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Bones of the Earth

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Abstract

The film *Bones of the Earth* (Riglin, Cunninham & Correa, 2014) is an experience in collective inquiry and visual creation based on arts-based research. Starting from the meeting of different subjectivities and through dialogue, planning, shooting and editing, an audiovisual text that reconstructs a reflexive process of collective creation is built. A sense of community, on-going inquiry, connections and social commitment inform the creative process. As a result, the video's nearly five intense minutes are a metaphor for the search for personal meaning, connection with nature and intersubjective positioning in a world that undergoes constant change.

Keywords: identity, learning by doing, inquiry, a/r/tography, video art, filmmaker

This article comes out of my experience at GIFTS (Gulf Island Film and TV School), Galiano Island, British Columbia (<http://www.giftsfilms.com/>). Writing an autobiographical text that recreates a journey to an ill-defined part of ourselves holds risks. Risk is inevitable when we undertake a journey that tries to account for an aspect of our life history in a reflective way; risk is also inherent when we take up the challenge to speak not so much about ourselves but from within ourselves, testing the traditional dualism that scientific narrative has always insisted upon.

Inquiry is the means of transport chosen for this trip, which is itself narrative, metaphor and reality. On this personal journey I wanted to experience learning based on information and communication technologies, and at the same time I wanted to continue my own personal process of inquiry, a process of inquiry in which knowledge, learning and creation are not incompatible and where there is an interest in the collective processes of transformation and social change. Such a methodology is based on inquiry that generates creative commitments to the processes of social change. Indeed, as an academic and a professor, I argue that information and communication technologies, far from materializing new ways of relating knowledge and its representation, have failed in the attempt by reproducing old methodological strategies that are more suited to a model of universities as institutions that transmit and reproduce rather than create and liberate. This structural weakness, along with the practices of evaluating and reproducing knowledge, means that information and communication technologies perpetuate the traditional strategies of hegemonic colonization in universities.

As a process of inquiry, *Bones of the Earth* is a creative challenge more than a mere documentary video. It is an a/r/tographic product, something more than the sum of individual initiatives or creative coincidences. This type of audiovisual work becomes a dialogue between subjectivities that need to express their personal and committed position in seeing the world through video creation. Pearse (2004) suggests that a/r/tography is a construction that is woven from multiple identities, voices and positions that move through a multiplicity of marginal spaces and social contexts. All of this suggests that the positioning of our identity is always shifting and transforming, re-creating and rearranging itself. For Winters, Belliveau and Sherritt-Fleming (2009), the responsibility of the a/r/tographer is to extend,

investigate and create opportunities for new insights and perceptions about the understanding of reality. Springgay and Irwin (2007) suggest that identity is continuously constructed and negotiated through encounters with others. This means that with each new positioning, we get new interpretations and understandings about our own identity. For this reason, *Bones of the Earth* is a project that is connected to my own identity as a teacher, a researcher and a visual artist. It is a relational, metaphorical and liminal experience (Leggo *et al.*, 2011).

A Promised Land

My interest in going through an experience¹ like this comes from my work as a professor and researcher in educational technology in teacher training. Given that I am involved in a process of on-going change and methodological innovation, it is not easy to find experiences that contribute to my professional development and that can be applied to our teaching practice. In this sense, GIFTS (Gulf Islands Film and Television School) offers a valuable model that is based on learning by doing, where you use the lens of inquiry to try to convert the process of learning your subject into a process that is politically committed, more democratic and cooperative (Correa & Aberasturi, 2013).

Taking the story of my experience as a base, my aim in this text is to reconstruct and interpret the experience I had producing *Bones of the Earth*. In this type of investigative experience, documenting becomes a narration strategy, one based on evidence. It is a space, as Hernández (2013) suggests, in which the methods of narration that are related to arts-based educational research and research with and of images allow processes to be unveiled and open processes of inquiry that convert pedagogical relations into meeting spaces and the shared construction of experiences of discovery. This text is a reflexive and interpretive exploration of my pedagogic experience from various positionings. I start from the premise—which is methodologically linked to the ethnographic tradition, to (auto)biographical and narrative study in education and to participatory action research—that narrating pedagogic practice and experiences reveals the decisions, knowledge, beliefs, subjective intentions and reflections that shape the professional duties of teachers, in this case from various positionings: learner, researcher, foreigner, migrant and peer.

Stories are a medium for sharing the knowledge that is constructed through educational experiences. They are also a way to understand what occurs when practice is carried out in certain institutional and cultural contexts. In order to gather evidence, provide support for my narrative reflection and document my experience, I used an iPhone 4 and two apps and their accompanying web sites (Ethos and Portfolio Up for Mahara). These tools allowed me to document my experiences with video, photography and audio, and they gave me access to a space where I could write my blog.

Moreover, as Lin, Grauer and Castro (2011) suggest, a community-based media arts program that exists outside the traditional academic channels offers opportunities for self-introspection and communication with others. Community-based initiatives strive to foster shared commitment from the creative, social and moral capacities of individuals and communities, and they try to facilitate representations of their commitment to teaching through multimedia art forms and digital tools. It is precisely this orientation towards art-based inquiry that encouraged me to explore this training model that is based on learning by doing.

The learning experience at GIFTS is divided into four phases. In the first phase participants are welcomed and the outline of the course and the community rules are presented. The second phase focuses on the development of individual ideas and ends with the selection of group projects. In the third phase the selected projects are planned, shot and edited, and then the completed projects are shared.

The first phase is made up of moments of exploration, where we meet the various participants and discuss the personal motivations that have brought us here, our previous experience and the professional background that each of us has in this field of documentary video and media production. The GIFTS courses attract all kinds of people, from television directors to young people who are eager to enter the audiovisual industry. Among the various groups who attend this school, the teachers from all levels of education stand out, and for them there are special training and improvement courses. There are adolescents, young people who want to try their hand at audiovisual creation at this school, which is noted for promoting learning by doing and distances itself from scholastic practices by instead reproducing the real work environment of filmmakers. The objective of this learning experience is to provide students with an

opportunity to create works of art that speak about and are situated in the world in which they live. It is an alternative to the traditional class found in schools. By gearing the training towards the formal world of short films and video, adolescents and adults are fully capable of producing stimulating works of art that span a broad spectrum of genres and deal with a wide range of content. These workshops and courses are also attended by professionals who are looking to share experiences, foster relationships among professionals in the audiovisual industry and search for partners or try to find collaborators for work projects. Another group of people that attend GIFTS are the First Nation People. The group is notable in that the school organizes courses exclusively for this group and provides mentors from the same ethnic background.

During my experience at GIFTS, I overlapped with various professionals in video production whose motivation and objectives were more in line with meeting other professionals than learning the craft of making documentary videos. In all its years of operation, one of the things that stands out about GIFTS is its collaboration with experienced Canadian video production professionals. This context is enriched through dialogue, which lends a special appeal to the creation and development of projects. I agree with Castro and Grauer (2010), who analyzed the GIFTS learning experience with adolescents, that the methodological weight of the activity and the project development is based on the agency of the participant, who first exercises her agency by choosing to experience learning in a setting like the one provided by this school, where participants are encouraged to contribute their ideas and to work actively on creating a documentary video, and continues to exercise her agency through her choices in terms of subject or topics, how the work groups are organized, and how the production time is managed.

The second phase of this learning experience is closely related to the motivations behind participants' desire to attend GIFTS and develop their own video documentary projects, when all participants are encouraged to propose their own ideas for documentaries. The idea is for them to develop their own project and to attest to the filmic possibilities of their idea. GIFTS asks them to bring their own proposals, in order to share and validate them. This experience requires that participants have some technical knowledge of what video production is. It requires special motivation to develop their project by mobilizing personal ideas and thematic preferences and at the

same time by looking for benefits that are not solely the realization of a good audiovisual product, but more related to experiencing professional encounters with others. There is an intangible value in exchanging ideas and sensibilities about what it is like to work in the audiovisual market, in developing creative, artistic and professional skills. GIFTS's curriculum is intensive ("movie boot camp"), practical (without lessons), and self-directed (with mentors that help you to make the film). The course includes highly structured and loosely structured activities. There are large group activities such as the nightly video forum or the two workshops that are held during the first three days on media literacy and the technological resources that are available for producing and editing films. This is a meeting place for gaining mutual knowledge and creating teams. The nightly video forum serves as a teaching context that promotes group dialogue about the films shown. This opportunity allows them to analyze the resources used in the productions and the intentionality of the creators. I feel very identified with Gaztambide-Fernandez (2007), who analyzed the role of the artist in society, the gamble of making a commitment and of being an activist of social awareness. Viewing as a group *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, which was about Coppola's journey, *An Inconvenient Truth* or *Exit Though the Gift Shop* by Banksy was part of a vindication of the transcendent and committed social role of filmmakers in our society and of the need to experience film making as an artist, with passion and a dedication to social commitment.

Having chosen the various filming projects, the third phase is the most crucial. In this phase, planning what is needed for the film (people, content and dialogue) alternates with scouting locations for filming. The work environment is created in a collaborative and creative setting that tries to reflect the world of professional audiovisual production. Participants tackle the creation of the video as a team. Together they select ideas and shoot and edit the film using the professional recording and editing tools that are available to them.

The environment of the school, the need to contextualize the filming and being immersed in the community of Galiano Island, allows participants to focus their production goals in the community context, though not exclusively. This community-based sense of creation is reinforced in courses like documentary production, where the community is a source of inspiration. Attention is paid to the people living on Galiano Island, to their

social, personal and everyday issues and provides a good opportunity for analysis and reflection. The initial collaborative workshops give way to the activities of creating, shooting and editing the project, where each group has to manage their time. In this way, the only things that is structured are the fixed times for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The mentor is always present to advise and assist the groups with their tasks of planning, shooting and editing of the film.

Finally, the last phase is the screening of the films, a moment that is greatly anticipated and is the culmination of the learning cycle. At this stage the different projects made by the participants are shown.

I think that the value of the experience at GIFTS lies, in part, in its being an alternative to the traditional model of learning. I think the sense of community that this experience engenders and the fact that it reproduces the actual working conditions of the professional context situate learning in a real context, enhancing other motivations, collaborative relationships and responsibilities that, coupled with the agency that is fostered by the school itself, build a learning space that is stimulating and that puts both young people and adults in a position where they can find channels that allow them to experience the participation and exchange they need to develop their projects.

Therefore, the methodological identity of this school is based on certain criteria that can be characterized as:

- a situated learning experience, based on real and collaborative projects.
- a break with the traditional organization according to instructional timetables, where learning is divided into classes, hours and sessions.
- a break with traditional learning spaces: we learn in a variety of places, not necessarily in a traditional classroom.
- a break with the traditional hierarchical channels of communication. Everybody teaches each other. We can all teach and learn from everybody. Traditional classes are replaced by communication with mentors.

It is also worth mentioning that

- tasks are loosely structured; participants are expected to organize themselves, which creates working conditions that require continual collaboration in making decisions.

- the conditions and objectives of the professional world and the film industry are reproduced; for example, participants feel the pressure of deadlines that are involved in the creation of a video.
- there is an interest in developing critical thinking skills through dialogue and by focusing on the community.
- emphasis is placed on reflecting on audiovisual language
- the participation of people who are socially disadvantaged is promoted by providing financial assistance and offering them opportunities to participate and to receive support in making their voices heard.

This *break with the traditional organization of time and space* in schools is one of the keys to understanding the satisfaction of the participants. The years that this school has put into the creation and maintenance of a community of practice of filmmakers is, I believe, a vital concept. This is where people go to share their experience rather than learn in a traditional way. Wenger and Lave (1991) distinguish between the teaching curriculum and the learning curriculum. The *teaching curriculum* is knowledge about the profession that is usually presented during training at university. The *learning curriculum* is learning set within real contexts, which offers many opportunities for learning, some of which are not necessarily predictable. By reproducing the context of a professional work environment and by developing projects based on collaborative relationships, GIFTS becomes a context for learning which enhances the learning curriculum rather than teaching curriculum, functioning as a *real community of practice*. George, the director of GIFTS, believes that "*in one course at GIFTS you can learn things that you won't learn in four years at university*". Reproducing the natural conditions of work is very important for the adults who are participating. The respect, credibility, and appeal of the real experience hook many adults.

Lin, Grauer and Castro (2010) highlight the *importance of the mentor* in the learning experience at GIFTS. The mentor figure aims to foster learning by moving away from the traditional representation of what a teacher is. It is important to keep in mind that many of the mentors who participate have attended the school as students. Once they begin working professionally in the film industry, they continue to expand their work experience by developing various projects for the audiovisual field so they can later return to the school as mentors. This aspect is important when considering GIFTS

as a community of practice. Mentors, themselves former apprentices, become an important part of this community of filmmakers, which makes them feel involved with the activities and courses that are organized at GIFTS, following a path that took them from the periphery of the community into being full-fledged members (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). This was the case with our mentor, who had attended GIFTS ten years prior and later started a career that led him to directing his first short film with funding from the of the Audiovisual Resources Centre of Montreal. It should be noted that the function of a mentor is not only to communicate with the participants but to also share with students his or her expertise in the audiovisual industry and experience in developing audiovisual projects.

The type of filming project that is developed at the core of the learning experience facilitates the natural communication of knowledge between mentor and participants. This situated model allows for the transfer of knowledge that is directly related to the problems that students must solve. In addition to transmitting technical information, the mentor also gives advice to participants about the main professional aspects of working in the audiovisual industry.

The significant features that constitute the experience at GIFTS make it *closer to an informal learning context* than to that of the traditional, formal school context. These features are: 1) the objectives that are geared toward the development and implementation of the project, 2) the agency of the participants, 3) the strengthening of collaborative relationships, 4) communication between participants based on dialogue, 5) being community-oriented, and 6) the promotion of social responsibility. Another characteristic is the development of critical thinking skills and breaking with certain traditional scholastic strategies, like subjects or theoretical classes, and replacing them with practical workshops that focus on the undertaking of projects and peer exchange, which enhances horizontal communication.

Research (Adams et al, 2008; Page, 2012) shows that art programs that are grounded in the community and are developed outside the formal organization of the classroom provide a multitude of different spaces that encourage young people to reflect on their experiences in relation to the complex world in which they live. These community-based initiatives strive to promote and share the individual's and the community's commitment to

creativity, society and the community, and to facilitate learners' artistic representations of knowledge in time and space through their knowledge of digital arts. Evidence suggests that the teaching and learning that occur in the community are effective mechanisms for building a set of individual skills that promote community ties and provide greater social benefits.

Bones of the Earth

During the days that made up the experience, everything happened quickly and in an immersive way. The meetings with the other group members alternated between fleeting moments and long and intense sessions. These meetings allowed us to exchange smiles and talk about the outcomes of our productions and our intense moments, going over participants' personal and cinematic positionings. This allowed us to learn and discover as we went along; with each new dialog, we forged new relationships. In this way, all the characters and their commitments to the experience made their appearance; a parade of characters that could be in many film scripts. Marc, who had been a television director, had come to GIFTS for both personal and professional purposes, looking to connect with the audiovisual market. Then there was Nick, perhaps the most adventurous person in the course, who had found in the GIFTS setting a way of living, like Jill or Tunique. George was also there. He had been the director of GIFTS for nearly twenty years, and now he wanted to reorient himself and work with indigenous communities, the First Nations People. The significance he saw in GIFTS was the ability to empower these communities, to hear their voices and develop their cultural creativity. In the talks I had with him, I found the model of education that GIFTS offered—"something that can never be offered by a university"—to be one that made a great deal of sense. It was also "a fluid place for meetings and exchanges between professionals in the audiovisual market."

The filmmaker

A good starting point for talking about my experience as a video documentary maker is to start by trying to contextualize who I am and what I'm doing by having embarked on an experience like this. Let me introduce myself. I'm not a professional filmmaker; I am a teacher. It's true that the

audiovisual world appeals to me and I am a regular consumer of audiovisual culture, but I don't feel any special attraction to the world of audiovisual production despite being familiar with the planning and audiovisual production process and recognizing the influence of audiovisual media in our culture. When I decided to go to Galiano Island, my interest was to undertake a learning experience that is backed by the publications of scholars in the study of the production and visual culture. Moreover, I was interested in learning from the experience and reflecting on its possible application to the field of initial teacher training for teachers, the field in which I work. In other words, I was interested in exploring the possibilities that video documentary could provide for inquiry. More particularly, I wanted to explore what it would mean to incorporate the visual arts into my work as a teacher and a researcher.

The incorporation of the visual arts into teacher inquiry, as Hernandez (2012) points out, has not only served to question the hegemonic forms of knowledge, the classic and scholastic disciplines of knowledge, and the very conception we have of science and scientist. It has also allowed what is present but not expressed to be uncovered and it has promoted another type of narrative, one that is not exclusively text-based. In recognizing other languages and contexts in which artistic activity has a research goal, we authorize other types of messages and break certain exclusive academic orthodoxies. The visual arts allow us to explore other positions and communicative languages and to make other messages and authors visible (Herne et al, 2013).

The audiovisual project *Bones of the Earth* was an opportunity to tell a story that could help me explore and evolve my own personal and professional identity (Leggo, 2008). This project has been a creative way to share images and stories that encourage public awareness and are able to stimulate our critical capacity (Winters, Belliveau & Sherritt-Fleming, 2009). The project has promoted various forms of narration and heightened our reflective and critical awareness, both individual and collective. Through my participation I was able to help visualize narratives old and new, thus promoting new strategies for thinking, seeing and communicating.

The Film

What is *Bones of the Earth*? It is a personal and collective inquiry about my own process of personal and professional and individual and relational transformation, about a world in permanent flux. It is a game of reconciling opposites, the stable and the permanent (Leggo et al, 2011). It is more than a micro-story about a world that is continuously changing; it is a story that seeks the opposite of constructing objectivity. It is a gamble that has allowed me to reconcile opposites, the stable and the permanent. The inert and the living. It is a fractal metaphor about stones and the passing of time. It is about nature, about how light changes the reality that we perceive and what seems fixed and immutable. And it is about ourselves. It is about the search for meaning in the world around us, something we human beings do not stop doing. It is also an experience of not just individual but also collective inquiry. It is a metaphor for narrative research itself and my own role as a researcher. It wants to touch the viewer, evoke emotions and provide alternative perspectives to seeing the world. These creations are strong enough to allow readers to place themselves within the experience. As an evocative narrative, the validity of *Bones of the Earth* is determined by what it elicits in the reader, and in what the reader can consider to be a genuine, credible or possible experience. In this way, *Bones of the Earth* accounts for the multiplicity of relationships, both for the one who investigates, who inquires through the camera and her visual perspective, and for the one who is being investigated. In this multiplicity we show the multiple stories, words, times and frames that the opportunity of a creative meeting brings forth. *Bones of the Earth* is a personal inquiry into our own process of transformation. It is about stones and the passing of time. It is about nature, about how light changes the reality that we perceive; it's about us, about our search for meaning in the world that surrounds us, the search that we human beings continue to engage in. This micro-story, far from hiding the voice of the person who inquires, seeks to enable the participants' dialogue, without obscuring the contradictions of the many voices at play. As Nicole said: "nature is part of the way I see the world; everything is a question of learning to position yourself. Of learning to look and inquire. It's paradoxical that the rocks, which are impenetrable, anchored and solid, inspire a permanent change in us, and we associate this with our own personal journey."

In contrast, Jill, the youngest member of the work group, undermined the significance that we wanted to give to our project. Smiling, she challenged the idea of “personal journeys, where people ended up finding themselves. It’s only about finding a balance within oneself.”

Agreement came quickly given our connection and eagerness; the spark ignited. When Nicole began talking about Stoneworld, we realized that we had a topic that had many possibilities for creative interpretation. Stoneworld, a landscape with stones like Carnac. Stoneworld, a sanctuary for menhirs, a tribute to stone. We organized our own search for information so we could start designing our creation: settings and characters. Some of us made phone calls, and we began to write down our ideas. This is how we met Craig, the magician who is able to balance the stones, and Barbara in the Stoneworld setting. This is how me met Larry Foden, the painter.

After analyzing the different recording options and the human resources that were available to us, we chose our team and filming locations and wrote up the interview script that would explore Barbara’s commitment and Larry Foden’s philosophy. We wanted to use these interviews to explore the two points of interest behind our artistic experience: the process of inquiry and the collaborative creation of the documentary.

We became immersed in the task; everything became an obsession, a collective, diffracted creation of reality, halfway between the metaphorical and real. And we started thinking about stones, about rocks, about the earth itself, but turning our gaze towards ourselves and exploring the meaning they had for us when we looked at them, these stones, rocks, sculptures and paintings, and exploring what our relationship with all of them told us. But suddenly we were in another moment, no longer looking at the stones but instead reflecting on how life changes. We dwelled on the things that change, and everything remained. We also noted how the light changed the stones themselves. And we understood the paradox: the inert, in remaining unalterable, is in constant change and transformation. From this we created *Bones of the Earth*, filming and creating, talking and reflecting and looking for creative forms of representation that sought to produce diffractions.

Many months have passed since we made *Bones of the Earth*, and I haven’t been able to get Larry Foden’s penetrating voice or the conversation we had with him out my head. He talked to us about his tastes, what was behind his paintings, the attraction he felt for nature, his continual reflective

search for himself, and the magnetic effect that he felt towards what is solid, towards rocks and how in painting them he was searching for and questioning the divine and the mundane. He was exploring the meaning of life, talking with the elements of nature such as the sea, light, shadows, figures, fire and with his paintings, colors, time, slowness, rushing, etc.



Figure 1

I'm Larry Foden (Figure 1), I live here on Galiano. I have been here eighteen years, nineteen years. I'm from Ontario. I started painting rocks in water in Ontario and Whitewater in Cambridge Shield, in granite, and when I moved out here the rocks fascinated me. The same kind of idea, water and rock, only in this case the water very visibly erodes the sandstone into shapes so for me there's a certain mythology attached to the rocks out here, like a history. Not necessarily the island but in my head they represent a mythology, that as a culture we've accumulated so my titles and my themes go a little towards myth base. Icarus and the Sphinx....you know, animals, creatures... They're fascinating, and as a painter, it's an amazing subject for its textures and sculptural lines. Well I don't try and replicate, I just try and get a sense of

who they are. Once they get into my head on camera they become quite different. Not different, synthesized perhaps, they changed. Whatever it is I'm seeing. They occur and sometimes it's the light, where you are, that time of day they look different as they would in the morning and you know they change. And that's when the mythology comes forward and makes them more real. So, I'm a painter and you know, it's what grabs me. What stimulates me. And I've been staying with the rocks exclusively 18 years and I very rarely do anything else, which it may be time for a change but I'm discovering them more and more each time I see them. I discover more about them and now I'm moving into the rocks more or into the sky more because the sky here, you see I live here on a very big sky and it's affected by the water and if I lived on the Prairies it'd be a very different sky because it's not affected by water it's affected by land. Reflections are different. Different colors, different, it's amazing. It's like watching a private television, it's always changing, it's always shifting. It's great. So that's what I paint. I'm curious about the water and the sky and the rock. The rock is very solid. It's so substantial. It can't be touched and the water is very in ephemeral. It moves and it's instantly gone. But the one thing that causes the rock to change is this water, so these two amazing forces back and forth create these wonderful formations and it's only 5 or 6 places in the world that this type of thing exists, this type of rock. It requires certain conditions. I don't work at night because artificial lights affect the colors I use, the techniques I use are layers and layers of very transparent color. So artificial light often causes a shift in certain good colors. Greys and greens shift down or up so they don't read as clearly so I tend to not work at night except if I'm working on a black and white piece. Once in a while I like to work in black and white and grey. It forces me to think very differently. All of a sudden, red and green are the only things that separate each other in a colored picture but in black and white you only have certain shades of grey that they eye perceives, so you have to look at what the shapes are, what they tell you. It's an interesting challenge. So I like to work mid morn to mid noon. That's when I'm ready to paint. That's when I'm awake enough. Oh I use acrylic mostly sometimes pastel, sometimes water color. I haven't used oil a lot since I've discovered acrylic in a way that I like to work, same way I worked in oils. Transparent places. My favorite stone is sandstone. The sandstone out here really

intrigues me. In Ontario it's granite. Here it's sandstone. One of my favorite places is Coon Bay. Very north, on the tip of the islands. Very interesting formations along the north end of the island. Once again it's affected differently by the tides than the east side or the west side. But sometimes there's a spot over here that I love that I see everyday. It's always changing, you can't see from where you're sitting. But it's a wonderful spot and in the summer days I'll go sit out there. In Ontario the shield is mostly made out of granite. It's very hard so you don't see the carving on the rock. You see it being split by ice and freezing and shifting and the water moves it and it causes it to move slowly over times and it doesn't happen in days, it happens in years. Whereas here the action of the tide the wind and the small grains of sand in the stone can cause it to carve much more quickly. And that's what fascinates me and the difference is mostly in the action itself. It creates the images out here in stone. Depending on what filter we have to look at the stone, they're either just stone or my filter just happens to be a myth based filter. I see them that way. When I'm with them...I'm a happy guy, I'm a happy guy out here. I'm with them all the time either in the studio or in location. I'm touching them, I have small examples in my yard. It's called Tafomi, by the way. T-A-F-O-M-I. It means little crater in Italian, and you can get small examples of it. It's amazing what lives in and around these rocks. The old woods, you know, we're seeing old forests sometimes in the stone, petrified in the stone. It is beautiful and that's what attracts me. Other painters, we're all attracted to something new and unique and that's what attracts me. They have a lot of power because they're layers and layers of history and I do sense out in the islands where there's so little urban movement on the islands and you feel it more when on the ground and if you go out on the ground in your bare feet there's more of a sense of history there. You're more aware of it there but maybe that's just in my head but yeah. Uhm, I collected rocks and skulls and bones and you'll see scattered around the house whenever I've found a skull I save it and bones I love. My work in the east a title I call- Bones of the Earth and I came out here and it's simply more of that, the Bones of the Earth. I haven't been able to forget those phrases: it's always changing, it's always shifting. This, for me, sums up this creative experience. And his voice, so calm and interesting, plays over and over again in

my head, it's always changing, it's always shifting... it's always changing... it's always changing...

The End

Irwin (2008) says that to interweave theory and practice in arts-based research we create cases or stories that simultaneously and sequentially reveal multiple perspectives about a topic. Arts-based research has the ability to evoke deep insights through an image, a set of movements, a series of sounds, moving images or a few well-chosen words.

As we were saying goodbye, Jill talked about the feeling of excitement she had in embarking on such an intense project: “Finishing a project like this gives me great satisfaction. You learn a lot of things that surprise you. It’s not just the technical resources; it’s also the privilege of living the experience and getting to know the people that are involved in it with you. What I’ve learned from people like Craig, Barbara and Larry Foden is to seek our balance. To not lose sight of the important questions about how we got here and where we want to go. I’ve known about this experience for a long time, and making the effort to attend this course never disappoints me. It puts me in touch with myself. Partly it’s because of the effort you have to make to work with people you don’t know, but it’s also because of the personal demands that the process of artistic creation puts on you.” Nicole, who is closest to Barbara and most identifies with her, added a more professional dimension to the experience: “I came here looking for ways to continue developing my career as a filmmaker, at a time when I needed a transformative push. I’m leaving with a lot of energy, feeling refreshed and enthusiastic about the possibilities that are open to me. I like rocks, their texture, their silence. They present us with many ways to sculpt them and shape them. In a similar way, when you embark on very intense experiences like these, you know that even though the cost of being here is high and you have to give up some of the comforts of living in the city, it’s worth it because it moves us creatively.”

Arts-based research invites us to question what we are as researchers, academics, educators and citizens, and how we have come to understand our own position and responsibilities (Lea, Belliveau, Wager, & Beck, 2011). This must also allow us to question and reflect on the traditional methodologies of teaching and learning, and encourage us to interrupt,

break, create and meaningfully participate in alternatives to the traditional academic ways by looking to offer new ways of understanding and committing so our students, our teachers and our communities participate differently and more actively in educational design.

I agree with Springgay, Irwin and Kind (2005) when they point out that the same images of reality cannot be literal or identical. Visual narratives should include, at least, some sort of displacement that is able to problematize certainties and natural identifications in viewers. In *Bones of the Earth*, the dialogue with different persons, places, and activities allowed us to diffract our collective inquiry. Emotions played an important role in our creation because they allowed us to establish changes in positions and roles, which are twists and opportunities for knowledge that are generated in conjunction with the people with whom we work.

Creative inquiry (Birrell, 2008) means to relate with a topic and enter into dialogue with it from different places, with different people, objects, etc. In considering creative artistic inquiry as a performative act and in diffracting it (meaning we interpose ourselves in order to produce something different), we generate new situated understandings of the phenomenon. This diffraction involves the development of a new perspective that is based on the creation of a position that was already established based on a particular ethical-political position.

In the text I aimed to unveil the assumptions, concepts and references that guide the creative inquiry and the joint construction of a narrative in dialogic terms. It is a process of negotiation in terms of the choices we make, who we make them for and for what purposes and with what consequences, the utility our results will have, which voice is speaking, and what ethical-political aspects are related to our creation. I've tried to explain the what and the how of decisions that go into the construction of the narrative. I wanted to explain the relationships and decisions that are established in the process of joint creation, employing a strategy that demands reflexivity as a way of validating the decisions made. I've done all this without losing sight of the purpose of the narrative/inquiry in order to develop forms of representation that allow us visualize processes, journeys and contributions. To build a realistic narrative that allows readers to share the experience as if they too had been present.

Notes

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