

Submission for: Arts-based research and artistic research

Title: 125 Studios: Conversation as Medium

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## 125 Artist Studios: Conversation as medium

No longer is the studio seen as belonging to a system, as a space characterized by box-like enclosures, of frames and limits, each assigned a discreet place in some rigid, stable and all-determining structure or order. What system or structure does exist today is more properly described as a network. (Ralyea, 2010, p. 220)

Over the past two years, my doctoral research into artists' studio practices has taken me across Canada from coast to coast visiting 125 artists' (specifically painters') studios. Through in-depth interviews with artists about their artwork, process and communities, and exploration of the studios through photograph documentation, my doctoral research examines the following question: What ways of learning, knowing and meaning-making are generated within the studios of practicing artists as they engage with research, art making and a community of artists?

As an artist and researcher, I approach my research through an artistic lens. Through this research, I examine artistic research of the artists interviewed as well as my own arts-based research methodologies that emerge through my interview methods. Gubrium and Holstein (2003) describe an "active interview" as a dynamic meaning-making process, where meaning is constructed through the active dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. As such the interview is a social encounter that constructs and generates knowledge throughout the process. Their examination of the interview process allows me to view the interview as a creative act that is constructed through the process. As such, my research methodology parallels the artistic processes I discussed with artists. On the one hand, paint is the medium and on the other, conversation is the medium.

As I entered each studio and began talking to the artist and exploring the space, several conversations emerged: conversations between me and each artist; conversations between me and the studio space; conversations between me and their paintings; conversations between paintings; conversations between an artist and their painting. Artists talked about how art making was their way of working through their experiences in the world, and as I listened to their stories, I began to view their thinking process as a web of connections. As I continued on my journey, this web of conversations expanded beyond each artist's own studio as I saw connections form between the artists' stories, ideas, opinions and investigations, creating a giant web weaving together artists and art studios from across Canada and opening up a dialogue between art communities.

In this presentation, I draw from the interviews and studio visits with Canadian artists to examine creative processes and ways of thinking that emerge through art making. Using mapping and collaging as metaphors for both art making and research, I draw from hundreds of hours of conversations with artists and thousands of photographs of studios. I map out connections between the artists' stories and creative processes and bring them together to form a collage of conversations and a poetic trail of stories as each of the artists' narratives weave together. Through this research, I propose that the creative processes that generate artistic research are not singular investigations but rather form an infinite network of conversations and an ever-expanding community of artists and researchers.

## References

- Gubrium, J. & Holstein, J. (Eds.) (2003). *Postmodern Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Ralyea, L. (2010). Studio unbound. Hoffmann, J. (ed.) *The Studio*. London: MIT Press. p. 218-223.