal workshops to explain the journey to the centre of the birthing experience and back out to mothering. It is like the journey in which we travel to the essence of our form and carry insight from the centre outwards into our daily lives. When facilitating other individuals' journeys through their own labyrinths researchers add value to their service if they have made their own journeys to the centre of their own experiences.

Intuitive birthing: Rethinking expertise

When I was attending Art College a pregnant artist created a piece called The Pregnancy Nazis. She was expressing her frustration with people judging

and commenting on her behavior while she was pregnant. I often thought of her when I navigated myself through the public arena as a pregnant body. The duty to be well is a contentious issue, words like 'rights', 'future' and 'responsibility' carry a great deal of weight. How should humans navigate the weighty responsibility of a pregnant woman to her unborn child? How can society foster health through reflexive agency?

One does not give birth in a void, but rather in a cultural and political context. (Rich, 1986, as cited in England, 1998)

Within the context of authority and dependence that currently structures the doctor-patient relation, moreover, coupled with the use of instruments and drugs in the birthing process, the pregnant and birthing woman often lacks autonomy within these experiences. (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 47)

To be pregnant in the public realm is to engage with social meaning making.

Understandably the insecurities inherent in giving birth, especially for the first time mother, propel women to seek out people who they perceive as experts (Babrow & Sassi Matthias, 2007). We naturally seek mentors to help us navigate the landscapes of pregnant life. We are not always successful at finding or providing mentorship that moves towards wholeness. Through social pressure, propaganda, legislation, and public discourse pregnant women are no longer experts in pregnancy and birth (Lake, 2007). The habitual fragmentation of mind and body can produce hierarchical structures of authority, which largely exclude pregnant women from the process of decision-making. Most women are still

handing over their authority to doctors in exchange for the illusion of security. “Medical narratives have subordinated personal, lay, and other alternative narrative of health and illness in modern times” (Westfall, 2006, p. 264). Our dreams, creative urges, and embodied experiences as well as the creative acts of others are the antidote to habitual or stereotypical modes of being pregnant.

Surveillance of the female body and her womb is now permitted in exchange for perception of security and social acceptance. As soon as it is apparent that a woman is pregnant, her body comes into public scrutiny. She must perform pregnancy in front of her community, medical professionals, strangers, and family. She has a “duty to be well” which is mediated by the public.

Science uncovers and professionals mediate her womb as a public space. Her flesh becomes the stage whose proceedings are of immediate interest to the state, the body politic, to public hygiene and the church, and also the husband. (Westfall, 2006, pp. 264-265)

Women must navigate a minefield of opinions concerning her and her child’s health. Compassion and curiosity can provide an avenue for us to shift relationships out of judgment and suspicion into investment, devotion and support. Compassionate relationships between pregnant women, her community, medical professionals, strangers, and her family can provide an environment of intersubjective inquiry and reflexive agency.

To many birthing activists it is imperative that women resist “narrative surrender” (Westfall, 2006, p. 274). Narrative surrender happens when we acquiesce and blindly accept the opinions of others as own. This can happen by

allowing others to tell our story without including our own voice, or by neglecting our stories all together (King, 2005). If people relinquish authoritative knowledge of their embodied selves to others, essentially they are handing over control of their health. This has two major consequences: (a) humans leave themselves vulnerable to tyranny, (b) they relinquish responsibility and reflexivity.

Dependency is created when education is only provided to an elite few. When education is accessible to many, empowerment becomes possible. Providing accessible and inclusive education about birthing practices; pre and post-natal health, and health systems can provide pathways towards authoritative knowledge.

There are however different levels of expertise needed in the birthing process. There is ubiquitous expertise, which is expertise that every member of the group must have to participate. Then there is technological expertise, which understands the scientific and technological content of a particular context. Lastly there is specialist expertise, which utilizes specific knowledge of a context (Collins & Evans, 2007). It cannot be expected that every family who is about to give birth should know the specifics of female anatomy (specialist expertise), nor should they be expected to run a fetal heart monitor (technologic expertise). They should be given the opportunity to acquire ubiquitous expertise and be granted a level of respect that allows them to exercise that knowledge.

Efforts are being made to reclaim female authority over the birthing process. One of the leaders in the field of midwifery is Pam England (1998) who uses education to empower women and their birth partners. In her own

midwifery practice and research she found that art served several functions in preparing for birth. She noticed that many women accept media images of birth and do not connect with their own fantasies; she found that art allowed women to connect with their individual understanding of birthing. Through art making, women are able to recognize their need for spiritual and psychic help during the birthing process. England proposes that art making is a wonderful way for pregnant women to begin bonding with the babies forming inside their bodies. England also found that doing art in groups gave expectant parents the opportunity to share their inner experiences. England's philosophy of birthing from within has inspired a curriculum for prenatal classes that are used globally. The central question asked to participant parents is: "what do you need to know in order to give birth?" These classes empower parents to reclaim authority and reflexivity in their birthing processes. They learn to "feel what needs to be done" (Greene, 1995, p. 18).

Art making has proven itself an efficacious way for women to give expression to one of the most mythologized and misappropriated human experiences (Chernick, 2003). Art as a way of knowing gives society new forms of expertise, ones that do not limit, but includes multiple voices. Art as "flesh of the self, consciousness sensuous material and semantic content" (Crowther, 1993). Art can stand in place of the maternal body as an embodied narrative sharing her story through time and space. Gloria Hadjuk, a Canadian mother-artist created *Application for Prospective Mothers*, a 30 question form asking prospective mothers questions that would facilitate reflexivity concerning their

upcoming responsibility. A group of Canadian mother-artists curated an art show called *Laundryworks*; art was displayed in places where “women’s work” was accomplished (i.e. laundry mats, and grocery stores). They expressed interest in transforming perspectives on ‘women’s work’ and bringing about awareness of women as human beings performing their roles within a community (Moravec, 2003). Art, as embodied subjectivity can act as a learning and communication vehicle for exploring the experience of pregnancy and disseminating that knowledge.

Understanding happens during and after the story is told or art piece is made/performed. It is through storytelling that events and experiences are linked into a meaningful framework (Miller, 2005). While forming a narrative one can explore perceived reality and construct identity by weaving experiences together into a meaningful art piece. Narrative research is not looking for a measurable truth, it investigates how individuals make sense of, and ascribe meaning to their experiences (Miller, 2005). Narrative communication can make sense of experience without locking the experience into concrete or binary thinking. Stories allow room for the imagination; they retain the subtleties inherent in reality. The artist and audience unlock the meanings in the story, inviting new understanding into themselves, they embody the “knowing” contained in the story as they come to understand and interpret it. They merge with the storyteller and audience in a mutually transformative dance. “What we think or feel about events can easily change as the filters used to interpret them change” (Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007, p. 5). By sharing our stories we enact

symbolic interactions that reform “the very corporeal matter of ‘unfinished bodies’, as well as supposedly innate drives such as sexual interest.”

(Monaghan. 2006, p. 126). Shared art making is a context in which the inquirer is formed with he/she forms.

Gendered body is a corporeal mode of being, an act, intentional and performative (Lockford, 2004). We present ourselves to the world through the choices we make. Through mindful sensing and perceiving of lived experience we develop a capacity for living as an intuitive art form. We become literate to the meanings and knowledges housed in everyday life. When we see the self as changing, complex and embodied we open up to multiple possibilities for our modes of living. We can build reflexivity into our embodiment by taking the time to share our narratives with others as well as our selves. Living and sharing our narratives can be seen as an embodied, living research methodology. All living beings are invited to engage in the inquiry process and be thus respected for their contribution to communal knowledge. Just as indigenous elders are respected as teachers through embodying their philosophies for younger generations to witness, so are mothers mentors for each other and their children.

Creating spaces for families to share their maternal narratives invites them to the inquiry process. Women need to be able to intuitively improvise their modes of being to meet the experiences they have during this transformative process. In turn, they contribute to their communities through reflexive agency. Confident intuitive actions is encouraged when authority is placed back in the hands of the people performing pregnancy and birth.

Stitching the first booties: Art making in pregnancy

Serendipity “the art of finding something by looking for something else.” (dictionary.com). I had prepared myself for the birth of my fantasies, a vaginal home birth filled with ceremony and art. I knew that was not to be my lot when I saw a coyote on our route to the hospital on the night my water broke. When I felt Coyote’s presence, I walked into my birth room knowing I would be challenged. I came home a week later with a healthy baby girl, cesarean scar, and a lingering grief because I had failed to birth my child vaginally. It was only while writing my birth story that I was able to find the humour and sanctity in my birthing process. I did not get to experience the orgasmic moment of crowning, but I learnt humility, witnessed the strength of my husband in the face of terror, and had to accept help from the very medical system I distrusted so much.

The ability to look at social reality with an unflinching mother’s eye, while at the same time guarding a helpless life, gives the best of women’s work a savage coherence. (Erdrich, 1995, p. 147)

To engage in performative inquiry while pregnant is to contribute to societal understanding by providing a unique mode of inquiry.

Art making can be used to research the nature of pregnancy and pregnant families as well as a process of orienting a family in the experience of pregnancy. Smith (1999) used narrative art making to investigate women's transition to motherhood during pregnancy. She noted early pregnancy was commonly experienced as a time of adjustment and uncertainty. Middle pregnancy is often marked by introspection and changes in perception of self. In the last few months of pregnancy women often turn their attention to the birthing and parenting processes to come. She tracked these changes by having mothers create images and then discuss the process and content. Smith helped mothers to interpret their work as a way to help them gain insight into their pregnant experiences. Art making is an effective way to sense, perceive, and comprehend the experiences of pregnancy and foster the capacity for more inquiry in pregnancy and parenthood.

Weingarten (1995) was one of many women who sought out ways to expand the evaluative processes used to assess the effectiveness of health care services. She found that stories from health care clients were an effective way to gather information about health care services. By allowing services providers to hear their client's stories Weingarten found that service providers could reflect on their work and gain new insight. A surprising result can be that by telling their stories clients can also gain new awareness and insight. Whaler and Castelbury (2002) found that listeners often ask for clarity or reflect alternative meaning back to the storytellers/artist, which can invite new awareness and create new

understanding for the storyteller/artist. Evaluative processes are exchanged and thus expanded by sharing narratives.

“We need to reconstruct our images of mothers to incorporate the reality rather than the fantasy, thereby allowing women to experience unhappiness without perceiving themselves to be failures” (Ussher, 1989, p. 102). It was only after hearing many stories that I realized it was unlikely that my water would break dramatically in the aisle of a grocery store. Narratives show an expansive reality with multiple possibilities as opposed to generalized knowledge that shrinks possibilities into generalizations or stereotypes. Emerging mothers require safe contexts in which to share their narratives, and access to narratives from mothers outside their social context. These stories will strengthen mothers’ ability to make reflexive choices based on an informed reality instead of fantasy and projection.

Birth partners and co-parents also require access to the therapeutic nature of embodied art making. Co-parents experience a transition during the pregnancy of their loved one. They often feel left out and disappointed when childbirth preparation is only focused on the mother (Finnbogadttir, Crang Svalenious & Persson, 2003). What would change if we included the voices of all stakeholders in pregnancy so as to create an expansive representation of all the invested subjective truths?

Art making is an active investigation into the nature of reality and how we understand it. The creative process can help us develop skills in sensing, perceiving and meaning making. As art educator Elliott Eisner writes,

They refine our senses so that our ability to experience the world is made more complex and subtle; they promote the use of our imaginative capacities so that we can envision what we cannot actually see, taste, touch, hear, and smell; they provide models through which we can experience the world in new ways; and they provide the materials and occasions for learning to grapple with problems that depend on arts-related forms of thinking. They also celebrate the consummatory, noninstrumental aspects of human experience and provide the means through which meanings that are ineffable, but feelingful, can be expressed. (Eisner, 2002, p. 19)

While our embodied selves explore the intersubjectivities inherent in our lives, we can influence and be influenced by the phenomena that we share our perceived reality with. If we create discursive practices that invite indeterminacy we will be able to investigate and communicate the wholeness of our co-created and shared reality.

Attending to life through art making can help enhance the orienting and conceptual frameworks of aesthetic and embodied modes of being. Narratives and art making help promote an expansive understanding of perceived reality, which can empower women to trust their own modes of being. By expanding the capacity to track and vision, or sense, perceive and comprehend a person can learn to embody the subject that they are tracking. By tracking and visioning pregnancy pregnant women can embody and therefore deepen our collective understanding of pregnancy. Through my research, I have come to understand that in artful embodied inquiry pregnant women, their families, and their communities can develop an expanding capacity to attend to, understand, and respond to their lives and their children.

LABOUR:INTH: ENGAGING IN INQUIRY

Sunday, March 2nd both my own and my husband's family happened to converge for a breakfast. Halfway through I was mortified because I seemed to have peed my pants. I hurried to the bathroom to deal with yet another embarrassing moment in the last few weeks of pregnancy. My ankles were swollen like fatty sausages, I couldn't sleep from cramps and gas pains, and now I was wetting myself! After some damage control I went back to finish breakfast. When we all went back to my house there was a quiet moment when only the women were in the room. That was my chance to ask if MAYBE my water had broken. In a flash several modes of inquiry rose up through each women in the room. I went strait to the internet; my mom looked through the newest pregnancy information book; my mother-in-law suggested I call the mid-wife; and my grand-mother-in-law told one of her stories about birthing. After a lengthy process involving lists, smells, narratives, questions, and intuition we decided my water had broken and it was time to call the mid-wife.

Choosing a research methodology is to take off our clothes and expose our passions, our imperfections, our hopes, and yes, our quest (Fels, 1998, p. 29).

I have witnessed the human need to inquire, the human need to understand why, how, what if? The specific inquiries each one of us attend to are the unique contributions we bring to collective understanding.

My research methodology was informed by: art therapy, performative inquiry, and communities of inquiry. My research process happened as an intuitive response to both the project's trajectory and to the needs and interests of the participants. I have chosen to use primary narrative in the narrative of the inquiry process. Primary narrative is a method of writing where the researcher acts as an embodied narrator, situated in the story or project (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Pratelli, 2007).

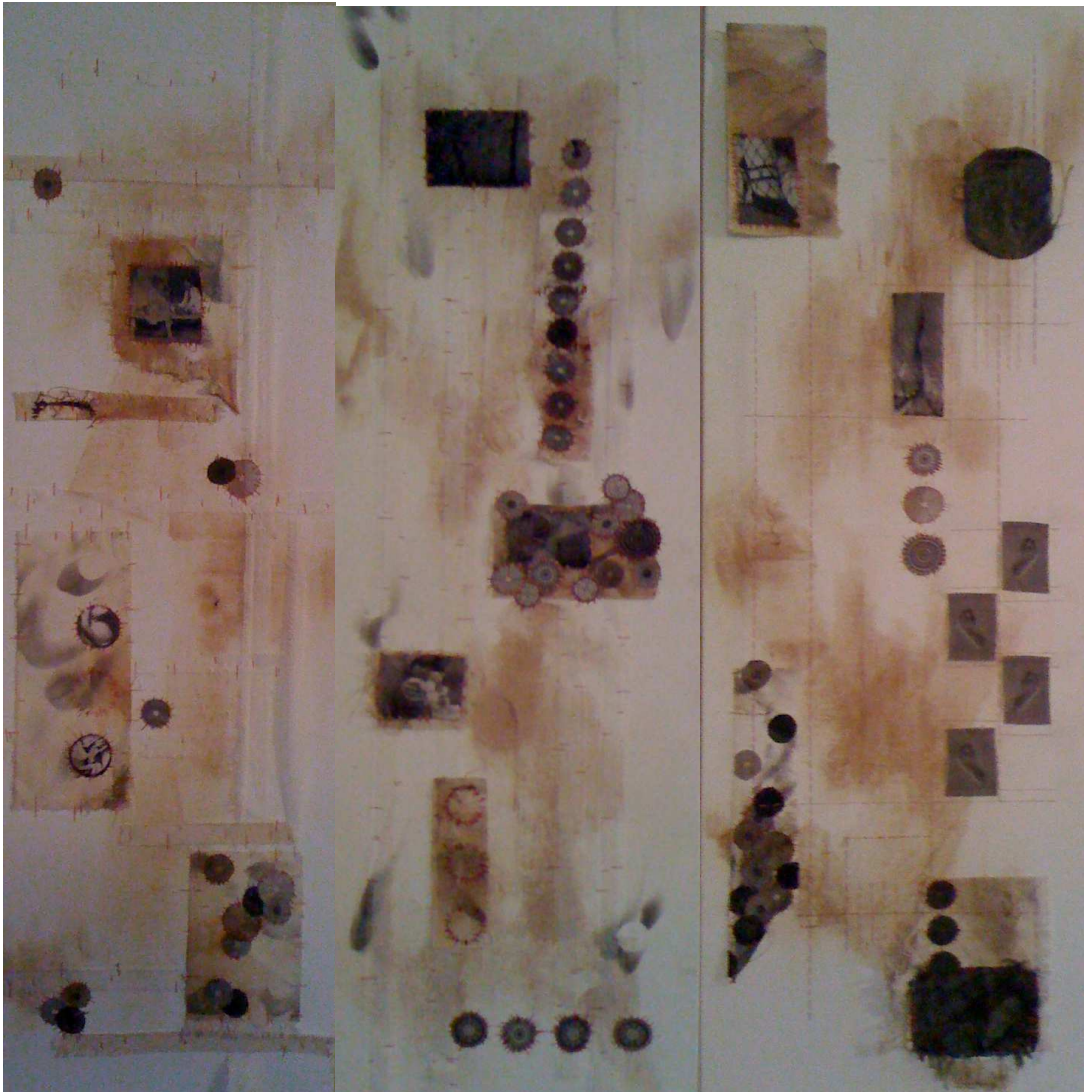
I came to Education because most of my therapeutic practice involved providing parenting classes, so I wanted to learn more about pedagogy. Initially I felt lost in the education academy, so I looked for a bridge between the worlds of therapy and education. I chose to begin with a mind map. A mind map is a diagram that starts with a key idea and connects words, tasks, or ideas to that central idea. Mind mapping is a visual way of mapping a brainstorm without forcing creativity into a linear format. In this process I noticed similarities between the practice of mindfulness, Buddhist therapy and the inquiry processes of phenomenology and embodiment. These inquiry processes could be directed towards the self, acting like the therapeutic process of inquiry into the modes of being that influence our quality of life.

I began with an interest in the idea of embodiment. This stimulated the question: what if I called a group of pregnant couples together to bear witness to their pregnant experiences? I connected embodiment back to my life's passion which is art making. This brought forward the question: what if we used art as a process of inquiry? I then responded to my desire to share my experience of

pregnancy with other pregnant women. This sparked a desire to call a community of inquiry into being where I could ask: what if I engaged as a research participant as well as a researcher?

Art therapy

Figure 1: Post-Natal Images



Questions for Kali 3 10'' x 31'' mixed media canvas

I scraped, and stitched, and searched for icons while my baby slept each night. I asked the same questions with each knot of each thread. Where do I go from here?

I spent much time reflecting, with great intensity, upon a number of questions, which seemed very important to me at the time. (Brazier, 1995, p. 57)

As we create we are created.

Art therapy combines the creative process and any relevant counseling modalities. The key counseling modalities utilized in this project were Attachment theory, Hakomi and Buddhist therapy.

Vancouver's Gordon Neufeld (Neufeld, 2008; Neufeld & Mate, 2004) is a mentor and educator to therapists and parents seeking ways to support maturation in people. Maturation is experienced through three attributes: vitality, viability as a separate being, and emergence or motivation to learn. Maturation is fueled by relationships that provide a secure base, rest from over-stimulation, and room to explore. Therapists and parents can acknowledge that maturation comes forth from inside a person that to control or direct emergence is to limit and perhaps smother it (Neufeld, 2008; Neufeld & Mate, 2004; Rogers, 1998). Like a flower one can feed, care for and tend the flower-bed, however we can not manipulate the type of flower or its desire to grow. Parents often try to direct behavior instead of fostering ethical intent or curiosity. It is not the accomplishment that is the goal; it is the bias towards curiosity.

There is pedagogy of emergence; researchers can draw out motivations, knowledge, and inquiry methods that already exist in students and add to it (Neufeld, 2008). This can be done by providing space for initiative, creativity and originality; encouragement that meets the individual needs of each student; and rest from distracting expectations and information. When relationship is

functioning between researchers and their participants then researchers can hand participants responsibility over their own learning. The pedagogy of attachment provides learners the opportunity to experience their selves as viable, vital, and motivated (Neufeld, 2008). When humans are provided the opportunity to relate to self as integral and valuable they can see others in the same light. By providing opportunities to witness the self in relationship and action as valuable researchers and therapists provide opportunities for empathy.

Researchers, therapists, and parents who provide attachment relationships can foster emergence by providing non-judgmental spaces to inquire and thus succeed and fail. The key element in maturity is the ability to invite both success and failure into the inquiry process. When a human is allowed safe relationships in which to feel failure and futility the limbic part of their brain registers emotions that stimulate change (Neufeld, 2008; Neufeld & Mate, 2004). This is the process of adaptability, which is not to be confused with adjustment or compromise. Adaptation begins with an emotional registering of sadness, we grieve the expectations that can not be met. The emotions stimulate brain and personality shifts, which lead to new attempts at inquiry. The process of adaptation depends on compassion and stillness. We must feel supported and stop what we are doing long enough to feel and allow growth. Researchers, therapist, and parents must support vulnerability so that individuals can experience feelings of futility and breath in new modes of being.

Hakomi therapy provides a supportive environment for people to challenge their knowledge and belief systems. Hakomi therapists invite their clients to let

go of cognitions and beliefs. This unlocks clients from constrictive narratives. The client is then free to begin living life as an inquiry process. The therapist acts as a guide in the practice of not knowing seemingly concrete facts like gender, familial roles, and eye color (Kurtz, 1990). The inquiry process then becomes a non-judgmental opening to the possibilities contained in the self. The act of seeking knowledge unlocks compassion by encouraging non-judgmental connections to the self and to others who witness your inquiry process.

One of the many roles of a therapist is to witness and accept all feelings brought to therapy by a client. The therapist witnesses the feelings and lets go of each as they emerge. This models non-judgment and non-attachment. In the therapeutic realm a client should be encouraged to practice witnessing their own subjective experience with non-judgment so they can learn to experience life's challenges without being stuck in pain and suffering.

Therapists who mindfully practice engaging with their own suffering, may become more familiar with the process of movement so that they can mentor their client out of stuckness, and, secondly, so as to not bring their own stuckness into the therapeutic relationship. I see stuckness as the inability or unwillingness to experience vulnerability within ourselves and others in a way that invites adjustment. The shadow of a therapist can be a strong presence in therapy. It often manifests in the desire to fix clients, which I consider condescending and uncompassionate. The therapist may also focus on a problem and try to get the client to delve too deeply into the pain. The problem is, concentrating on what the client already knows may deny them the new

experiences that promote change. The therapist's task is to hold the space, rather than extract from it solutions, advice or snippets of wisdom... learning happens through experience. "We do the work for the experience of tenderness in doing it" (Brazier, 1995, p. 208). It is a therapist's responsibility to practice non-judgmental witnessing of the bodichitta (the most vulnerable heart) in the therapeutic relationship as well as their relationship to their self (Chodron, 1994). It is impossible to live completely free from kleshas and attachment, but reflexivity is key to engaging responsibly with clients.

Hakomi and Buddhist therapy are similar to Tonglen practice. In Tonglen meditation a person breathes in the suffering of a chosen subject and breathes out love and compassion (Chodron, 1994). The person in meditation uses their embodied self as a filter for pain and suffering. Similarly the therapist listens to the painful content of their clients' narratives and reflects back compassion and love. Therapy, as such, is a compassionate meditation focused on moving pain through compassion towards wholeness and freedom from habit.

Art making provides a mode of relating to challenging feelings. Art making can allow clients to witness their own mode of being, thus empowering them to relate to their experiences with non-attachment and flexibility. Art therapy is a venue for practicing freedom and movement. By responding to the demands of the art making media and creative process, the artist can develop responsive spontaneity. Clients as artists can test and develop the intuition needed to interact with experience on a moment-to-moment basis without the barriers of attachment and judgment. Buddhists believe that intuition is linked to the ethics

at the core of all humans, which is informed by the oneness/intersubjectivity of all beings (Brazier, 1995). Therapists attuned to listening can encourage clients to follow their intuition instead of the conditioned patterns they have developed in reaction to pain.

Creating is a compassionate act of searching for the essence of a form. Care is taken in the inquiry into, and the creation of, form. Creating art is an attempt to communicate, to connect. “Art pushes the artist to touch the world” (Moon, 1990, p. 80). Moon equates visual images to prayers, thus extending the reach for connection to a higher source of love and compassion. Art can connect us to a community as mirror and source of compassion as well as provide connection to a higher power when we cannot access our worldly community (Christofferson, 2002).

The combination of Buddhist therapy and art therapy promote an acknowledgement of impermanence. “Through my own therapy and in my own meditation I have developed a confidence that no matter how embarrassing, terrible, or inconvenient a situation is, it can be survived. I have learnt the simple power of just showing up” (Epstein, 2001, p. 135). By accepting suffering with compassionate attention, people allow themselves to progress from moment to moment, unencumbered, and free. By interacting with compassion, people learn to respond to each other with spontaneity and freedom. “Creation does not banish pain or discomfort but rather ennobles it” (Moon, 1990, p. 184).

When facilitating the art making process in this project I attempted compassionate engagement with the self, and the community. I also attempted

to weave spaciousness into the process to allow the participants to choose their own goals and enjoy freedom of expression. My hopes were that by using art as a rehearsal for birthing we could respond intuitively to our birthing and parenting without becoming stuck in patterns of coping or suffering.

Creating communities of inquiry

I think the most corporeal experience I had during pregnancy happened in the last trimester. I noticed that the nipple I had once pierced was now leaking some sort of puss out of the piercing hole. Yuck! Not only Yuck! But what if this was an infection that would continue until breastfeeding, what if I poisoned my child! Many fears surfaced while I compulsively squeezed my nipple trying to drain it of puss. I saw my pregnant art making group before I saw my midwife so I brought my leaky question to the group. It turned out two other women were experiencing the same thing and they had been told that it was colostrum leaking from the piercing hole. We all revelled in a moment of shared grotesqueness. It was a real comfort to me, learning that I was not sick, that my body was functioning and preparing for my baby.

Being given a voice, one speaks

Being considered a learner, one learns. (Smith, D., 2004, p. 12)

Communities that grow from a shared desire to learn sustain each other with their shared inquiry.

Community is a context for our embodied selves, it is also a living culture, which helps us attend to our modes of being. In Indigenous society, community, the learning process, and the search for wholeness are integral to each other (Cajete, 1994). The community acts as a shared mode of being and a place to negotiate and test new ways of being.

A culture in the anthropological sense is a shared way of life. But the term culture in the biological sense refers to a medium for growing things. Schools, I believe, like the larger society of which they are a part, function as cultures in both senses of the term. (Eisner, 2002, p. 8)

The function of community in learning and research is to provide a landscape for the development of self and modes of being.

Communities based on exploring and challenging ideas are communities of inquiry (Cleveland-Innes, Garrison & Kinsell, 2005). People actively exploring life shape a community of inquiry. The catalyst for the formation of communities of inquiry is often the researcher, however each participant enters into the inquiry with their own agenda and relationship to the research question (Cleveland-Innes, et al., 2005). Each participant is integral to inquiry because they reflect and refract the images, modes of being, and selves being tracked. They reflect to aid attending and refract to aid shifts in perspective and understanding. This collaboration bridges the internal and the public by combining the private agendas of each participant as well as the agenda agreed upon by the group. The value of communal inquiry is a shared responsibility in the creation of

knowledge. The community engages with the learning process by challenging, interpreting and understanding new and old ideas and experiences.

Communities of inquiry are consensual frameworks for developing critical thinking, mutual understanding and shared knowledge (Lipman, 1991).

Communities of inquiry that use art making embrace the expansive language that art provides. When a culture includes art making as a discursive practice people may use narratives, music and visual images to weave their embodied selves together. Through creative interaction people can nourish each other with sparks of insight and connection. The art holds space; it embodies the active inquiry performed by its creator. It can therefore act as another reflection into the intersubjectivities present in its community. A community that uses art making is blessed with more possibilities for shared knowledge, mutual understanding and critical thinking.

Communities of artful inquiry are integral to the investigation into human experience because of their tangible documentation of the process of inquiry, and negotiation of culture. In the case of pregnancy and early parenthood artful inquiry can help parents track and store information on parenting and birthing. The community becomes a resource hub for parenting.

Human behaviour and group process are not always benevolent. Culture can turn towards oppression and disempowerment (Cleveland-Innes, et al., 2005). I believe that value systems are what motivate culture towards empowerment or away from it. Researchers can influence culture towards the positive by creating a community that values critical thinking and mindful

awareness. They cannot eliminate what may be perceived as oppression from their environment or their own selves completely and this should be met as part of the investigative process. One important part of this investigation is how the community conceives expertise. A true community of inquiry values the knowledge embodied by each participant and engages with it through critical thought and curiosity.

In an attempt to include all participants' voices in the collected data I recorded all of the discussions. The artwork created in session was used as a visual journaling of the process on which each participant had embarked. The questions I chose to ask were intended to facilitate exploration and discussion, not to extrapolate information. I borrowed methodology strategies from health researcher Barbara Christofferson's (2003) auto ethnographic performance creation study. Christofferson invited the formation of a community of caregivers who were looking for methods of preventing burn out. She provided a space for caregivers to grow a culture of inquiry and health. Her research intentions were: facilitating first person descriptions of the experience; synthesizing all participants' moments of insight; and concentrating on experience over experimentation. By holding the space for a community focused on learning Christofferson facilitated the development of individual insight and mutual knowledge.

The community of inquiry in my project was comprised of parents wishing to understand their pregnancy and upcoming parenthood. We used art making

and conversation to develop and share insights into individual and shared experiences of pregnancy.

Performative inquiry

Figure 2: Pre-Natal Image



Becoming 2" x 1.5" " paper and fabric

wait, the moment whispers,
you know me.
this space-moment resonates.
go to your being, becoming. (Fels, 1998, p. 2)

Performative inquiry in pregnancy listens for whispers from those in the living world and those who are not yet here.

During the research and implementation of the project I was pregnant and the physiological changes of pregnancy were affecting my body, my mind, and my spirit. I longed for a research methodology that would be informed by and include my experience as a pregnant woman. I began to investigate methods of arts based research that would promote embodied learning.

I found performative inquiry (Fels 1998, 2002, 2007, Fels & Belliveau, 2008). This research methodology uses performance to investigate the bridge between the “real world” and “imaginary worlds” or worlds not yet created. Performative inquiry may be undertaken through a variety of drama or theatre forms as well as other art forms, such as dance, visual arts, mixed media, and music, may be incorporated with the design of a performative inquiry. For example, performative inquiry through role drama involves both facilitator and participant(s) choosing a theme or subject to explore through the co-creation of an improvisational drama. By “acting out” a series of improvisational scenes and/or drama activities, the participants explore possible modes of being in the world. This mode of inquiry felt comfortable to me as both performative inquiry and art therapy invite participants to create spontaneously.

Improvisational space of interaction, may be understood as a co-evolving interaction between participants and their environment within which moments of learning emerge, just as life dances into being within the interrelationships and co-evolving patterns on the edge of chaos (Fels, 2007, p. 80).

Participants of performative inquiry shape and are shaped by the real and imagined landscapes of the drama, and upon engagement and/or reflection, participants may arrive at and speak to new understandings (Fels, 1998).

Performative inquiry is thus a self-reflexive vehicle as well as a research methodology. This satisfied my desire to explore facilitation techniques and research methods that facilitate reflexivity in researchers and participants as researchers of their own experience.

Performative inquiry is an inquiry located in form and action (Fels, 1998, 2008).

And the prefix *per* suddenly takes on a split-personality when juxtaposed with the word *form* meaning “utterly, throughout and through” form but also “to do away, away entirely or to destruction” of form. In our reading of *performance*, we imagined a creative action-interaction, a birthing and rebirthing simultaneously within form and through the destruction of form. (Fels, 1998, p. 9)

To engage with form brings us into action (i.e. knowing, doing, being, creating) (Fels, 1998). Performative inquiry is an inquiry that dwells within change and movement directed at or through shape, essences, and modes of being. In this project participants and researcher searched for the essences and modes in their own pregnancies. Form was their changing bodies, their sensual experiences in pregnancy, and the ways of being pregnant that each participant embodied. The per-form-ance of pregnancy was a shared engagement with their own ways of

being pregnant and the changing form of both their own body and the baby shaping inside them.

In my study the word “form” came to mean the body expanding to create a new body; Pregnancy. This was to include pregnant mother, foetus, and “birth partner.” The birth partner came to mean husband, father of the foetus, and in one case sibling of the foetus. Action was the pregnant bodies growth, art making, and interaction within the group through which emerged learning.

I thought performative inquiry would be a beautiful methodology for exploring the very real experience of bringing a baby from imagination into being. I did however need to extend beyond drama because of my participants’ request to work with visual media. It was not a difficult transition. Similarly to drama visual art can be used to search for insight. Just as drama allows participants to investigate the bridge between the “real world” and “imaginary worlds”, visual art can bring imaginary worlds into tangible form. This allows artist and audience to interact with forms that have not yet been. Moments of insight can occur when co-creators connect with the possibilities present in the creation process and allow new ways of being into form or presence.

Researchers and therapist who are aware of their power and weave spaciousness into their actions can help facilitate change. Complexity theory explains that minute changes in one context can often influence seemingly unrelated contexts (Fels, 2007). These contexts are interrelated through a web of relationships, some unknown to us. Complexity theory also shows that a myriad of seen and unseen factors can influence the change, which in turn

influences the context. “Complexity theory proposes that any minute change in any dynamic system has a generative impact on a multiplicity of inter-related locations and relationships” (Fels, 2007, p. 74). We cannot know all of the delicate and invisible relationships that will affect our research. By spontaneously and intuitively responding to events researchers and educators are less likely to miss or negate moments of insight. Performative inquiry promotes improvisational ways to interact with “the multiplicity of complex relationships and interactions that simultaneously embrace and disturb conventional expectations” (Fels, 2007, p. 77). The researcher/facilitator cannot predict the outcome of his/her actions but he/she can influence the outcome with ethical behaviour through his or her choice of actions. As Fels writes,

If we understand our lived experiences as unfolding possible worlds within which learning emerges, we must then pay attention to how we engage in pedagogical encounters, and how we chose to interact with our students within what becomes a co-evolving curriculum of possibility. (Fels, 2007, p. 78)

Participants and researcher collaborate to shape the inquiry through improvisational art making. The desired outcome is what Fels in citing Taylor and Saarinen (1995) calls “interstanding”. I believe “interstanding” describes the experience of finding new insight that resonates with each participant. Individually the new learning has different qualities unique to each participant, however an emergent truth is shared.

In performative inquiry distillation of emergent truths or interstandings can be done by journaling or discussion. My study used informal discussions or conversations after each creation process. Participants

spontaneously chose to include phone calls to me after certain sessions. They also chose to create artwork outside of the sessions that they shared with me later.

Performative inquiry does not focus on providing conclusive evidence, it acts as a vehicle of exploration where possibilities are invited and enjoyed. Those who engage in performative inquiry hope to find moments of insight. “Here, in the cross-shading of the intersection, is an action-site of possible learning, a generative space within which “aha!” moments, those moments of recognition or what I call learning, may emerge. And here, too, moments of stop or hesitation or paralysis, realized in the intersection of performance and lived experience, become signposts of learning not-yet- known” (Fels, 2007, p. 83). Fels (2007) talks about educators and researchers being fortunate if participants find themselves in a moment of recognition. This reminds me of the saying “luck is when preparation and opportunity meet.” Performance inquiry acts as a magical landscape where the imagination invites the world to open up and let something new in.

FLYING IN A “V” FORMATION: THE JOURNEY OF INQUIRY

Ethics

Reflexivity is an important component to any well-designed research project (Anderson & Braud 1998; Blair, Maud, & Sheldon, 1995; DeVault & Gross 2007; Nagy Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). Before I began my project I considered the ethical concerns, personal challenges and biases that I could predict would affect the project.

I tried to acknowledge the impact my racial and socioeconomic status had on this project. I am a white middleclass woman who has worked in an urban aboriginal community for over 10 years. Working in a culture different than my own taught me to track using an aesthetic modality thus allowing events beyond my understanding to unfold. I was lucky to receive mentorship from an indigenous elder. He facilitated my emerging relationship to the symbols, metaphors and realities of aboriginal people living in west coast Canada. I was gifted the opportunity to use two modes of being in my work as a therapist. I could relate to clients through my own western mode as well as be brought into the indigenous mode of being. Bartlet (2009) labels modes of being that

incorporate indigenous and western ways of seeing as “two eyed seeing”. I believe two eyed seeing brings a holistic approach to science and research, incorporating the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional aspects of human experience. I believe two eyed seeing promotes responsible relationships to community, the world and the self.

I have enjoyed the benefits of higher education, freedom of expression and freedom from institutionalized racism. My feminist perspective has been informed by my life as a woman who has experienced violence and oppression because of my gender. I was raised to overcome sexism and to trust myself, and my intuition despite alternative viewpoints.

The ethical use of communities of inquiry requires that synthesis of data be shared between researcher and participants. There are five levels of representation in a research project: attending to the experience (choices in what to notice and recount), telling, transcribing, analyzing, reading, and listening (editing and writing) (Hewitt, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1995; Nagy Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). It is the researcher’s responsibility to give the participants agency in all five of these levels of representation. The objective of the research is to “work closely with people, maintaining an inclusive reality, open and flexible, consisting of a diversity of perspectives and enhancing their understanding and ability to control their own reality” (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 503). Accordingly, I shared the responsibility for the project with my participants. The process of shared responsibility began at the first meeting when I gave participants voice in the project. The artwork, examples of which are included in

the thesis, acts as direct representation of our shared inquiry. Debriefing and dialoguing helped to insure that their interpretations and thoughts were included in the narrative.

Not only did I obtain informed consent from my participants for their participation, I included consent for the use of the art in the study, and in the inquiry in the thesis.

It was important to keep the documentation process confidential and accurate. Sessions were recorded and transcribed the same day. The artwork was locked in my home office until it was completed, at which time each participant took responsibility for it.

Recruitment

Respecting the need for diversity in research I tried to include as broad a representation of the community as possible by posting advertisements on web communities, at hospitals, midwifery offices, and community centres. I found however that most of the interest came from my own circle of friends. The people interested in participating were mostly middle class artists who enjoyed economic security. The most successful recruitment strategy was hosting a pregnant potluck for all of my friends who were pregnant at the time!

At the potluck I asked pregnant couples what they would like to get out of the group and how they would like it designed. They suggested a three-hour, weekend group that would be run out of a space familiar to us through community events. All mentioned an interest in visual arts, including painting, photography, and plaster casting. Their intentions for the group were to memorialize their experiences, foster a community based in arts and deepen their relationships to their babies and each other.

The first group had four drop-in sessions that lasted four hours. On several occasions some of the participant couples could not make it to session. I held five group sessions and one individual session during the course of the first group.

I ran a second group as a workshop that run for two nights. This group happened because people had heard about the first group but missed the opportunity to participate. I invited original group members, and others who had contacted me about attending sessions.

There were many delays before I was able to start the group, I had to finish my classes, get ethics approval, and find an advisor as well as research methodology. This meant that most of the participants' due dates were during the course of the inquiry. participant's agreed to come to the sessions on a drop-in basis, aware that they could give birth at any time.

Participants

There were 17 participants, 10 pregnant women and 7 fathers to be. The participants came from suburban and urban settings and included Chinese, Polonesian, First Nations, and Caucasian. I knew 10 participants before the project as friends, the other 7 joinED the project because of advertisements at clinics or because their partners were coming. In the hopes of preserving confidentiality while leaving the reader an impression of the essence of each participant I use a totem animal to represent each participant. At the first session each participant chose a name that would be theirs for the duration of the project.

Chosen Name	Totem and God	Associated Words
David	Hare and Dionysus	Lusty, Music, Merriment, Verility, Wit
Heather	Cat and Aphrodite	Proud, Independent, Mystery, Cleverness, Unpredictable, Supernatural, Beauty, Struts, Leaves a trail of her essence behind her.
Zack	Dolphin and Daramulum	Polynesia, Shaman, Water, Weather Patterns, Dreamtime, Communication, Intuitive, Rhythms of Embodiment.

Pepper	Wolf and Branwen	Enlightenment, Inspiration, Search for Truth, Mother, Teaches you to read the signs of nature and meaning.
Gabrielle	Swan and Athena	Reason, Wisdom, Grace, Dignity.
Ulysses	Elk and Apollo	Poetry, Handsome, Health, Virility, Joyful parenting, Balance, Light, Robust.
Alice	Chickadee and Brigid or Hera	Hearth, Kin, Merry, Cheerful speaker of the truth, Patroness of poetry and culture, Sisterhood.
John	Moose and Kronos	Practicality, Spontaneity, Familiarity, Independence, Self-confidence, Patience, Time.
Lillian	Rabbit and Hestia	Hearth, Home, Trauma, Sacrifice, Journey.
Juniper	Salmon and Gea	Abundance, Earth, Determination, Strength, Tradition.
Nigel	Beaver and Dagba	Builder, Community, Creating Home, Industry, Balance, Skill.

Bliss	Pheonix and Mania	Cycle of tragedy and rebirth, Significance, The gifts of insanity.
Oatmeal	Pelican and Fool	Buoyancy, Unselfishness, Balanced emotions, Lets events unfold.
May	Grouse and Morgain	Sacred Spiral of Life, Protectress of Sacred Rituals, Fulfilment, Family, Healer, Sorceress.
Wi fun	Fire Fly and Guan Yin	Compassion, Giving, Meditation, Educated wisdom, Illumination, Wonder.
Lyle	Coyote and Hermes	Shape Shifter, Lusty, Cheeky, Inventive, Inventor of music, Able to push through hard times, Karmic Circles, Merriment.
"Me"	Canada Goose and Elphis	Support the group, Heal the sick, Do what needs to be done, Hope, Expectations.

Session 1: Body casting

Before the session started I rushed around preparing for the group. I noticed that I was running late and prayed the participants would also be late. When I was ready I smudged the room with sweet grass and sage and said a prayer to open the space. Right as I had finished the cleansing Ulysses and Gabrielle arrived. Soon after Lyle, David, Heather, John and Alice arrived.

I explained the project: birth partners would cast their woman's belly in plaster. Each woman covered her front torso with Vaseline to prevent the plaster from sticking to her body. Plaster bandage was cut into strips, wet and smoothed over the body. After two hours the cast was dry enough to remove.

I noticed that John and Alice sat slightly removed from the others. I was concerned that they would feel left out of the conversation. Alice however said several times that she was enjoying some quiet time. *Despite her solitariness in the group it was Alice who expressed joy from sharing time with parents whom she felt an affiliation for. I find it interesting that she felt connection from simply sharing space with them. There is much thought put into giving students equal air time with groups, perhaps we need to acknowledge the quiet observatory style of learning as equally valuable to the vocal style of learning. How can researchers observe and recognize silent learning?*

While everyone was creating their casts Pepper and Zack arrived seeming tense but ready to create. They chose their station and quickly caught up to the group. They mentioned to me that they had been fighting but decided to come to

the group because they wanted to make a cast. It was evident that during the creation process they began to relax and enjoy themselves. They chatted with each other and shared stories about their pregnancy with the group.

Gabrielle remarked it was probably a-typical to have a group so comfortable with bearing their breasts in front of strangers. She and Heather enjoyed chatting about the changes pregnancy was effecting on their bodies and sexuality.

Figure 3: Gabrielle and Ulysses' body cast



During the process Lyle noticed that all the women were resting and allowing their husbands to create the cast except me, I was helping create my own cast. He complained that I was not allowing him to nurture me. *I wondered*

how I was going to be able to include Lyle as an equal in parenting our child. I decided to look for opportunities to respect his role in our family.

After each group member had cleaned up David and Lyle set up a comfortable seating arrangement where we could talk and share food. I asked several questions and people responded in a popcorn style discussion. I created questions on the spot in response to what had happened in the group during the art making and as the conversation emerged. The first question was “What did you want to get out of this project?” Alice and John responded first, they wished to create a piece that would remind them of what pregnancy was like. Zack’s main intention was to bond with the group. He explained that he often felt that this pregnancy was something he had to cope with, because it had not been a choice. Being in the group helped him celebrate and recognize that he had chosen to be in his child’s life. He said his stress slipped away as soon as he began creating, and he saw the beauty in Pepper’s belly. Gabrielle explained that her pregnancy had flown by in a busy haze; she wanted to immortalize this time with an art piece. Ulysses agreed that he had wanted to create in meditation on the pregnancy. David explained that he depended on parties for social and creative time, now he would use this group as a social and creative outlet.

The next question was “were there any unexpected outcomes from this process?” Zack noticed that he might be part of a baby boom. That perhaps he

could influence the next generation by being a conscious parent. He now believed that he could maintain his values and lifestyle while raising his family. Pepper said she was excited to look further into the context of her pregnancy. John noticed that his touch had gone beyond the systematic touch Alice usually received from health professionals. He was listening and responding to her body while he cast her. Alice remarked on enjoying being with parents that seemed to share her values.

During that week Alice called me to talk about the session. She said she had not realized how much she would enjoy being around other emerging families. She also realized that her body would not be like this permanently. Alice was struggling with her body image during the last stages of pregnancy and was glad to remind herself that she would soon undergo another change.

I struggled with the ethics and validity of creating a research group with participants who were my friends. However during this week I realized that the successful attendance most likely came out of the fact that I was using a naturally occurring community. I had felt a need to connect with other parents and consequently had met that need for other new parents. I know that many of the parents have kept in contact after the group; I wonder what impact a continuous art group would have?

I was also interested in the idea of systematic touch. Birth partners spent over two hours caressing the surface of their partners' bodies. I wonder

how that touch helped connect them, and how that interaction will sit in the memories and narratives of each couple.

Figure 4: Wi fun's body cast



Figure 5: Wi fun's body cast inside



Session 2: Family portraits

Figure 6: Gabrielle and Ulysses' anonymous image



I smudged and began setting up a backdrop and lighting for the photographs. Each participant had been invited to bring costumes or props to use in their portraits. My intention for the portraits was to encourage each couple to portray themselves as they were during their pregnancy. Lyle provided a laptop so that we could download the images instantly on the computer. This allowed the couples to see the images and make changes as they saw fit. I could only photograph one couple at a time, so I invited the others to paint their casts while they waited for their turn.

Wi fun asked to be omitted from the family portraits because of Chinese superstition. She explained that it is considered bad luck to talk about the baby

too much. The danger is that the baby will be born “overly sensitive” or (in her language) “sui hay” and will not be what was expected.

Ulysses and Gabrielle were first to arrive and first to be photographed. They wanted to be photographed naked but did not have ideas for poses. We experimented with poses and lighting until we found several that were comfortable. Their favourite image was of Ulysses seated behind Gabrielle with his legs and arms wrapping around her. Both Gabrielle and I thought they looked like a lotus flower. The couple also wanted a few shots of Gabrielle alone. She found a feather boa and top hat and played with the camera until she found an image she enjoyed.

Both Gabrielle and Ulysses were very comfortable with this project. They said they enjoyed the sensuality and intimacy achieved in the images and felt that reflected their experience. Ulysses said he felt nurtured during the two art making sessions. They were aware of confidentiality issues in this session, and decided to create an anonymous image that could be included in the body of the thesis.

Pepper and Zack arrived late and looked very distressed. I asked for a break to check in with them. They said they had been fighting about the photo project and felt that they would be unauthentic if they were to take happy pictures at that time. I told them we could set up a private session if they wished. They left, and I called them later that day to offer support. *Several times during this*

process parents decided not to create art about the struggles they were having at the time. What could I have done to allow them to explore those moments with curiosity instead of omitting them from their narratives? Would including them have been helpful, or is there an innate need for focusing on the positive during the process of becoming a parent?

Heather and David arrived prepared with several costumes from their extensive tickle trunk. During the process Heather complained that she saw a resemblance to her estranged mother in her own face. David suggested that we change camera angles. After we changed the angles Heather felt better about the way she looked and engaged further with the process. She commented on David's readiness to help her. They changed costumes and this time she embodied an outrageous, sexy character that dominated David by riding him.

When they were finished David suggested he take pictures of Lyle and I. We quickly changed into our favourite burlesque outfits for the shots. *During the process I realized how much fun Lyle and I had together. I often forget that we can be playful and entertaining. I also appreciated David's readiness to give us an opportunity to create. It seems very simple but important that art making is often a pleasurable experience where intimacy and mutual appreciation can happen.*

After the session was over Lyle and I left to have dinner with Pepper and Zack. We set up a time later that week to photograph them. Zack dressed in

traditional Cook Island garb, and Pepper was naked except for one white feather wing. During the process Zack noticed how important art was to Pepper. The two also became aware of how separate they were as images. The photographs were of two different people as opposed to one cohesive couple. They decided to experiment with poses that brought them together. Zack also noticed that Pepper was trying to work despite her sore muscles he empathized with her. The shoot was challenging for all of us. I was unable to get a nice backdrop, Pepper could not find a comfortable pose, and Zack could not find a way to relate to Pepper in the images.

Photography is a collaboration between subject and photographer. I am aware that I influenced the outcome of the images and therefore the narrative of the families. How important is it for the facilitator to have a developed skill in the media being used?

Figure 7: Lyle and Rebecca's family portrait



Birth week

The next session was cancelled because three of the five couples gave birth that week. Alice and John gave birth to their baby boy at home. Two days later Gabrielle and Ulysses gave birth to a boy, by induction at the hospital. The next day Pepper and Zack gave birth to their son naturally at the hospital.

Each couple emailed the group a short narrative of their birth. I was also privileged with phone calls from Pepper and Alice who orally shared their narratives in great detail.

I truly enjoyed receiving each email, each story evoked strong emotions about pregnancy and birthing. I remember reading a story from Ina Gaskin's (2002) book *Spiritual Midwifery*. She recalls inviting pregnant mothers into a birthing room only to have one expectant mother faint on the birthing mother. She concludes that allowing an expectant mother to watch a birth when hers is so imminent may overwhelm her. However pregnant mothers benefit from the insights and experienced gained by other mothers during their birthing. I experienced many emotions when reading the birth emails. I also learnt some important information and was given great advice from the mothers who birthed before me. I think sharing narratives can provide the shared knowledge and preparation that Gaskin was looking for with out the risk of overwhelming the expectant mothers.

The birth story of my own arrival had great influence on the expectations of my own birthing process as well as the relational dynamics between my mother and myself. The narrative of my mother's birthing of me contains much grief, fear, and trauma as well as love and joy. During my own pregnancy and birthing I often had to separate the two stories as the trauma resurfaced for my mother. I believe that my empowered relationship to my midwives helped me to remain calm and confident. The power of the project helped me know my own narrative enough to not confuse it with another. How does the sharing of birth stories affect the dynamics within a family?

Session 3: Family narratives

Figure 8: A section from Heather's family narrative

Part 7 - More co-creation! The decision to conceive

David and I knew we wanted to have children together. We had agreed on a plan that would allow us to have a certain amount of time just enjoying "each other", but still have babies coming at a time before biological "challenges" set in. We were both 34 and had just completed another year at Burning Man, where we had spent the whole previous calendar year heavily involved in the creation, planning, and execution of the Lemuria theme camp. Burning Man 2007, we decided, was the milestone event that would transition us into the time we would try to conceive. We visited San Francisco on our way home to have a few days to rest and "wind down" from the event, thinking that we'd probably spend the next few months watching aspects of our fertility cycles and hoping a baby would bless us with its presence in my womb....

Part 8 - Conception

I had come home from our desert adventure to a job I hated, but was in the unenviable position of hating exactly the job I had asked for!! Every day I would pray that I would get pregnant so I would have a good reason to ask for a transfer, or else that an opportunity for advancement would come up that I would clearly qualify for...little did I know the two would happen at the same time! David was away on tour when I was accepted a new position working on a high profile kidnapping trial at the Supreme Court. It was only a couple of days later that David's dad convinced me that some of the unusual things I could sense going on in my body might warrant a pregnancy test. Imagine David's surprise to come home from his tour and find a plus sign on the test kit—we had made a baby!! The ultrasounds confirmed that we had conceived in San Francisco, the very first time we tried. Success! Our precious baby was on the way....

Part 9 - To be continued

Heather, David, Lillian, and her four-year-old daughter attended this session, Lillian's daughter played while participants created work. I had organized a series of warm up games to get people ready to write. When I noticed the games seemed to be confusing people, I decided to stop the games and allow participants to start writing their pieces. I asked participants to create a written piece that related to their pregnancy. During the writing games participants shared stories of their family of origin traumas.

Lillian was apprehensive about creativity and had contacted me before the group to warn me she would need help. She identified her goal before setting out; she wanted to write a narrative letter to her baby. The letter would explain the context her child would be born into and the hopes and dreams she had for her baby. Lillian explained to the group that it had taken her a year to feel

bonded with her first child. Consequently she felt guilty and anxious about parenting both her children. She wanted to write a letter ensuring that her baby would know how much love she intended for him/her regardless of what happened after the birth. Lillian was wonderful at orating her narrative but struggled putting it in writing. During the process she acknowledged that her mother had never supported her creative expression, and she felt blocked. She persevered long enough to produce a beautiful short poem that eloquently pronounced her love for her child. She however did not feel satisfied; she wanted the letter to include more insight. I agreed to meet later at her home to help her finish. *In many groups I have facilitated and participated in I have noticed that expectations often affect the group. Clearly stating intentions and outcomes often help researchers and participants to know what to expect, but unrealistic expectations often slip in.*

I had a sense that whatever Lillian produced would not have been “good enough”. For her art was a symbol of vulnerability, and her vulnerability had not been met by love and compassion but judgement. Perhaps with time I would have been able to provide her with the safety to tend to her boddichitta. I only had two sessions with her so I tried to focus on the methodology of accousmatic text so that she could continue on in her writing. *Can researchers provide a skill set that participants can project into their lives after the project or class?*

Heather and David decided to create a storybook. They chose a notebook and divided it between the two of them. They would both write their own version of their relationship leading up to the birth. One page would contain one version;

the adjoining page would show the other version. David created images for both pages. They both found quiet corners and wrote for the duration of the group. They did not finish the book.

During the discussion David explained that he would have preferred to tell his story orally. He enjoyed relating to the group more than working in solitude. He explained that he learnt from other group members while playing the writing games. Heather said that she had enjoyed the discussion and felt some catharsis in relating to Lillian's family traumas. I had witnessed those games as unsuccessful, however both Lillian and David said they enjoyed doing the games together and then breaking off into individual groups after. Lillian thought that intention was important to the art process. She had decided to use the art to deal with some family of origin issues, and felt she had found some catharsis in the art making because of her goal. Pregnancy brought up unresolved issues for her, and the art had helped her find some forgiveness and understanding. During the discussion Lillian remembered the first time she felt bonded to her first child, she decided to use that memory as an image of hope.

David said he enjoyed art because it provided him a more abstract way to think about things. He also found that when he went back to read his story to the group he found new meaning in his work. Art allowed him to be mindful. He felt he needed time to consider his actions as a parent; to question whether he was acting out of pain, habit or rebellion? He found our shared art process challenging because he did not practice mindfulness often, so he did not feel skilled at it. Lillian agreed that the process took her out of her "normal everyday

conscious head.” She believed they were discussing the “important as opposed to the urgent.” She realized that she spent most of her days dealing with urgent matters and did not afford herself the time to interact with what was important. This reminded me of Schroeder’s (1998) “tyranny of urgency” (p. 34). *I hope that these art projects gave my participants some rest from the “tyranny of urgency.”*

When I asked them about their editing process Heather talked about wanting to imbue the story with positive feelings. She was having challenges in her relationship with David and she wanted to be past them before the child came, consequently she left those details out of her story. Lillian reframed Heather’s statement. She believed that parents must infuse their stories with what they decide is important for the child to know instead of isolating the child from reality with silence or falsehoods. Lillian explained that children do not need to know the “nitty gritty”, but they can sense denial and their need to understand at their own developmental level must be respected. She felt isolated as a child because of the denial in her family. She explained that the best artists “don’t just throw red and green at a page, they weave hints of the truth, as you re-read and re-interpret the art you understand more of your own life.”

I regret not recording oral storytelling. I believe the writing process separated the group members from spontaneous creativity. So much of our relationships with text are overpowered by conventions. In our professional lives we write essays and reports much more than we write poetry and prose. Written text is often regarded as representing a singular truth, visual and oral creativity

are more often afforded a more expansive view of the truth. I believe the habit of conventional text imposed a block for many of the participants.

During the discussion David suggested we create an art piece to explore our hopes and fears in pregnancy. His suggestion inspired me to create prayer flags for them to write on for the next session.

Figure 9: Our birth story

Our journey started at Sunday breakfast with both sets of grandparents and one great grandmother. Halfway through my omelette I thought “awesome, on top of the swollen ankles, carpal tunnel syndrome and sleepless nights, I've started peeing my pants”. By the end of breakfast I worked up the nerve to ask the women in my family if it was possible that my water had broken.

This was not ideal because I had group strep b infection, which required an iv injection of antibiotics every four hours until the baby was born. Lyle and I started the many trips to the hospital to get my shots. On one of the many trips to the hospital I felt coyote was watching us. Lyle and I then knew the trickster was coming to teach us some tough lessons.

By Monday my midwives told me that I would need to start induction soon (mark another off the I'll never do that” list) or I was endangering my baby. So I ran to my naturopath for some contraction inducing acupuncture. By the end of my session I was definitely having some good contractions. Lyle gave me reiki, which helped connect and centre us. After that we made our way to the hospital to get me strapped into the monitors (ugh!), luckily they've invented ones that are on a remote so you can move around.

The BC women's staff was wonderful, my mother Lyle and I enjoyed our time in early induction. We experienced some wonderful serendipitous moments, including a nurse born on the same day I was. One of my midwives shared a magical story about Lyle's home (Haida Gwaii) and Raven. Lyle and I got some lovely alone time where we danced out the contractions to MIA, and Mos Def. Then everyone came back in to Bob Marley and more oxytocin. I started becoming aware that I was opening but felt no pressure from the baby descending. However how was I to know what it should feel like, I've never done that before!

So my second shift midwife arrived to check out the situation. Which turned out to be less than ideal. My little trickster was a

frank breach. I was going to have to have a caesarean. I don't need to tell you, the tears flowed for a while as I processed my worse case scenario. All my fears surfaced, I swore a bit!

We headed into the OR; I got the aesthetic and lay down on the table. I began to shake like someone with MS, it was horrible. One midwife kept me centred with more magical stories of Haida Gwaii. Lyle held my sanity close, and when I was about to loose it he began singing the women's warrior song, I joined in the singing, thankful for a little bit of strength. During our song I felt them pull my daughter out, and place her on my pelvis. She entered this world in song.

Lillian

I met Lillian at her house to help her finish the letter to her unborn child. The session was a casual combination of playing with her daughter and helping her vocalize her thoughts. Very soon after I arrived I realized my function was to listen to her organize her feelings around this birth in the context of her family. She was able to verbalize many stories with insight and clarity but if I mentioned writing them down she became blocked and anxious. I decided to help her write an outline of themes and then just listened to her stories instead of trying to create a written piece. This session went on two hours longer than anticipated.

Lillian spoke about needing time to exit the routine of dealing with only urgent matters. I experience the need to create with a passionate urgency. *Is there a way to promote a passionate need for embodied artful inquiry so that*

people can connect with their whole self? I wonder what impact long term involvement in an art group would have on Lillian?

Session 4: Prayer flags

I decided to switch times to fit Oatmeal and Bliss' schedule, unfortunately that meant no one else showed up.

To prepare for the group I had cut out delicate handmade paper in 4" by 3" pieces. I put the pieces in a pile and allowed each participant to take as many as he or she needed. The direction was to put one fear or one hope on each piece.

Oatmeal wrote a word surrounded by metaphoric images on each paper. After he finished painting he read the images and decided they could be condensed into one thought: "I hope that responsibility will find its way through a calm peaceful place."

Bliss took her time creating each fear and left her hope for last. She explained that she wanted to spend a lot of time listening too and acknowledging her fears so that she could let them go. Pregnancy had been full of sadness for her, and she wanted to move through her fears and insecurities to a place filled with love.

Bliss struggled with many health issues during and after her pregnancy. As an adult it is often hard to get the amount of care and nurturing that one needs in challenging times. *During the art process Bliss recognized that she was acting as both the nurturer and the nurtured. Can embodied art making be a habit of practicing self care and self compassion?*

After they felt done, we burnt the fears and decided to string the hopes on twine so they could be displayed in each birthing room. When Bliss and Oatmeal had burnt their fears they were invited to smudge with sage and sweet grass to cleanse.

During the discussion Oatmeal shared a moment of insight. He realized that he could bring creativity into the birthing room. He spent some time brainstorming ways to bring spirituality into the medical field. He enjoyed the power one word could command.

Bliss was pleased that she and Oatmeal had chosen the same hope. She shared a moment of connection with him during the discussion. She decided to continue this process through out her pregnancy.

I carefully created my own prayer flags while Bliss and Oatmeal made their own.

How can art influence the birthing process and how we experience it?

Session 6: Baby dreams

Figure 10: Wi fun's dream image



I laid out a buffet of art supplies that included clay, different types of paints, and decorative items like sequins and beads. May and Wi fun arrived at the same time, they spent some time introducing themselves and chatting about their pregnancies. Being aware of time, I decided to start the project and encouraged them to talk during the art making.

I started by having Wi fun choose an image from a dream remembered from her pregnancy. She described playing with her baby as a little boy, who was dressed like her husband typically dresses. While describing the dream she

realized that her child would be half Chinese and half Caucasian, and that this would impact the child's appearance. I had her explore her child's essence in the dream and asked her to create an image to depict it.

While I was working with her I had a strong desire to do "more", I felt that this exercise was too simple and that I was not doing "enough" to help her develop new insight. I still cannot decide what that "more" could have been. When you get a message from your self that something is missing in your lesson plan how can you respond? Is providing a space to share narratives and invite learning enough of an action from a researcher, or is their role more expansive?

May focused on three dreams that she felt were connected. She described giving birth to a kitten, and feeling disappointed that she had not been able to go to full term with a human child. The second dream started with a woman asking permission to give May energy healing. In her dream she was given charka healing that put pressure on her solar plexus, this evoked concern for her child. She was then given a crystal that became a bear's head that told her she was released from any past pain she was carrying with her. May was hesitant to share her last dream for fear of misinterpretation from the group. She eventually shared that she had dreamt her beautiful baby had emerged from her stomach only to be overtaken by a demon. In the dream she had evoked all her power to expel the demon with her voice. After telling the dream to the group she noticed the personal power needed to expel the demon. She also realized that the kitten represented her real cat that was the only "thing" she had ever

nurtured in a parental role. She chose to create an image that spoke about the new ways of seeing herself that she had experienced during her pregnancy.

May had been photo-documenting her pregnancy and brought several images to include in her artwork. She chose to create a multimedia piece using paint, photocopies, clay, and shells. Wi fun used paper and watercolour paints. They sat side-by-side outside and created while chatting about their pregnancies.

We sat down to share food and a discussion after the art was complete. Wi fun shared her piece first. She explained that during the art making process she was able to experience her child as real. When she drew the eye it had felt like a window of connection between herself and her child. The challenge had been drawing him as a formed person when she did not know what he would look like. Drawing an abstract representation of his essence felt more real. She had used yellow to depict his joy, purple to represent a social life force (Sagittarius) and grey to represent the responsibilities of being the first child and older sibling.

May shared the image of herself releasing pain and fears, while surrounded by golden light. She remembered noticing that her child was not in the image. When she realized she did not know how to depict her child she silently asked the child for help. She then knew the connection was important and drew a foetus with an umbilical cord attached to her body. Her new insight was how connected she felt to the spirit of her child. She also realized how strong and practiced at nurturing she was.

After the participants shared their work the discussion shifted, I had my child with me for this session, and they wanted to spend time with her. They were soon noticing things about her that they were excited to encounter in their own children. At one point Wi fun shared that her pregnancy helped her feel connected to women throughout time.

I chose not to make art during this session because I was no longer pregnant. I did notice how all but one dream had slipped behind the fog of memory now that I was no longer pregnant. I was amazed because they had been so vivid and seemingly unforgettable at the time.

I felt that most of the participants were skilled at using art as an investigative process. I wonder how this project would have changed if the participants were less familiar with art as a vehicle for inquiry?

Figure 11: May's dream image



Follow up: Meeting the children for the first time

Follow up was disjointed because most of the participants were busy with their new children. Most of the follow up interviews happened at the participants' homes.

Ulysses and Gabrielle did not have a follow up interview, but Ulysses called me to inform me that our project had inspired him to start writing about his experience as a new father. He had noticed that men were reluctant to talk about new fatherhood, he wanted to challenge that reluctance. Gabrielle had been busy at conferences during the time of the project and after her child was born. She had not done any art and shared being thankful for the short time she had dedicated to artful inquiry.

Women are permitted the social luxury of sharing birth stories in limited settings, for example when their children ask for the story, when other women are about to give birth, or when they have just given birth. Outside of these settings birth stories are not commonly told. Men have an even smaller arena to share their birth and parenting stories. New mothers and fathers are in a vulnerable transformative process, telling their stories can help them shape their selves and the community around them. It is a political decision to support both male and female voices to share their creative inquiry into the nature of their lived parental experiences. I know I enjoyed watching TV shows that shared birth stories like Bringing Baby Home, and Birth Stories where filmmakers follow families during their birthing experience. How much would those stories shift if

parents had more autonomy in how those stories were told and what subject matter was included?

David and Heather had their belly cast displayed on their living room wall beside a cast of Heather's bottom (cast before she was pregnant). David also shared several other paintings he had created after the project. He explained that they had some relationship challenges during the pregnancy because she did not understand his level of commitment, so he created images to show her how he felt. Like Gabrielle, Heather had been very busy and had not made any art. She explained that the artwork had also triggered sadness about her mother's absence in her life. When their son was born they contacted Pepper for support. Her son was having challenges breastfeeding and they needed some donor milk from Pepper.

This project allowed me to witness the relational aspect of art making. Many of the parents came to the group looking for a creative community where they could raise themselves and their children. Art is a wonderful way of inviting others to witness the nooks and crannies of the soul. Friendship is established through making art together through the sharing of the deep process of investigation involved in arts based inquiry.

I visited Nigel and Juniper right before they gave birth. Nigel shared that he had actually stopped making art and journaling because he felt he was in a limbo-waiting period. He experienced pregnancy as a holding period between life before pregnancy and parenthood; consequently he could not focus on artwork.

I did not get a chance to make art with Nigel and Juniper because they arrived on the day I was giving birth. What I witnessed from their participation was how the group took ownership of the process when I was not there. When I came to see the group half way through the session Nigel and Juniper were successfully completing their cast because the rest of the group had showed them how. The group had welcomed new members and made their own art without needing any guidance from me. It was a wonderful opportunity to witness the sustainability of a functioning community.

Pepper acknowledged how hard it was to look back on her pregnancy now because of the relationship challenges they had at the time. The family portraits were poignant for Pepper as they portrayed the distance between herself and Zack at the time. Pepper and I formed a very deep friendship while this project was running. Our participation in the group showed each other our commitment to art. Since the project's completion Pepper and I have begun collaborating on art pieces that speak to pregnancy and parenting.

Pepper has inspired me to work on my own artwork again. I have focused on the creativity of others for many years, and with her help I have developed the confidence to re-investigate my own creativity. This was an unexpected outcome. Through connecting to other parents' creativity I have found the confidence to re-immense myself in my own passionate urge to create.

The participants and I have created friendships from the intersubjectivity of a common experience: pregnancy. We live in a world that chases highs and tries to find ways to delete the mundane tasks of life. Luckily pregnancy is still

considered enough of a miracle that we find a high in the ordinariness of sustaining human life. Humans still revel in the intersubjective nature of pregnancy; it is a symbol of hope, rebirth, connection and love. Pregnancy offers a wonderful opportunity for people to take the time to explore embodied living. Rubbing the stretching skin of a swelling belly, screaming through a contraction, dreaming of the spirit of their child; these experiences incite the body soul and mind into connection.

The writing process: Her first words

The dance of writing does not begin when we put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, but rather in the way we live, breathe, think, and dwell in our bodies. It is a way of being, an invitation to living that calls forth attentiveness to every cell and fibre. It is letting our very cells dances into the details of our lives, accessing the nooks, crannies, and alphabets of our lives through the physical act of writing.” (Schroeder, 1998, p. 31).

After a performative inquiry event has happened, researchers are often expected to present the data in written form so that those who could not witness the performative event can share in the insights. This is not an easy task. Moments of resonance, connection, and insight are larger than the written word. These moments are fragments in time-space, pieces of mismatched fabric, which must somehow be stitched into a story quilt. In this research project the writing process was even more fragmented. I stole moments at the laptop beside a

sleeping baby, my mind-body slipping between historical moments from the project and the present reality of a baby's constant needs. During the writing process I would often just grab hold of a thought and then lose it when my daughter woke up to be fed. I had to accept what learning I could capture and let go the learning that slipped away. Some embodied learning could not be put down in words and hopefully will be disseminated in my body and through my actions. The learning I could catch on paper was written improvisationally and then edited by reading it aloud to my mother. Reading it aloud helped me to hear the voice of the project, as I listened to the rhythm and resonance of the stories that were shaping my new understanding.

Jacques Daignault (2005) presents the term "accousmatic text" to explain how writing can act as a window of insight to promote self-reflexivity. I believe an artist can relate to the art making process just as a writer can relate to his text as a process of inquiry. Daignault suggests that we can study intuitive writing for clues to our own perceptions, and methods of engaging with our personal reality. The first stage of creating an accousmatic text is to spontaneously create, free of judgment. After the first draft of the piece is completed the artist reads the art as autonomous and listen to what it has to say. He or she re-enters the work in response to that listening, and the emergent learning that arises. The artist distills the creation by searching for moments of insight. This process similar to art therapy, the difference being that the art therapist redirects the inquiry when the artist or client comes across blocks or resistances. In creating accousmatic

text and art making the artist takes responsibility for the inquiry process. In performative inquiry, everyone in the group takes responsibility.

Just as the writing process is part of the dissemination of the inquiry process represented in the text. I hope to practice and embody the moments of insight and intersubjectivity accessed during the inquiry. The words are one way to access the moments of learning and understanding as is my active body living the journey of further inquiry.

HOLDING YOUR NEWBORN TO YOUR CHEST: LIVING WITH NEW INSIGHT

Countless nights I sat at the computer desperately searching for strategies to help my child and I survive another night of teething. I usually abandoned the lists of suggestions by health professionals for narratives of mothers with similar stories. I was not only looking for facts on sleeping I was looking for the details contained in personal situations. Their stories felt more real, they had more information, and they were more helpful to me. Usually I could find something in those personal blogs that would help me, either with a different strategy or with a moment of intersubjectivity that made my pain feel valid. In the morning I could call one of my mother friends to comfort me with their stories of gritting their teeth until they chipped or biting their selves out of frustration. Then we would formulate a plan for the next night. My group of mother friends held strength and love for each other when we had used up our last reserves. We also were a pool of knowledge and experience that broadened our skill sets and information base. How can we foster communities of inquiry that use art so as to utilize the strength contained in human bonds and art making, which develop and expand our abilities to sense, perceive and comprehend?

“Warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.” (Jung, 1970, p. 235).

I entered this inquiry within the impulse and temporality of my own pregnancy, wondering: *What if I called a group of pregnant couples together to bear witness to their pregnant experiences? What if we used art as a process of inquiry? What if I engaged as a research participant as well as a researcher?* In response to these wonderings I engaged in inquiry with my experience of pregnancy in order to be transformed through new understanding. I experienced pregnancy, metaphorically, as if I was Coyote voracious for moments of recognition within the experiences of transformation that were so common for me at that time. I trusted art making as an effective mode of inquiry in which to sense, perceive, comprehend and represent my pregnant experiences so that myself, and others could attend to the wonderings that surfaced.

This project grew into a place and time where the participants were researchers and the researcher participated in the inquiry process. We shared the responsibility for the direction and interstandings and emergent questions I witnessed, which are woven into the paragraphs and the poem that follow.

I found the pedagogy of embodiment, and the aesthetic mode (Eisner, 2008) as contextual frameworks that allowed me to understand the usefulness of art making as an inquiry process. Performative inquiry (Fels, 1998, 2007; Fels & Belliveau, 2008; Fels & McGvern, 2002) provided the democratic and spacious methodology in which to house sensing, perceiving, and comprehending.

Performative inquiry calls us into relationship through curiosity and attention. It can expand our sensitivity to and understanding of our life, community and the self.

Throughout this thesis I refer to wholeness. I have come to understand wholeness as a therapeutic and educational journey. Therapists and researchers facilitate experiences that bring clients into a multifaceted relationship with their self. When strong relationships are formed with the multiple possibilities contained in an individual, clients are able to access a multiplicity of resources in which to navigate their lives. The quest for wholeness is an inquiry oriented towards integrity in modes of being, which include intention, sensing, perceiving, and comprehension. This movement towards wholeness influences methodologies as well as meaning making, and evaluative processes. In this research study the participants as emergent parents were provided the opportunity to investigate their selves in a time of rapid change. In the moments of change and challenge we are often presented rich opportunities for inquiry into the self. The quest for wholeness is a process of inquiry and a process of adjustment. This project and this pregnancy was a constant process of attending to and adjusting to life. Art making and community engagement helped bring joy, curiosity, companionship, and expanded possibilities to my struggle to keep up with the changes taking place at that time.

When our community of inquiry engaged in embodied artful inquiry we were provided the time and space to attend to ourselves, and our families in a compassionate way. The project fostered adjustment by providing space and

compassion. Since giving birth to my daughter I have had many challenges, some I was unable to handle with the grace I was accustomed to. I believe that the practice of embodied artful inquiry in this project gave me the skills to consider my actions mindfully in troubled times. It also increased my capacity to sense, perceive, and comprehend my life, which expanded my options for responding to it. I developed a mode of living that utilized non-judgemental attention to my behaviours, this let me have moments of pain and misjudgement without becoming ensnared by patterns of behaviour and emotional chaos.

When reflecting on the project I have many wishes. I wish I could have started the project closer to the beginning of pregnancy. I think emergent parents would benefit from long term embodied artful inquiry during pregnancy. A longer inquiry process would have most likely allowed more participants to join, thus expanding the repertoire of selves providing input. It would have given participants a broader range of art making activities thus expanding their exploration. I have since facilitated art making groups for teen mothers. These groups had been going on long before I became involved, the mothers had developed comfort with each other. They contacted each other in crisis, babysat each other's children. When I introduced art making into their relationship they expressed satisfaction with the potential metaphor holds as a communication tool. It is my hope that I can provide opportunities for emergent parents to engage in long term embodied artful inquiry so that they can develop their ability to act mindfully to their lives.

I also wish that our group could have continued art making after our children were born. We are now meeting for play-time with the children, and babysitting for each-other. These meetings contain storytelling, sharing resources and mutual inquiry into parenting. The “dates” we go on because of the babysitting has proven integral to attending to ourselves in relationship to our partners, outside our roles as parents. The unexpected outcome of these “dates” is the re-remembering of the self we were before pregnancy and the attending to ourselves in the present, perhaps an essential element of wholeness! We are benefiting from the community of inquiry still, however I hope that as our children grow older we will all share embodied artful inquiry again. Such an arts-based practice cannot only help us develop mindfulness and wholeness, but we can learn to facilitate experiences and skills of sensing, perceiving and comprehending in our children.

Some aspects of life are challenging to attend to. I sense and feel in a much larger way now; life seems to be yelling instead of whispering. As a therapist I hear my clients stories in a deeper way; their stories mix in my blood and change it forever. I used to use habitual inattention as a sort of boundary where I was protected from their pain, and incongruent modes of thinking, doing, and being. The consequence of embodiment for a therapist can be over-stimulation, which to me feels like rawness and fatigue. I know to greet my clients stories with non-judgement and inquiry so as to not get stuck. However this process requires a new form of hygiene or self-care, at which I am not yet adept.

To increase our capacity for understanding also seems to bring forth new pathways of inquiry. I have many new questions and avenues that I would like to explore.

Throughout the project I noticed participants shying away from any painful content uncovered by their inquiry. Would prolonged practice of inquiry and embodiment promote enough trust in the process so that people would begin to explore challenging content? Could a shift towards aesthetic modes of being facilitate a new way of greeting life challenges? Can performative inquiry help people relate to and adjust to birth, death, and other transformative processes? Does increasing the ability to sense, perceive and comprehend naturally enhance our ability to adapt, or can it increase our vulnerability to violence and oppression? For instance, can we confidently lead a child of abuse through performative inquiry without further opening them up to sense, perceive and comprehend negative effects of abuse? If we shifted towards empathic relationships can we instigate systemic changes that promote reflexivity and empathy in habitual abusers? Could we merge therapy and education and return to the indigenous modes of education where learning provided compassionate space for individuals to move through suffering towards wholeness? Would that shift promote wholeness in a broader populous than therapy and counseling which is typically under-funded and harder to access than education?

Vulnerability and adaptability are woven into the mortal nature of humanity. What role does art and stories provide in accepting, even promoting vulnerability as a pathway to wholeness? Can stories contain moments of hope

and insight for individuals to access and use in their own life? Can stories and art making help humans communicate intersubjective moments of vulnerability in order to share strategies for adaptation?

The participants from this project displayed different levels of skill in embodied artful inquiry. Despite the differences in ability they all engaged readily in the inquiry and were met with insights that they found valuable. It can be challenging for people at different levels of sensitivity and different paces of inquiry to meet and share. What can facilitators do to enhance inquiry when participants are at different levels of sensitivity and pace of inquiry?

Can the empathic relationships fostered through shared inquiry nurture our ability to witness our own intrinsic value and the intrinsic value of others? Would performative inquiry then be an effective methodology for conflict resolution?

I look forward to engaging with some of these questions in the future as I joyfully reflect on this moment of inquiry. I am ever grateful to the participants of this project, my mentors, and my family: my community of inquiry. This poem acts as a representation of the journey undertaken by the research participants and myself. It can only whisper faintly the volumes of gratitude I have for the impact they have had and will continue to have on my life. I would also like thank you for engaging in the inquiry by reading this thesis.

Sticky iridescent strands of cocoon

stretch around a speck of dust

Silk spun of dream world

Satin spun of lebenswelt

Paintbrush hovers silently before touching the palette

Straining to hear destiny's secrets

The satisfying squish of pigment to brush was the only sound

It searched for subsequent strokes.

This was the start

Footprints form ancient sandcastles on a path

Ripples flutter across the lakes housed in the landscapes left behind

Wind breathes primal knowledge into my flesh

Gusts of humid air leave space for genesis

Moans ooze from stalactites dripping loneliness

Drip drip

Come come

Into the pools of the great mystery

A school of fusilier fish form a living map

Each fin a rudder guiding the fellowship

I follow

Forming my frame for the function I have found

This was the foundation

Black box theatre benches seat rows of bards

Students searching for their sensei

Sensation

Tentative thespians watching each other's movements for signs of meaning

Teachers

Light refracts red from silver scales on my school

Sea

We done the velvet cloaks of reclaimed regency

Our language is spoken in questions and tales

We sing common prayers of uncertainty and hope

Our bodies are liminal monuments

Thresholds to an ancient apple orchard

Shared pistols grind our lives into pigment

Living

Breathing

Images

Eat our apples and shit shared stories

Apollo's lavish armour reflects the golden light

Flashing blindness into my eyes

In that split second my school has left without me

I am secluded

Engulfed in the blues of the ocean

Absent of topography

Nowhere to know but now

This was the nexus

My lone lost fishy flesh finds flaws

Teenaged zits

Stutters

Cellulite

The stench of self-hatred assaulting strength

Tendrils grasp at historical shape

Motionless hurry sends focus away

Ants rush to rebuild rubble

They never ponder the sand

Stop

Buzzing silence stills the busy

Water must flow around the pebble

I light fires and watch smoke drift to distant shores

This was the waiting

My toes settle in the soil

Probing networks of roots plant

Placing me in my purpose

Unfolding fern rooted by softening bones compensating for newness

Paintbrush bristles cling to colours

Hoping to create

Hovering between water can and canvas

Unable to understand its muddied brown mass

Howls permeate mountainous solitude

Wolf yips

Yearning catches a breeze and holds fast

A she-wolf lifts her attention from the cubs suckling at her breast
Her cry imbues the mountain air with firelight cast on cavernous catacombs
She welcomes you to the library of petroglyphs
Her wisdom is shared with raindrops and falling leaves

Coyote answers in hyena fir
While great brown wings whoosh in the wind
Watching
Eagle's cry cuts perceived perfection
So that Raven can come in through a crack in the door

This was the arrival

Modest mouse moulded her nest in fragments of neglected monasteries
Mothering
Tiny eyes still shut search for sustenance
A molecule of time sits suspended
Hovering in a sleepy stew

Silver flash
The school returns to celebrate new life
Stories sing through the sea

Light rays permeate bubbles of breath

Time for text

Piles of blank parchment pleaded

But no words would play

My dream world daughter danced dressed in the robes of Kali

I pleaded her reveal my tarots tale

Our compass needles pointed to the house of the harvesting moon

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