M/other (ArtisT/eacheR/esearcher/unner)

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"The journey is the thing"

-Homer

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is no surprise that the oldest stories that humans share are "journey stories". The Odyssey, the Epic of Gilgamesh, and even the overall shape of The New Testament indicate a voyage of sorts. Later storytellers, recognizing the power of this form, exploited it for mega-blockbuster films and books: Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings captivated the hearts of billions. What is it about this idea of taking a journey that captures our imagination? Carl Jung (1953) claimed that our "collective unconscious" (p. 10) was made up of archetypes, and that certain myths and ideas are shared collectively simply by virtue of being a member of the human race. It is this idea that I, as a Mother, an Artist, a Teacher, and Runner wanted to take up as the focal point of my project. This paper is a reflective journey of me. I write this project as a way to run through the layers of my multiple selves. Because we are human, we understand the power of the journey archetype. We recognize it intrinsically as the purest human story told because it is the metaphor that most clearly illustrates the human condition: the journey is our arc from birth to death. When we read those old myths we are aware that the story that is being told is our story, because everything that we, as humans do, constitutes a way-point for the journey that we began on the day that we came into this world, and which will not end until we take our final breath. Each human life is the story of a journey and so, when we read or visualize or gaze upon other "Journey Stories" we see ourselves reflected back, we make a connection. Human to human, even across thousands of years: Odysseus
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is me, Gilgamesh is me. The journey of Abraham out of the wilderness is my journey.

When we connect as human beings, across the space that separates our individual consciousness, we have done something unfathomable, something remarkable. My journey is artfully and physically expressed through my research, “The Run.” The Run is the artful lens through which I will traverse and connect each of the facets of my selves, while creating a rich understanding of each of these selves and how they affect my life and all of those in it. That is where I see art: human connections through metaphor. This journey, my journey, is also my art – no less a thing than Homer’s epic journey. Like The Odyssey, it is meant to be seen and shared so that other members of the human race might see it, recognize the truths vindicated by it, and find themselves to be reflected. My life, my journey, my art is a performance piece: I live it. As one views The Run (appendix A); gazing upon my journal entries and studying the map of my footsteps (appendix B); they live it too. We connect, and the space between human consciousness is suddenly gone.

Figure 1. The beginning of the epic 8-hour journey.
CHAPTER II
MY JOURNEY

M(Other)

The title M/other, is appropriated respectfully from a collection of essays called, “Mothering a Bodied Curriculum: Emplacement, Desire, and Affect” that was edited by Stephanie Springgay and Debra Freeman (2012). The notion is that the pair m/other, do not have to be separated and exist disjointedly, rather they exist in harmony and conjointly. It was after this reading that I was realizing that I do not and should not separate the fundamental facets of my self that are mother, artist, teacher, researcher, and runner. Our bodies are not separate from the experiences that are occurring. Judith Davidson (2012) explains John Dewey’s reference to the “Body-Mind”, where the body and mind interact and become entangled, and learning emerges through experiences (bodies) thereby “building new structures of knowledge and understanding” (p. 198).

The physical body itself is not separate from the happenings in one’s life. One’s experiences in all facets of life help to shape learning. The idea of me as mother, or m/other (or any mother) is a woman working full time in a professional educational setting (e.g. the art classroom). She has her own children, which she carried to term and then labored. She then nursed them and raised them (and is raising them); all the while working full time. A connection is made in the text about curriculum being like pregnancy and how it changes and evolves through time. I personally relate to the idea at hand. I was a full time m/other (teacher and mother to my son, runner) when I was pregnant with my daughter. My belly grew each month and each week just as the minds of the students were growing. My physical appearance had changed dramatically as my
stomach grew. As my body changed, it became more difficult to navigate through the rows of tables and tall stools in the classroom, subsequently knocking my belly against furniture and bodies. Pregnant pedagogy, as written by Mauldin (2006), refers back to the embodied subject and the larger context from which it is inseparable and encourages one to reflect on our own bodily experiences to inform our educational philosophies. I would argue personally that a woman is never quite as in tune to her body as when she is growing a life inside of her. Innately she listens carefully to subtleties in her body, thus making her more aware of everything that is going on, which does not exclude the students in the classroom. The text encourages the reader to reflect on one’s autobiography, which I found myself doing as I made connections to the literature. Once my daughter was born, I nursed her exclusively for 15 months, doing so required that I take three breaks a day to express milk in the kiln room attached to my classroom. I stored the fresh milk in the refrigerator that was placed in-between the two sinks that my students used to clean materials. I did not keep it a secret, nor did I try to hide the fact that my breast milk was being stored next to the paintbrushes. I was proud to be able to provide sustenance. There was no reason to keep the milk there other than necessity. The refrigerator would only fit in that particular counter where the materials were maintained. Thinking back, it seems fitting as breast milk helps to create healthy babies just as paintbrushes create life on the canvas; both require the mother/artist to assist in the creation and in the process of caring.

Springgay (2012) explains “according to Deleuze, affect is the effect another body has upon my own body, experienced in time and as duration. It is of the body, and as such, produces bodily knowledge” (p. 86). The milk expressed from my breasts is a
M/OThER(ARTIST/EACHER/ESearchER/USSERTER

nurturing substance, much like the substance of knowledge that my students ingest in quantities determined by their own needs.

Figure 2. (2009). A typical training run

Figure 3. (2009). Journal Entry
I have brought two amazing children into the world and have been pregnant four times. Each pregnancy, each labor, and each delivery brought vastly different experiences. I ran consistently throughout my fourth pregnancy (which was my second child). My little lady and I would run from three miles to thirteen miles a day, slowly but surely. Together we pounded the pavement all the way until she was born. At nine months pregnant, we trotted step by step along the rolling hills of an eight-kilometer race, only to bring her into the world a few days later.

My labor with my second child was vastly different than my first. With my first child I had an epidural and physically was numb, however, my heart was full of joy and fear. My second go-a-round was an experience like none other. A genuine aesthetic experience in that despite the pain of a drug free birth, there was joy and beauty that words alone cannot begin to describe. The birth marks the end of the pregnancy but the beginnings of life and of a new beautiful journey.

My two children are the light of my life. They bring me such joy as a person. Sometimes, however, when I need to think... break away... calm down... get fresh air... I will run. Running is the way that I can seek clarity, and renew myself from the day. I am constantly moving in and out of the spaces of my self. “Learning/creating/inquiring in, from, through, and with situations occurs in the in-between spaces: those spaces that make connections that are often unanticipated” ((Beer, et al., 2006, p. 72). It is the unanticipated events in life that make the journey splendid; each of them brings joy and satisfaction and sometimes trials and difficulty. I am a mother all of the time. I teach art and I run, both of which are an integral part of my life. There are no off days from any of
these endeavors. Being a mother and having carried a life enabled me to be more in tune with my body as previously mentioned; this intuitiveness of motherhood empowered me as a runner to be more aware of my physical body and state of mind during runs.

Artists tend to be more reflective and careful thinkers by nature, thus the m/o/ther (artist/eacher/researcher/unner) in me became trained, conditioned, and warmed up to be able to run through my teaching in a fluid and rhythmic way. Completing a run, which I contend is also my art, allows me to reflect on all the parts of my self while making connections with each of those parts. How does one part enhance the other? I now listened to my brain, body and students; changing stride as needed to get back on pace, to speed up or slow down to a calm jog as needed to run through the practice that is my teaching.

Parenting is a journey I have willingly undertaken, and it is probably the one I was least prepared for. As a runner and a teacher I have always felt I understood the nature of the journey, and knew the endpoint; as a parent the endpoint is more amorphous, the journey is longer, and the complications along the way can be more difficult. When I develop a blister while running, or when a class is not grasping the lesson I am teaching, the consequences are similar to complications in parenting, and all are of equal importance. Everything you choose to do ultimately affects every other aspect of your life, and those that are in your life.

Parenting as a journey is more problematic. Like running, or the school year, it too has waypoints, places where I can stop to rest and reflect. It is the end point that is hazy here. Where is that, exactly? Is it when my last child is out of my house, living an independent life? Or does parenting ever end? I find myself feeling melancholic when I
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think of this. Here is a journey that circumscribes my own life. Will I be around to see
this one end, or is the point of parenting the repetition of life cycles so that no one ever
dies? It will take a finer mind than I own to figure that out. I do know, however, that I
prepared for this journey in the usual but important ways. I studied the literature,
understood the rapids and the difficult paths, and internalized the map. I was as prepared
as any parent could be, having read *What to Expect When You’re Expecting*; having taken
birthing classes; having grilled friends of mine who had already begun this journey. But I
was not really ready – just as I was not completely ready for my first marathon, or my
first year of teaching. Research can only pave the way: experience carries you on its
shoulders. When there was colic and sleepless nights I understood what it would mean,
but I did not have the embodied experience necessary to give me perspective. *This too
shall pass*. I know this when I run: blisters, cramps, etc – these things can be overcome. I
have overcome them before. When a situation arises in the classroom and a challenge is
presented, I have the experience to see me through and help me solve the problem.

Figure 4. M/other. Nurturer.
ArtisT

A/r/tography is about each of us living a life of deep meaning enhanced through perceptual practices that reveal what was once hidden, create what has never been known and imagine what we hope to achieve (Beer, et al., 2006). The ideas presented through A/R/tography are of interest to me as an art educator, artist, and as someone currently invested in researching the movement in-between these practices as a means to document the journey and practices of my life. Rita Irwin (2006) explains “if we conceive of researching, teaching, and art-making as activities that weave in and through one another – an interweaving and intraweaving of concepts, activities and feeling – we are creating fabrics of similarity and difference (p. 28). This is precisely what my run, my art, and journey represent. The Run, as an art form works in concert with my teaching and mothering. It integrates knowing, doing, and meaning as Irwin describes (p. 31). By allowing my mind and body to fall into a state of physically induced clarity and forward moving action, all other parts of my life seem to make sense when I run. The fibers of the tapestry of my selves become entangled and the lines between them blurred. Each area is enhanced due to this interweaving because of the clarity achieved in the body and mind of the physical act of moving my body through space. As the boundaries become blurred, I, as the artist/teacher am living in Métissage and may then share the newfound understanding that occurs in that third space (p. 33). “Where two would be inclined to dialogic opposition, a third space offers a point of convergence – yet respect of divergence – where differences and similarities are woven together” (Irwin, 2006, p. 29). “Métissage is the language of the borderlands. The barriers and borders become strategically erased, metaphorically as an act of the métissage” (p. 29).
M/OTHER(ARTIST/EACHER/ESSEARCHER/UNNER)

The journey motif is an apt one for me for many reasons. I identify myself as a runner. I don’t golf; I don’t scrapbook; I don’t spend endless hours on the phone – I arrange my life around running so that it becomes as essential to what I do as teaching, mothering, or anything else. The boarders between all of these things are eradicated and none of these parts of me can be replaced; the run being the key piece that aids in weaving the parts of my life into one beautiful tapestry. If not for the opportunity to run, everything else I do would suffer: I could not parent as effectively if I could not take the time to break away and have a mind-cleansing run; I would be an inferior teacher if I did not have this time to align my thoughts and think forward about lesson plans, and think backwards to assess what might have gone right (or wrong) in yesterday’s lessons; and some of my finest ideas for personal art have come about after several miles of running, when my mind and my spirit become aligned as my heart-rate, my breathing, and the flex and pulse of muscle create the rhythm that shamans recognize as necessary for communing with the eternal. So I run, and by running, I create a personal journey that takes me from one point to another in both my mothering and my teaching practices.
Figure 5. This is a journal entry to document time conversions for several of my student athletes’ workouts; as well as an experimentation of watercolor to complete a study of a flower seen during a run.

A/R/tography, as a form of living inquiry, incorporates the transformative practices of action research and autoethnography. "It combines and unites the visual and the textual, allowing a doubling of meaning to emerge from the art and the writing, which is distinct and complementary" (p. 119). As Laurie Eldridge (2012) notes, "I [used] visual autoethnography [to] create a collaged work of art, and then [used] that collage as a prompt for my reflection on my curriculum and teaching practice. My reflection is woven into the wider culture of art education, and distinctions between the cultural and the personal become blurred as I change focus from looking backwards and forwards, inwards and outwards" (p. 70).
Figure 6. The knot as a visual of Eldridge's quote (see p. 70). This is an entry into my personal visual journal that I shared with my art students in order to teach them value and shading.

The art piece that I have created is the journey of myself as M/other (Artist/eacher/erearcher/unner). I created a short film to document the physical run as a performance piece. As I ran through the school day, the boundaries between runner, artist, and teacher overlapped to create new meaning; a living métissage. "Métissage is a metaphor for artist-researcher-teachers who integrate these roles in their personal and professional lives" (Irwin, 2006, p. 30). "A/r/t as métissage is a powerful metaphor because it helps us in "experiencing and understanding one thing in terms of another" (Richardson, 2000, p. 926). By experiencing the act of running I am able to reflect on mothering and teaching, thereby generating new understandings about each of these things. "Through comparison we create" (Irwin, 2000, p. 30). By making the comparison
b\textit{etween} the artistry of running/teaching/mothering, I carefully assemble a new tapestry to create a picture of the whole \textit{me}. I create a performance of selves.

\textit{Performance Run}

In a feat of endurance and passion, I performed an artwork that illustrates the parts of myself coming together to create a visual metaphor for curriculum in art education. There is a point A and a point B and the path between the two are vast and varied; multiple routes may be traversed with each of them being considered correct; just as in teaching. The weather was overcast and mild. The temperatures varied that day from 50 degrees to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. According to forecasts, the possibility of rain stood at 50 percent. I reflected, by documenting my thoughts into a recording device, that "this is going to suck" but I was also thinking about how well it relates to all that teachers and mothers go through. Not every day will be ideal, and sometimes you must run in the rain. The plan was to run for the length of the school day, which was 7:15 to 2:48. I began the journey at 7:00 am and I ended at exactly 3:00 pm. The night prior I laid out my clothing, shoes, fuels, and other tools to necessitate my journey; much akin to laying out the materials one may need in order to facilitate the day's art lesson. The twelve minute and two second film is to be projected onto a large-scale map that I hand plotted and painted onto primed canvas post run. Figure 7 indicates how the artwork is displayed. As you watch the movie you will note the split screen (see Appendix A). On the left is \textit{me} and my run. It is an assemblage of the various video clips that I recorded over the course of the day that show my feet and body in forward movement. It shows my mind reflecting by me actually thinking out loud. The sounds of breathing steadily are
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heard as well as the rhythm and cadence of my footsteps, and the footsteps of my mentor whom joins six hours into the run. At one point the sounds of a car enters as a loud crescendo that peaks at forte then those sounds fade into a decrescendo and finally into a legato and gentle sounds of my feet gently striding on the rubberized track surface. On the right is a series of images that come at you in fast flashes, various fragments of the various aspects of Me. They rush at you, repeating the same fragments so that they begin to blend together and create a shape that is meant to indicate the whole me, a shape that is created from the coming together of these fragments. Taken separately they may not mean much, but repeated at speed they blend the way pinwheels blend colors and shapes into a unified whole.

*Figure 7* The map with projections of the film
Figure 8. A still from the film.

The run itself takes place in my hometown of Winder, Georgia. We begin journeys with origin stories and just as Odysseus’ origin is Ithaka, my own origin is this small town equidistant to Athens and Atlanta. It is here that I became who I am. I parent here; I run here; I teach here. I wanted my run to reflect these aspects of my life. My run begins and returns to Winder-Barrow High School (WBHS). Having graduated from WBHS in 2001, I was a product of the school, I completed my student teaching at the school in 2007, and I began my career as an art educator here in 2007. Joseph Campbell (2004) wrote in *Hero with a Thousand Faces* that the hero’s journey is always circular (p. 29). It is only fitting that my journey, my performance, should physically end at WBHS as well. Like Odysseus, I return home to my classroom, with stories to tell.
R/eseacher

As teachers of art, we try to get our students to find beauty in their surroundings, in their experiences, and in their lives; so as an artist I considered running to be a medium of art after reflecting upon my own experiences, surroundings, and life. With every step I take and will take, I am creating a work of art. Identifying with how I am situated within the rhizomatic curriculum that is my life as a M/other (artist/teacher/researcher/unner) can best be explained through the writings of Pinar (2000), Eisner (2003), and Deleuze & Guittari (1987). Pinar (2000) explains that within the realm of education, "curriculum ceases to be a thing and it is more than a process. It becomes a verb, an action, a social practice, a private meaning and a public hope... curriculum becomes by product of our labor, changing as we are changed by it" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 2000, p. 848). This impacts me as an educator in that while I am on a mind-cleaning run I am able to reflect on my day, life, and teachings and apply them to my craft.

A teacher's life is full of waypoints arranged in the calendar year. We take a year's journey, each year based on seasonal changes. When late summer comes around again, we prepare for that journey, planning what we will need to complete it safely; by Christmas we are half way finished and are then able to look cautiously to the end point; in the spring we have hit our stride and the newly green trees, the flowering Georgia dogwoods, are indicators that the year's journey is nearly finished. Like a runner coming around the final turn, we sense the temporal end of the journey. These waypoints give us something to focus on as we push ahead. They are targets and, at the same time, they are places where we can pause, catch a second wind, and push on again.
I never run without preparing: stretching, eating right, and hydrating. I understand how to begin a journey. Every journey begins with that first step, and usually you are of two minds about it: you are excited to begin and get where you are going; but at the same time you are intimidated. Am I up for it this time? It is going to be a long journey; do I really want to do this? Do I have a choice? The first fifteen minutes or so are always difficult but if one has enough experience, he/she pushes through it. Over the years I have gained that perspective. It is true in teaching as well. As the summer draws to a close and the calendar for the coming school year is published, I can see how far I will have to go to get finished. Sometimes it is daunting: looking at where spring break falls in the calendar when it is August and I am attending my first day of pre-planning can be disheartening – but only if you have no experience and no perspective. When I run, I set waypoints for myself, places along the trail that tell me I am completing important aspects of my journey: when I get to the dam, I'll be a quarter of the way done.

Figure 9. The dam in Fort Yargo state park. A quarter of the way into my journey.

It is true for teaching, too: I can look at Halloween and Thanksgiving Break as waypoints. And it is important to my layered sense of being that I share this calendar with my children. Our lives blend in this journey – our waypoints are exchanged. We all look forward to summer, and the journey's end, with similar anticipation. Being a runner and a
coach of the sport of running is an integral part of my day and life, while sharing a part of myself with my runner-athletes. Steve Prefontaine was one of the great runners and was a part of the boom of running in the 1970s. Tragically, he died early in life, but in 24 short years he was able to contribute greatness and inspiration to the sport. He said:

Some people create with words or with music or with a brush and paint. I like to make something beautiful when I run. I like to make people stop and say, ‘I’ve never seen anyone run like that before. It’s more than a race, it’s a style. It’s doing something better than anyone else. It’s being creative’. (Jordan, 1997, p. 112)
Figure 10. In response to my student-athlete’s state race motivational quote, and due to Steve Prefontaine’s inspiring career, I created this sketch and posted the progress of the drawing to Instagram. I included his quote that refers to running being a creative act much like artists use a paint brush. I find the dialogue that was created to be interesting because it is bringing the mothers, artists, runners, and others into a discussion about my artwork.

One of my art student-athletes was sent this Prefontaine quote by her father just prior to the state race. I was struck by this quote in such a way that my eyes and mind were open to the fact that running is an art form. There is something about my unique artistic fingerprint – in my mothering, teaching, and in my running. These parts represent my creative voice; all of which are meant to be shared, heard, and gazed upon. When my students emerge from the classroom they will have hopefully gleaned what I have taught them. They will have their own knowledge and the tools with which to create their own journey and their own story, which is powerful. It is a gift, a form of creativity and knowledge.

French philosophers “Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) describe rhizomes through the conceptual image of crabgrass that “connects any point to any other point” (p. 21), growing in all directions. Through this image they stress the importance of the middle by disrupting the linearity of beginnings and endings” (Irwin et al., 2006, p. 4). Through this imagery I was compelled to create a visualization of my curriculum.

Deleuze and Guattari perfectly describe how running, as a rhizomatic and performative action, moves me through my day. The act of running is a process. No one
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starts out running 50-mile ultra marathons. A runner begins slowly and gradually over
time gains mileage, speed, and endurance. Comparatively, the act of teaching is gradual;
one assesses and reassesses lesson after lesson, day after day, and year after year to
become better at the craft. Running is social in that run clubs gather to traverse the earth
together in camaraderie to enhance one another’s lives and skills. Teaching is social
because teachers plan together in order to best achieve a common goal: success and
growth of our students. Teachers are in communication with not only teachers under the
same roof, but at meetings at a county and district levels. Teachers attend weekend long
conferences to take part in workshops and share ideas.

Runs are also completed independently in order to gain the mental strength and
toughness that it takes to run for 12 hours at a time; yet it becomes public as the runner
trains and races outside, and on treadmills, for public consumption. As new milestones
are set and met, those around the runner become inspired. The curriculum of my life can
be, as Prefontaine alluded to in his quote, a matter of moving my students, colleagues,
and the community to say, “I’ve never seen anyone teach like that before!” “Curriculum
is a means for developing the mind” (Eisner, 2003 p. 72) and in the context of me as
M/other (artist/eachER/researcher/unner), a means of developing these multiple selves.
The selves are entangled and intertwined, forming a tapestry of knowledge; as the parts
seem to cross paths in unexpected ways and, as such, respectfully alter and help grow the
next path, similar to that of a rhizome. The image of the rhizome is an interesting one. A
rhizome, “in botany, is a horizontal, underground plant stem capable of producing the
shoot and root systems of a new plant”
(http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/501483/rhizome). Similarly to how art
education curriculum is approached, the curricula of my life as M/other (artist/eacher/esearcher/unner) is aligned with the de-and restructuring of curricula and the movements through which teachers “take the initiative to shift the locus of pedagogy from the formal art classroom to a space between the school, [and] the context of their art classes and the things that interest them and their students” (Wilson, 2003, p. 225).

Through the construction of my art, I intertwined my passion for running, art making, and teaching; therefore closing the gap between the “spaces”. “Deleuze and Guattari suggest that once a map is grasped, tracings across the map need to occur in order to resist dualistic thinking” (Irwin et al. 2006, p. 4). I took hold of this idea in order to visually represent the metaphor of The Run. The map is made of actual tracings of each of the runs completed through the semester as indicated by the black lines (see Figure 9) as well as the performance Run, as is indicated in red in Figure 9. A living métissage, as I generated individual tracings of my actual footsteps of the Run. I documented the journey on the app Runkeeper. The old became the new. “By inspecting the breaks and ruptures that become invisible when the more stable tracing is laid upon the always becoming map, we are in a position to construct new knowledge, rather than merely propagate the old” (Alverman, 2000, p. 17). I was able to access a map of each run that I embarked upon. I began a new phase of the journey of creating a larger map from each individual tracing. It is no longer just a series of single runs that stand alone as the lines are blurred and the fragments come together to visually describe Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of the rhizome.
ArtisT/eacheR

Upon entering grad school I had a vision of collaborating with other like-minded art educators in order to generate, grow, develop, and implement ideas. My main intent was to research more meaningful ways to incorporate art history into the classroom. Entering my first year as a teacher in 2007 I knew exactly what I wanted to focus on: classroom management. I am a petite woman, 4’ 11 ¾” to be exact, and so I wanted to ensure that had demanded control of my classroom, in other words have “presence”. The classes I teach are Comprehensive Art I through VIII, so the potential is there that I will teach a student every semester of his/her high school career. I inherited an amazing art program, one that I could put my own personal touch on. The art room was one that I had taken art in as a student just five years prior, and it was the very same room that I completed my student teaching assignment in. It was not just “the” art room, but “my” art room. The students that I taught were students that I had worked with as an in-service teacher and they were all used to a “way” of doing things, so in an attempt to keep the order and sameness I kept some of the curricular elements in tact. One such element was the bell starter, the activity was completed at the very beginning of class to get the students settled, engaged (the engagement piece was lacking) and focused, and it was simply called “art history” by the introductory level Art I students. During art history an image would be projected along with credit line information: the artist’s name, nationality, birth and death date, title, media, subject matter, size and location. The students were taught to examine the art work following the Feldman method of art criticism: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. The entire process seemed out of date and did
not leave much room for the students to actually connect with the artworks, but what it
did do was condition the students to come in, put their belongings on the blue bookshelf,
and then gather around the image to begin art history (getting the students to gather was
always like pulling teeth!). Once settled, the students would copy the credit line
information, sketch the artwork and then write a brief description, analysis, interpretation,
and evaluation (which I later phased out). The students became bored with this over the
course of 18 weeks. The question that I asked myself over and over is how can I include
looking at art as a starter while making it engaging and dialogic? The answer became
clear as I created the map of my run on the floor of my art room.

I have created a visual example of my interpretation of a rhizome as it connects to
art education by mapping out my unplanned and unanticipated journey. I created this in
my classroom post-run. The students enrolled in my class became engaged in the process
of recreating my journey in a concrete and tangible form – the map. Those of us who
create art understand that each act of creation describes a journey-arc from inspiration, to
conclusion. When I am creating something, I am away on a journey that has its own twist
and turns, as unpredictable as parenting or teaching.
Figure 11. Tracing of each individual run I had embarked on throughout the semester. I am beginning to piece them together on my whiteboard.

Figure 12. Process 1. After tracing each run of my semester individually, I began to piece the runs together to form a large, more cohesive map.
Figure 13. The map of the 8 hour, 37 mile journey.
Figure 14. The finished tracing of the maps. The runs completed during the semester are in black. The Performance Run is indicated in red. This is attached to my white board in my classroom.

Implications for the Classroom

When an artist of any age or ability picks up the brush or the crayon, or takes clay in hand, he/she is taking up the pilgrim’s staff and setting off for a voyage that is much about self-discovery and foraging a new pathway in order to fulfill ones appetite for knowledge. In creating this journey on the tile floor of my classroom, my students and I were able to generate discussions about the journey, experience, and aesthetics. Through the process of self-discovery and creating art based on my journey I was able to relive my journey through my map-mapping. It was beautiful. It was an experience. So the topic of inquiry is then: what does this mean for my art classroom?

As mentioned before, I can teach students up to eight times throughout their high school career. Embedded in my curriculum is the process of engaging in and discussing works of art, in addition to creating art. In doing this over the years, as students work towards the development of a rich repertoire of artistic knowledge, one of the things that we discuss along the way is aesthetics. Aesthetics is complex. A person without a formal background or grounding in aesthetics may be inclined to say that aesthetics is the beauty within something, whether it is within a work of art, a beautiful sunset, or the way the ocean retreats back into itself after it crashes on the shore. In studying the term more closely, I have come to realize that aesthetics encompasses much more than matters of beauty. Aesthetics and the aesthetic experience are guided by one’s own experiences in life and with the work of art itself (Barrett, 2008; White, 2009). It is the dialogue that one
M/OTHER(ARTIST/EACHER/ESEARCHE/RUNNER)

has with oneself and with the artwork that generates thoughtful interpretation (Barrett, 2008). I also have gleaned that aesthetic experiences are not always positive, happy, or gleeful and can be an experience that moves one to tears due to overwhelming sadness, anger, or fear. The point being that an aesthetic experience is a feeling, whether it is a positive one or not (White, 2009).

I was able to share with my students exactly how map-making became an experience in itself. And my classes were a part of the process. As I re-lived my 37 mile, 8 hour run, my students would ask questions and anticipate where my feet would take me next. One student spoke of Fort Yargo State park and her memories as a child fishing with her father and grandfather. An artwork can generate a response in a person that is hard to explain, which is where the study of phenomenology comes into play.

Phenomenology, fathered by Edmund Husserl, is a self-critical method for reflexively examining and describing objects and events in the world-as-experienced (White, 2006). Husserl’s idea is relevant for the classroom and how a student can (or why a student) relates to a work of art. White (2009) writes, “Previous experiences are embedded in memory, and conscious or otherwise, provide the foundation for current perceptions. They are embodied in each new experience. These experiences provide the basis for our instinctive striving toward meaning” (p. 45). It is this meaning that we ought to teach for.

The desire to do so is innate. So when a student was able to relate to my journey, my art, via the journey of creating the map, I was giving them insight into their own lives. We must also, then, understand that all students, with all that they bring to the artwork based on prior knowledge, experience, and exposure to art, will intimately shape the way they view a work of art. And, as a result will likely revisit the art work in their minds if not in
actuality, for the rest of their lives. It is that type of rich meaning making that students should be exposed to. This type of life-long response would not happen if it were not for the aesthetic experience. Meanings are not static, good-for-all-time, instead they are ever evolving.

Henry (2010) writes, "The aesthetic experience is a complex, emotional response that can focus perception, engage viewers, and lead to greater insight and understanding" (p. 43). This quote touches on several aspects of art education that I find particularly important. Reflecting, sharing, making connections, being affected by symbolism (also being able to generate personal symbols), and to understand the role that context plays helps to support our work with students in the classroom. As I was in the process of meticulously piecing together the fragments of my run in order to create a map, the students would be engaged in the process as well. Several offered to sit and help hold a section of the tracing paper while I transferred it to the canvas. Dewey (1934) says, "art denotes a process of doing or making... Every art does something with some physical material, the body or something outside the body, with or without the use of intervening tools, and with a view to production of something visible, audible, or tangible" (p. 53). Part of being an artist is learning to erase that symbolic perception; at the same time part of being a student of art is to be able to use symbols meaningfully. It is a fine line then, of wanting students to open their minds to having an experience but being aware of what they are observing and why they feel the way the do. I was particularly intrigued by what Brooke Hofsess (2013) referred to in a graduate course discussion, as the articulate artist. As an educator of art, I feel it is of essence that the student artist be able to create works of art that are meaningful as well as being able to reflect on his/her decision making; thus
M/OTHER(ARTIST/EACHER/ESSEACHER/UNNER)

being able to experience the process from the planning stages to the final exhibition of a work, which would include a well written and informative artist statement. The entire process is the experience. The students learned that the final map was not the only end result.

The process of planning, running, documenting, creating are all embodiments of the art work. In terms of looking at and viewing art, one is better equipped at doing so in having practiced it. Inherent in my comprehensive studio art curriculum is the act of looking at a work of art. This looking generates responses that always surprise me as the teacher, even if it is a work that I show to three classes per year. The responses change and vary due to the students’ own knowledge and experiences. Every viewer is entering into the experience with his/her own memories that ultimately will shape the experience. The ultimate goal is the “aesthetic experience.” In discussing the aesthetic experience with my Art I class in regards to creating my map, a student felt inclined to share an experience he had with his family while spelunking (caving). He described the beauty and the awe he felt and in turn his explanation of the experience enabled many in the class to grasp the concept of the aesthetic experience and to be more open to the idea of it occurring while observing art.

One approach that could be successful in attempting to erase the symbolic perceptions of an artwork in order to look at it with a formalist eye is to show art examples upside down. I have done this many times in my art teaching practice. This way, students are not so quick to make symbolically perceptive comments as they are seeking to deconstruct the painting’s elements and principles. To see the symbol is an achievement of the mind, but it is often helpful to spend time exploring the colors, lines,
shapes, balance, unity, variety and so forth to simply examine and take in the works formal qualities. Formalism, as defined by Terry Barrett (2008), is “the belief that aesthetic values can stand alone and that judgments of art can be detached from other considerations such as ethical or social ones” (p. 85). The importance is on composition or abstract qualities that pay attention to the arrangement of visual elements regardless of their expressive content. Once this process has unfolded, the artwork may be turned right-side-up for further exploration. I feel that this process enables the students to become more apt creators of art since they are equipped of approaching looking at and creating art in a more sophisticated way. There are several methods that could be employed. The goal is ultimately that the students are spending quality time engaged in the work of art generating dialogue. Once students have worked independently with the artwork, they could pair up to discuss the interpretations. My goal for them is to see that the process of the entire art piece is as beautiful as the end result.

Barrett (2003) writes that ‘multiple interpretations can inform individual interpretations’ and cause the viewer to ‘reflect more, consider further’” (p. 208). In my experience, students have a difficult time articulating what they think an artwork -means-. The teacher, as facilitator of a discussion of an artwork, should ensure that the students are comfortable and are confident in the act of looking at a work of art. This is why I feel the process of creating my artwork was so valuable and authentic for my students’ learning. Students will learn to -see- a work through the process of looking, thinking, discussing, reflecting, and sharing; and in doing so the art historical works that the students have been studying will hopefully have more relevance to the student’s lives.

I am excited to approach looking at art in a fresh way, and in such a way that the
students take ownership of the process, and do not feel like if they do not know the artist’s intentions then it is just wrong. Ultimately I hope that my students will experience the works in a new way and take everything they learned with them for the rest of their lives. The discussions will invite multiple interpretations and in turn invites the student to generate a deeper understanding or appreciation for the work of art that did not exist prior. Henry (2010) says viewing art is an “acquired skill” (p. 41). She underscores that “there is always potential for ‘informed experience’ to positively impact a student’s perception beyond the classroom” (p. 41). I will echo what I mentioned above: it is important that as a teacher I am instilling the confidence to look at works of art in a meaningful way and to deconstruct the work in order to generate understanding and meaning.

Any lesson that leads to greater inquiry is bound to be successful. In discussions of my project, the questions generated by my students ranged from asking about the run itself to asking about art that influenced me. One even commented, “You are like Forrest Gump!” so the connection to compare me to something they understood, a character in a movie. My Art II class watched the video together. The students in this class are mainly 9th and 10th graders with a few upper classmen in the mix. As we watched and listened to my feet pounding in a rhythm, I talked them through the video as it was playing as to not lose their attention. I recorded the dialogue as well. I said to them: “I did the last thirty minutes on the track; so while y’all were being dismissed from school, I was doing “this”. It was the longest thirty minutes of my life, seven and a half hours went by like it was minutes, but this last thirty was long, long, long.”

Student: “How far did you run and how far did you run on the track?”
Me: “37 miles total. 30 minutes was on the track, but it was slow so I am not really sure.

Student: When is your daughter’s birthday?

Me: Eliza’s birthday? It is next week, December 11th.

Me: “…so this is the end of the video, my husband came and started filming right at the end. The second it turned 3:00, I stopped running and began walking so that is what you see here”

Students: <break into applause>

To this point the discussion was very surface and had not delved into the richness of the project. I then say to them “that I wanted to show you this for a couple of reasons. The title says that I am a teacher, artist, mother, researcher, and runner. So this video ties everything together into one cohesive piece. I told you the other day that Duchamp was the father of Conceptual art and that it was works like “The Fountain” that enabled the concept of art to be about an idea. Without his gesture, works like mine would not exist today. So my project is a lot of ideas combined into one piece. There is the run, the documentation of the run, there is me showing it to you now, there was me plotting the map and then painting the map, and now the projection of the film onto the map.” I then explained how what I teach in art is not based on a linear format; that the curriculum can and does evolve based on the needs of the classes and on the needs of individual students. I explained that I was pursuing my masters in art education and how all the parts of myself are intertwined. With all that being said, the class was at a point in the semester in which they designed their own projects based off of their own individual experiences and interests. In building the rapport with the students and opening up as an artist and a
teacher, ultimately I found that most were quite confident to think outside the box when it was their turn to create.

Barrett (2008) references the aesthetician Morris Weitz, who suggested that we consider art to be an ‘open concept’ (p. 2). The educational implications of this are considerable. Students need to be exposed to a variety of art, although clearly not all types of art will reach out to every person and every taste, but the exposure may lead to a more open mindset. Barrett, invoking Weitz (2008), argues that art is a living concept that cannot and ought not to be pinned down by one or a set of conditions (p. 2). Barrett goes on to say that the “question is not whether it is art, but whether it is good art, thus leading the viewer to accept it as a work of art, and then to decide whether it is a good work and by what criteria” (p. 3). Art and the experience of looking at art is very much a personal endeavor. I deliberately show the students Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain, from 1917 so that they may gain the understanding of why my art is “art” by today’s standards. I give them the historical context of the Fountain and the monumentality that the act of displaying this object had on the art world from that point forward, to provide them with the knowledge for them to be able to generate an informed opinion on the work. The idea of the definition of art being ever changing is, for me, the most evident in Duchamp’s gesture. From that moment in time forward, art and the concepts that drive art have been boundless. My plan is the art. My map is the art. My run is the art. The discussion of the project is the art. My video is the art. All of these things denote an experience for all involved. By exposing students to the entire process that I used to create my ideas, they too can learn and create using ideas relevant to them rather than using only historical content or information that a teacher deems important. By focusing on a larger idea the
students are generating meaning and creating a sort of self-narrative. This creation of a personal narrative is something to teach for so that students can begin to consider their own journey. I feel much the same way when I look at a blank piece of paper or a lump of clay. The possibilities are endless but sometimes that’s daunting and I have to make myself get going. Dorothy Parker once said, “I hate writing but I love having written.” It’s the getting-going that can be hard, but again that takes experience and practice. I exercise discipline to make myself turn off the computer and take up the brush; I do not allow myself to be deterred by the size of the journey ahead of me. Likewise, the students then realize that they too can create meaningful and successful works of art if they focus on what matters to them and engages their personal interests.

The goal of the art curriculum, in terms of aesthetics and having an experience relies on the teacher instilling confidence, the students being receptive, and the students desire to want to know more. Rich meaning-making should occur in the classroom from every angle. It is not just in looking at a work of art that generates meaning; it is the multi-layered approach to making art. Thinking, sketching, revising, reflecting, creating, journaling, interpreting, deconstructing, analyzing, and critiquing are the facets of the art curriculum that make it magical and meaningful.

**Community: An audience**

I wanted to reach a larger audience in my artwork. I created a film of The Run. It is intended to be projected onto the larger map that I created. Towards the end of the film you will note that Jim, a friend from the running community, joins me. You do not see him but you hear him. Jim was like a mentor to me that day. Upon embarking on feat of endurance, I had called upon my running friends to join me. I knew that I would need
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someone to “carry” me the last miles of the journey. Jim was that person. All that I do as
Mother (AristT/eacheR/esearcher/unner) requires communication with my peers.
Odysseus’s story is only made relevant by his need to share it with others – I too need to
share my life with those around me. What is performance art without an audience to
perform before? Odysseus understood that. When he washed ashore onto the island of the
Phaecians and shared the story of his journey, he brought them (and by extension, us)
into the story as willing participants and sounding boards. Without the audience the
sound dies. Without a resonating board, there is no echo and the sound is swallowed up in
the void. My peers at school, the community of mothers, other artists, and runners – all of
these people exist in a matrix that allows my story to resonate. I am Odysseus and my
story needs to be told.

My story has also been told in the larger, more connected context of social media,
i.e. Instagram. Through this outlet, my audience becomes every member of each of the
mother, artist, and teacher, researching, and running communities. By documenting the
process and the journey in real time on Instagram, the aforementioned communities
became active participants in the performance. Each member is brought together in a
social interaction in which the varying participants engage in dialogue. The following
images and comments creates a new dialogue which represent the visual and verbal that
takes on a new context:
Figure 15. Preparation; akin to lesson planning. Commentators and likers are runners, former students of mine, art education students, and gym owners.
Figure 16. Mile one of what would end up being 37 miles.

Figure 17. Somewhere in Fort Yargo State park. Hour 3.5
Figure 18. #trailrunning #peace

Figure 19. Mile 20
Figure 20. Dam run

Figure 21. Somewhere around mile 33.
gakstatter, 1000endlessnights, aminn00, betheats2run, cdr58, wdawson619, katti0615

apmanders Tired but happy. 8 hours later.
apmanders #ultrarunning
gakstatter Wow that is awesome!

Figure 22. Tired but happy. 8 hours later.
Figure 23. The space. My classroom.

Figure 24. The map. Pieces.
Figure 25. The second map

Figure 26. Red = 8 hour run. Black = a semester of running.
CHAPTER III

Conclusion

How has the evolution of me as a M/other (ArtisT/eacheR/esearcheR/runner) taken place, and why? Each of these practices and identities have been a deliberate decision that ultimately led to the next. In running my research, I have realized that I do not and should not separate these things, which is enlightening, simply because all of them represent me; and as I mentioned, each has directly affected the other in an unplanned, rhizomatic way. Throughout my journey of the study of art education as a graduate student, it became clear to me how each of my roles, my “selves” (Walsh, 2001) are intertwined. The question then became: what do I do with all of this information, how do I go about teaching/mothering/coaching/running while making sense of my research?

Authoethnography finds a place and presence for the researcher’s life experiences in order to help us understand how people experience everyday life and explore ways of making sense of life and expressing this knowledge. It is an extension of the researchers’ lives and that knowledge is not linear (Eldridge, 2012). I am able to run through my thoughts, stories, and experiences and share them. I am a teacher all the time. I teach art and I run, both of which are integral parts of my life. I am a mother all of the time. My two children are the light of my life and bring me such joy as a person. I am a runner all of the time. There are no days off from any of these things. Each of them brings me joy and satisfaction and sometimes trials.

When I am running through trails that offer switchbacks and connections to other trails, much like a rhizome I am creating knowledge. I am reflecting and thinking. My
own personal visual journals, images of my Instagram feed that focus on my life as
M/other (artist/eacher/esearcher/unner), memories of my runs long and short and how
more than physical ability is achieved; all to show how each of them works together to
tell my story.

I have created a work of art that not only visually articulates the concept of the
rhizomatic curriculum but is also a map of the performance through which I embarked on
an un-mappable journey. I paced myself, mile after mile, as a gesture of growth and of
the evolution of me as m/other. As I ran, my body, feet and mind worked in synch to
move, grow, think, and wonder. I was evolving. Every part of me was together as one in
that moment, no longer separated by titles. I became a performance example of what I
believe myself to be: a M/other (artist/eacher/esearcher/unner). That day I did not have
a set route planned; I just put on my shoes; took a recording device to record my thoughts
and went. Reflections of the journey are evident through pictures, art, and writing. The
journey is more than the literal miles I traveled on foot for the duration. My audience
may quench his/her thirst by viewing images created by the artist/eacher that I have
become. The end result, the finish line, is a rich description of how I have made sense of
my journey as a M/other (artist/eacher/esearcher/unner).

The finish line marks the end of the event you are running. While it is an ending
point, it also is a new beginning. A race time is generated. Perhaps the time is a personal
record. Your time is dependent upon several key things; some which are in the runners
control and some are not. Perhaps it was a bad day, possibly is was a race comparable to
many others, maybe the weather conditions were less than desirable, perhaps your
clothing created a blister, the course could have been hilly or pancake flat, the time could
be affected because of the fuel you consumed during the race or the quality of the meals prior to the event, maybe there was a fellow runner that upped the completion or just maybe you were the fastest person and no one was there to push you to be faster. ... From that official race time a new goal is set. The runner reflects on the race and on the performance in order to analyze how to improve, thus allowing a new plan to be laid for future training. What went right? What went wrong? What new goals have been set? This ends up overlapping nicely with life as a M/other (artist/eacher/esearcher/unner) as I have defined it.

I find my rhythm. In my film, you might note how the syncopated beat of my breathing matches my footsteps, creating an aural pattern for the run. When I push past the opening hesitation of a journey I know there will be that golden moment when I hit my stride. Those who see me running at this point cannot see the hesitation and excuses that haunted me when I was trying to not run; all they see is a runner finding rhythm. I come to forks in the road and make decisions, improvising all the way because I can, because I have done so in the past, because I am self-actualized and self-realized.

Sometimes I (smugly or not) like to get a look at myself as a veteran teacher from a first year teacher's point of view. When I was a first year teacher, I envied the veterans their sense of perspective and that valuable body of experience they had accumulated. Where I was looking forward to the school year with an anticipation that was nearly superstitious because it was all new and frightening, they were relaxed and confident. I'm that teacher now, hitting my stride. I have many years of experience and, while that experience is not all-inclusive, it gives me the perspective necessary to overcome obstacles, to improvise with confidence. I have that same perspective as a
M/OTHER(ARTIST/EACHER/ESSEARCHER/UNNER)

parent too. I know that I have not faced all the challenges that lie before me as a parent; still, I have faced the challenge of colic and toilet training and bullies at preschool. The journey goes on, and even Odysseus, by the time he came to Circe's island, knew that he could meet this new challenge as he met the others. He was not home yet, but he was well prepared to get there.

"The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency" (Emerson, 1841). All journeys are one journey, as Emerson writes. And, seen from a distance, the constant zigzagging of our life's journey looks like a straight line and points to its end. Sometimes in our explorations, journeys, life, and work we zigzag along the way lost or we barrel ahead with zest. We may stumble upon a new and unexpected path. We may fall down. We may loop back to where we began; but in all of this, it is a process of learning and growth and for me, artful living. You will note throughout the film that my outfit changes and the landscape changes. Still, I do not change. I am the same runner at Fort Yargo State Park, or downtown Winder, or the track around Winder-Barrow High School; I am the same mother for each of my children; every piece of art I produce, though disparate, only enhances who I am. Sometimes I think about students past and I wonder, Was that three years ago or five years ago or this year? After awhile the years blend. I have come up with a conceit when thinking about the past: I refer to all things, all past students, as having happened five years ago whether that is true or not. It might as well be true. The essential truth of who they were, or who I am, or the relationship we shared is unchanged. When I see something I painted ten years ago vs. a mixed media piece I produced this
year, they are constant in their expression of the essential me. It does not matter where I run, it matters that I am me.

I am ambivalent about the ending of journeys – I suppose that is because it is implied that this is an ending. It need not necessarily be so, but you cannot escape the feeling of loss even as you achieve closure. Something important has ended and, though it might be repeated endlessly, next year and next year and next year, still there is an end. When the school year comes to an end, I never seem ready. All year long I am looking for that final lap, that final turn around the trail from which I can see the finish line. For whatever reason, it always sneaks up on me and, mixed with the sense of looming accomplishment, I am already mourning the loss of something that defined me. In the final days of school, I am suddenly overcome with ennui so powerful that it seems I will falter. That entire long journey I held strong and now I feel like I could quit, walk the rest of the way – prolong the end point. The sweetness of the end of the year, the triumph of seeing the end of the journey, the completion of a project, the graduation of your own child – all of these are long hoped for results. As each is achieved, we experience it through the vapor of melancholy. Nostalgia sets in before the ship is docked – you are already sharing the stories of the journey with your fellow travelers and you have not even claimed your luggage yet. It is over and yet you are trying to prolong it. Nostalgia is sepia toned: the past has passed and something irretrievable has been set aside. I finish a piece that I have created and already it seems separate from me – I have released it. As my children age and come to points in their lives that allow them to push further on, I feel a sense of loss. I think you see this when at the end of the film when I return to Winder-
Barrow High School. The film copy is shaky, cloudy – a vague melancholy is somehow achieved.

No journey is ever truly completed if it lives on in an audience, an appreciative ear or eye can make that trip go on forever. We have memories, we have shared the trials of the trail, and we have made photos and blogged our triumphs and sent postcards.

When there is an audience, there is life. The journey of my life is captured, however minutely, in this film. I run; I am a mother; I am a teacher; I am an artist. These facets of me blend together harmoniously into a completed shape that does not need to ever end as long as there are people to tell the tale. Odysseus does not die, he is endlessly returning home to Penelope, who awaits him in the bower.
References


M/OTHER(ARTIST/EACHER/ESSEACHER/UNNER)


M/OTHER(ARTIST/EACHER/ESSEACHER/UNNER)


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I have read and agree to the terms of this agreement.

Date: 04-30-15

Name (print): Amanda Marie Partee-Mander

Signature: [Signature]