

# The Hermeneutic Dialogic: Finding Patterns Amid the Aporia of the Artist/Researcher/Teacher<sup>1</sup>

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Passionate knowers use the self as an instrument of understanding, searching for new methods to sophisticate the way the self is used in research. (Kincheloe, 1991, p.41)

"The hermeneutic dialogic: Finding Patterns midst the aporia of the  
artist/researcher/teacher"

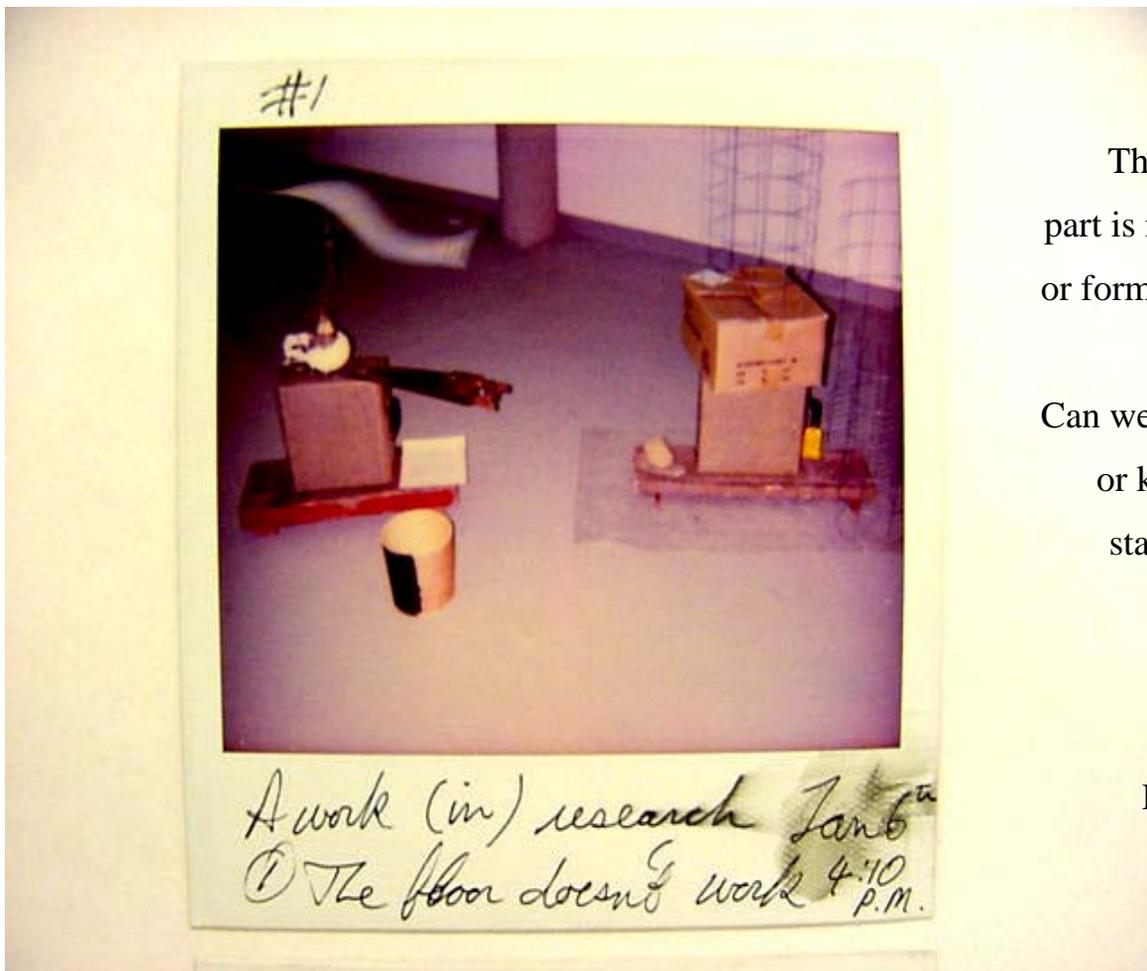
*The title that screamed one wakened night<sup>2</sup>*

But the question of knowing what it means 'to experience the aporia,' indeed to put into operation the aporia, remains. (Derrida, 1993, p. 32.)<sup>3</sup>

## I write

I want to write *in* the aporia that my research places itself. In the point of disjuncture - when in praxis, while engaged in the pedagogy of the work that is sculpture - the place where (*my*) meaning becomes and belongs in its progression forward on the journey to anticipate meaning out of the curriculum of being that finds itself doing what it is called to do.

**To present an embodied moment in the studio process of art making, that validates my embodied understandings, through the pedagogy of being becoming.**

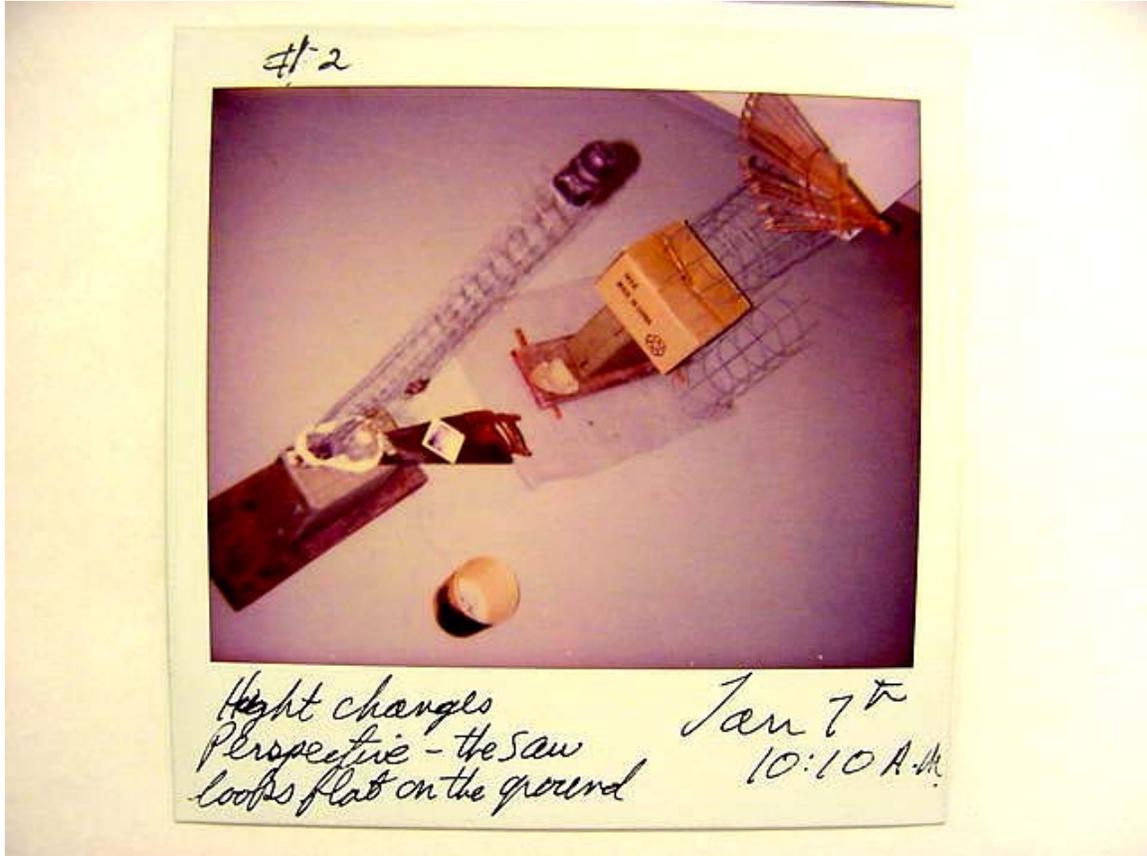


The hardest part is non form or formlessness.

Can we imagine or know this state of non being?

It is Derrida's question

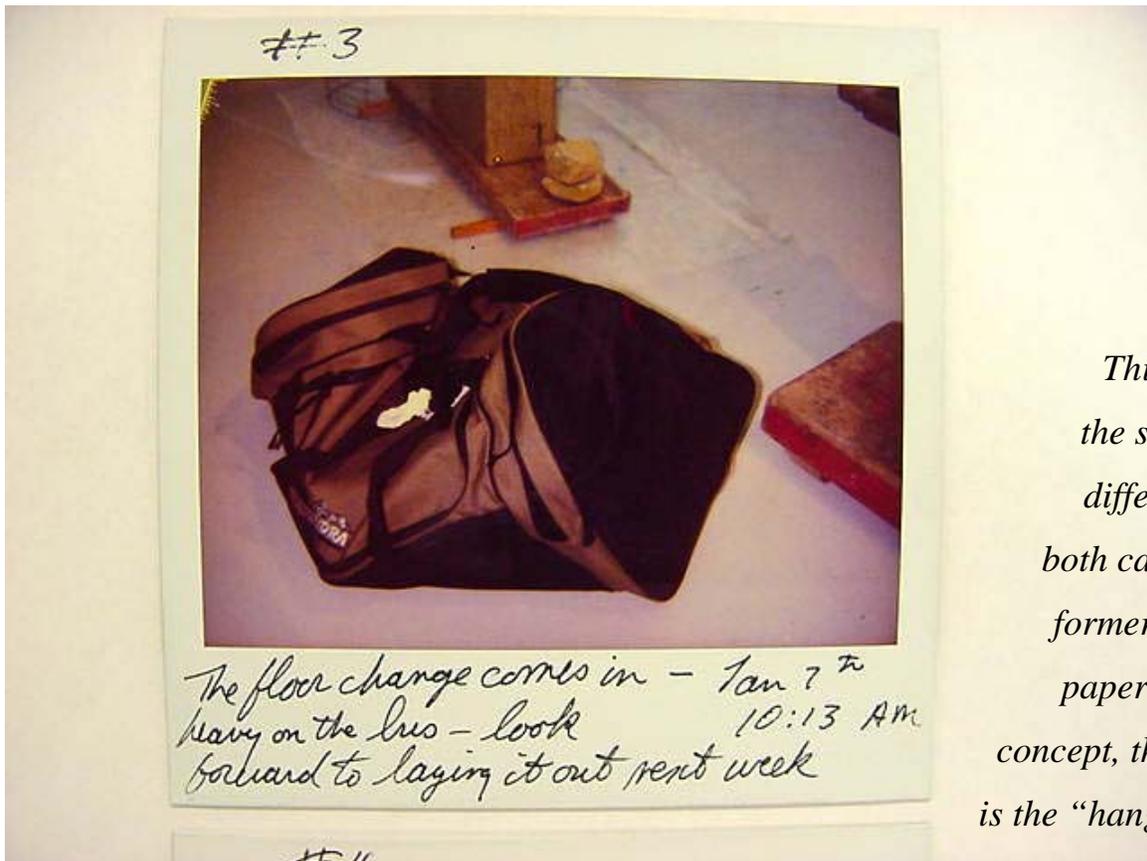
## "My death, is it possible?"



4

*The dictionary falls from the place/space - (s)p(l)ace - I had placed it moments ago after looking up "syntagm" from, "where do we situate the syntagm 'my death' (Derrida, 1993, p. 23) as possibility and/or impossibility of passage?" not that it makes any difference to the aporia of reading Derrida. The denseness of the over-all, is far larger than bits of text taken "out" trying to create meaning - the continual hermeneutic of meaning making.*

*I come back to the challenge of marking the progress through Derrida's Aporias (1993). I like the notion of the place of difficulty kept alive by the fact that I haven't got there - wherever there is. Reading it guaranteed placing me in/with aporia. Whenever I think I have an opening and I enter the text to pick a quote to "hang it on," "it" disintegrates.*



*This "it" is the same but different in both cases. The former is the paper as a concept, the latter is the "hanger" for*

*the concept. This constant destruction of the "very heart of the matter" makes the project difficult but not impossible. Word-windows that Derrida seeks out, to work over and under, to find new ways around a (the) problem of aporia. Can I retreat from the mission? or am I driven on to find ways through the border land (Minh-Ha, 1992) that is inherent in this space of not knowing/knowing (simultaneously).*

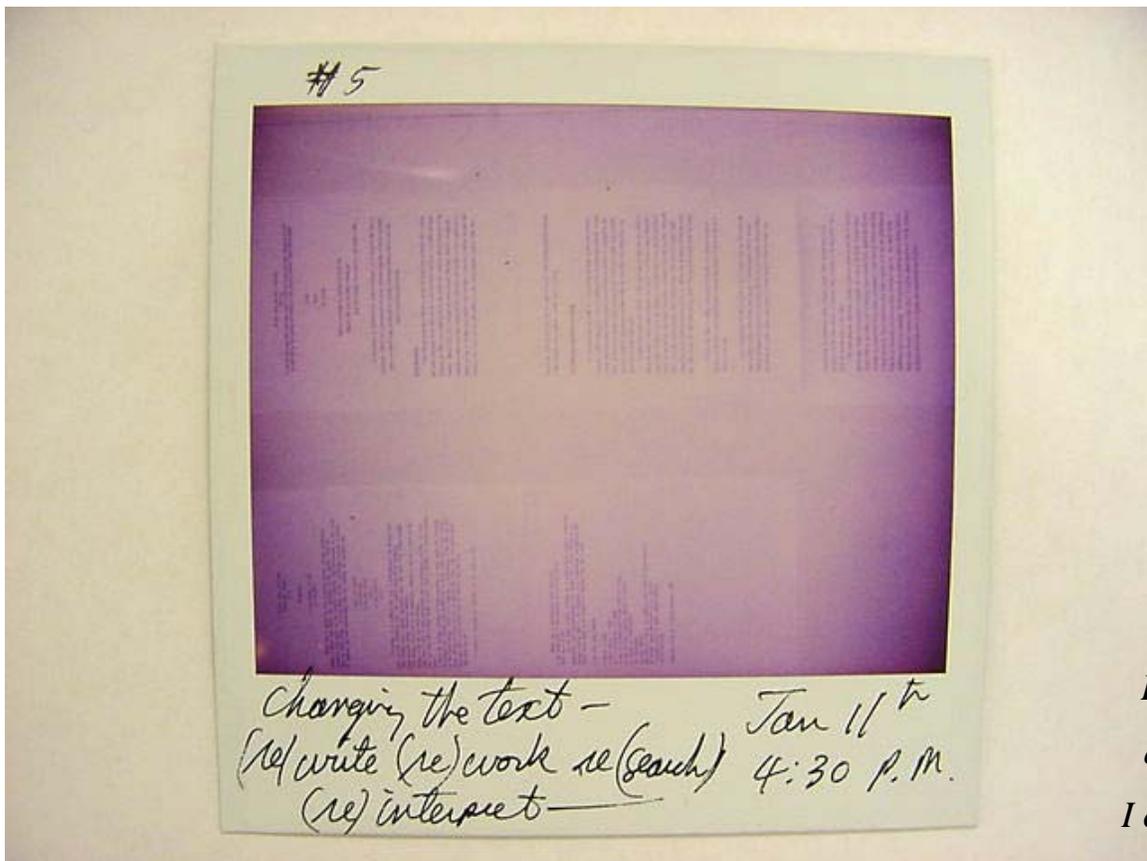


I am  
(researching)  
the process  
of my own doing

I know a work  
I don't know a work,  
a metonymy  
of place.

Remain hidden from vision  
stay running ahead  
or behind.

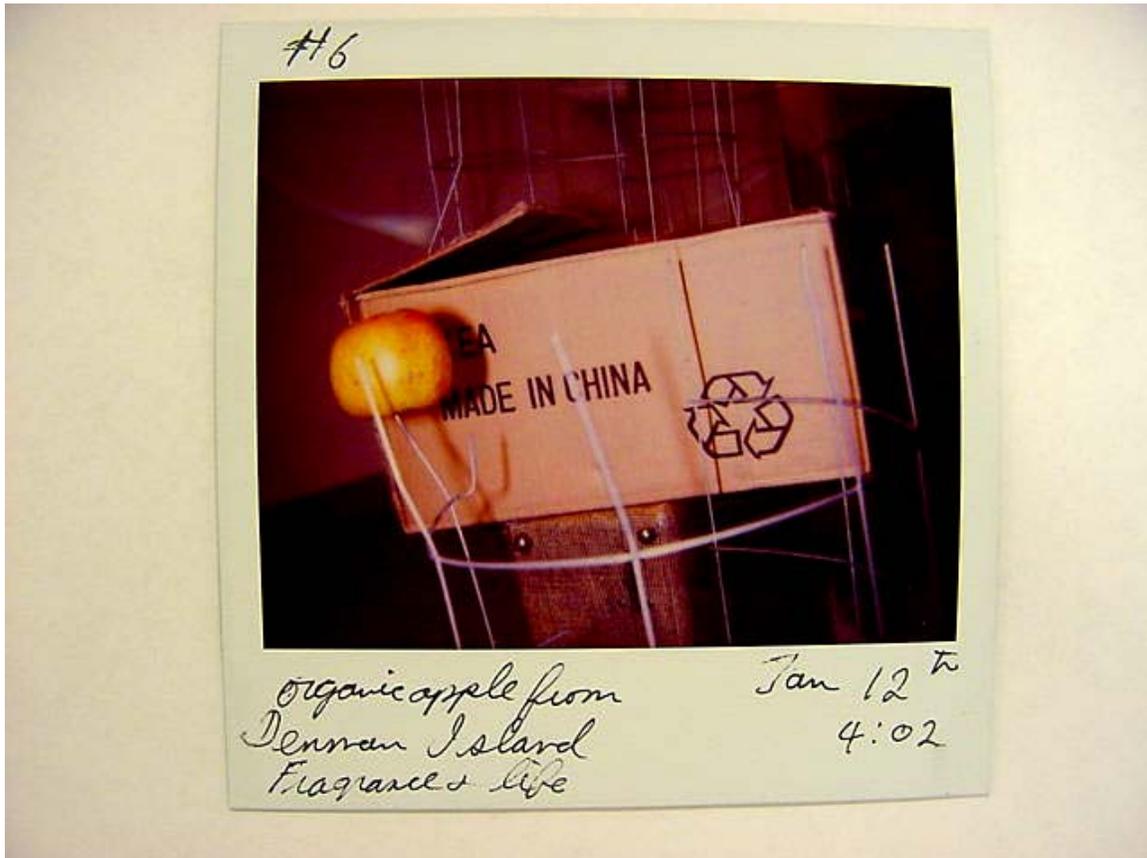
Needing its ambiguities  
its betrayals  
to stay afloat.



Even in  
aporia  
I come to

*understand  
its function.*

1. 2. 3.



*"I" wrote this, - (deeply) - I feel so far from it now, as though I have lost the point of entry - I am fighting something inside that will not let me be - that seems to want to hold me down, that does not want to let go - to let being be, as it were.*

*How do I (re) enter?*



Find pressure  
points  
that spew  
guts  
for  
penetrated  
dialogue

with a place I'm to write about.

What is my mission

in the here and now?

*I want to propose ...*

Praxis is work that interacts with life and community concerns and is contextualized in human values. It is practice united with theory, subjectivity united with objectivity, action united with value. (Cary, 1998, p. 28)

.....



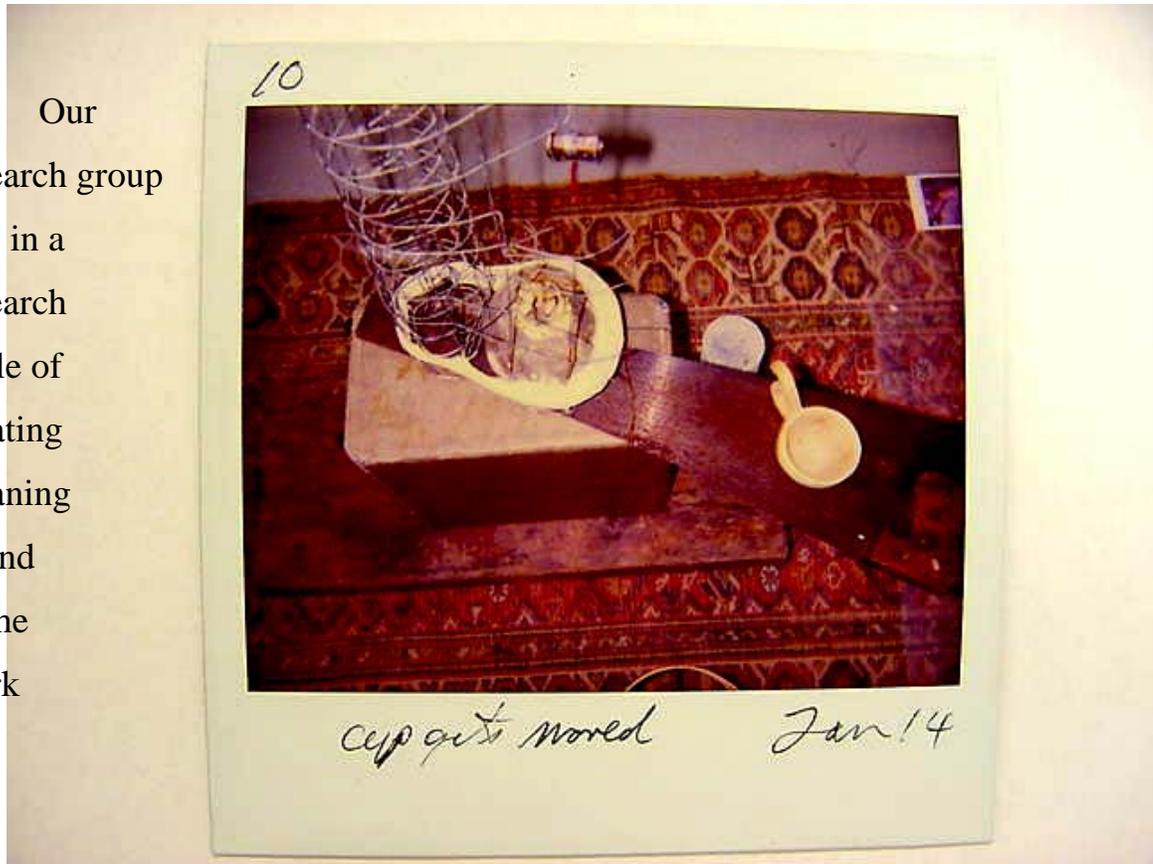
### Weekly Research

There was a point in our research group's weekly gathering where one significance, among many, was forced open - namely, the importance of the

other. This “opening” had its incubation while I attended a presentation on Self-Study/Action Research: Is it REALLY Research? where Dr. Cynthia Nicol speculated that self-study wasn’t so much about self as about the other, for without the other, the self was redundant. This circling from other, to self, to other, to create meaning finds a home in philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology. When engaged with/in art it is in the circling from viewer, to art, to viewer that meaning is made. This hermeneutic that Sontag (1966) called for as an “erotics” in *Against Interpretation* is an engagement with the reality as found without the calling in of external meaning, it may be of a “truth,” a “truth” to that moment, to that group, to that understanding as it manifests itself. This meaning is universally true to that moment.

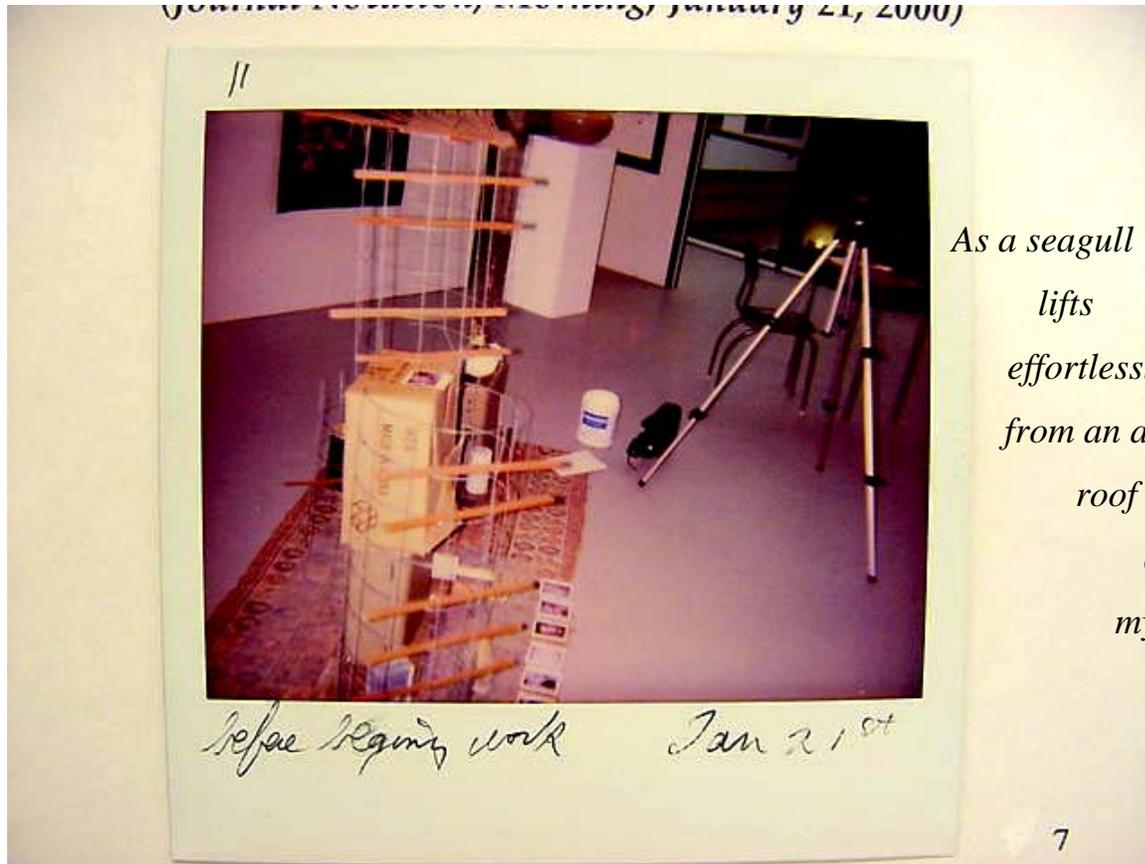


Our  
research group  
was in a  
research  
cycle of  
creating  
meaning  
in and  
of the  
work



we were doing and in our continuing dialogue with(in) it. For many art teachers their artist self is often neglected, hidden, even repressed, to conform to the “norm” that is the teacher. We were in the researching process of validating our doing as artists, through each other and our work.

That we were in the presence of research in our weekly meetings became abundantly clear to me as I enthusiastically cajoled a fellow group member, “You are doing research, you are because you are here and that is what we are doing” as she or he questioned labeling our work research, choosing instead to label it simply art making (feeling more comfortable in a familiar place) and not research (this more difficult place in which we wished to dwell). For me it was the moment of being in and of “the other.” In Gadamer’s (1974) words, I was “in the game.”



Theory is not limited to but includes textual discussions and analysis set within and/or alongside visual imagery of educational phenomena and/or performance. (Irwin, in press, p. 7)

*I centre on meaning*

*recessed (gently)*

*(hidden)*

*deeply*

not to shut down the process before it has begun!!

spaces (in)between

*vibrant*  
places  
of newness  
embraced

*as a child lights a flaming torch*

*(softly)*

*in a burning night*

The integration of text and image is an act of  
borderland pedagogy, a way of sharing a third  
space between knowing and ignorance. (Irwin, in  
press, p. 9)

.....

**I want to be *in* that which cries  
out from deep within.....**



*becoming one*

*(Journal Notation, Morning, January 21, 2000)*

I awoke this morning

with an image

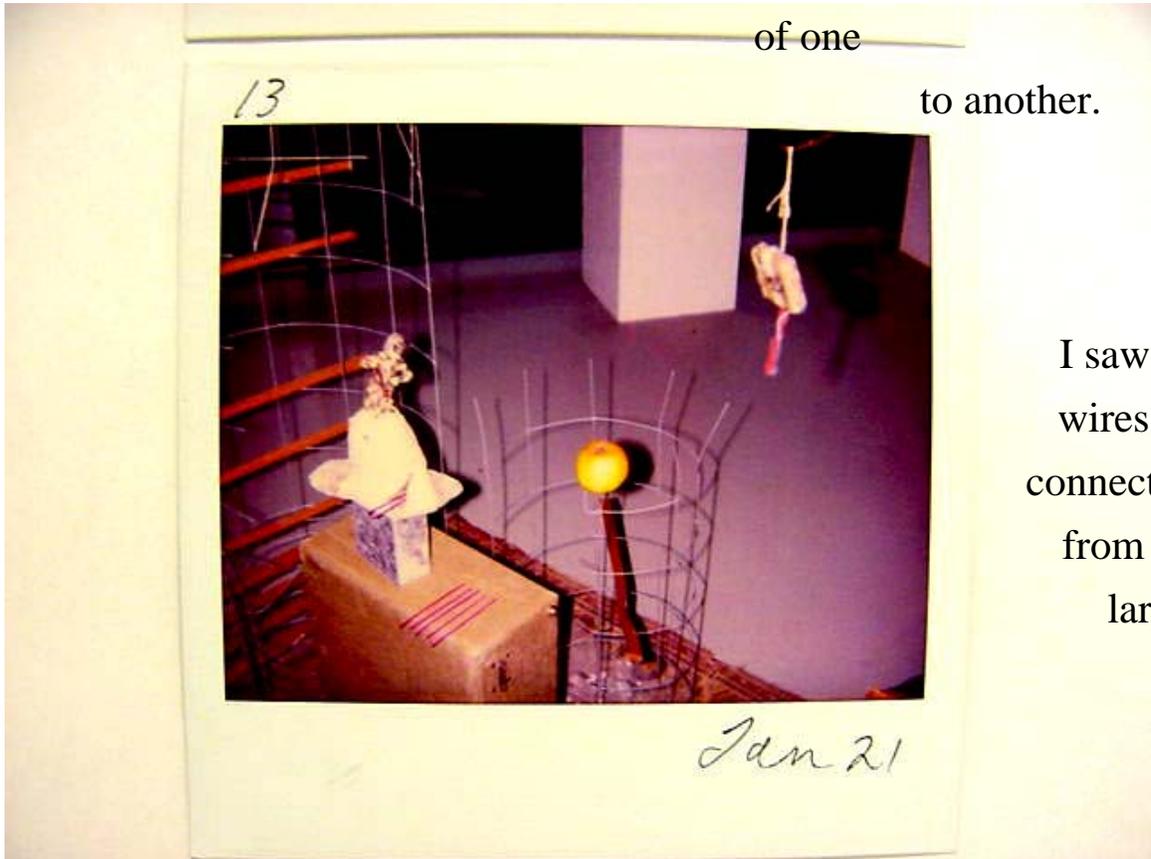
bridging

-

a connecting

of one

to another.



I saw the  
wires  
connecting  
from the  
large

tower  
to the smaller  
tower.

(Research journal,  
written before studio work,  
morning of January 21, 2000.)

*I shall use video and SX70 photography*

*to document the task as an action  
I will document the reality  
a moment of fulfillment  
a vision/concept - constant since I started.  
I knew this part,  
but I don't know the whole –*



*the whole must change in the moment of doing -  
the whole is my dialogic with the work,  
the research,  
the rigorous being that contemplates the strategies for movement within a  
predetermined*

*number  
of coordinates  
of action.*

*(Research Journal January 5, 2000.)*

I envision flat lines of art

-research to be-  
lying dormant

*awaiting the call*

*I want my being subverted, tantamount to 'knowing' inside.*

As though I might find an answer in the deepest depths that are soul.  
How can I go deeper? How can I settle the quarrel once and for all (impossible you  
quip) let us fly in light mind, as though angels (which we are) but how to get the light  
to shine always, not only in an abstract sense, but in the reality of the moment of  
*being*, to allow the spaces to open, to feel the pure joy of the sun as it  
passes over head, as though singing - allow birds to be singers -  
way up above  
the formless universe

.....

*The hard part is to actually get over to the gallery and do the work before the  
entire day has slipped away in otherness.*

(Research Journal January 16, 2000.)

(The following is from my research journal written on January 22, the day *after the studio action on which this paper is concentrating*)



I  
place  
the  
video  
camera  
onto  
the

tripod as I am doing this the concept for the work changes, I suddenly see the top of the broken figure as part of this "work" - *Change Again* -

I dismantle the second tower, get out the work box that had been the "middle" retrieve the working tools from its

chest - spread them - order them - I  
feel comfortable in this praxis of body  
knowing -  
20 years of sculpting has taught me my  
process

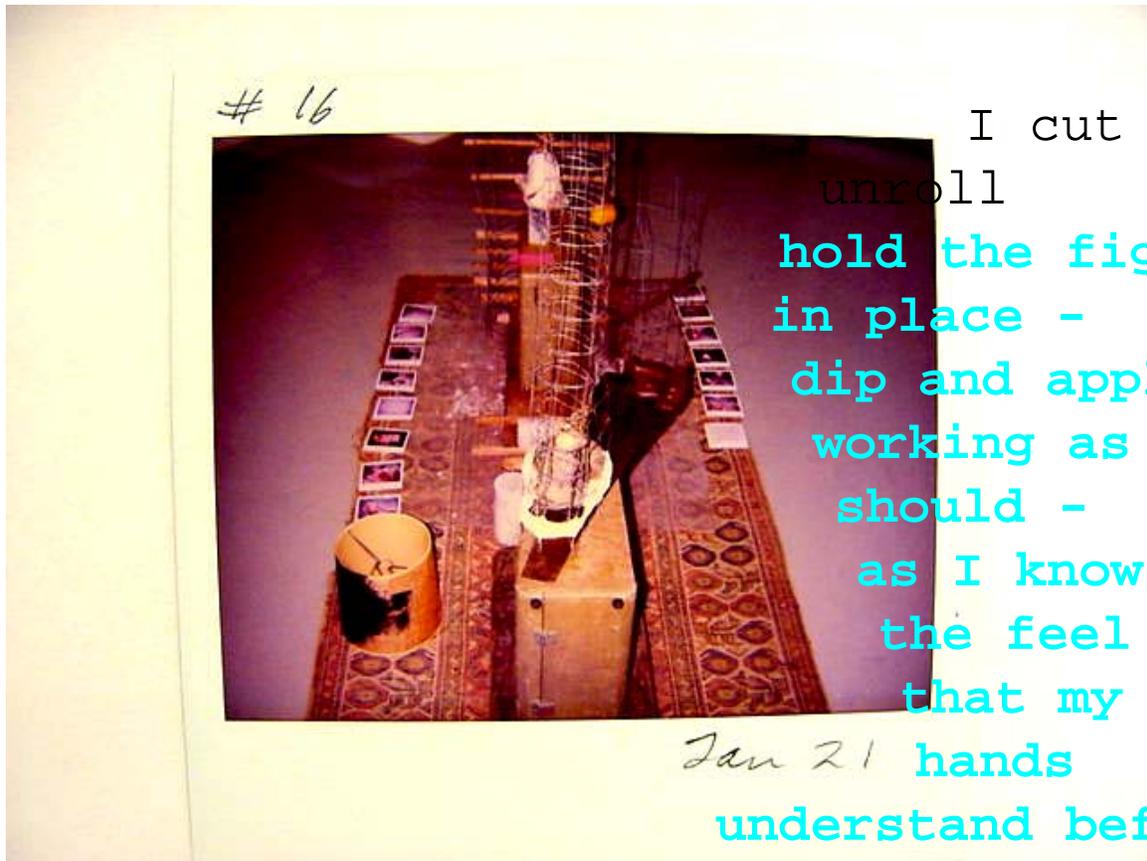
I'm conscious of the camera, I can feel  
its capturing eye - but I'm comfortable

-

- I settle into the plaster work of  
joining the rocks - the plaster is doing  
what it should do -

I need to lift it - as I am wrapping  
under the rock - I balance it on the  
marble block and one of the plaster role  
boxes.

I need more plaster as I have  
finished the roll I am working with - I  
open the next box of plaster -



my mind does-  
but very quickly I know the feel is wrong - this roll isn't isn't working right - I feel tense - I realize my body is not comfortable - I am very conscious that it's not working - the plaster goes pebbly - instead of visceral, tacky, with a slippery contact - as I know it with my hands - I'm holding the figure in one hand realizing this isn't behaving as it should - I am very self-aware -

There is a argumentative inner dialogue which ran something like this:

*"let go!"*

*"follow the process!"*

-

as my mind races

*"Just let it go!"*

*"You can get some new plaster - come back later -"*

*"NO!"*

*"I want the figure on the rock."*

*"But it is not working!"*

*"Let go!"*

*"Which am I to let go of?"*

*"The concept altogether?"*

*"The material not working ?"*

*"Go with the flow!"*

*"Which flow?"*

*"This isn't working!"*

*"Let Go - Find another way!"*

*"Yes, but if you just wait and get fresh plaster it will work really nicely"*

(This concept of “letting go” is one of my primary goals when teaching my  
Foundation sculpture studio classes.)

I can feel the pull to stop - an  
equal pull to continue

to find the way through -

I try further down the in the plaster  
role, maybe it was just a bad section -  
but no same thing -

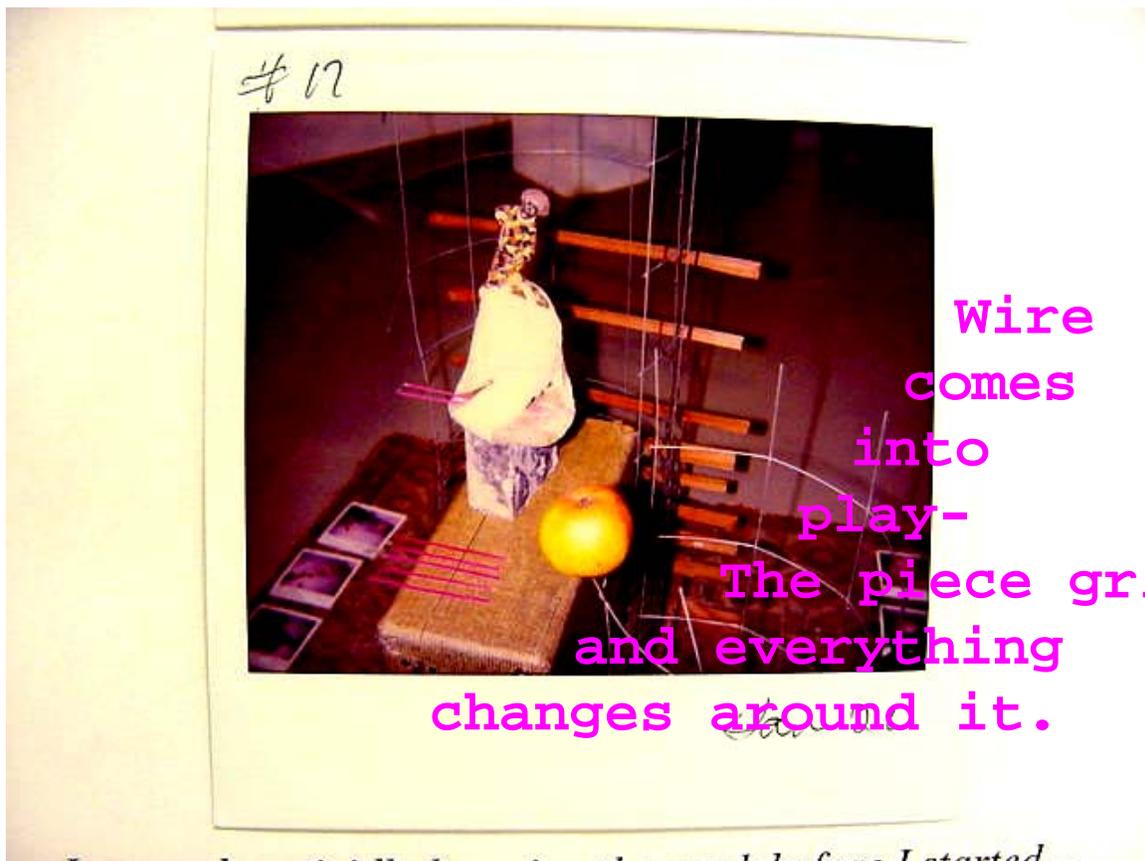
pebbly -

doesn't dry !

doesn't do anything -

I'm worried now - but equally

I will allow it to be -



Suddenly it is working - the wire  
holds  
it becomes  
the centre of the second tower  
-

the rest has to work for it now  
Stamps, coin and cup are  
removed- too much baggage

This is a sculptural process, it is a continual working through, not knowing where I am going, but needing to push on through the constant aporias. Watching the video document shows only an artist at work, it appears confident and self-assured there is not the slightest indication of the anguished fretting internal dialogue as presented above.

### **Learning (in) praxis**

I feel the need to write to that sp(l)ace - to write to the learning that has taken place as I've struggled to hold the three hats of artist/researcher/teacher.

I have learned how hard it is to stay amid these three, to stay afloat, with all in simultaneous motion. I'm teaching three courses, doing research, being *in* the aporia of my praxis -

I (re) learned what I already know, what we all know. as artists, that art learning is an embodied practice learned through praxis. As a teacher of art I must always stay vigilant to this “knowing.”

As a teacher I am also reminded of the power of the student as “other,” that without this “other” constantly reflecting back to me my (re) learning I am nothing. Without the “other” honored as equal in the circling hermeneutic of learning and (re) learning I will become ungrounded.

Praxis (re) shows me - (re) learns me through the moment of being in that sp(l)ace of not knowing - I (re)learned something I say all the time in my teaching - that it is in the letting go that we find, that we cannot be found until we are lost. Yes that is what I have learned - I learned, (re) learned what I know but forget or hang onto too lightly .

I remember vividly knowing the work before I started- I knew what I was going to do. I saw it. I wrote it. I (pre)wrote it - So I'd know or rather have a record of what I was going to do knowing it would change was part of my research agenda - to be in the aporia of my own doing -

It was so simple - I really did believe I was going to do what I set out to do - I had no notion nor sp(l)ace for a change outside the confines of the degrees of change that I was prepared for - - that once the material failed - well that was another thing - on one level I was not prepared to stay the course - -

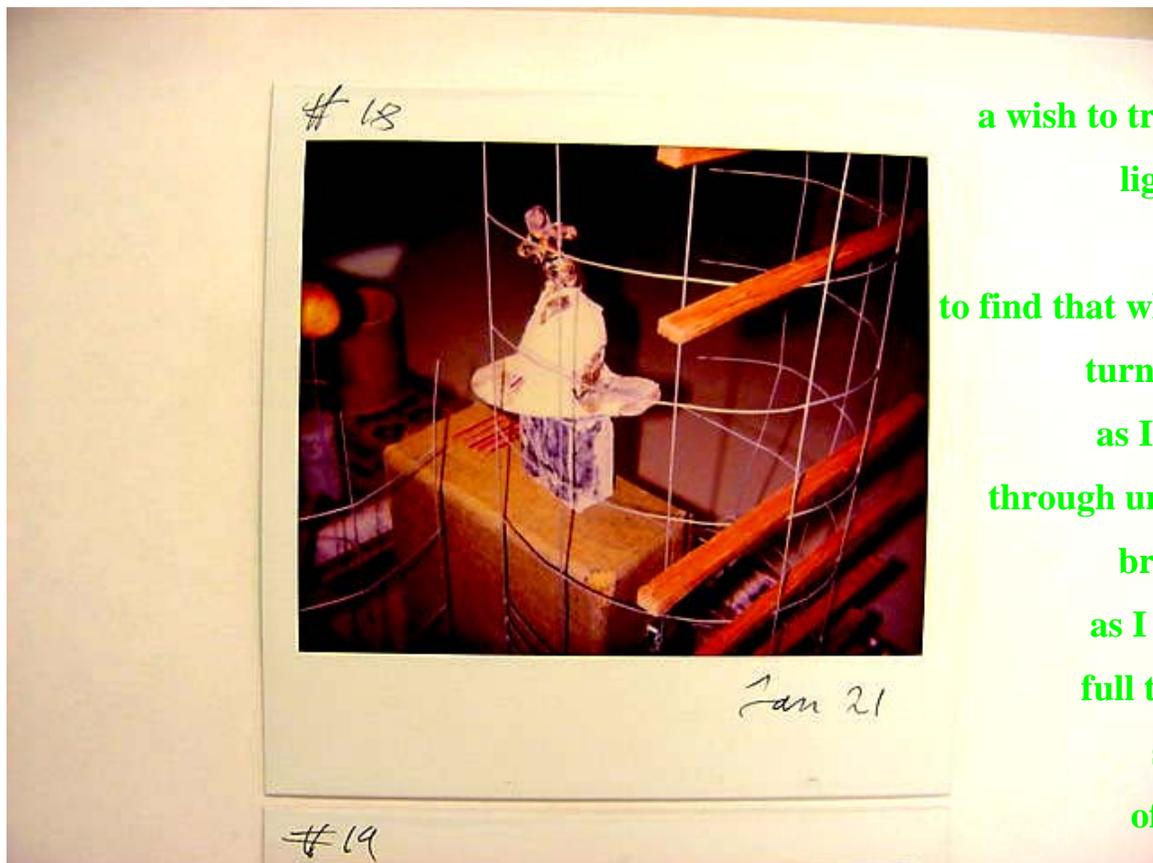
I was (pre)programmed to believe that the plaster would operate as it always does - I truly was taken aback - not prepared -

I had to push myself through the moment of turning back -

allowing the disrupter to become operative -  
 to not allow it to dictate a ceasing of my work -  
 the power of that moment was a subversion to myself -  
 a (re)learning -  
 a (re)confirmation of what I know but equally what I forget -  
 or rather, without the (re)learning in praxis my teaching is merely rhetoric -

“Without the reflexive researcher role - the relationship of praxis to teaching would be lost from the conscious equation - from the place where it really matters, from the why of the entire thing - what it is -  
 How this triality artist /researcher /teacher connects.”

(Reflective research journal notation January 25, 2000.



a wish to travel  
 light ..

to find that which  
 turns up  
 as I run  
 through under  
 brush.  
 as I find  
 full trees  
 saps  
 of life  
 calling me

forward  
&  
stones  
grounding  
me

*Cling to the pedagogical ecology!*

"The Line I trace with my feet walking to the museum is more important and more beautiful than the lines I find there hung on the walls" the Viennese architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser inscribed this on the wall of the KunstHausWien museum dedicated to his work.

This notion of the importance of the moment  
of being *inside* the process of being

*"Don't go backwards,  
don't turn away  
from these messy secret tales  
that no method can outrun and make all right,  
as if they did not speak to us,  
as if we did not hear them,  
as if the agencies of the world  
were always just our own"*  
(Jardine, 1997, p.165).

I awoke this morning

with an image

bridging

-

a connecting

of one

to another.

I saw the wires connecting

from the large tower

to the smaller

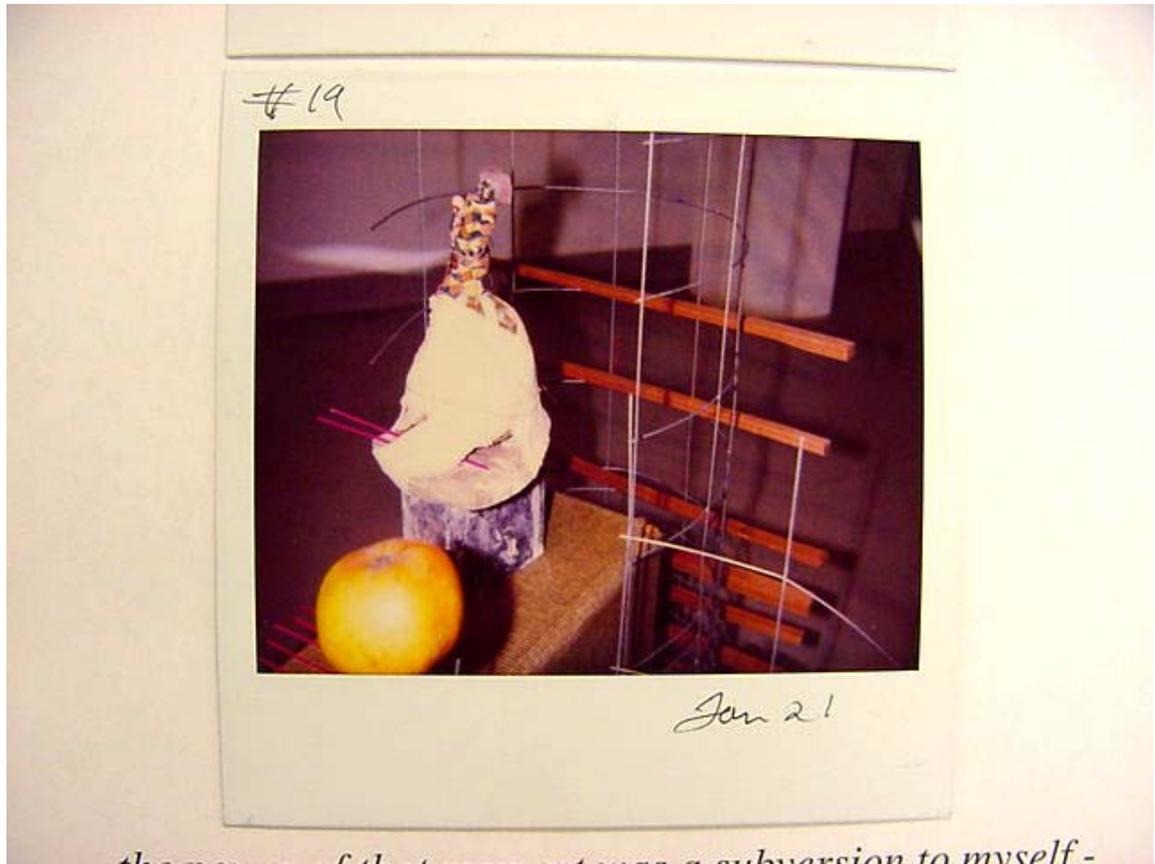
tower.

*I am*

*(re)searching*

*the process*

*of my own doing*

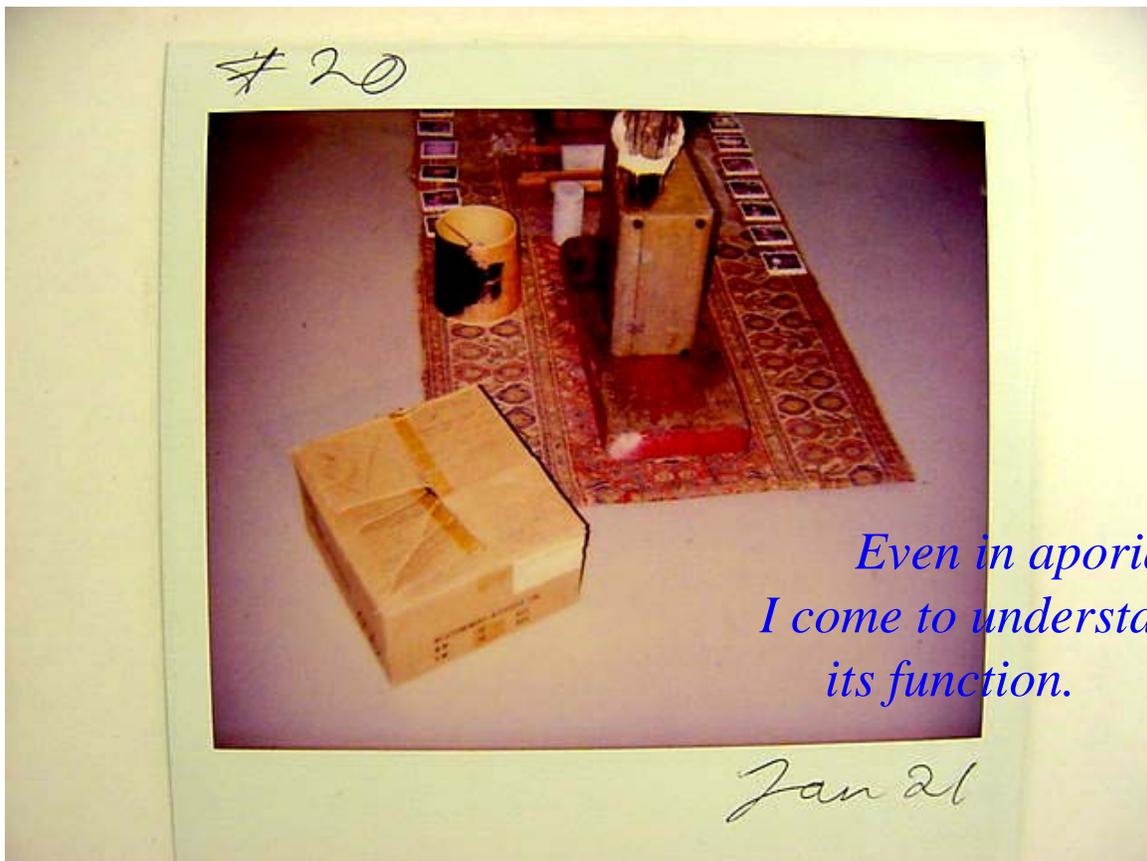


If we dare to engage in the dynamic process of looking at the field (of education) using new tools and questioning those areas which have been uncharted and treacherous, we may enter insecure territory, but one that holds layers of meaning we may not have otherwise encountered.

(Fischman, 2001, p. 32).

I know a work  
 I don't know a work,  
 a metonymy

of place.  
Remain hidden from vision  
stay running ahead  
or behind.  
Needing its ambiguities  
its betrayals  
to stay afloat.



#20

*Even in aporia  
I come to understand  
its function.*

Jan 21

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup>There is a deliberate use of multiple fonts in this article to work with the performative in writing. I wish for a (text)urized – textur(e)al page.

<sup>2</sup> As when I build a sculpture, the surface of a plane is activated by the texture that is at play, so does a page come alive with the performativity of the fonts at play. In my opinion, their rhythms and interactions enhance the readability and enjoyment of the text.

<sup>3</sup>There is a series of 20 digitized SX70 photo-documents spaced throughout the text. These do not reflect the “objectness” of the original SX70 prints, their saturated color and richness, just as *they* did not reflect the “objectness” of the original installation (art work) they were endeavoring to capture (it was never the intention to do so), however they do enact a strong “memory,” a (re) capturing that enables a researcher’s eye (i) to consider their s(p)lacement in this document. These SX70s were originally used in the installation to record the temporality of the autoethnographic research methodology, (that of being in the gallery, reworking the piece, and recording the process on a regular basis). Examples of SX70’s in the installation can be seen on p.18, picture # 15. They have come to represent a reflective process as they are both in and of the working praxis of the installation. They can now stand *as* an arts-based component of the original work (and can have further reflective considerations placed upon/within them, indeed another paper calling). However, it is not the intention of this paper to dwell “outside,” but rather to keep my research centered on “the goal ... to enter and document the moment-to-moment, concrete details ... (as) an important way of knowing” as Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 737) encourage us in their explorations of autoethnographic research. If arts-based educational autoethnographic research is based “within” as Slattery (2001) would have us consider then these SX70s are potentially visual reflections of that state, and this text endeavors to “open” just a “crack” this arts based potential.

<sup>4</sup> The digitized SX70s in this article form a part of a performative sculptural work by Alex de Cosson, begun on January 6, 2000, at the Lookout Gallery, Regent College, University of British Columbia Campus, as part of an arts-based research exhibition entitled *A Pied: Exploring Artist/researcher/teacher Praxis*, which culminated in a symposium on the subject, January 29, 2000, at which a working model of this article was presented alongside the original video data on which this article is based.

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