

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching,
Learning and Teacher Education

Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher
Education

January 2004

Traces, Patterns, Texture: In Search of Aesthetic Teaching/Learning Encounters

Margaret A. Macintyre Latta

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Margaret.Macintyre.Latta@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Macintyre Latta, Margaret A., "Traces, Patterns, Texture: In Search of Aesthetic Teaching/Learning Encounters" (2004). *Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education*. 18.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/18>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Traces, Patterns, Texture: In Search of Aesthetic Teaching/ Learning Encounters*

Margaret Macintyre Latta

Art rooms in schools are often found in far-removed basement corners, tucked away at the nexus of numerous hallways. I have taken many such ventures on my way to visit student teachers in art classrooms in my capacity as a teacher educator. Today was not too different. The art room was tucked away in the basement, but students and teachers had temporarily relocated to a nearby room to accommodate some maintenance in the art room. I was particularly struck today by the nature of aesthetic teaching/learning encounters. Its visible presence was not immediately apparent. I found myself in a makeshift room with little visual appeal. But, as 25 grade 4 students entered and got involved in artistic learning, the makeshift classroom transformed into a dynamic learning space, a space that felt productive and energized. I dwelt in this wonder, conversed with it, and found myself reluctant to leave. What was it that I found so attractive and compelling? Was it the same fundamental encounter that many others have identified as the aesthetic?

Notions of the aesthetic have a long, venerable tradition. There, Kant (1790/1952), Schiller (1795/1954), Hegel (1835/1964), Gadamer (1960/1992), and Dewey (1934; 1938), to name but a few, address the human worth of the aesthetic. The location, purpose, and lived world of the knowing subject are addressed from differing perspectives by these thinkers, but all turn to the aesthetic as giving expression to that

* Published (as Chapter 4) in *Pedagogy of Place: Seeing Space as Cultural Education*, edited by David M. Callejo Pérez, Stephen M. Fain, and Judith J. Slater (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 79–96. Copyright © 2004 Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

fundamental encounter between subject and world. It is particularly intriguing to me that these thinkers turn to the aesthetic as a medium that bridges theory and practice and to the arts as exemplary forms that embody these qualities. Kant redirects attention from the objects of experience to the experiencing subjects. Schiller and Hegel continue this search. Gadamer and Dewey remind me that the relationship between subject and world is reciprocal, both changing in the interaction. While exploring how the aesthetic might be embodied in teachers' discourses and discursive patterns and how it might be embodied in students' approaches to learning and in their work, I turn to these traditions. I (re)collect concrete incidents from a variety of classrooms visited in which students and teachers are grappling with taking aesthetic teaching/learning considerations seriously.¹ I then juxtapose these with historical sediments. In so doing, traces, patterns, and texture surfaces that have shaped the identity and purpose of the aesthetic, yielding insights into the creation of aesthetic teaching/learning encounters.

Historical Sediments

Kantian Traces

Through exploring the relationships between subject and world, Kant (1790/1952) concerns himself with human response, the aesthetic experience, rather than with the art object. He struggles against the general notion that art and the aesthetic is unnatural and that the artist is a rare and eccentric individual, having little or nothing in common with others. Kant's use of the word *genius* may at first glance appear to suggest quite the contrary. But he carefully describes genius not as a noun, but as a verb referring to the etymological origin *genie*, meaning *peculiar guardian* and *guiding spirit*. His portrayal brings to my mind a creative attitude, an invitation to free thinking, exploration, and growth. Kant asks us to concentrate on acts of mind rather than on already created objects.

I have observed concentrating upon acts of mind and not end products to be absorbing for some students and teachers. For

example, a grade 8 student. Will, explains his thinking for a humanities class project:

I lost all track of time. I could not believe it was time to pick up for the next class. We were drawing from a still life arrangement of personal objects. The objects chosen are supposed to recall strong memories for us. I have always been very attached to the stuff I brought so it did not take me long to decide what to bring from home for this project. I spent today drawing my composition. I am trying to represent the different textures accurately; like the basketball has a slightly tired look... missing parts of the logo, well used, but still okay; the rock my dad and I found at the top of a mountain is cold, flat, and heavy, with interesting markings. I have really had to examine each piece. Actually, I have probably never paid each piece so much attention. (Interview #2, Jan. 19, 1999)

Will's voice and body language represent the process as pleasurable. A language for describing the objects is fostered from the close observation drawing exercise, and this, in turn, feeds back into the visual portrayal as Will purposely adapts and changes his work and thinking. Will's teacher, Lorraine, comments:

I do not know how to reconcile this kind of richness and complexity with outcome-based objectives except to say that in doing things this way we have explored the writing objectives that were the curriculum goals, but also made it possible to cover a lot of other territory as well. I find it fascinating to see how students loop back to previous literary or art encounters and link them with new ideas that are emerging... .Emerging is perhaps, the keyword here. The interactions seem to result in ideas moving to more complexity. This grappling in-between seems to be a way for individuals to discover meaning, a way to make sense of things that integrate mind and body. The interface is interesting. (Artifact #16, April 8, 1999)

Lorraine's attentiveness as a teacher tells her students make learning connections that really matter to them through such involvement. Her use of the words "loop back" and "emerging" places value on unpredictable patterns of thought. Lorraine searches for ways to foster learning encounters that allow all students to come to appreciate, acknowledge, and utilize such patterns of thought. Lorraine struggles to make room for this way of thinking. An imaginary space needs to be created in students' understandings and a physical space needs to be created that is supportive and

complementary. Marcuse (1978) talks of the aesthetic being such a location:

A designated imaginative space where the experience of freedom is recreated. At times it is a physical entity, a site—a painting on the wall, an installation on the floor, an event chiseled in space and or time, a performance, a dance, a video, or film. But it is also a psychic location, a place in the mind where one allows for a recombination of experiences, a suspension of the established rules that govern daily life, a denial of gravity. It challenges the monopoly of the established reality by creating. Fictitious worlds in which one can see mirrored that range of human emotion and experience that does not find an outlet in the present reality.... It is the reminder of what a truly integrated experience of oneself in society might be. (p. 41)

But, this sense of the aesthetic as an internal/external location seems difficult to create and sustain in classrooms. Lorraine explains:

It is exhaustive at times and at other times exhilarating. There are so many tensions that interrupt and disrupt the flow in my classroom. Sometimes its the pressures of grading and report card periods. Sometimes its the kids themselves—I get frustrated with them, as some just want me to provide the easy way or right answer. Sometimes it's the classroom itself—the lack of supplies, the lack of storage, the lack of physical space for so many bodies to be creative. (Interview #4, Feb. 16,1999)

Students also confront the difficulty of the aesthetic as an internal/external creation. Bruce, a grade 7 student, comments:

At times I find the projects overwhelming—a lot to think about and keep organized in my mind. That is when I miss a tighter structure. It was definitely easier not to think as hard. In this classroom you must be willing to take risks and do things differently. Most of the time I like that the learning is not so unpredictable. And most of the time I like that the teacher asks me what I think. (Interview #1, Oct. 21,1998)

The possibility of concentrating on acts of mind is often in tension with the desire for certainty and ease. Lorraine struggles to create learning encounters requiring students to discover a formula, not to follow one. Bruce begins to feel the demands of such learning encounters. Those without this sense fail to understand the purposefulness behind the learning encounters. Students and the

teacher have to enter into learning as a problem to be explored or a new adventure as Will's and Lorraine's earlier words relay. This attitude coupled with commitment seems critical. Maureen, a grade 8 student, echoes this thinking, talking enthusiastically about her sculpture piece in progress after attending an art exhibit of local works:

My first impression of this art gallery thing was that it would probably interrupt everything I was doing, and it did! But, really, I think that it is pretty neat because I like art. My favorite piece was the one with Winkin, Blinkin, and Nod in their so-called wooden shoe. The thing I liked most about it was that they were all girls instead of boys. It was also surprisingly colorful and bright. The sculpture I am working on is a shoe form too. Though my idea is different, this sculpture made me go back to my work with some thoughts about ways to really capture attention and make a statement. I need to think more about this, but it will change my work. (Interview #1, Oct. 21,1998)

Maureen's words suggest that in the very process of perception and in the interconnected process of expression, a tendency to form is elicited. Kant's (1790/1952) event termed *delight* (p. 41), its presence, its possibilities, is given expression by Maureen. Kant claims this event arises from a mental state present in the free play of the imagination and understanding. Imagination is the activation of the Senses, and understanding relates to the faculty of cognition in general. When they are freely interacting, delight emerges of its own volition. There is a feeling of "concert" in the play of mental powers (p. 71). A certain randomness, an unpredictability, is assumed in Kant's discussion. Within Maureen's forming experience of her sculpture, delight emerges through the insights gained. Kant (1790/1952) speaks of these insights as "aesthetic ideas" (p. 175) evidenced in the union of imagination and understanding acting together as catalysts within process.

Maureen experiences an allegiance to learning through manipulation of ideas, materials, and the demands of continual judgments in her creative process. I see this evoked in a fluid action rather than a rigid sequence. This fluidity of thought is evidenced again in an excerpt from a written reflection on some philosophical readings for a humanities class by Andrea, a grade 8 student:

I find Horace Walpole's statement, "This world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel, a solution to why Democritus laughed and Heraclitus wept" truly intriguing. I read somewhere else that Democritus is often called the laughing philosopher because he believed that we all have an individual conscience that can decipher right from wrong. I have met people who think very deeply about what has been said or done and seem to be able to make anything funny. But, I also know there are people who feel everything strongly, which is good when they are happy but they are often sad. I think it is easier not to feel, for feeling makes you vulnerable. Being vulnerable is considered weak. But, perhaps it shouldn't be. For sure, if you only ever think and never feel others get hurt without your knowledge. I now wonder if it is possible to separate thinking from feeling? Are they really different? (Artifact #61, May 25, 1999)

Fluidity of thought is not necessarily smooth and linear, rather an acceptance of living with doubts and uncertainties seems essential to respond to newly discovered relationships, determine ways of working and acting, attend to modifications derived from these discoveries, or trust intuitions. Kant (1790/1952) acknowledges these subjective responses to be the determining ground of the aesthetic. He roots these in immediate sensible particularities coining the term "disinterestedness" (p. 43). I do not confuse this with uninterestedness. For Kant, disinterestedness assumes involvement, participation, and contemplation. I have come to see it as a paradoxical term, embracing impersonal objectivity with intense personal participation. Kant suggests that:

The cognitive powers brought into play by this representation are here engaged in free play, since no definite concept restricts them to a particular role of cognition. Hence, the mental state in this representation must be one of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation, (p. 58)

It follows then that the outcome depends on the nature of the subject and the interaction taking place and is not held to a premeditated purpose with preestablished rules. Out of this awareness Kant identifies a respect for "the super-sensible substrate of phenomena" (p. 208), his central claim being that within aesthetic judgment, rules are created, concepts formed, and categories organized to fit the unique instance presented by works of art. For Kant aesthetic encounters are not mediated through existing rules but result in the

creation of rules, forming the basis on which the work can subsequently be talked about (p. 168). I see expression of this in Maureen's and Andrea's descriptions of their thinking processes.

Schillerian Traces

Schiller (1795/1954) writes a series of letters. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, over a period of three years, documenting the evolution of his thinking on the aesthetic. The letters are poetic as Snell (1954) comments:

As much a piece of feeling as of thinking; a passionate attempt, by gazing at the opposites of reason and sensuousness, freedom and caprice, mind and nature, duty and inclination, absolute and finite, activity and passivity... to grasp the unity lying behind there, (p. 14)

Schiller's (1795/1954) apprehension of this sense of unity monopolizes his thoughts throughout his letters. His pursuit of this unity throughout his letters comprises a doctrine of education embracing the aesthetic. Schiller understands an aesthetic education to be a meeting place of one's senses with the external world. This reciprocal relationship is taken up by Schiller as play. He is drawn to Kant's (1790/1952) use of the term *play* to characterize the cognitive meeting of *imagination* and *understanding* (p. 71). Fleshing out Kant's notions, he associates imagination with the sensuous impulse (p. 64) and understanding with the formal impulse (p. 65). Schiller sees these as two fundamental human impulses. The sensuous impulse impels experience of the changing world, and the formal impulse reflects *rational* and *absolute existence*, insisting on *changelessness* (p. 66). Schiller insists on the tendency of these impulses to conflict and encroach on each other, mediated by a *play impulse* (p. 74). This impulse is characterized by being a living form, "a free movement which is itself ends and means" (p. 134). He assumes reciprocity between the self and its determinations (p. 60). Schiller sees unity achieved through play, claiming "man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and he is only wholly man when he is playing" (p. 80). Thus, he refuses to compartmentalize human beings,

insisting on an organic whole. In Schiller's words, the "cultivation of the whole of our sensuous and intellectual powers in the fullest possible harmony" becomes the educational imperative (p. 99).

The locus of Schiller's (1795/1954) sense of play is dependent on the other as much as self. A dialogical structure is suggested that is realized through an interdependent process. Jocelyn, a grade 7 student, reconstructs the relationship between self and other exploring this interdependence. She gradually becomes aware of the subtle complexities of such intertwining. She talks with me over a few weeks about the image she is creating in her humanities class to synthesize her thinking on a particular cultural concept that she feels needs to be addressed:

My image is called "Story to Story/" It depicts a story being passed along from generation to generation. A story gets changed just a little each time it is retold to someone new. Each of my purple circles represents a new telling of the story. If you look closely at them, you will see that each circle changes just a little from the last circle. They change slightly in size. The shapes in and around the circles change colors, shape, size, and in quantity. The circles evolve just like a story. I decide to use a geometric shape (circle) and a fibonacci sequence because we have been studying patterning in math and science. I can see that cultural stories have similar patterns. There are things that repeat themselves over and over again....But, as I was working on it, I also thought that it is not always the same—there are differences that make each story unique. That is why I chose clashing, dissimilar colors because they are like the stories of long ago; there are differences that make the story interesting to listen to. In the beginning, the story starts out as a small purple circle. It gets changed many, many times. It is a chaotic journey. But, in many ways it is still a small purple circle with little change. (Interview #2, March 9,1999; Interview #3, March 16,1999)

Jocelyn has become accustomed to addressing her schoolwork in this way. She expects that her ideas will change during process. Schiller (1795/1954) talks about this playful process being *energizing* or *melting* (p. 83). Similarly, Jocelyn's thoughts seem to be a catalyst to possibilities and precipitate reflection towards reassessment. A necessary relationship between self and other is assumed, informing how she approaches her work. Jocelyn brings selective resources from her past to bear on the present, linking her to her image, creating a

belongingness. Thus, Jocelyn brings a way of thinking and being to her work by assuming these expectations.

Central within this relationship between Jocelyn and her image creation is a felt freedom. It exudes from Jocelyn throughout her creating/re-creating process. Schiller (1795/1954) talks of such freedom developing by inner necessities. Perhaps these are the pleasure and pride Jocelyn derives from decisions made and the course her earning takes. Increasingly, I see and hear in other student voices the anticipation of felt freedom within process. Participating students report deriving much pleasure from this felt freedom, and I see it acting as a catalyst toward establishing and sustaining relationships between self and other.

Akin to Schiller's (1795/1954) notion of freedom intimately associated with inner necessities is Greene's (1978) description of how (discovery is taken out of learning in many teaching/learning situations: "The self as participant, as inquirer, as creator of meanings has been obliterated" (p. 12). Rather than conformity being rewarded in these classrooms, difference is not cause for alarm but celebration. These learning encounters attempted to build on personal uniqueness rather than dismiss or negate it altogether. Participating students were very much aware of this attempt. For example, Marjorie, a grade 8 student, comments:

I did not realize until I came to this school that I had been missing something in my learning. I now feel very attached to some of my work, like it is a part of who I am. I have learned things about myself and who I am becoming. The class discussions of our work have really encouraged this because I get to see and hear so many ways to consider one question or project. (Interview #5, March 16,1999)

In a later conversation I had with Marjorie, she explains she did not feel this same level of commitment in another classroom setting at the same school and felt it was important to discuss this with the school principal:

I am not willing to just let this go. I feel let down. I am here to learn. And learning for me is questioning and being allowed to search for answers. I do not want the answers given to me; asking me to memorize them but not really know them. (Interview #6, May 18,1999)

Marjorie has developed an appreciation for yearning, wonder, fear, and confusion throughout the learning process. She has also been listened to with great care by teachers and, in turn, classmates. In some learning situations Marjorie felt safe to convey her unique perspectives. Marjorie knows the difference. She likes the felt involvement in her learning and the sense of community participation. The alienation from learning she abruptly meets dulls and numbs her sense of herself as a learner, eroding her spirit of inquiry. It becomes risky for Marjorie to ask questions that matter to her. And yet, she is not necessarily searching for answers but rather, wanting simply to be heard.

The aesthetic becomes a medium in which a form emerges through engaged relationships between self and other. This was Schiller's (1795/1954) answer to human fragmentation—to follow the path of aesthetics leading to wholeness. Some students comment that they like the involvement they feel in their learning. I note a stronger sense of self developing in many students alongside a developing respect for and honoring of differences in each other.

Hegelian Traces

This revelation of self is explored by Hegel (1835/1964) as a transcendental quality existing as *Geist* or spirit. He conceives of spirit as a living and self-developing identity involving a relation between self and other. Through interactions with the other, one attains greater consciousness of oneself.

Lorraine initiates these interactions through valuing first impressions from her students. She deliberately asks students to note initial impressions as they confront new questions, projects, or mediums. Cindy, a grade 9 student, notes, "Strange, isn't it, how things in life can be two completely different emotions" (Artifact #20, Nov. 17, 1998). Megan, a grade 8 student, writes, "One piece that drew my attention was a drawing of just the trunks of trees. It was black and white and the artist used mainly vertical lines. Even though it was simple, it was striking" (Artifact #25, Nov. 17, 1998). These initial responses trigger further thinking. Lorraine terms these

interactions "stretching exercises" deliberately positioning students to connect learnings across topics and disciplines. These stretching exercises take multiple forms, but students are meant to feel the pull between self and other. As they experience this pull, an animating or essential part of self is revealed in passion and commitment that intimately connects students to their learnings. Hegel's (1835/1964) sense of spirit comes alive, existing and thriving in a play of meanings between self and other.

Hegel (1835/1964) suggests the relation of self and other is best explored through a dialectical development. Instead of a dialectic taking a set course, as Hegel envisions, I see this play of meanings taking the form of conversations understood as Yinger's (1987) notion of a *conversation of practice*:

One of the Latin roots of conversation is *conversari* meaning to dwell with. This suggests that conversation entails an entering into and living with a context and its participants. As such, conversation is not only a means of interaction and a way of thinking, but also a type of relationship with one's surroundings, (p. 311)

Most importantly, in my mind, it equates education with relation, content meaning little without contact.

Gadamerian Traces

Relationships between self and other established and nurtured seem to endure; a significance is retained. Lorraine's description of a teaching/learning incident reveals the need for this significance. Lorraine discusses the background of an assignment on the human body and disease that she has students working on:

I mentioned to students that we were about to begin a unit of study on our bodies and the impact of disease. The class erupted with comments such as, "We have done that so many times; I am sick of looking up diseases in encyclopedias." The groans and moans were not something I could ignore. I did have something in mind, but the complete lack of enthusiasm was weighty and going to defeat my attempt. We had invited a playwright into the classroom last week to do some idea generating and writing activities with students. It just popped into my head that maybe students could write

about a disease in a science fiction play format. And, so, together we invented "Ritchie," a fictitious person who was about to be invaded by diseases of all types and intensities. (Interview #6, April 6, 1999)

Lorraine goes on to explain that she observed students' interest and commitment to the assignment slowing growing as she let go of her specific idea for the learning and let students author the learning. Such authoring brings to life the reciprocal relationship between self and other. This is Gadamer's (1960/1992) understanding of *play* as distinct from self and the other. Play is its own experience, resisting means and ends, reliant on the performance (p. 134). The reciprocal interaction and modification generates meanings within the relationship. Gadamer emphasizes that such play has a spirit of its own to which participants must attend and take up. Anna, a grade 8 student in this class, finds this playful spirit. I relay an excerpt from her written script, which gives further expression to this play:

(Tour group makes its way through destructed tissue tubes)

TOUR GUIDE: Welcome ladies and gentlemen to this section of the endocrine system. I will be your guide today. I will lead you through Ritchie's pancreas. I am ready to answer any questions. Please follow me and our tour can begin.

(Group follows guide through area that looks like a ratty old dish cloth; torn, battered, lots of holes, thin, etc.)

TOUR GUIDE: Now, as you can see the pancreatitis has eaten away at Ritchie's pancreas causing destruction of the tissues. This has been caused by Ritchie's excessive drinking, and as a result he has two choices: to die, or pray to God that he can get a transplant in time. Take a minute to look around, and I will be over here if you have any questions.

WOMAN ONE (speaking to woman two): This is worse than I thought it would be. Think what bad shape the boy must be in! (motherly) The pancreas is very important. Normally it secretes digestive enzymes, insulin, and many more hormones, but that is only possible when the pancreas is healthy. On average the pancreas is about 1.3 to 2.5 centimeters thick.

WOMAN TWO (responding): Yes, I know. I thought this was going to be the calmest tour of them all. Look at the size of those holes and how thin and frail the tissue is. It looks like my old dishcloth I threw out last week! (Artifact #40, April 27, 1999)

Anna was positioned to find ways to relay meaningfully the formation gathered on the pancreas for herself and others. Her search for visual images and descriptors transcends factual knowledge of the pancreas to a much wider sense of the ensuing impact and disruption of the disease. Thus, she appropriates and internalizes this thinking. The link between Anna and her thinking reflects a strong sense of belonging, and as Gadamer (1960/1992) claims, "(she) comes to belong to it more fully by recognizing (herself) more profoundly in it" (p. 133). It seems transformed subjectivities emerge from play, taking something away from the process. Thus, the centrality of the other is constitutive of the self. I hear in Anna's voice and in the voices of other participating students and teachers the impact of such involvement. Students and teachers invest themselves in their learning processes. Their comments hold an emotional commitment that intimately connects them to their work. They question, deliberate, and respond accordingly on an ongoing basis. A seriousness surrounds these learning encounters that is evidenced in care. Seemingly, such responsive care entails responsibility. The subject matter does matter to students and teachers.

Deweyan Pattern

I find Dewey's (1938) notion of *experience* to embrace the Kantian, Schillerian, Hegelian, and Gadamerian traces of the aesthetic identified above. Experience is a fully human activity, a way of being in the world that does not separate knowledge from interest or theory from practice but insists on a pervasive qualitative whole. Dewey (1934) explains:

In such experiences, every successive part flows freely, without seam and without unfilled blanks, into what ensues. At the same time there is no sacrifice of the self-identity of the parts....In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases of its varied colors, (p. 45)

The implied unity and movement are critical to understanding Dewey's notion of experience as a *moving force* (1938, p. 31) acknowledging past, present, and implications for the future. Simultaneously, all human experience is ultimately social, involving contact and communication. Thus, Dewey (1938) identifies the *principle of continuity* (p. 27) and the *principle of interaction* (p. 38). "An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time constitutes his environment.... They intercept and unite" (pp. 43-44). And it seems the determining ground, meeting place of situation and interaction, forms the necessary space for aesthetic encounters; such a space being always in the making, open to the play of possibilities.

It is Dewey (1934) who sees that experience comes to be "what it is because of the entire pattern to which it contributes and which it is absorbed" (p. 295). Thus experience involves participants actively structuring what is encountered. The voices included throughout this paper exemplify the active *undergoing* (open, vulnerable, receptive attitude) and *doing* (responding, organizing, discerning) entailed in Dewey's notion of experience. Their thinking grows, constructing and reconstructing, taking form through adapting, changing, and building meaning. The play between undergoing and doing is always evolving with beginnings and endings occurring throughout the learning encounters. Thus Dewey (1934) explains: "An experience has pattern and structure, because it is not just doing and undergoing in alternation, but consists of them in relationship" (pp. 50, 51).

Dewey (1934, 1938) emphasizes to me that identified traces sedimented in the writings of Kant (1790/1952), Schiller (1795/1954), Hegel (1835/1964), and Gadamer (1960/1992) are all linked and do not succeed one another but, rather, yield patterns. It is experienced as connected. These traces exist only within the creating, making play, attached to the learning encounter. It is impossible to separate each trace away from aesthetic experience. I see these traces as living parts and aspects in relation to the vital movement of the whole pattern or learning encounter. It seems they belong to the self and situation concerned in this movement.

Texture

I believe these traces and patterns draw attention to an awareness that the experience of creating precipitates. This attunement to the creating process is the nature of aesthetic encounters. Initiating, sustaining, and enhancing links between students and learning through aesthetic encounters is central in these classrooms. Thus, students and teachers take up learning as a constant process of reciprocal interaction and modification between self and subject matter. This entails teachers and students developing a sensitivity to the many nuances and possibilities present in learning situations and a willingness to play along with them. The catalyst for learning is generated within the teaching/learning experience rather than imposed. Curriculum in classrooms forms as it lives through aesthetic encounters. Thus, the curriculum is neither entirely foreseen nor E preconceived, animated with movement and life. It is experienced differently for individuals and the class as a whole, and yet I am I aware of a sameness in lived sensations that the aesthetic traces speak to. The patterning or interplay of these traces seems to involve teachers and students in a *mindfully embodied* way demanding that they be "in touch with self, others, and the character of the circumstances they find themselves in" (Field & Macintyre Latta, 2001). I believe this is an aesthetic encounter's philosophical significance in teaching and learning. The lostness and foundness self-inherent within such attunement to process are constituted within Dewey's (1934) metaphor of the *live creature*, "the live being recurrently loses and reestablishes equilibrium with his surroundings" (p. 17). An obliterated self is severed from learning, detached from the circumstances in which learning develops. The interplay of a lost and found self is achieved through an "organic connection between education and personal experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 25).

Thus, there is a texture and continuity in the actuality of aesthetic encounters that I believe is worth paying closer attention to. The historical sediments surface as necessarily and integrally forming and reforming learning patterns to aesthetically play with ideas, search for connections, and see possibilities for students and teachers. The

implications for curriculum, students, and context are interrelated and deserving of further study. Clearly, though, it evidences aesthetic encounters as a pragmatic and philosophical necessity within schooling meriting serious consideration. But teachers must assume the weighty responsibility of addressing this consideration. The primary responsibility is the teacher's to assume, embracing tensions and uncertainties as inherent to teaching and learning, searching for attunement within the development of curriculum itself. Dewey (1938) further claims, "We have no choice but either to operate in accord with the pattern it (experience) provides or else to neglect the place of intelligence in the development and control of a living and moving experience" (p. 88). So, Dewey places teachers at the vortex of this movement, actively facilitating learning connections with students. Dewey claims the educator needs to come to view teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience. *Connectedness* is discussed as the necessary thread that precludes meaningful learning:

It is part of the educator's responsibility to see equally to two things: First, that the problem grows out of the conditions of the experience being had in the present, and that it is within the range of the capacity of students; and secondly, that it is such that it arouses in the learner an active quest for information and for production of new ideas, (p. 79)

This inquiry reveals this crucial guidance of teachers toward surveying the capacity and needs of students, the formation of ideas, acting upon ideas, fostering connections, seeing potential, making judgments, and arranging conditions. Each aesthetic trace causes me to wonder how teachers learn to create experiences that foster student participation in the world aesthetically. The following considerations surface:

- Given the emphasis in schools on outcomes and results, how do we encourage teachers to focus on acts of mind instead of end products in their work with students?
- Given the orientations toward technical rationality, to fixed sequence, how do we help teachers experience fluid, purpose-

ful learning adventures with students in which the imagination is given room to play?

- Given the tendency to conceive of planning in teaching as the deciding of everything in advance, how do we help teachers and students become attuned to making good judgments derived from within learning experiences?
- How do we help teachers build dialogical multivoiced conversations instead of monolithic curriculum?
- What do we do to recover the pleasure dwelling in subject matter? How do we get teachers and students to engage thoughtfully in meaningful learning as opposed to *covering curriculum*?
- A capacity to attend sensitively, to perceive the complexity of relationships coming together in any teaching/learning experience seems critical. How do we help teachers and students attend to the unity of a learning experience and the play of meanings that arises from such *undergoing* and *doing*?

The traces, patterns, and texture evidenced locate tremendous hope and wondrous possibilities alive within aesthetic teaching/learning encounters. It is such aliveness I encountered in the grade 4 art classroom that opened this account and continues to compel my attention. Possibilities for teaching, learning, and teacher education emerge. I am convinced they are most worthy of continued pursuit.

Endnote

¹ The data represented in this paper are part of a two-year inquiry conducted at a middle school with a mandate to infuse the arts-making processes across the curriculum as a whole. Twenty-six students and their parents, 3 teachers, and 2 school administrators participated throughout the inquiry. The data consisted of on-going interviews with all participants, student work/artifacts, teacher work/artifacts, and classroom observations. For a more extensive analysis of the findings arising from this inquiry, refer to Macintyre Latta (2001).

References

- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: Capricorn.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Collier.
- Field, J. C., & Macintyre Latta, M. (2001). What counts as experience in teacher education? *Teaching and Teacher Education, An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 17, 885-895.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1992). *Truth and method*. (J. Weinsheimer & D. Marshall, Trans.) New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1960.)
- Greene, M. (1978). *Landscapes of learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1964). The philosophy of fine art. In A. Hofstadter & R. Kuhns (Eds.), *Philosophies of art and beauty* (pp. 382-445). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published in 1835.)
- Kant, I. (1952). *The critique of judgment*. Oxford, England: Clarendon. (Original work published 1790.)
- Macintyre Latta, M. (2001). *The possibilities of play in the classroom: On the power of aesthetic experience in teaching, learning, and researching*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Marcuse, H. (1978). *The aesthetic dimension*. Boston: Bercuson.
- Schiller, F. (1954). *On the aesthetic education of man in a series of letters*. New York: Frederick Unger. (Original work published 1795.)
- Snell, R. (1954). Introduction. In F. Schiller (Ed.), *On the aesthetic education of man in a series of letters* (pp. 1-20). New York: Frederick Ungar.
- Yinger, R. J. (1987). Learning the language of practice. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 17(3), 293-318.