Educational arts research as aesthetic politics

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abstract ° full paper In the ongoing argument that educational research in the arts attempts to do something beyond traditional dominant models such as the scientific method or empirical methods, the recent and growing awareness of how media and technology change us and have become unmediated extensions of our own bodies must be considered. We argue with Massumi (2002) for research that attends to an aesthetic politics that offers something materially continuous between experiences, bridging the division between increasingly powerful claims of science and the cultural needs of immediacy and particularity in the data of our lives. Research in the arts as it is now unfolding holds potential for helping to find a path other than romanticism and private idealist perspectives, or alternatively, positivism, or what Ameriks (in Bowie, 1990/2003) describes as the analytically rigorous but narrow scientific focus. This paper will focus on an arts based educational research called a/r/tography, specifically in modes that are defined as community engaged research or public pedagogy. A recent four year research and creation project called *The City of Richgate* involving eight in-migrating families[1] to the city of Richmond, British Columbia is one example of a vitality possible in educational research in the arts for contributing to society's potential for self-augmentation, qualitative growth and continuing variation of the world. The underlying premise for this project is that perception through the senses is essential to the human condition, yet this is simultaneous with the complexity of a metaphysics of empirical perception that is inherent in dynamic relational processes. The *City of Richgate* research example is presented here in hope of giving rise to useful insights for future research.

Previous arguments for the benefit of arts based research involve important reasonings such as their usefulness as pluralistic approaches to interpretation (Knowles and Cole, 2002; Sullivan, 2005). This approach acknowledges the fact that different generations and cultures find their own merit in the art project but gives little attention to the ways in which public pressure for conformity is produced from the combined effects of people's own understanding and the pursuing of their own interests. In addressing this pressure for conformity, considering the social force itself may be more beneficial than focusing solely on what Searle (2004) defines as the very necessity of politics' distinctions between private and public. In another defense for arts based research, that was still immersed in the classically scientific methodology of perception, Eisner argued in 1988 that arts based research is an auxiliary process to empirical methods in which what is imagined can be perceived and in which we open perception to new possibilities. This has been an important educational goal for decades and Eisner's arguments have had much influence on extending what counts as legitimate research. However, research in the arts as a supplement to traditional methods does not fully articulate perception as more than a visual experience, a passive event, or a one-direction event, nor does it acknowledge that consciousness is too small to take in the fullness of sensation (Davis et al., 2008). Art viewed as something to orient perception too often catches us as Davis et al argue

perception can, in a loop of construction and interpretation that only serves to reinforce routines of sense-making of the same sense. It does not recognize the very empirical qualities of perception that extend beyond current limited ranges of scientific educational research and sociocultural realities of empiricism. It also misses the material, corporeal effects of participation, both more urgent concerns in light of media and digital technologies.

In contrast to arts based methodologies involving contemporary sociocultural assumptions of mediation in which research is done to an object and subsequently reported on, Massumi (2002) argues that experience, which we extend in this paper, to the concept of a research experience, cannot be built up from links between discrete perceived elements. Rather, in experience, continuity is as basic as discreteness and relation is as elementary as individuation. Massumi explains this in the example of an echo, which must occur between surfaces though the resonation is not found on the surfaces but instead, in the emptiness between. The echo fills the space with complex patterning that is its own event, needing distance to occur but not at a distance from itself. It is not composed of parts but instead it is composed of the event itself, which is unitary. The interference pattern occurs where the sound wave intersects itself by bouncing back and forth without cutting it so 'this complex self-continuity is a putting into relation of movement to itself: self-relation' (Massumi, 2002:14). This is a helpful example for disqualifying any fundamental reliance on stimulus/response, input/output, or simple active/passive research frameworks or classic assumptions that sense-data link together to form perceptions. Instead, following Benjamin's (1910-1940/1994) recasting of Kant's understanding of experience as intrinsic absolute, we view research event experiences as capable of local contextualization yet always containing the elements that exceed them, and which carry on to other events.

Our conception of aesthetic politics is not solely perspective or interpretation-based, in which a codifying capture interrupts change or continuity but instead, works towards an 'amidst'. This kind of research is not so much about imposing aesthetic form on our relations with one another and not even intended to necessarily challenge nor extend what Searle (2004) calls 'constitutive rules' that change our social interactions even as we participate. Instead, this call for an educational arts research argues for a certain experience of the present that is both pleasurable and incomplete. The focus shifts to what political realities might be in a world consisting of physical particles that are inherent in abstract similarities continuing across events - nonlocal, qualitative, felt perceptions that echo themselves in repetition. We draw heavily on Benjamin and Massumi's (2002, 2003) interest in art's capacity for offering pedagogic events in which perception is extended to the virtuality of nonlocal linkage in response to tightening of control by technology in current capitalist society.

Technology and politics: Public affect regulation

In looking briefly at the history of power in current capitalist society, Massumi (2003) extends Antonio Negri's argument in explaining how disciplinary power began by enclosing bodies in top-down institutions in order to produce more regularity in behaviour and how this has now spread to similar intentions outside of enclosures such as community clinics, halfway houses and educational institutions designed for self-help or career preparation, with power relaying between places. Massumi argues that eventually, power begins to operate in an open field, paying more attention to the transitions between institutions. Although regularities begin to loosen and normalcy begins to give up its hold, this is not a liberating situation and disciplinary power is not eliminated. It is instead, capitalism's power to produce variety simply because markets get saturated. Diversity is acceptable then, even in educational settings, but only if it's profitable. As Foucault (1997) concluded, power puts its paths within us so by the time we learn to follow its constraints, we are following ourselves. In our digital society, this is where power starts to work directly on the movement of bodies in the form of checkpoints. Our passage or access is continually controlled by technology even as it is enabled. There are checkpoints at grocery stores, airports and banks. Boundaries for interaction become more defined by feedback loops than surfaces (Hayles, 1999; Davis et al. 2008) and the real power starts after we've passed because we've left a trace that is valuable for marketing. Benjamin's (1983) beautiful description of living as a leaving of traces can be taken up very differently in current society when we consider traces as active, and as that which determines potential.

In continually registering our movement, our everyday activities become a form of value-producing labour

in which everyday movement is capitalized on. Media also bear directly on our movement by not mediating, but by becoming direct mechanisms of control. They rely less on analysis or information and more on the local citizen's subjective experience of emotion that ultimately changes how we experience what potentials we have. In the invisible way that McLuhan (1969) observed, we begin to change the way we live, instinctively limiting movements and contacts with people. As a result, the loosening of power as discipline on an individual's particular relationship to societal norms feeds back into a new disciplinary movement-based power locking individuals tighter than ever to predefined cultural codings with consumption patterns used to shape opinions (Lasch, 1984). It is not so much, however, ownership or objects that are sold and consumed but instead, a right to use something, with strings attached, ways of affecting and of being affected that are simultaneously and complicatedly full of potential and full of control. The very sense of vitality, felt as faith in the ongoingness of things, is even commodified, linked to economic imperatives or questions of ownership.

Massumi refers to vitality as affect, as our 'margin of manoeuvrability, the where we might be able to go and what we might be able to do in every present situation' (2002: 3), our ability to affect and be affected in relation to others. He describes affect as body movement looked at from the point of view of its potential. Both Massumi (2002) and Grossberg (1992) claim that while emotion has function and meaning, affect remains unformed and unstructured, a difficulty for traditional forms of research. Emotion and affect follow different logics and pertain to different organization. Affect is what continues from one event to another, its vivacity always on the move from one situation to the next. It is both situational and trans-situational, actually inhabiting the passage between as the extra of continuing activity by which people escape their contextual containment. Whereas emotion, according to Massumi, is subjective, qualified intensity, personal, owned and recognized, affect is not ownable or recognizable and is resistant to critique. Affect may be further understood in terms of Plato's 'erotic anamnesis' as 'the movement that transports the object not toward another thing or another place, but toward its own taking-place - toward the Idea' (in Agamben, 1993/2005: 2,2). Affect is the projection of an experience of the fullness of the present out to other beings whose responsive cells and nerves carry the ideas into different imaginations and places.

Although technology is taking over the enabling of experience, it is an enablement of experience that has to be supervised, setting up potential buying connections and commitments with other things and especially other people. Williams explains the difficulty that affect creates when constituted by social experience is that it does not 'have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before [it] exert[s] palpable pressures and set[s] effective limits on experience and action' (cited in Ngai, 2005: 26). Essentially, what is being sold is social experience and the overall effect is to enclose that experience in the determination of regularized context. Ferneding (2003) observes that technological changes in educational settings that are considered apolitical have the distinct political advantage of neatly fitting into the context of a commonly understood cultural bias about technology only meaning progress. Actual situations get submerged and the ongoing connecting thread of experience disappears from view. Saul (1995) identifies a western weakness for quick-fix ideologies and our corresponding inability to recognize ideology as such when we are in its grip.

Once affect is sensorially invisible to us, Massumi (2003) claims, the only perceptible activities in the world are the regularizations of discourse and institution, and truth, meaning that things are at last, properly named and disciplined to mean what they are and to act how they mean. Content fits within form. Educational research has a responsibility to respond to this form of public affect regulation that has taken the place of ideologies in our society. Williams and Lester (in Williams, 2008) argue that a more appropriate action for education research than the pursuit of knowledge, would be that of 'actually moving people... to action (434)'. Given the foregoing background, this paper will expand on the methodology of a/r/tography as one way to mobilize methodologies in order to address and respond to current mobilization of power over affect.

A/r/tography's response

A/r/tography has been uniquely developed at the University of British Columbia by faculty and students. To be engaged in this mode of research means to participate in a research experience through ongoing collaborative artmaking and writing while acknowledging simultaneously the multiplicity of the processes

of artmaking, researching and teaching to which attention is drawn by the forward slashes between the letters. Arts based methodologies in general, have been transforming the representational form of research communication for several decades and most use creative processes to fully engage in the contexts of surrounding human experience. A/r/tography, however, stresses more the physicality of human activities of making that are so etched into our life work as living beings. The separate yet overlapping processes of artmaking, researching and teaching are engaged in as experimentation and participation.

In the moving focus on perspectives, there is a continuous displacement of subject and object as well as a displacement of their general relation. This continuity of movement includes a disjunction similar to that in Massumi's (2003) description of walking; the continual change includes rupture but is nevertheless continuous with itself. The positions of artist, researcher and teacher are simultaneously occupied yet departed from, leaving what Massumi describes body movement leaves, a gap filled by movement. This real movement cannot be seen as one's selves in motion, as DuChamp's (1913) image of altered time and space in *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Rather it is possible to 'see' this movement, if we veer away from subject/object, self/other divisions and think in a more relational way in which the movement of transformation is an event, not just research subjects and objects. (see also Irwin, 2006).

Although a/r/tography has been used in many individual research projects (see examples in Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay et al. 2008), its strength in changing conceptions of educational research is its movement-oriented, relational nature that works well with projects of public pedagogy (for example: Bickel et al., 2007, Springgay et al., 2008; Triggs et al., in press). We define a/r/tographic public pedagogy in accordance with what Rajchman argues has always been art's challenge which is 'to create [public] arrangements in space and time in which we relate to ourselves and one another in a manner not already subordinated to identity or identification, either imaginary or symbolic' (2000: 82). A/r/tography's deep implication with collaboration and collectivity is a methodology that responds to the public nature of affective meanings and expressions. Its sociality is paradoxically inherent in its autonomies of artist, research, teacher, through which it escapes being confined in any one limiting perspective. Like affect, artographic research cannot be limited to a personal investment but *is* self-continuity across the gaps of life experiences; it inhabits the passage between. Boler (1997) observes that if we acknowledge affect's public formation, we do not then have to require individuals to justify reasons for feeling certain ways. Instead, educational research can call for a 'full social accountability on part for the interpretative context' (1997: n. p.), a much grander collective provocation, which a/r/tography endeavours to respond to.

For example, a recent a/r/tographic community-based public pedagogy research project called the *City of Richgate,* explored the lived experience of eight families living in the City of Richmond, British Columbia, Canada who have migrated at various times in history from China, Estonia, Japan, South Africa, Western Europe and India. The four-year SSHRC[2] funded project involved a/r/tographers with inter-generational families resulting in interview transcripts, celebrations and collaboratively designed works of public art. The project sought to explore the families' inhabitation of a place in which the notion of process as something locked in linear time is absent and where movement is not towards something ahead of itself, but is instead the pure 'meanwhile'. Art was made in collaboration with the participants and as the artists/researchers/teachers were engaged in the artmaking, they paid careful attention to its practice. The attentiveness to art's process imbricated vital awarenesses in the research and pedagogical sensibilities, each changing and informing the other.

In considering how a/r/tography is changing conceptions of research, it is worthwhile to consider Benjamin's theory of experience in which perfection is present in the moment. In this notion of perfection, however, there is a move away from an absolute idealism that rejects the present in place of an absolute idea, to instead, a materialism that finds what is absolute in what is unused or what exceeds the present and carries on. The excess or absolute, which Massumi (2003) calls affect - is a totality that contains the elements that exceed it. Potentiality is considered present rather than absent in this definition of experience. Research can then be an experience of the present, not just an intrusion into ways in which people organize their social and personal lives according to a process of growth. Instead, the research experience characterizes the history of transcontinental movement to the city of Richmond, where innumerable new formations are made through the separate transpositions of beginnings and endings, lending life to displacements and connections that never before existed. The research experience is an expression of what

Bartoloni (2004) describes as 'con-fusion' in which the outcome is an openness or unfinishedness, rather than chaos. Arts research experiences that resonate with Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler's (2008) description of 'sensorially rich all-at-once situations' (210) invariably offer something that remains without explanation, without which, there would be nothing left to take away elsewhere.

What is left from an experience is part of a surplus value to the coming-together: the affect of belonging-together that continues on after the event which is most significant for our argument. For Deleuze (in Massumi, 1996) affects offer potential for 'lines of flight' that suggest unpredictable change. Their unownable, felt perception echoes itself in repetition as they move from one experience to the next, infusing a certain amount of objective uncontrol. Rather than describing affect as intrasubjective, as Stern (1985) does, Massumi (2003) suggests that because of the literality of movement, the real duality that glues the world together, is not between objectivity and subjectivity. Instead, it is between trans-situation and context and rather than being metaphysically opposed, they embrace each other in their discontinuous continuity, each momentum of excess initiating the next movement.

The *Richgate* project created several series of images with the participating families. The first were eight gates that are lived biograms or maps of each of the families' processes of change and transition (see figure 1). These were designed to have a top banner with hanging sides in the shape of gates or entrances through which people could walk under and through. The *Gates* share moments of the processes of arriving into the present through continuous change, also marking the determinate forms selected out of that flow. The changes and transformations are defined not by the invariant formal properties of their lives but by a continuity of transformation. Stasis, as well is a movement effect and as a result, when a process of change has been stopped in its passage, anything left outside also belongs. Massumi defines experience itself, as 'a hyperdimensional reality: as the 'being' of the excess of effect over any determinate spatial configuration' (2000: 186). The *Gates* are lived diagrams based on experiences that are already lived, reanimated to orient further experience on the way to alternative relations.

Figure 1: *Richgate* Exhibition, installation photograph. Art Gallery of Southwest Normal University, Chongqing, China. Beer, R., Xiong, G., Irwin, R., Grauer, K., Springgay, S., Bickel, B. (2005).

Designed to meet the challenge of what Ellsworth (2005) asks of public places of learning, the *Gates* are invitational portals, completely impersonal in that they can be recombined with an experience of movement past, under, through and yet, utterly human and entirely contingent on the passing through of a particular place and a particular time. They make possible the necessity of having to deal with our relation to others. The *Gates* hang as patterns of exits and entries across thresholds. As gates, what is important is the hospitality of who and what they let pass. In response to current global surveillance of movement, they invite openings into different arrangements for public space inviting the known to mingle with the unknown, the process of change to linger at the coming edge of the future. *Richgate's Gates* indicate the continuity of thresholds that deliver experiences to the virtuality of transitivity by virtue of shared conditions.

Perception must be reconsidered to include the virtuality of affect that is present in the materiality of an experience. Massumi describes visual perception as never pure but always cofunctioning with other senses. He explains how attempts by researchers to isolate the seemingly straightforward elementary nature of visual perception by orchestrating white light striking the retina in a uniform way, found only a fog of abstraction. The research participants lost themselves in various sensations of dizziness, intoxication, and depersonalization. The researchers unintentionally discovered that 'the closer you get to the objective, physical and physiological bases of vision, the more vision abstracts' (2002: 147). Massumi interprets this to reveal that instead of distilling a basic unit, this research approached a complex limit, which is not a boundary but instead lacks determinate dimensionality, only existing to govern a movement. As a field of experience, vision is attracted to the limit of its own totality but the limit can't be imposed without the loss of the experience for the participant. Only by reference to the limit does what moves toward it have reality, so it is virtual rather than unreal. The limit is reality-giving or more accurately, reality-attracting. This is where Massumi argues that perception becomes inseparable from imagination.

Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2008) agree that perception is not just a process of taking things in. Instead, they describe perception as more of what is imposed on everyday experience. Subsequently, we argue that what is needed to counter society's containment of affect are research opportunities that extend the limits of the perception that we impose on everyday experience. A/r/tography holds potential for responding to this need by offering participatory events that let us hang on to experience. We suggest that it does this by experimenting with time as becoming, making and breaking of form, and with limits as attractors.

Time as becoming

By offering a continuous range of potential for change, arts research as aesthetic politics is not a logic for a now-focused consumer society. A/r/tography has potential for responding to current mobilization of power by mobilizing time and exploring it as an active ingredient viewing it as Rajchman does: 'a complicating force in a material rather than as a form imposed on matter' (2000: 110). This is essentially an aesthetic time, which as Britzman (2006) describes, runs slowly by exalting the moment - inviting the past to mingle with present feelings, prolonging the thought path and thereby keeping the very possibility of imagining a future that could be radically and structurally other. Science philosopher, Cilliers argues that memory is only possible if there is also forgetting. What he stresses as most important in the process of remembering and forgetting is slowness and therefore, 'there should be a temporal space in which the past is allowed to play itself out in interaction with present...the balance between stability and change is a contingent thing which plays itself out in time' (2006: 5). Massumi reminds us that this temporal space does exist in the form of the delay between sensation and cognition, which is not a still space in which we wait for consciousness to kick in. Instead, there are intervening stimuli that affect the outcome of each prior stimulus, again and again. The recursions meld together creating what he describes as 'relational time-smudge' (2002: 196).

Considering time as becoming creates research that purposely returns to what it cannot understand in the space between sensation and cognition in order to 'keep faith with the open character of the future' (Ngai, 205: 389). As a research team in the *Richgate* project, we spent time with participants looking through old photographs, listening to stories of places and times, walking together through their neighbourhoods, as well as sharing meals with all participants together. Much time was also spent in discussing and designing

images for public exhibition. Instead of imposing the usual chronology of time on research, the *Richgate* project considered time as something that stirs things up. Its process did not attempt to smooth any disconnect between past and present but instead by exploring and experimenting, rearranged patterns of lives lived and offered opportunity for new connections to be made.

One of the created series from the project was titled *Side by Side*. These eight works of art each consist of two images - one an historical image of either the family or a place that was important to them, alongside a different picture of family or place that offered an instance of change over time. The *Side by Side* images locate the force of change in a movement that time carries. They teach that difference is a force that is always in the process of coming. Another series of bus shelter posters was installed in bus shelters throughout the city of Richmond for several months. Some of the bus shelter posters reveal an image from the past embedded within a picture selected from more recent times; in others, a smaller focused detail of particularity is designed within the image of its bigger context. Putting time into motion not only in the making of these images but also in the exhibiting of them in public spaces both in China and in Canada, offer cartographies with surface qualities that are larger than our visual range - like the rim of the skyline. These images offer a way of seeing time in space and are, using Massumi's words regarding the nature of events, 'perceptions that combine senses and tenses and dimensions on a single surface' (2002: 187). The many overlapping attentions to time in the *Richgate*'s project offered public pedagogy research in which experience's taking place takes place in what has already happened and yet also in what Mead (1938) might describe as its *already* turning towards a future.

Figure 2: *Gabriele and Brian Ailey Side by Side*, archival inkjet photograph, 16 x 40 inches. Richmond City Hall. Richmond, British Columbia. Beer, R., Xiong, G., Irwin, R., Grauer, K., Springgay, S., Bickel, B. (2007).

The participating families in the *Richgate* project have had experiences in places - buildings, gateways, gardens and homes. Although many of these sites important to their heritage no longer exist, they remain perhaps more vivid than ever, in their memories. Their memories are what Massumi describes perception as: ' intensive movement back into and out of an abstract 'space' of experimental previousness' (2002: 197). Every one of the participants' memories of perceptions coexist with many potential forms of qualitative relational differences that produce in-between affects, 'a continuity of transitions rather than a collection of discrete elements' (2002: 197). Benjamin's (2007) intimate archives remind us that living leaves other kinds of traces, slower traces than those that spill so tightly into current feedback loops. Places and landscapes hold a meld of timeless traces.

In the *Richgate* project the tracings were always redrawn with stories, with overlapping memories of moving in relation to time's change, transitory attempts at locating sites that remain situated in personal memory. *Richgate*'s collaborative making of art functions in the movements of turning backwards to retrace anew and turning forwards to anticipate, enlarging the virtual space of potential through the very motion of

turning. The past stories of the participants are different from their current processes of change but their histories' embodiment actively re-condition current transitions and transformations teaching that conditions of change, change. Each visitor to the public exhibitions of *Richgate* also changed change. Massumi writes that 'emergences emerge' (2002: 10). The history of time is 'becoming'.

Making and unmaking of form

The making and unmaking - breaking - of form is inherent in a/r/tography's name. Distinct processes are brought together yet recontextualized apart; events are engaged in and then over; text and image are created separately yet together. What is supposed by such experimental crossing of edges is a kind of trust in the ongoingness of the world. Art has always had a capacity for offering events in which local conditions can be manipulated towards a creative activation of virtual form but a/r/tography highlights this more vigorously in its multiplicity of creative process and engagements. Media can also creatively activate virtual form, but more often, in current society, inserts emotion into things as already recognizable and personal, offered as a reflection of reality. These portrayals of collective consciousness obscure the continual resonation between singularities and collectives, between sensation and consciousness. The virtual is not necessarily lost; affect continues as an attempt to designate movement with ritual values. Instead, it is the self that is lost because there is no escape from the already-defined, and no ongoing, continuation in the faith of belonging-together.

In a/r/tography, the research experience is not an abstract entity that we are somehow outside looking in at, nor a phenomenon to be described or analyzed but instead, we *are* our participation. People or objects that inhabit them inextricably bind up weather, wind, seasons, places and time. This composition invites self-variation and simultaneous contrasts. Here is where the distinctions between artist, researcher, teacher, author and public lose their basic character. Similar to an art composition, there is not so much an opposition of form and content nor do the parts completely preexist but are rather invented and reinvented in the process. In this way, art never supposes a transcendental public but always, only, an experimental one and instead, only a transcendental sensual reality.

Rajchman argues, 'art is less the incarnation of a life-world than a strange construct we inhabit only through transmutation or self-experimentation, or from which we emerge refreshed as if endowed with a new optic or nervous system' (2000: 135). The *Richgate* public could not and cannot be predefined. The families came together as a result of a public invitation presented as an opportunity with art, to make something new of the times and places of their lives. Through the extended encounter, the flow of change was suspended in the collective process of art making. Forms were created as series of artwork but just as physics is discovering that space forms itself around matter, form followed the abstract imaginary of the physicality of body movement: passages from country to country, place to place, time in its becoming, artmaking and collaborating. *The City of Richgate* project added the pleasure of time as a continual recontexualizing interim in exploring experiences of body movement across continents, in the city of Richmond, and between each other.

As the materiality of an event relays between research participants, there is potential for conditions of the emergence of a self, what Massumi describes as the 'perception of perception' (2002: 14). Each transition of the self is accompanied by changes in capacities for affecting and being affected. During the four year *Richgate* project, participating families in collaboration with the a/r/tographic researchers had many occasions in which to experiment with their own and others' previous experiences. In the experimentation of artmaking of these memories, something extra always slips in; memory's fluid boundaries are filled with the abstraction of potential. Boler (1997) describes these affects as mapping proactive encounters, running ahead and underneath the experimental nature of experiences. A/r/tography subsumes a multiplicity that evolves situationally; every situation is an evolving differential, an open-ended variation on itself. With its focus on time as becoming, the *Richgate* was able to engage in bringing the project's self-variation into its own definite singular expression of transformative injection that makes variation anew.

A/r/tographic public pedagogical research seeks to remain indirect, allowing unimagined and multitudinous responses and movements into other connections and occasions, offering unrepeatable events. This making and breaking of form is well described by Ellsworth and Kruse, as 'intense flickers of here and gone, now

and then, self and stranger, passing through one another' (2007: n.p.). Kennedy (cited in Ellsworth, 2005) describes the butterfly's flickering flight pattern as one that makes our eye/brain response continually break and form and break and form. Although the event changes collective recognition of duties, obligations, permissions, privileges, authority and also creativity, imagination, audience, and flexibility, all of which von Vacano (2007) claims are the essence of the political, there are also literal, material effects of the tactility of this visual event. Selves emerge from participation in a virtuality that is felt. In relation, we are our own participation.

Limits as attractors

There is no breaking of form if we don't work at the limits of form. Limits are invitations to experiment with what we think we know from representation. Arts research sometimes assumes that a work of art is already distinguished from production relations and thus the object of research is to relate the form of the work to the content of the relations but a/r/tography maintains that art and production relations are already in relation in a/r/tographic research. Yet, in this meltdown of forms, form is still maintained in order to productively work its limits. Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2008) describe the importance of enabling constraints in learning systems, explaining that constraints, or limits, are 'simultaneously constraining and capable of flexible, unanticipated possibilities' (2008: 193). We agree but urge a stronger articulation of working at and pushing against the constraining limits in the direction of Pinar's exhortation towards 'becoming private-and-public intellectuals' (2004: 229). Ellsworth & Kruse (2007) remind us that it is at the edges of what we think we already know, where things happen. They observe in their *Feasibility Project*,[3] the edges are where 'extraordinary acts of creativity and responsiveness have now become necessary and possible' (2007: n.p.).

A/r/tography works at the limits of processes that have histories and pasts that are imminently important but it pushes towards new collaborative potential in the artistic, research and pedagogical processes. Movement takes place between these three attractors, tending one towards the other, creating a field of potential in which an echo resonates that has not so much to do with the limits but rather with the gap of movement. The participants add another dimension that further functions to induce the movement and the research experience arrays its participants around itself, drawing them beyond themselves in relation to others. The limits are not boundaries but exist instead to affect movement that is not conformity or correspondence but rather offer potential for 'resonation or interference, amplification or dampening' (Massumi, 2002: 25). A/r/tography takes up the challenge offered by Pinar and Grumet of letting theory and practice play against each other to reveal their limitations. In so doing, they claim we might 'enlarge the capacity and intensify the focus of each' (quoted in Pinar, 2004: 231). Enlarging the capacity overfills experience extending research's impact into the domain of the virtual, teaching us that there is a moving absolute that is materially more than we can visually perceive. Research no longer becomes merely the application of a philosophically expanded notion of itself but an aspect of its experience of itself.

Such an intent focus on process and practice could potentially result in an unintended instrumentality. However, attempting to work at the limits of what we thought we already knew about process, letting one process inform the other, realizing that change changes and emergence emerges create processes and events that remind us that we live in a world capable of surprise not just one of tracking movement. Ellsworth (2005) argues that acknowledging the limits of knowledge is a form of knowing. Any research project can avoid confronting its limits, granting itself beforehand the conditions that allow it to encounter things only it already knows the language for things. In *Richgate*, the participants' participation guided much of the project, inventing new ways to say and see things that didn't preexist. The project was not determined by given outcomes, nor based in predictive expertise but chose instead to remain attentive to the unknown at the limits of what we already thought we knew in each of our a/r/tographic capacities.

Conclusion

Although a/r/tographic research has been underway for several years, its emergence is still emerging. A/r/tography's aim is to always nudge the edge of its work into spilling into nextness, in hopes of soliciting ongoing elicitations of emergent form. Our wish for a/r/tography is that it will be used to invent technologies for what Massumi (2002) describes as overfilling experience and in the process, making

connections that are simultaneously too small and too large for already recognized or constituted subjects or objects. This will offer room for movement to slip in, bumping us straight into 'becoming'. Sociologist McDonald (2006) illustrates the potential of media and digital technology in his work on exploring new forms of commitment and identity in social movements. He discovers that groupings of people are no longer based strictly on political or social issues but by forms of practice or doing *and* also emotion. We have noted how media currently promotes political groupings by wielding emotion and constraining affect. Rather than seeking to free affect from constraint, a/r/tographic research might serve instead to flip constraints over into movement by offering aesthetic arrangements of public participation in research experience that is a kind of sociality transcending contingent reception and inviting alternative structures of collective participation. These would be relational places of learning that offer what Ellsworth describes as 'opportunities and capacities that allow us to be interrelated and separated at the same time' (2005:30). These are events that would offer experiences from which affect can be so augmented that parts of it would have no choice but to escape and run on, full of its lifeness.

We agree with Boler (1997) who argues that many theoretical models of research that we develop 'privilege models of emotion in which the dominant discourses of rationality, biology, and pathology limit the transgressive possibilities of affect'. Many of these theoretical models are premised on discourses of instrumental reason, which were invented, Massumi (2002) argues, toward the invention of utilities. A/r/tography strives to save practice from utility or need, keeping open instead, the excess of experience in the virtual. Our argument presented in this paper involves beginning thoughts and holds much that is yet unexplored, including the extended nature of perception, how perception relates to distraction in public spaces, the coupling of body and technology outside of mediation in light of its immanence prior to movement, as well as continual experimentation with what art does instead of what it means. These are questions that will spur further work for us.

In conclusion, we offer a quote from Rajchman in which he describes Deleuze's analysis of what he finds in all art:

We find an attempt to find release from the suffocating sense of given possibility, ready-made ideas; even in the old masters, we find a fight against immobility, catatonia - against, in a word, 'depression.' There is a logic to the fight - to extract possibility from probability, multiplicity from unity, singularity from generality - the logic of 'a life' (quotation marks in original) (2000: 127).

Rajchman's words challenge us to respond to public groups with artistic, theoretical and pedagogic sensibilities to offer a 'diagnosis of what body and world are when all possibilities seem 'exhausted' ' (2000: 125, quotation marks in original). A/r/tography seeks to respond to what we perceive is the burden of educational arts research which is to create arrangements in 'time as becoming', where forms are made and unmade, and in which limits operate as attractors. These events will leave traces of connection and reenergize a collective faith in our shared material world. What we hope continues on from our a/r/tographic research experiences is a deep physical invitation to the relational actions and bodies of humans on earth and the ways in which they collectively organize and reorganize.

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 3 http://www.smudgestudio.org/smudge/feasibility.html