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The Artist - Educator Alliance

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Research in
Higher Education
Practices Series

AALBORG UNIVERSITY PRESS

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The Pedagogy of the Moment: Building Artistic Time-Spaces for Critical-Creative Learning in Higher Education

The Artist - Educator Alliance

Edited by Tatiana Chemi and Alison Neilson

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Series Preface

The collection of four booklets 'The Pedagogy of the Moment: Building Artistic Time-Spaces for Critical-Creative Learning in Higher Education' is part of the Artist-Led Learning in Higher Education project, led by Aalborg University and funded by Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships. Our intention with the series is to produce a timely synthesis and creative rethinking of research on higher education topics of national and international relevance.

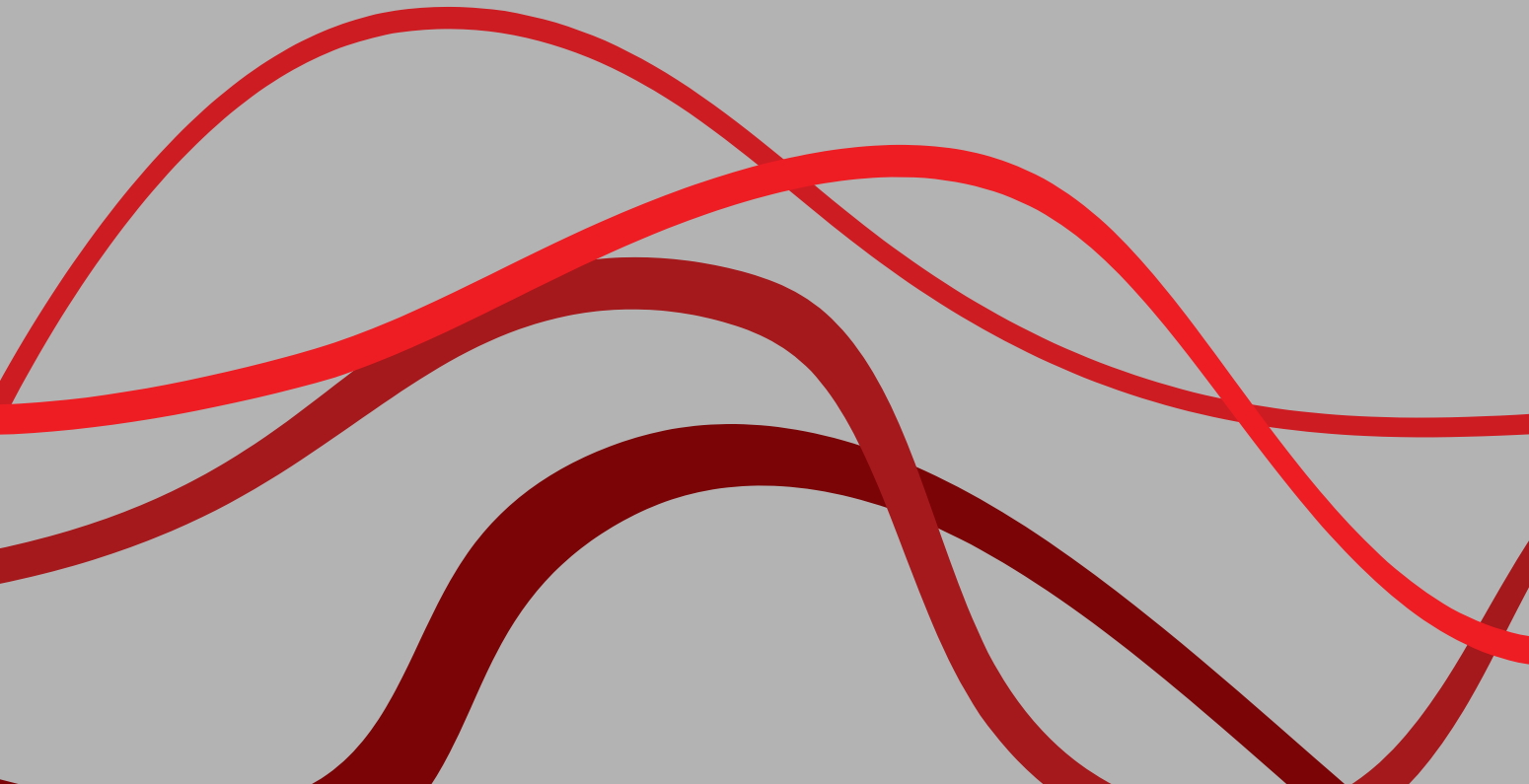
This book series provides knowledge, inspiration and hands-on tools on research in higher education, with a special interest in problem-based learning (PBL) approaches. We

discuss, investigate and provide argumentative analysis for the ways in which specific approaches to higher education are relevant and how educators can use them in their contexts. We appreciate original, relevant and resonant research based on sound theory and on meaningful, creative, transformative practices. We encourage our authors to formulate recommendations with concrete examples of how to practice them in different contexts in higher education, and to critically address the ways in which specific practices are or become relevant to higher educational contexts.

Lone Krogh, Antonia Scholkmann & Tatiana Chemi, Series editors

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The pedagogy of the moment

Building artistic time-spaces for critical-creative learning

Tatiana Chemi and Alison Laurie Neilson

Darkness in our Time

We came together by way of the Erasmus+ project, *Artist-Led Learning in Higher Education (ALL)* but, in 2020, much deeper connections burgeoned with the namesake of this programme than anyone would have ever imagined when we first encountered in 2018.. We are colleagues from eight partnering educational institutions from Italy, Denmark, Norway, UK, Finland, Portugal, France and Iceland. Our shared interest is the critical-creative introduction of the arts in non-arts programmes in higher education. More than 500 years after Erasmus of Rotterdam lost his mother to the Plague, the Covid-19 virus has given us a window into past and present horrors. The isolation, the sicknesses, the deaths and all the multiple impacts to our daily lives have caused deep reflections on our personal, and social lives. We cannot ignore the inequities of today, the differences between people in terms of vulnerability and ability to recover, but we can offer reflections on the hierarchies

of education that are implicated in these inequities. In exploring artist-led learning in higher education, we must acknowledge the “subaltern” voices who

... speak hundreds of languages and communicate in song, oral storytelling, dance, poetry, and rituals. Such voices use performative styles, reflecting an array of indigenous epistemologies that go far beyond prevailing Western academic styles and venues for dissemination, resisting external definitions of what is of worth, and often reflecting relational versus individualistic constructions of human beings and other creatures.

(Swadener & Mutua, 2008, p. 39)

We cannot claim that we were engaging in decolonizing practices as we initiated our project, but pandemic crises and complex

responses to them led us towards unexpected investigations around “the pedagogy of the moment” that unfolds in the present and shapes critical-creative learning environments. The concept of the “pedagogy of the moment” is part of the transformational educational discourse by scholars such as Ibrahim and Glithero, (2012) and Koepke (2015), but we use it here primarily as a metaphor to capture both the possibilities and perils of being present in, but also locked inescapably into, the present moment.

One hand holding another

While we honour artist-led and arts-based learning, we invite a critical self-reflection to illuminate the hypercomplex reality that we inhabit. Artistic practices can take us to places that we might not want to explore, but that lead us critically and gently to “the end of the world as we know it” (R.E.M). These encounters are important: sensing, feeling and bodying are fundamental in our practices. How does my life touch yours and yours mine?

ALL project outcomes aim for cultural understandings to flow without being colonised or appropriated, but just cherished and loved. For instance, the linguistic loan of “the red thread” enriches us across our countries as we create a shared vocabulary. This is fundamental in intercultural projects, especially as we seek bodily and sensory communications. To co-construct knowledge

appropriate to creative learning, communication and knowledge-production must be challenged away from what is already known. To innovate educational practices that are often left out (bodies, affects, experiences), working with the arts and professional artists have opened up new ways of doing so, but also new dilemmas. The experimentation carried out in the ALL project went through the same process that the expression “the red thread” went through: from diversity to sharing. The artistic activities and the embodied language that is proper to them insinuated a pedagogy of the moment (here and now) at higher educational institutions, bringing forth new opportunities for creative interactions across disciplines.

The red thread

The expression “the red thread” speaks to the relational exchanges within the ALL project. The saying “the red thread” may not make much sense in English. In several European languages “the red thread” is an expression that indicates a coherent common thread, a discursive line of thought, a clear commonality. As common to most European exchanges, this metaphorical expression, once non-existent in English, has been adopted in British cultural and scholarly contexts, with the consequence of shaping shared cultural and linguistic references, a common ground of comprehension, and reciprocal learning, a red thread of cultural fellowship, a shared

le fil rouge

den røde tråd

il filo rosso

punainen lanka

rauður Þráður

den røde tråden

o fio vermelho



feeling of ownership and community that respects differences, rather than conflict or normalisations. This metaphor constructs our collection of booklets, with each booklet as a thread that is autonomous but also entangled with the other threads. Each thread builds around two contributions that share similar colours and that are expanded in a “red thread”. The red thread is a comment that each colleague in the ALL project has crafted in resonance to a chapter by another. This poetic strategy emerged as means for performing the collective character of our work, and in order to shape a thread of commonalities throughout the four booklets.

Practice-based chapters hand-crocheted together as a book

The first piece of *Thread One* uses a provocative approach to explore the day-to-day practices of higher education, highlighting artist/practitioner collaborations and challenging norms of time and space. The second piece arises from musical connections to educational practice. It invites the reader to experience “lumen in tenebris” (light in darkness, or happiness in darkness) through their emotions evoked by Gothic rock music.

The first writing in *Thread Two* is a crocheting together of personal history and the ALL project online meetings, including how Covid-19 made a mess of it all. The second,

a presentation of theatre-based activities, is an invitation into a military leadership programme which goes way beyond the norm and engages our deepest experiences, in body and spirit, of life and death.

Thread 3 includes a case study of a long-term collaboration between a creative learning centre which supports arts and artist collaborations with a university, the university practitioners and musicians from Turtle Key Arts. This case study suggests trusting processes and explores the ethics of practice as a continuing process. The second piece focuses on an artist-led workshop on palmistry, and explores the way that a postgraduate class questioned and created broader understandings of being a community.

Thread 4 describes experiences with art-led teaching that evokes ethical questions about using powerful methods which have the potential for unpredictable impacts beyond our ability to know or control. The second piece focuses on theatre and the magic it makes, highlighting the embodied learning and communications from learners, and looks at artists/educators’ practice as research and research as practice.

With our collection of different, but related, artist-led practices, we wish to bring a creative criticality to the work of educators and artists who are curious about or engaged in each other’s work.

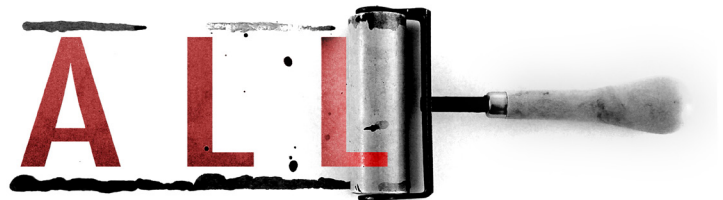
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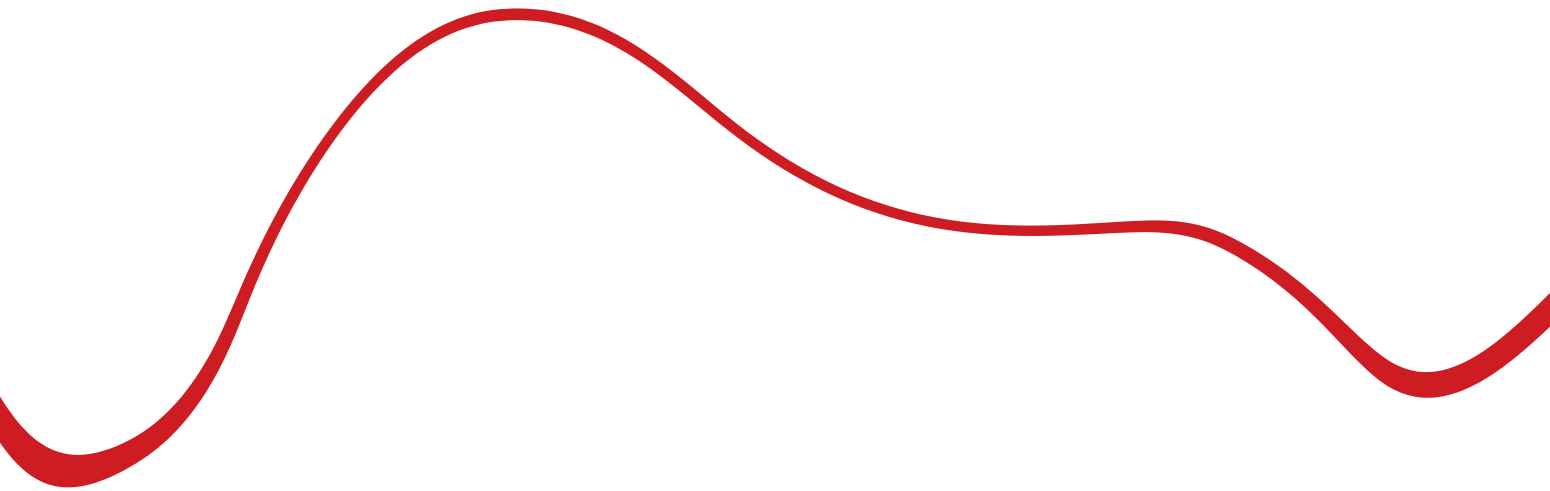
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Artist-Led Learning in Higher Education



Artist-Led Learning in Embodied Writing Workshops

Kristian Firing (KF)

Tatiana Chemi
Pierangelo Pompa

The needle and the red thread Tatiana (23 February 2021)

The needle in my hand is travelling on its journey through and across its thread. A red thread. Wool yarn left over by someone, somewhere, from some time unknown to me. Not much thread left for this activity. There will not be a compelling need for more. The crocheter is unskilled. This is an absolute beginning, approached with the guilt of one who has been betraying the aunt's and grandmother's legacy for too long. Forever. The needle gently grabs the thread. Hands working unsteadily. Feeling. Exploring. Sensing. Listening. Hands listening to the material: the metal needle, its yellow plastic handle, its roundness, its shifting temperature from cold-metal to lukewarm plastic, the warm yarn, its thin thread, its generous redness. First turn. Then second. Stop. Repeat. Second turn. No.

Stop. Repeat. Undo. First turn. I got it right this time. Slowly, second turn. Stop. Look. Resume. Third turn, fourth, fifth, sixth. It looks hideous but my hands refuse to see it. They keep on moving. Working. Exploring. Eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth. Movements feel easier. A knowledge coming from within, from far away. Hands moving at the will of centuries of common knowledge, embodied, often tacit. Tacit because of its resistance to words, explications. Show it to me, don't tell me.

My body gives in to the flow of ancestral knowing. I let it speak by itself. Singing a song to the women in my life, past and present. I am

"The needle in my hand" arouses associations to my own writing experiences as a little boy, so unskilled and so filled with guilt for not getting it right. However, I kept on moving under the wings, or rather the will, of my mother. Being a poor writer at elementary school; I had to do my homework 10 (!) times before running out to my friends. Today, I understand that this guided reading and writing made me cope with school, but more importantly it developed stamina and love for the practice as a process of creativity and learning.
KF

singing and dancing with my partners, needle and thread. Flowing in and out, up and down, across and above. I am breathing. My breath sustains the dance. Where am I? What time is it? Why am I doing this? I do not know but I have no doubt. The need is impelling. I simply have to. The chain comes to a halt. It has fulfilled its purpose: it has to be this long. No more, no less. This long. What now? The expert crocheter instructs. My hands won't follow. They will not do what my brain is planning, what my will is telling them to do. They work against me. Feeling of detachment. Mind/body cartesian¹ separated. Mind at the top of the hierarchy tells body to do. Body from below declines. In the middle of this conflict, I am lost, feeling stupid, useless, unskilled. My guilt overcomes my curiosity. I remember now why I never learned this art from my expert grandmother: I could not overcome the transition from very simple to simple. I got stuck. No help, no favouring agencies². My learning experience hijacked, murdered. Handwork was not appreciated in my family of intellectuals. Grandmothers' skills appertained to a past our community was silently ashamed of. Our roots in Southern Italian culture had to be left behind when the younger generation packed its luggage, on its way to the Capital, to the North, to a better life, career, modernity, status. At the bottom of their suitcase, their aunts' and grandmothers' practical wisdom. This practical wisdom was exclusively practiced by the elderly, part of

their busy bodies. Extensions of their limbs and their souls. No child was to receive this legacy. It would die with them. I was not encouraged to pick up any of the practical skills. Practical wisdom was not in my informal curriculum, even less so in my formal one at school. Praise did not follow my small steps into the craft. Tiny achievements were not acknowledged. Mistakes were not corrected. When I got stuck again with my attempt to crochet, all this came back. A wave of impotence. I froze. Again.

Then the unexpected happened. My hands kept on working. Doing and undoing. Undoing the doing, doing the doing, undoing. Again and again. My brain would not follow instructions, would not send them to hands. Hands frozen. Still went on. A shape emerged. Tiny fostered sign of life. Life flowed into my whole body in one warm upsurge. The foster child grew under my astonished eyes. Hands doing autonomously, unceasingly. Again and again. The needle in my hand started feeling lighter, smoother, easier.

*"A wave of impotence"
Dear learner, this is a bloody torpedo to learning processes and playfulness. What do you need? Just a kind voice telling me that I -as educator- love you unconditionally. Love is all you need. The Beatles were right.*

KF

The dance became encounter. No demands, just following each other. I kept on doing. Only doing. Doing some more. And again. By the evening, my grandmother was in my body, working through my hands, breathing through my lungs, inhabiting my core. The sound of the needle against my /her fingerings, the sound of the yarn makeshift growing and the thread working its way through the crochet. In complete silence, I listened to my mother's mother. She was by my side, summoned by the needle, the craft. I listened to her. Her practical wisdom. Her love for us. For me. My hands had knowledge for themselves. They were showing me. Their partner in crime: the needle and the red thread. I was just following. Listening to them and following their lead. Was it revenge? Was it cultural legacy taking its vengeance on me? On behalf of each and every grandmother and aunt, was this needle reversing history, by means of this embodied, material and materialized experience? Was this the reclaiming of women's voices that have been silenced by Big History and relegated to the back of its travel-bag? Voices that are hands, hands that listen, crafts that speak, history

"My mother's mother"
leading with and from love.
Learner and educator, just
listen and keep on moving.
KF

made every day by unceasingly working hands, and love practiced in the cracks of wars and great events. Love in the making. Love through practical wisdom, one stitch at a time.

This piece of 30x7.5 centimetres red crochet is by far the ugliest piece of crochet that I have ever seen. And it makes me so damn proud.

Finding the thread

What is happening here? During a seminar within the Artist-Led Learning in Higher Education project (ALL 2018-2021), the hosts (Italian team) had proposed and facilitated a short artistic activity: all participants were invited to start a crochet work, later on to be completed in small, squared pieces, to be finally put together at our next physical meeting to form our shared patchwork blanket. We are in the middle of a Covid-19 pandemic and all the project's activities have been transformed into online encounters. The team had voiced its frustrations during the preparation work, annoyances shared by all the academic community that was working creatively and integrating artistic, aesthetic and bodily experiences into higher education (Chemi 2021; 2020): the digital transformation of bodily activities cannot grasp the materiality of the physical encounter. The crocheting activity brought us together in novel, surprising ways by means of sensory shared experiencing. Against the background of the crocheting, participants were invited to write a short

text, which we did and shared by reading it aloud to each other. The text above is Tatiana's response to the activity and it has the purpose of poetically introducing the topic of the present chapter: the rethinking of (academic) writing practices as embodied, sensory and affective.

In our investigation of what bodies can do in writing tasks, we looked at crocheting as a leading metaphor and epistemological tool to reveal unexpected pedagogical insights, and possible applications to educational contexts. Our place of investigation has been the artist/researcher alliance that took place during the ALL project, when the authors of the present chapter co-created several educational tools at the intersection of learning, bodies and writing. Our investigation included both participatory ethnographies of the planned activities and autoethnographic (Jones, Adams & Ellis 2016) elements in order to capture our voices as part of the experiments made with the artist-led form of educational and scholarly practice.

Our reflections touched upon a number of diffractive perspectives, which we hope will resonate creatively with our peers' scholarly and educational practices. Our methodology made use of a hybrid composition of interpretive strategies borrowed from both academic research and performance studies (Schechner 2002), which clearly mirrors the authors' hybrid backgrounds and reciprocal collaboration. Among the theories that best can introduce our intuition about embodied

writing pedagogies, we found that Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of science in textile shapes was the most useful and resonant.

Understanding crocheting

Since 2005 a new form of activist street art has been practiced in feminist art collectives. Going back to textile artist Magda Sayeg who is credited for starting guerrilla knitting –also defined as yarn bombing or knitted tagging (Myzelev 2015; Scheuing 2010)– and who eventually founded the activist group Knitta - examples of impromptu placing of knitted or crocheted pieces in urban settings have been numerous. The political purposes of these artistic interventions are as varied as the techniques and methodologies applied, including choices about placement in urban (or rural) areas. However, they are all deeply coherent with the politically engaged approaches of street art and graffiti practices. In addition, because of the very nature of art form connected to women's crafts, yarn bombing gives voices to several feminist claims about women's rights and traditions, such as "the current crisis of global expansion and the feminization of labor" (Scheuing 2010, p. 3). More importantly, yarn bombing is a collaborative form of artistic protest that values dialogue and community making: "the dialogic nature of yarn bombing lies in the fact that it promotes the formation of a community of makers and thus has a potential to raise the

profile of handicrafts, especially textile art, to a level of artistic endeavour” (Myzelev 2015, p. 64).

Deleuze and Guattari (2016) extend the craft of weaving to the plateau of philosophical considerations. According to them, science can unfold in different spaces and through a broad variety of qualities. In order to deconstruct the monolithic understanding of science, they describe two contrasting perspectives. On one side, the royal, or State, science that practices models and procedures fixed in templates, static appropriations of spaces and lives with the purpose of reducing knowledge to figures, measurements and regulations. On the other side, nomad, or war machine, science that is flexible, ambulatory, vagabond (and vague), dynamic, corporeal, itinerant, collective. For the sake of argumentation, this opposition is unfolded as a dichotomy, putting these opposite qualities against each other, but only seemingly. In reality, the French philosophers specify very clearly that the two spaces/sciences/qualities cannot exist without each other, and often do lean towards each other. However, let us follow the argument of the distinctive attitudes to scientific knowledge, and let us dig deeper into these motionless or floating spaces. The purpose is to investigate ways in which artist-led approaches to higher education and scholarly research can be interpreted generatively, so as to open new doors for their future practices. For instance, one consequence

of thinking in ‘State vs. nomadic’ fields of influences is that matter is rethought as a dynamic connection with form. In the arts or other expressive practices, matter and form can relate to each other either by playing out a fixed dialectic (as in State science) or by escaping homogenization and duality (as in nomadic science). The former applies a methodology based on extracting constants, the latter makes distinctions and finds variables.

The two sciences and methodologies construct, in this way, two worlds that not only interact with each other but can also blend simultaneously. State science deals with organization of knowledge in sedentary approaches, shaping spaces that are “striated” (Deleuze & Guattari 2016, p. 552), or, in other words, spaces that mark intersecting straight lines, coherently with State apparatus logic (fixity, linearity). On the contrary, nomadic science deals with growth and shapes spaces that are “smooth” according to the logic of the “war machine” (Deleuze & Guattari 2016, p. 552). Smooth spaces are amorphous (p. 554) and “signal forces” (p. 557), rather than organize matter in shapes and properties as the striated spaces do. By means of very concrete and embodied metaphors, Deleuze and Guattari (2016), describe the two approaches as textile crafts. On one side, knitting, weaving and embroidery (State science), on the other, patchwork and crochet (nomadic science). There is no need to be an expert knitter or

crocheteur to approach the metaphor as materially shaping the two different spaces. Weaving and knitting emerge from the action of intersecting parallel elements (vertical/horizontal) in perpendicular patterns within delimited and closed surfaces, as for striated spaces. In the opposite way, patchwork and crochet work in wave-like patterns that “open space in all directions, a space that is extendable in all directions-but still has no center” (Deleuze & Guattari 2016, p. 553).

Crocheting voices, weaving memories Pierangelo (23 February 2021)

I know I'm resisting online collaboration very much. I suffer physically in being before the screen, and I have a physical longing of the other person and of my own active body. But I am trying. What can make it enjoyable is memory. Talking online with people I have met and enjoyed makes me remember physically that enjoyable meeting. It is quite clear that what activates this positive memory (which is hope for a new, future meeting) is the

voice and not the image of the other person. The voice acquires its physical consistence in the space and embraces me in a concrete three-dimensional way. And the vibration of the voice is able to remind me of the concrete person in a very strong way. But it is probably because these are people *I have met*, so my body can recover in its memory their presence and make it actual here and now. When I speak online with people I have not met, I don't have the same experience.

Memory and hope are very physical stuff. Writing is for me a very special kind of physical relationship, very sophisticated. In this moment, I enjoy hearing Anne and Allan³ tapping on their computer. I stop for a moment and watch them without them knowing. Anne's face is cut off at the level of the nose. Allan now has glasses on. I make the image bigger to see them better. I can experience the quality of their writing experience from the *rhythm* of the tapping. *Rhythm*, pauses, breath, eye movements.

Suddenly Zoom disappears from my screen, I don't know why. Only Allan is there in a small square in the corner. I don't manage to go back to the previous screen-view. I feel them more distant now. I want them big again. I don't want to be alone! Bother! It was in fact very easy. I panicked. I always do with technology. Now Anne and Allan are back. Closer. I would like to give them a big hug. I look forward to the moment when they will read these notes and through imagination maybe experience some invisible part of this hug.

“The voice” resonates with my own body as a writer. Suddenly I can bridge different people's voices to my body and I can understand the different relationships I am part of. The voice resonates with heaven and hell and everything in between, something that makes me sad and happy, but most of all grateful. I also start thinking about writers' unique voices.

KF

When Tatiana talked about *the visit*⁴, I thought about Mary. Yes, the Virgin Mary, Jesus' mother. *Visitation* was one of the important moments of her life and an important liturgical date in our tradition. Having received the message, from the Angel, that she is pregnant, and that it was the Holy Spirit, one of the first things she does is to visit *her friend Elizabeth* and share this incredible experience. When we discover the mystery that inhabits us, we need to share it. Only in that moment that mystery becomes real and eventually liveable. It does not mean that it will be clarified. The mystery is in the body. The Holy Spirit expresses itself through the body. No woman will ever get pregnant because of Wi-Fi.

Crocheting understanding

Pierangelo's experience of digital encounters and embodied writing elicited his consequent reading of Tatiana's text on crochet. During a dialogic exchange⁵ between the two authors, Pierangelo unfolded his understanding of Tatiana's crocheting narrative as the story of bodies encountering (Goffman 1961) the witnessing of a transformation. What seemed to him visible and concrete was an alteration that occurred in:

- Research (approach): scholarly investigation as autobiographical act
- Practice (embodied): scientific writing that becomes personal, subjective
- Autobiography (new subjectivity, as in Braidotti 2019): to recount oneself as subject (It. "raccontarsi come soggetto").

These points guided the bridging of our sensory autoethnographies to theories of embodiment, performance and text. We started noticing that a number of everyday words and expressions in several languages suggest that crocheting (as well as knitting and weaving) is more than a poetic metaphor for the practice of writing. The most evident shared semantic genealogy resides in 'text' and 'texture', words that share the same proto-Indo-European root (teks-), meaning the activity of weaving (Etymonline 2021). In Western cultures, the idea of a written 'text' is associated with a woven cloth (Latin, *textus*) and the act of writing, with the embodied and material practice of intersecting threads into one another. Whether in the sense of making a cloth, implicit in Romance etymologies (Italian 'tessitura', French 'tissage', Spanish 'tejido', Portuguese 'tecer'), or in Germanic origins associated with the spider's web (German 'weberei', Danish 'vævning', Norwegian 'veving', Swedish 'vävning', Dutch 'weven'), the image of single threads that, by agency

Finally, I know how writing and text is anchored in webs, "veving" (Norwegian) and plot – the pieces suddenly fell into places.

and will, become a complex, unitary artefact is more than a linguistic utterance: it is an existential, personal experience. For instance, the Italian word for 'plot' is the same as that for 'weft' and 'weave': *trama* indicates the intersection both of yarn and of words, as if the story unfolded through the concrete manipulation of materiality.

The fact that Western cultures think about writing and perceive the text as a material practice is often forgotten for several reasons. Descartes' separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, so rooted in Western thinking, bends scientific beliefs towards linearity, abstraction, pattern-finding, reduction of complexity. It separates thinking from materiality, so that sensory and bodily activities are relegated to the domain of everyday life. Weaving appertains to family practices, often carried out by women, and can just be an abstract image for writing. In reality, this metaphor carries a sensuousness (Salami 2020) that it is worth investigating for the purpose of rethinking writing as embodied practice. The pedagogical meaningfulness of this operation can be fully understood only by acknowledging "the primacy of the body in the construction of knowledge" and the fact that "teaching and learning (...) entails a humanizing ethos of embodiment that supports dialogue and solidarity, as we labor together for the common good" (Travis, Kraehe, Hood & Lewis 2017, p. v). In this sense, pedagogies that embrace

and include the body and its materiality serve ethical and democratic resolutions. Pedagogies that deny embodiment shape dangerous dichotomies that, by alienating and dividing, establish oppressive strategies (Freire 1996). Disembodied pedagogies are appropriate to the conservation of power in violent hierarchies, but rather useless for the formation of consciousness, of a sense of agency toward the world, of the development of learning and creativity, together with the resistance against oppression. Establishing pedagogical links to bodies and materiality holds this ideological and ethical intentionality.

The quality of text as texture and weaving can be unitary but not homogenous. Deleuze and Guattari look at felt as the texture that "entangles" fibres (2016, p. 553) in intricate ways and produces a smooth space. They recognize that weaving practices can be diverse to the extent of encompassing both striated/linear and smooth/open spaces. Thinking of texts as striated/smooth spaces, materialized in the phenomenology of weaving, embodies the pedagogy of writing in performative practices. The educator's body walks upstage and invites other bodies to engage in each other in the awareness that weaving meaning and words is a material, embodied practice of resistance.

Mythologies of threads

Several myths, narratives and sayings make use of the thread metaphor leaving open

its association with authorship, writing, storytelling and life. Penelope weaving in daytime and unweaving at night while waiting for Ulysses' homecoming materializes the dilemma of a woman caught prisoner by her suitors. Her daily practice, in which the stratagem for freedom insinuates itself, reflects the materiality of authorship: endlessly doing and undoing stories. At the same time, the image of life's ebb and flow adds to the complexity of the materiality of weaving and writing.

The Parcae weave destiny with their tools: Nona spins with distaff and spindle the thread of life, by which everyone is measured; Decima determines with her stick how long the thread of life is going to be; Morta cuts the thread of life, causing a person's death. Weaving shapes and dissolves, not only lives but also relationships (to weave a relationship), social interactions (social fabric), and affects (It. *tessere le lodi* = sing the praises, literally 'weave the praises').

How do the practice of writing and the materiality of text change when looking at them as weaving?

What is text? The very nature of text changes when it is

contaminated in rhizomatic intersections. The contaminated text widens the notion of text, for instance, by accepting the text as body and the body as text. We will address both: the former by looking at collaborative and autoethnographic writing and the latter by looking at bodies on stage.

Text as event

The desire of making the text explode has been implicit in several cultural and philosophical expressions that enact a difference or alternative to *status quo*. By breaking the form-text, the text becomes an event. Through history, artistic genres and traditions have practiced different forms of explosion (surrealism, modernism, postmodernism), while academic text has found ways of introducing "blurred genres" (Denzin & Lincoln 2011) as a consequence of the literary turn in sociological research (Barone & Eisner 2011). Anthropological, ethnographical and autoethnographical research performs text as a material event able to affect the reader/spectator as a fully participant subject. Practicing writing as the staging of an event implies the transformation we have mentioned above:

- Research (approach): understanding the text as material-discursive (Barad 2007) and the act of writing as bodily-affective
- Practice (embodied): the text is qualified by the materiality of matter and bodies, and the act of writing connects to bodily-relational

Sometimes wonder if I -as an author- am a slave of writing because I simply *need* to write, or if writing liberates me and makes me flourish. The same with relationships: Am I a slave of/in them or do they make me human?

KF

practices, such as oral storytelling, bodies on stage, performativities, enactments

- Autobiography (identity): writers perceive their (intra)actions (Barad 2007) with the text as involving -and not excluding- bodily, affective and sensory elements (including flesh, voice, movement, space, rhythm). Readers find themselves displaced and are asked to respond creatively.

Deleuze & Guattari (2016) have been pioneering this rupture with their non-linear way of organizing the text, a project that opposes arborescent (tree-like) formations and gives free space to rhizomatic materialisations. Rhizomes challenge the binary root-tree opposition: they develop as underground networks without top and bottom. In the same way, writing -and in general knowledge- proceed through “circular system(s) of ramification” (Deleuze & Guattari 2016, p. 3). According to Deleuze & Guattari (2016), the root-book (or arborescent book) “imitates the world, as art imitates nature” according to “the law of reflection” (p. 3), while rhizomatic texts are heterogeneous, escape linearity and dualism. They survey and map more than signify, and even assume diverse forms. If a principle could define rhizomatic texts, this would be the Baradian “diffraction” (Barad 2007), as their methodology chooses hybrid strategies: “a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and

circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (Deleuze & Guattari 2016, p. 6).

Deleuze & Guattari’s investigative and communicative project calls for a diffractive authorship and readership. Readers find themselves constantly on unsafe grounds, ready to intra-act in ways that are meaningful to them. Authorship includes the authors’ lived experience and autobiographical writing is practiced collaboratively (Gale et al. 2012, Diversi et al. 2021) without any contradiction. Collaboratively, authors make space for intimacy, generosity, affectivity, responsiveness; they share vulnerabilities and navigate through messiness by engaging in embodied practices, such as breathing, touching, undressing (Gale et al. 2012). Writing (and reading) touches when those who are involved commit to radical practices of love and sharing. Storytelling becomes the web of Arania (or more properly Ariadne) who “weaves her web through her story-telling talents: we are drawn, we are absorbed and then we are lost” (Gale et al. 2012, p. 50). Metaphors are only apparently a way to abstractly reflect meaning. They are materiality that makes itself discourse, and discourse that becomes materiality.

These scholarly practices are well-known in the arts, where orality historically precedes written texts. Looking at folk cultures, examples of words spoken aloud are numerous, for instance, in travelling shows and storytelling, as well as in practices of oral

rituals (Turner 1998) in shamanic or religious traditions. For instance, in Catholic convents, monks read aloud as a way of materializing the words of God and as a strategy for time-keeping. In modernist and postmodernist literature, Irish-born authors James Joyce and Samuel Beckett experimented with the embodied explosion of the text. Joyce's quintessential Molly Bloom soliloquy in his masterwork *Ulysses* (Joyce 1992) is the perfect example of implicit orality in written texts. The 4,391 word-long soliloquy is written without punctuation and conveys, by means of the literary strategy of stream of consciousness, Molly Bloom's chaotic thoughts, feelings and associations. The text has plenty of digressions and information that feels mysterious to the reader. Reading it conjures material voices in the reader's mind. Reading the text aloud is challenging as to how the stream of reading should find a musical flow or rhythm. Joyce, with *Ulysses*, makes the genre of novel implode from within. Samuel Beckett, his fellow countryman and admirer, finds further ways for bringing the spoken word to the written text. Beckett's prose and poetry originates from orality (Frasca 1988) and ends up transforming itself into body on stage (Chemi 2013). Only apparently motivated by the need of relaxation -after authoring his important narrative, the *Trilogy*- and by strategies of artistic divertissement, Beckett's theatre materializes what bodies can do on

stage, with their embarrassing materiality so much prey to physiological needs. Bodies on Beckett's stage or pages crawl, sweat, dig, rummage, shout, beg, play, stink, hug, fight. The author describes them stuck in the earth or in jars, running the same routines over and over, or he constricts the actor's body in cages (*Not I*) or in squares (*Quad*).

Beckett's written word digs through the debris of Joyce's destruction of the text and becomes body-text on stage.

Body on stage

In order to investigate how the body on stage can be looked at as 'text', we propose to turn to theatre anthropology, which is "the study of the pre-expressive scenic behaviour upon which different genres, styles, roles and personal or collective traditions are all based" (Barba 1995, p. 9). In other words, this discipline investigates the common

"How the body on stage can be looked at as 'text'", reminds me of all my dreadful experiences of reading texts aloud in the class at elementary school. Being a poor reader, I was stressed, made a lot of mistakes and was left with guilt and shame and the feeling of being stupid. I hated text as the basis for reading out loud, speaking or performing! For 30 years I prepared and performed on stage based on key words and pictures, no damn manuscript. But -guess what?- Recently, I crafted a speech, took the text to the stage and performed it by reading it aloud for an audience. I mastered the art of reading text through my body on stage. The reward of this surpassed all previous pain. Was I stupid at school? Certainly not!
KF

principles of a bodily grammar throughout different cultural traditions of performing arts. Unlike structuralist approaches that seek to build a system of understanding for cultural artefacts and expressions (Propp 2010), theatre anthropology finds its purpose in a fluid recognition of theatrical cartographies for the sake of agentic affirmation of the performer's body. In other words, common principles to the performer's body are observed through different cultures and analysed in order to act on performing practices. Barba (1995) emphasizes that close observation of the principles behind the performers' behaviour on stage brings knowledge about "the scenic bios" (p. 9), which can be internalized, personalized and applied in the performers' concrete practices. This means that this approach is pedagogic (allows the performer to learn autonomously) and practical (is applied to the performers' artistic needs). Among the principles that Barba (1995) observes throughout Eurasian cultures are: the extra-daily (performers' bodies behave differently on and off the stage), opposition (energy starts often on the opposite direction), omission (retaining energy and building indirect actions), and equivalence (movements/actions on stage are equivalent -but not the same- to movements in daily life).

These principles can have different ways of being expressed in concrete cultural artefacts (props, movements, scenes) or events

(performances) but together they collect knowledge that is new, useful (*ergo* creative) and can be appropriated or transmitted (pedagogy). In both cases, the body on stage develops creative dispositions (Chemi et al. 2015) in autonomous ways - what Barba (1995) calls "*learning to learn*" (p. 9, emphasis in original). In Chemi (2018), this is presented as part of the creative-educational environment of theatre laboratory.

Body and writing are in reciprocal relationships according to principles that theatre anthropology can contribute to explaining (physical, synchronous, rhythm, equilibrium, voice, energy). What are the consequences for education when bodies are perceived as texts? We propose the following:

- Research (approach): awareness of the performativity in academic texts and their potential agential role
- Practice (embodied): building texts in a matter-form continuum and designing educational material acknowledging bodies
- Autobiography (identity): subjects in educational contexts become aware of elements and principles behind.

Body in writing

During the artist-led sessions that were part of the ALL project, the researcher/educator and the artist-in-residence co-created embodied educational experiments for higher education

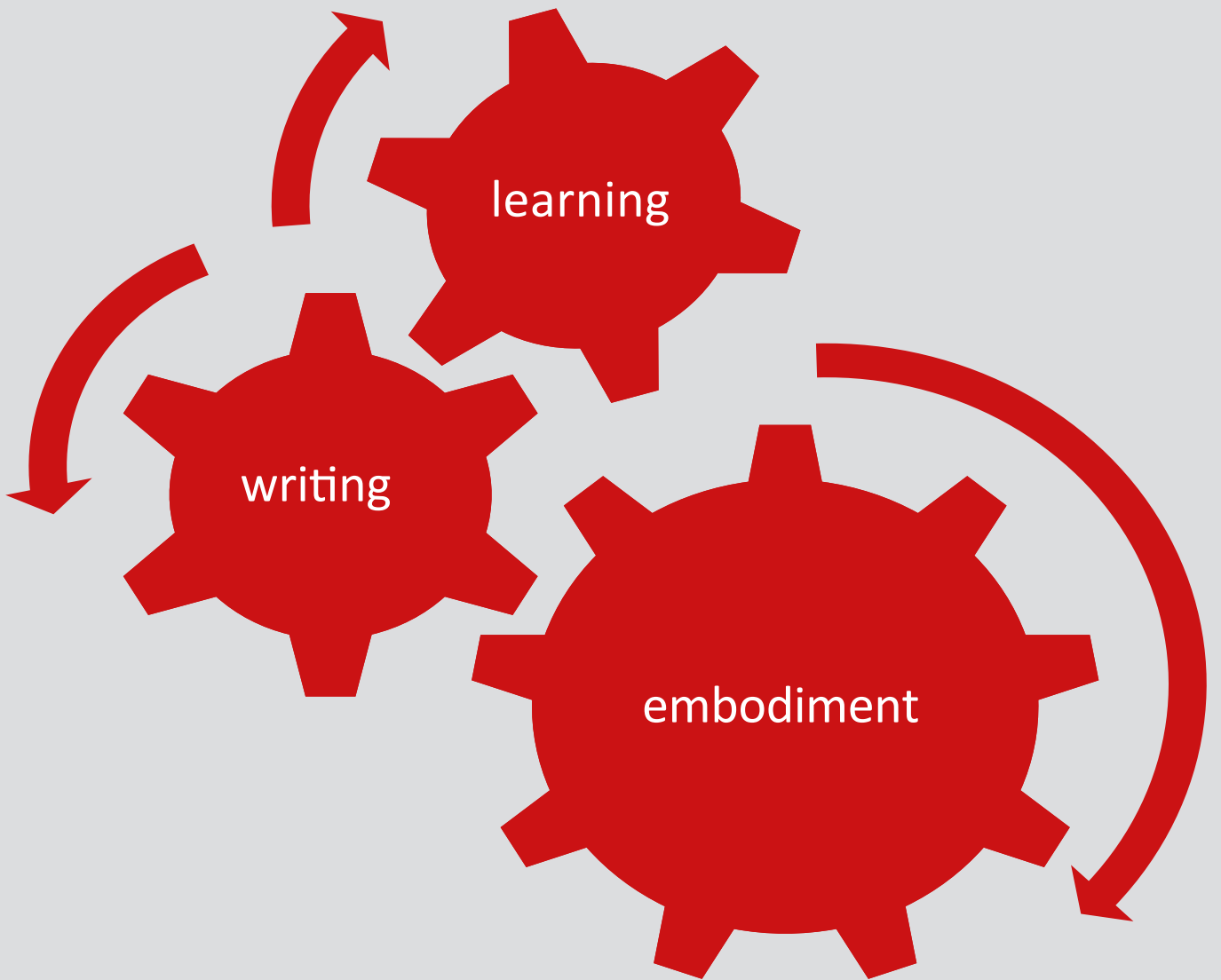


Figure 1. Reciprocal influences.

students and colleagues. These were based on the reciprocal influence of body-text-learning (fig. 1). Because the activities involved non-artistic educational programmes, the level of skills needed to approach the complexity of the activity had to fit carefully. We introduced dramaturgical storytelling and orality to a simple reflective exercise, which we defined as “intensive embodied writing-workshop experimentation”. It was founded on Stanislavski’s (1989) imaginative acting method that asks the actor: *What if?* The intention is to extend the actor’s possibilities for envisioning solutions to dramaturgical problems: what if this stick were a horse? What if I were Ophelia? Our exercise was designed in four stages:

- 1 Writing
- 2 Reading aloud
- 3 Expressing
- 4 Feedback.

The instructions were as following:

- 1 Flow writing on the topic: Designing a creative learning environment. Flow writing is a simple technique that consists in writing without stopping for a given length of time without editing or even looking at the page/ screen. It can be done intuitively (for instance as a writing warm up)
- 2 Create five short opening sentences or “prompts” based on the topic: What if the arts were the foundation of education.

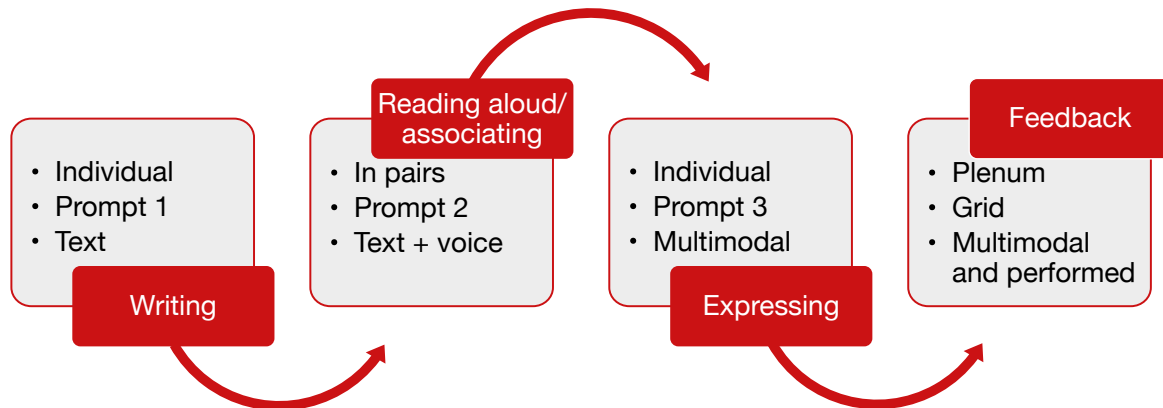


Figure 2. Educational design in four stages.

- 3 Tell a peer your key-words or short sentences (from step 2) and ask them to respond with 5 words (associations to yours).
- 4 Now write a short story about the topic in a literary / artistic form using your artist-researcher-teacher identities.

The activity alternated individual and collective tasks, as well as writing and performative tasks, such as the forming and sharing of the words in voices, and the possibility of responding to each other in performative, embodied ways.

Regarding the last stage, feedback was given in verbal, visual or performed ways and captured in a very simple grid. Here the participants were matched with each

other, and each could go back to his / her own responses, as well as to others' responses to one's materials. This grid was not dissimilar to those that design thinking uses to facilitate assessment (IBM). However, some points of difference consisted in the presence of the body and its influence on learning processes and relational interactions.

After the feedback, a mock-up montage session followed at the ALL gathering in Halden, Norway, 17 September 2019. This can be explained in simple terms as the sharing of an envisioned dramaturgy by one of the ALL artists in residence, professional theatre director Pierangelo Pompa. Being more than familiar with the technique of

| Design thinking grid | ALL grid |
|--|--|
| Structured by themes | Structured by individuals |
| Content-driven | Response-driven |
| Linear thinking | Messy associations |
| Material-cognitive | Poetic-embodied |
| Personal meaning (a feedback on something) | Relational gift (a present to someone) |
| Written-verbal (monomodal) | Written, verbal, drawn, performed (multimodal) |

Figure 3. Feedback grids.

“montage” (Barba & Savarese 2011), Pierangelo demonstrated verbally how he would collect and put the materials produced in the above exercise in a dramaturgical form, “as if” it were a professional performance. Pierangelo opened his creative laboratory to the participants (other members of the ALL project, who are educators in higher education) and shared aloud his associations and methods, answering to the imaginative task: what if these materials were to be part of a performance? He applied to a non-artistic context and to arts-based materials his artist-led tools of montage. As the word suggests, this is about assembling in a coherent (but poetic and associative) dramaturgical structure materials developed by means of aesthetic, meaningful and poetic processes.

Summing up, through this experience we learned:

- How creative educational design is:
 - Emergent
 - Collaborative / co-creative
 - Poetic and associative
- How we did it (how-to)
- What surprised us
- How this learning was applied to formal teaching (Master level and colleagueship)
- How Covid-19 made a mess out of it (and how performative thinking helped the educator to respond and make sense of it): in one application to a Master programme, the set up did not work
- Perspectives for the future. We intended to:
 - Explore the “montage” (pedagogical, epistemological) methodology
 - Continue implementing artist/scholar collaborations
 - Explore how digital forms can help
 - Affects and relationships in the experience and process of montage.

Orality as interpretation was what caught our attention when processing the documentation of our educational inquiry. The fact that written words could be made bodies by very simply being spoken aloud brought our inquiry back to the educational field.

Orality, *lectio*, interpretation

When a culture loses the practice of orality in education, then skills are also lost - the skills of oral interpretation. Lecture/*lectio* is about reading aloud the words of somebody else. The lecturer has read texts that he/she reads aloud to the students. Lecturing -as reading aloud- is a practice of interpretation and authority. Artist-led approaches are necessarily embodied because they make use of bodies, materialities, performativities and affects. We have shown how weaving is a fundamental image of the embodied approach, as relational, open, hands-on, care based. Embodied weaving (in our opening text) is an opening/reopening to materiality in the crafts and to

women in their pro-creative practices that take place through their participants.

Crochet, in our autoethnographies, stimulates associations with intimate memories, which the written -and orally shared- word grasps, makes public, turns into a pedagogical tool for transformation. Again, this has been well-known to several cultures throughout history - the tools of shamanism are words in/ with sounds and rhythms. The meaning of poetry as voice and singing is carried by the semantic field of the words related to shamanism. To be en-chanted means literally to be put to songs, to sounds, from Latin *in-cantare*, in-singing. Hence, the healing value of musical rituals and dances (Belfiore 2016).

What are the consequences for higher education?

The explosion of the written text can become a concrete didactic proposal that brings bodies -back- to the text, for instance by means of voices in spaces. Voices that draw from traditions of folk storytelling but also from scholarly reading aloud. As in our autoethnographies and in our pedagogical experiments described here, voices materialize bodies in contexts and their cultural history, with the consequence of shaping alternative learning spaces, inclusive and caring.

Putting into discussion the ideology of text has been a postmodern concern, which has guided a number of artistic expressions.

However, we have argued that text *is* -and ought to be acknowledged as- material and materialized body. What is the consequence of this reframing of text as embodied for pedagogical ideologies? Artist-led learning utopias bring the following dilemmas. When the text is open and embodied:

- How do educators evaluate it?
- How do educators teach it?
- How do educators practice it in artistic/scholarly contexts?
- How do educators challenge it and make it explode?

To conclude, we wish to address in a poetic way the artist-led approach as a feminine opening/reopening to the embodiment of text, not by adding more words to our journey, but by offering the gift of inspiration through the work of artist Maria Lai, who managed to craft artworks that are poetic snapshots of our approaches to text. Her visual poetry involves words, threads and weaving, just like the present chapter: <https://www.artsy.net/artist/maria-lai>.

The connection of writing and bodies to orality and performance is a revealing and meaningful reading experience. Drawing the lines from crocheting, memories, words, sounds, rhythms,

poetry, voice, music and dance, resonates with me.

It makes me believe in myself as an educator. I do not know why and I do not care. I simply rest in the feeling and motivation for upcoming educational processes. Thank you for your final invitation to visit artist Maria Lai. I did visit her, very gently, and I was blessed.

This and your text resonated with my mind in progress and my open heart, with knowledge and love.

KF

Notes

- 1 French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) was convinced that cognition alone characterizes human beings' identity: *cogito ergo sum*, I think, therefore I am.
- 2 According to educational philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952), learning is triggered by experiences of frustrations and obstacles that are undergone, addressed, and reflected upon by the help of favouring agencies (Dewey 2005). In other words, learners learn exclusively if they go through hands-on experiences followed or accompanied by reflections and receive the appropriate support in order to do so.
- 3 Anne Pässilä (Finnish team) and Allan Owens (UK team).
- 4 Arendt's concept of 'going visiting', as interpreted in Haraway (2016).
- 5 2 April 2021 - documented by audio file.





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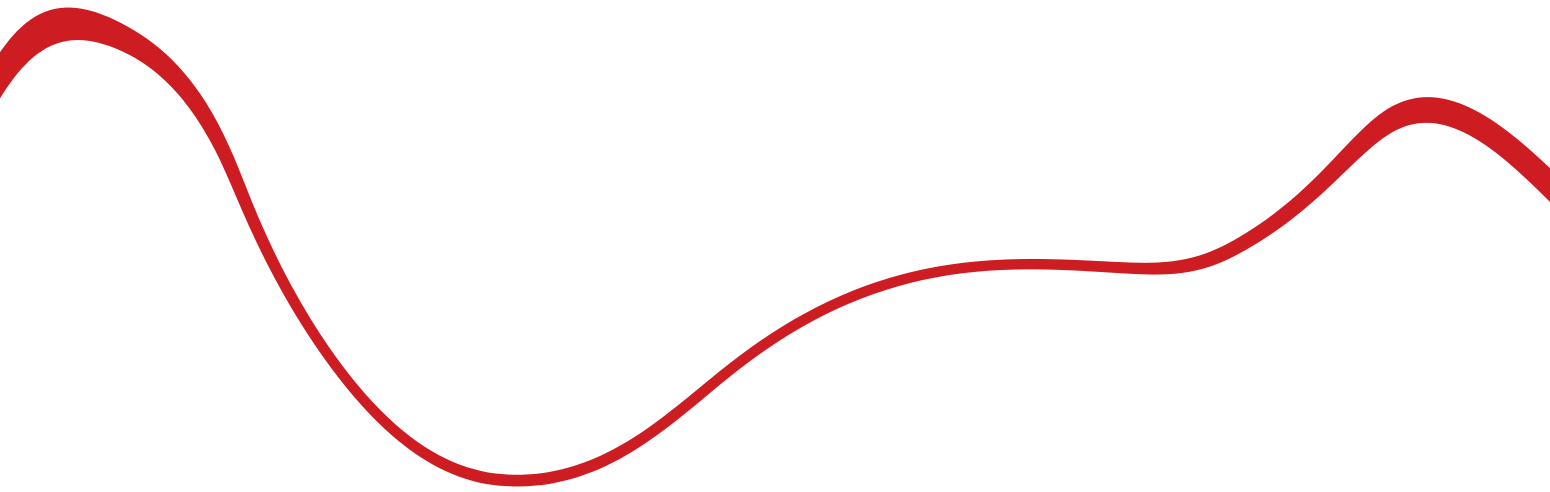
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Arts-based methods at The Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy

A journey of stress, growth and love

Kristian Firing
Glenn-Egil Torgersen
Herner Saeverot

Welcome to the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy

My name is Kristian and I am an educator¹. Please let me invite you on a learning journey to the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy, my educational home. The journey will contain encounters with death, relational rejections, stressful actions and performance anxiety: you are going to love it. If you dare to 'undress and be naked' together with the military cadets, this journey may change your life. I promise to take good care of you during the journey. You will be guided by my heart and mind within ethical standards. Imagine that you trust me and accept my invitation. We are going to visit four different locations, encountering a specific case at each one. The first case is just a short writing process - about death. How is it to be

here right now? Before we start our journey, let me introduce you to how we work to create experience to learn from.

How do we create embodied experiences?

The leadership doctrine of the Norwegian armed forces states that effective leadership behaviour can be categorised according to three primary target areas: (1) Mission Oriented: efficiency and performance, (2) Social Interaction: activation of human resources and relations and (3) Development Oriented: focus on learning and development (Sunde, 2012). The first two areas mirror a popular saying in the military; as a leader you should "solve the mission and take care of your men" (Luftforsvarsstaben, 1995, p.

34)². The third area addresses learning: a fundamental process in military education as well as in military operations.

Military education is heavily based on learning from experience (Dewey, 1980). An experience includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined. We do something in the world, we act out, then it acts on us in return, and we undergo the consequences. The connection of these two elements describes and creates the quality of the experience. The action and its consequences must be joined in perception; the relationship is what gives meaning (Dewey, 1980, p. 44). Reflection is the process by which thinking is directed towards actions and their consequences in order to construct an experience (Dewey, 1980). Experiences can be considered in terms of their results, but also as processes. These processes are essentially *negative* inasmuch as negativity of experience is not a mistake to be noticed and corrected, but rather gives rise to knowledge on what is not appropriate. Learning experiences presuppose (also) disappointed expectations: “Any experience that deserves this name disappoints an expectation” (Gadamer 2004, p. 397).

To learn from experience, the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy lives by an educational philosophy based on three pillars: theory, practical training and reflection (Firing & Laberg, 2010). Theory encompasses

central concepts and models from leadership, education and psychology. Through practical training, the cadets are engaged in a variety of experiential situations (Dewey, 1961), from weeklong settings (Firing, Fauskevåg, & Skarsvåg, 2018) to shorter exercises, to make the cadets sense and disclose knowledge in interaction with specific situations they might face in their profession (Firing & Skarsvåg, 2018). Reflection processes stand out as the core of their learning process (Dewey, 1961), mediated by methods such as group guidance (Rogers, 1961) and diary writing (Firing, 2004).

So, what about the embodiment? Human consciousness is largely bodily. This means that perception also takes place through our body: “Perceptual perspective is not just sensory or intellectual, but bodily perspective. We have a world only by having a body: the body is our anchorage in a world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. xii). The quote shows the importance of the body. Perception not only depends on the body, but is essentially bodily.

At the Air Force Academy, embodiment is addressed in the practical training, often through encounter with what we call cases. It is intentional. Sensing something refers to our basic senses such as sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. These senses are used in our perception; in addition, we talk about sensing something. Merleau-Ponty argues that “sensing always includes a reference to the body” (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 52). “Sensing”

something is a bodily process, something one feels on the body.

Why bridge education and arts?

Beyond the learning from experience, the Air Force Academy is opening up to arts-based perspectives in line with *The Art of War* (Tzu, 2003). To educate for the unknown, to operate on the edge of what is known and unknown, making the liminal zone a learning zone, the academy stages cases and processes of an arts-based nature in which the use of theatre has shown a promising potential (Chemi & Firing, 2020). In a recent study a group of 14 leaders was given the assignment *The Theatre of War*: planning and performing a five-act show for an audience of 50 people at the city theatre (Firing, Thorkelsdóttir, & Chemi, 2022).

Aim, question to explore and journey map

Our aim is to explore how educators within the military facilitate learning and growth, and to share such experience for knowledge and inspiration beyond this context. The question we are here exploring is: how do educators offer possibilities for arts-based learning on the edge between comfort and anxiety, and still take care of their students?

As mentioned, we are going to visit four different locations. Will you be open to learning? Will you feel it in your body? Please look at our map for the journey (next page).

The illustrations contain rich and deep knowledge. We will introduce each illustration when we arrive at the destination they are connected to. You may want more information about the four cases. However, we commonly do not provide a lot of information up-front to our students about the cases. We ask our students to trust us and encourage them to be open to learning. After each case, we reflect in order to transform activities into experiences. Following the four cases, we discuss our journey in relation to perspectives of arts-based methods of learning.

Do you remember that the first case is a short writing process about death? Of course, you do! What do you think? What do you feel? What does your body tell you? Let us continue our journey.

Identity

Each year the cadets have a daylong exercise to visit death, the core of being a leader in the military profession. After cases such as the shooting simulator, the last conversation and a lecture about the authenticity of death, the students are sitting in front of me just as you are now. Together with me as a coach and educator, we encounter the case named “The last letter” (Chemi & Firing, in preparation). The writing process in this case is inspired by the work of Pennebaker and his view of writing as a meaning-making and therapeutic process (Pennebaker, 1997).

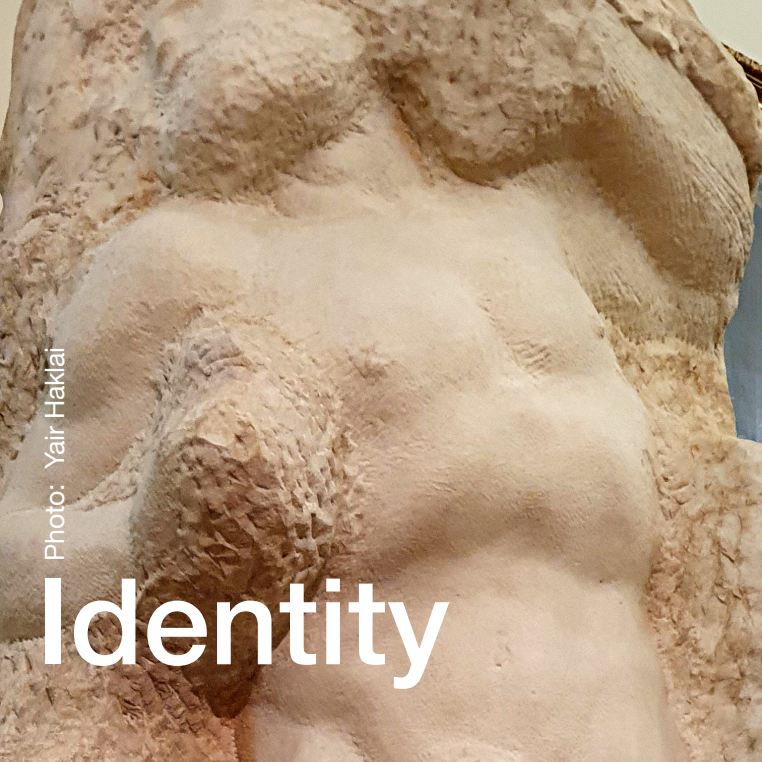


Photo: Yair Haklai

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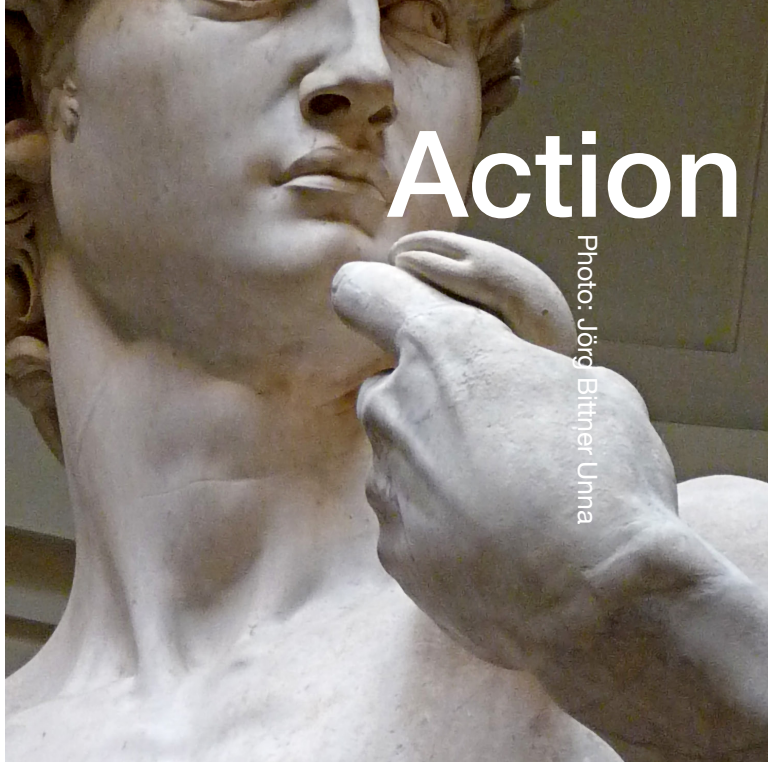
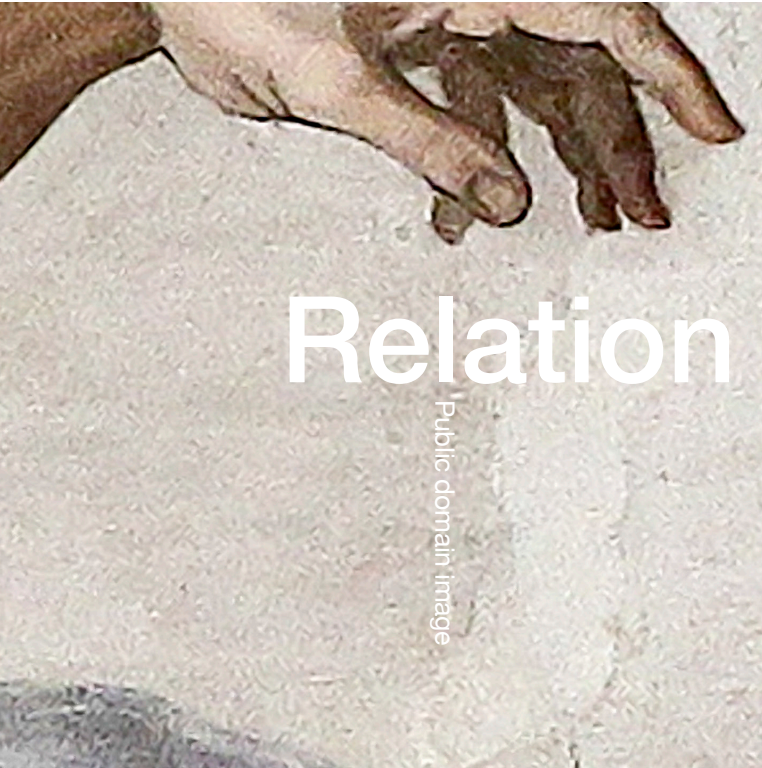


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Action



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Relation



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Organisation

“The last letter”

Imagine that you are soldiers ready to go into war. Have pen and paper ready. Listen carefully.

Write a letter to your “family / friends / kin” in case you die during the upcoming mission. The letter will be stored on your personal file and delivered only in the event of your death. Start writing your letter and please write in complete silence. No talking.

After about 10 minutes, I thank you for participating fully in this personal and intimate writing exercise, and invite you into a reflection process.

The arts-based nature of this case is in the writing processes, addressing death as an intimate, personal and open topic, and the oral reflection processes taking place in the group.

Reflections

You begin the reflection process by writing in your logbooks. I have a short introduction where I ask you “how was it to write this letter?” I offer auxiliary questions such as:

To whom would you address your letter?

- 1 What would you write, which words would you use, to whom?
- 2 What did you think about this writing process?

- 3 How would you feel and how would you notice the writing process in your body?
- 4 Please think through these questions and let me share some authentic reflections from my cadets. One of the soldiers experienced the “last letter” strongly:

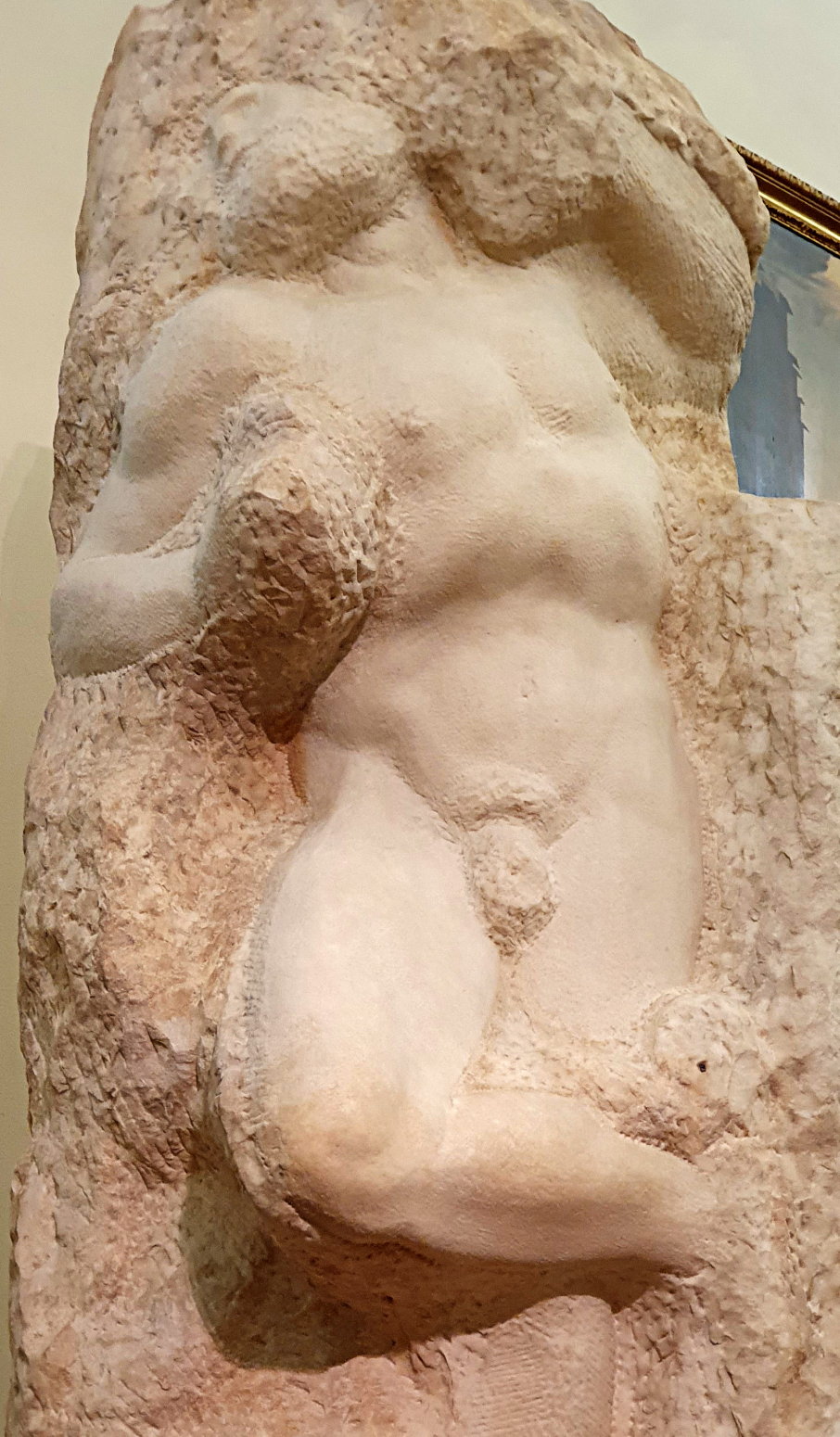
The last case, with a letter to the family, was difficult, especially when I got to it and had to write to my kids. Like if I was dead. It got completely sick...If I go abroad then... and then I manage to die in a war... How in the world can one explain it to a child? How will they ever be able to forgive me for that? I imagine that being a child and losing a parent that way, then, I think it can be very difficult. And sort of thinking back to the fact that we were actually no more valuable than that, “Dad didn’t love us”. So, no, when I started thinking those thoughts there, my professional existence was actually torn away from me in a way... Should I just quit?

This soldier ended up asking himself whether he should just “quit” (i.e. give up his profession). His reflections reached beyond his “ego-trip” mode into his social identity, encompassing both being a father and being a soldier. His explorations were about

The fame of these four powerful statues is above all due to their unfinished state. In various stages of completion, they evoke the enormous strength of the creative concept as they try to free themselves from the bonds and physical weight of the marble. It is claimed that the artist deliberately left them incomplete to represent an eternal struggle of human beings to free themselves from their material trappings. Michelangelo's "non finito" has been very much discussed and has initiated an entire aesthetic understanding right up to Rodin and Claudel (Schmoll-Eisenwerth, 1994).

Photo: Yair Haklai

Identity



death, however at the same time about the potentiality-of-being. Writing the last letter mirrors the act of time travelling, considering the possibility of death in war. This makes the soldiers visit death as experiential encounter, opening radical possibilities of existence.

How do the cadets' voices resonate with you as a reader and educator? What can you learn from the "last letter"? I like to hold this case up against Michelangelo's sculptures "The Prisoners".

Please look at your map again. I ask myself how I live my life: do I feel suffocated by the world of expectations or do I break free to live my life? Am I incomplete or perfectly vulnerable? Am I free to dream and to follow my dreams? What about you as a reader and educator, how do you feel?

Visiting Death and Learning to Live

Death is a personal matter; however, it can also be a social matter. Anxiety about death, of oneself or others, is for many associated with a threat to belonging. Following Baumeister and Leary (1995), a primary cause of people's fears about death concerns being separated from friends and family (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Heidegger has a rather radical view on death, arguing that humans know they are born vulnerable and that they will die. It is just a matter of time. This time travel towards death is captured through his concept "being-toward-

death" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 219). Nevertheless, encounters with death make humans able to reinterpret death as an event, which always assures us still more clearly that one's self is still alive. That the potentiality of being and the possibility of existence can actually unfold. Being aware of the fact that one is bound to die opens up the potentiality-of-being for ourselves and for the other. While Heidegger's concern is our own death, Levinas focuses on the death of the other (Saeverot, 2018). "The last letter" may be especially relevant to soldiers, whose possibility of encountering death, their own and their co-soldiers', during missions is quite realistic. Nevertheless, more than any other, the topic of death is, for every human being, related to life.

Relation

As mentioned, military leaders are guided by a strong will to solve their missions and take care of their people. The process of taking care of people encompasses protecting your soldiers and peers, and bringing them home alive from war operations. This is typically addressed during military field exercises, in which students/cadets develop role expectations and rational standard procedures. However, to explore leaders' emotional and social intelligence, free from such a scaffold, we invited them to a staged cocktail party (Firing, Skarsvåg, & Chemi, 2018). Now, I would like you to join them.

“The cocktail party”

Welcome to this staged cocktail party. Please close your eyes and let me place a piece of tape on your forehead with a number from one to six written on it. You will not see which number you are given. When we start the party, a person with a low number should be considered socially popular and should be talked to or mingled with. Conversely, a person with a five or six on his or her forehead should be considered unpopular and someone to be avoided. You should mingle or withdraw slowly from the persons depending on what number they have. If you need to avoid someone, you should do so in a sophisticated way so that the identities are not revealed too quickly. Let us start.

Imagine that people meet you with a welcoming attitude, including positive body language, eye contact and gentle voices. You sense that they want to spend time in your company. You feel appreciated, loved and thoroughly enjoy your party. Now, reverse the situation. This time, people turn their body slightly away from you, look somewhat aside to other attendees, and their voices are polite, but reserved, and they disappear soon after the introduction, excusing themselves.

After about 5-8 minutes, I clap my hands and state that the action part of this case is over, and I invite you into a reflection process.

The arts-based nature of this case is in the staged setting and the role-play, and the intimate and open reflection processes taking place in the group.

Reflections

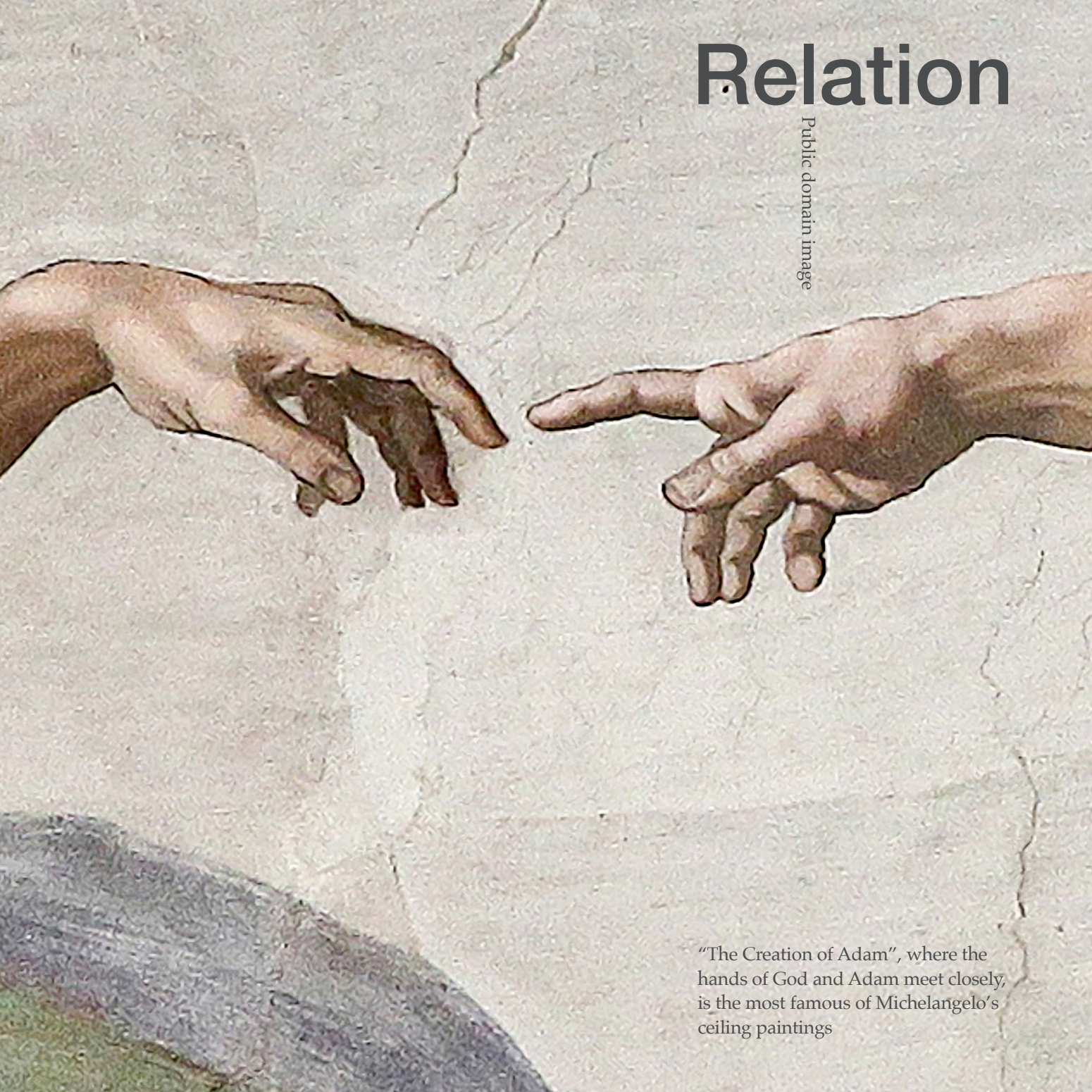
I start the reflection process by asking questions: do you recognise the situation? How would you respond to such an interaction? How would you react, think and feel if people were friendly? How would you feel if people were polite or even less than that? Would you have noticed this in your body? Let me share some authentic reactions and reflections from my cadets.

First, when I asked the participants to guess their number / role, almost all the participants answered correctly, or within the smallest margin of error. This, we believe, is due to human interaction. The participants figured out their number by how they were treated by the others. It is also telling that the numbers in between are the ones who are in doubt about their identity, as no clear relational response is coming from their peers.

Second, when I asked how their specific number made them feel, they tended to engage in conversations about their feelings, reactions,

Relation

Public domain image



"The Creation of Adam", where the hands of God and Adam meet closely, is the most famous of Michelangelo's ceiling paintings

thoughts, insights and surprises. Those given the number one or two perceived that the other participants were eager to talk and listen to them. They felt good about this and about themselves. The participants given a five or six experienced that the others rejected them, and they felt bad about this, feeling shame and sorrow, and they wanted to leave the party. The activity tends to be strongly felt in the participants' bodies and provides them with personal insight.

Third, I asked them for learning possibilities. There should be something to learn from this, beyond the pain of rejections. After some silence, this typical utterance was shared by participants: "having experienced that we are in the communication process in relationship with an 'other', and having witnessed that this really makes a difference due to the other's self-esteem, we should try to be a good other to the other" (Firing, Skarsvåg, et al., 2018). The attitude of being a good other to the other is the starting point for empathic understanding and reciprocal obligation, bridging the learning process from personal development to leader development.

Here, too, we are inspired by art, this time Michelangelo's ceiling painting from the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

Being a good other to the other

The staged cocktail party discloses processes of human interaction, emotional reactions and

leadership. Human interaction are visible to utterances such as "we become who we are in relation to the other" and "by meeting the other, I meet myself". This resonates with Martin Buber, who states that "I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You. All actual life is encounter" (Buber, 1996, p. 62). Communication appears to be the mediating process that is taking place here. On this topic, Mead writes that communication is not only directed to others 'but also to the individual himself' (Mead, 1934, p. 139).

Emotional reactions are important during the staged cocktail party. On the one hand, those who were attributed the number one and two roles shone with happiness. On the other hand, participants who were given the number five or six roles felt "*sorrow*", "*guilt*" and "*shame*". The setting of the staged cocktail party is stripped down to the bare essentials – people interacting. There is nowhere to hide, no equipment, no technology – just the encounters between people. Being faced with such nakedness the cadets are subject to vulnerability, where emotions unfold. This resonates with Goleman's emphasis on emotions and social intelligence (Goleman, 2006a, 2006b) for learning and personal growth.

Out of human interaction and emotional reactions, we find the potential for leadership. Let us reflect once more on utterances such as "leaders are in relation to the other" and "leaders

should be a good other to the other". These ideas usually fill the room with a mood of gratitude. Compassion never goes out of fashion.

Action

Military education is a profound process. On the one hand, soldiers go through a process of indoctrination into the military system (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978), being exposed to the process of socialisation and objectification of individuals. On the other hand, they are supposed to conduct hermeneutic reflection, retain their individual identity and conduct professional judgement (Toiskallio, 2008). To explore such a dilemma, out-of-the-box situations are needed (Firing, Karlsdottir, & Laberg, 2009). Are you open to learning?

"The water jump"

Please team up with the military cadets and get into this vehicle with your team. For this mission you should all wear shorts and a T-shirt with a hood covering your eyes. It is winter – and cold outside. After a short drive the car stops. Now, this happens:

One by one, blindfolded by a hood, cadets are taken out of the car, dressed in a life jacket and hooked up to a safety line. As you stand there half-naked and blindfolded, I will tell you "you're now standing on a wharf and you are given an offer

of jumping into the ocean". If you ask me, I will tell you that it is three meters down to the ocean and five meters to swim to a ladder to climb up from the ocean. Moreover, if you ask, I will tell you that whether you jump or not, you will get your clothes back and access to a warm shower. Finally, if you ask me about the offer, I will confirm, yes, I am giving you an offer of jumping into the ocean.

Silence, for as long as it takes. Then, if you elaborate about jumping, I will ask you why you would like to jump. I will listen to your reflections about stress and coping or that you want to show bravery in relation to your team. If you elaborate about not jumping, I will also listen. Listening to your personal and social reasons. During our reflective dialogue you might get the feeling that there is more to this exercise than jumping into the icy water. You are right. After about 5 minutes, I thank you for our conversation, and we transfer into the mediated action: you jump into the ocean, or I take off your blindfold. In both cases, you encounter your teammates to write in your "diary for leaders" before we listen to each other in a group coaching setting.

This may not be a typically arts-based case, however "the water jump" has an aesthetic design for opening up to the senses, embodied

experiences, dialogues, dramaturgy and storytelling about oneself in relation to “the others”.

Reflections

How would your bodily experience be on the wharf? How would you respond to such a challenge? Would you jump or not jump? What would be your contributions to the reflective dialogue? How would you feel meeting with your teammates afterwards, being among the majority of “jumpers” or being the only one not jumping? How would you notice this in your body? Let me share some authentic reactions from my cadets.

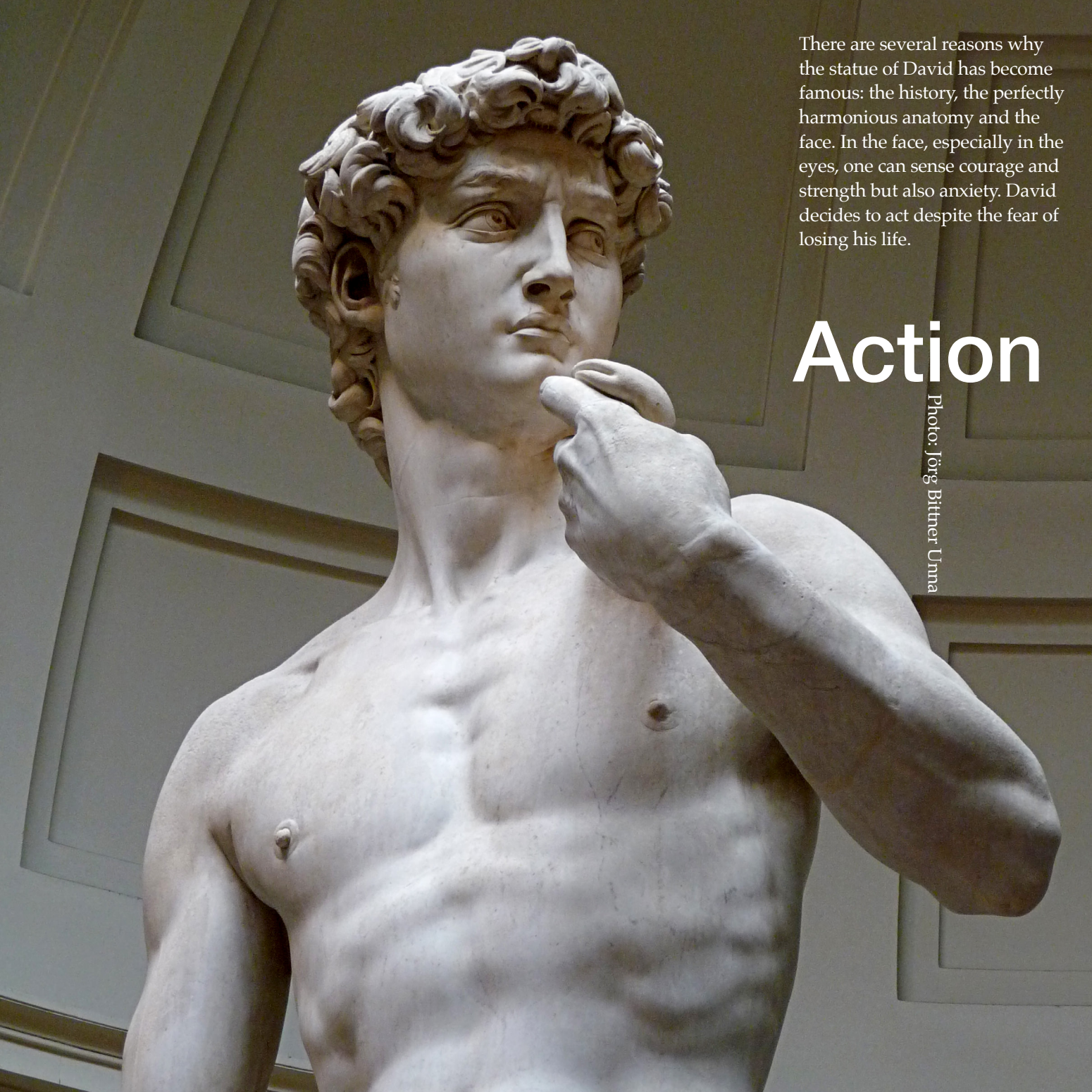
I will master it. I’m uncertain now, but I will certainly benefit from such a case in the future ... I think the learning is greater if I take a step forward and jump.

There is surely no point in asking, but have many others jumped? I didn’t want to be the only one not jumping ... And because I didn’t want to feel outside the group I jumped. I had confidence in the group that all the others would do it and therefore I didn’t want to stand alone on the other side.

On exercises it seems like you put a haze over yourself, a mask, you get into a sort of exercise mode. I think the group has its own culture. You say “yes thank you”, to everything. I do not think it’s very conscious; it just happens.

These comments disclose the core of “the water jump”. The offer of jumping is the starting point of an exploration of your impulses to act, your thoughts, your emotions, your body, and finally your identity: who you are in stressful situations. At a personal level of identity, the phrase “I will master it” might mirror the cadets’ involvement in the situation. The social identity on a relational level may be understood through the sentence “I don’t want to be the only one not jumping”. The social identity on a collective level could be this explanation, “you say, “yes thank you”, to everything”. Of course, the decision process of action is central to being a soldier. The soldiers’ voices resonate with the statue of David by Michelangelo, based on the narrative of David and Goliath:

This portrayal of David illustrates the moment when he makes the decision to fight Goliath, the decision to act. To military leaders today, action is highly important, both being able to act and being able to withhold such actions.



There are several reasons why the statue of David has become famous: the history, the perfectly harmonious anatomy and the face. In the face, especially in the eyes, one can sense courage and strength but also anxiety. David decides to act despite the fear of losing his life.

Action

Photo: Jörg Bithner Unna

Mediated Action

Being a soldier is being part of an action-based profession, in which military exercises are mainly action-based. You are stimulated by a situation and respond by an action. Drilling of basic military skills and coping rituals are emphasised in accordance with a behaviouristic perspective. A number of behavioural responses are often available in today's military operations. Withholding or executing behaviour, such as pulling the trigger, may depend on the operator's interpretation of the situation. Initially the action may be thought of as just a physical act. You perform an action, carry out a drill, or follow a procedure. However, it is much more complicated than that.

Following a sociocultural approach, action is the entry into analysis of mind. People come in contact with and create "their surroundings as well as themselves through the actions in which they engage" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 8). Moreover, the concept of "mediated action" states that "human action typically employs "mediational means", such as tools and language, and that these mediational means shape the action in essential ways" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 12). In this way, cognition is closely connected to action.

However, in the present case the flow of actions and responses was stopped, inviting the participants into a reflection process. This reflection process broke the stimuli-response relation, and the situation was transformed

into a reflective dialogue in which language functions as a tool in human thinking (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). From here, there is potential to explore identity in the range from personal identity to social identity. This enables further examination of how such identity influences action.

Based on this case, we suggest the following: (1) From a psychological perspective, we maintain that people may be carried away by the power of social identity in a given situation; (2) From an educational perspective, we recognise that military academies have the responsibility of addressing this challenge in an attempt to prevent this from happening. The cadets are provided with an opportunity to see alternative behaviours inherent in the situation and may decide on a different way of acting than if he or she was just following the group norm. The practical contribution may be that the reflection process can be a promising way to counteract unwanted group processes.

Profession

War operations, called the theatre of war, are a backdrop for military education. Military education is based on two perspectives: on the known, often learned through experience (Dewey, 1980), and on the unknown, what learners have not yet experienced. Both areas resonate with the liminal zone (Brunstad, 2015). The adjective liminal is used to describe a foreign, dangerous and threatening area of

transformation (Turner 1982). At this limit, past experiences are put to the test, but this is also where experience can help to develop enhanced coping capacity. Between the known and the unknown, new opportunities for learning open up. To explore this, educators at the Air Force Academy and an artist orchestrated a full-scale theatre performance (Firing, Thorkelsdóttir, & Chemi, 2022).

“The Theatre of War”

Based on their profession, the students were given a special mission. Please sit down among the military cadets and receive a special mission together with them. How is it to be here? How has your journey been so far? Are you ready for a final mission?

Your mission is to create a play entitled *The Theatre of War* and perform the play on stage at Trøndelag Theatre (the main theatre in Trondheim) in front of an audience of 40 student officers and 10 officers/specialists from the Royal Norwegian Air Force. The content should be based on the leadership course’s syllabus, and you will be supported by your internal coaches. One experienced actor from the theatre will mentor you prior to the performance. You should use yourself and the common

experiences you have gained earlier on your educational journey.

The arts-based nature of this case is the theatre, the multiple learning processes and on-stage performances, propelled by the imaginary and live encounters between actors and audience.

Reflections

How would you respond to such a challenge? How would you react, think and feel about this? Think carefully. Would your impulses be mastery and learning, or would they be performance and performance anxiety? How would you notice this in your body? Remember, this not just a case of an hour or two, it is a 9-week long process leading to the final theatre performance of 60 minutes. Let me share some of my cadets’ voices.

Because I thought the world would collapse for a moment, and I really hated life for a while. When it dawns on me that we are actually going to be doing theatre, then all my barriers come up. I do not want this, I really, really do not want to do this, and then I felt that I actually got angry. I felt like I was just wasting my time (2).

You get to hear “Trøndelag theatre and audience”, and that you have to both write and act in this play, then you will have to push yourself far outside your comfort zone, to perform for someone. Then you’re afraid of being stupid (7).



Organisation

Photo: Bruce Stokes

The tremendous flourishing of artisans, scientists and artists in Florence in the 15th century tells a story of great individuals. However, the Renaissance in Florence is also the story of a leading banking family (Medici) that opened to creativity, learning, growth and flourishing among groups and professions (Johansson, 2017).

The anger and being afraid illustrate the impact of the audience. This resonates with the core of the theatre: actor and audience encounters. Nevertheless, in theatre you have to be there during the performance. And afterwards, you undergo the consequences of your actions. Let's look more closely.

When I came back from my monologue out into the hallway, I experienced how much care there is. To feel that the unity of affection that I might not have felt in the whole course as a group, [...] it's in a way the first time I have felt that the class was one group (7).

Inspired by art, this time we have chosen a picture of an entire city: Florence. In the interplay between individuals and professions, the Renaissance stimulated a process of love for the individual and collective co-creation.

Group Affection

Considering the armed forces, theatre is used as a metaphor for war (conflict area), a concept used for capturing the war at the front line with other actors (Warden, 1989). A large body of research bridges the use of theatre in education in the military context (Chemi & Firing, 2020; Firing, Fauskevåg, et al., 2018; Firing, Skarsvåg, et al., 2018). However, as far as we know, this is the first example of how military students encounter the mechanisms playing in a full-scale theatre with all its arts-based elements: script, dramaturgy, actors, stage and audience. The next question is how the students perceive

the consequences of all this, in other words: how does the theatre provoke and challenge the students, as individuals and as a group, in their processes of learning?

This mission was truly on the edge of the students' experience. It was a mission into the liminal zone, a zone we managed to make a learning zone. Moreover, the students took the mission seriously, and contributed with authentic emotions in dramaturgical form between reality and make-believe. Finally, the students shared their experiences of group affection.

Looking back on the theatre mission, this was a learning journey with one continuous aspect: the students transformed from individuals to professional team members demonstrating group affection. The Theatre of War case became a transformative experience illustrating that being a soldier is taking part in a profession in which one solves missions together.

Why Arts-Based Methods?

Pragmatism emphasises the sensory and bodily elements, but also points to experience as the core concept for understanding the influence of the arts on human development. In particular, this tradition opened the way for a holistic reunion of science and the arts (Dewey, 1980). Critical education has seen the arts as research and activism. For instance, in Boal's forum theatre, Freire's pedagogy is put into the reality of performing bodies and stages (Boal, 2000).

Gardner's multiple intelligences theory sees the arts as one of the many different ways of comprehending the world (Gardner, 2011). This view on intelligence is in line with Goleman's emotional and social intelligence (Goleman, 2006a, 2006b). Finally, we acknowledge Damasio's critique of Descartes's mind/body separation (Damasio, 1994) and we are open to the new neurosciences and the concept of embodied cognition (Springborg & Ladkin, 2017).

Artistic methods have the potential to positively surprise by expanding knowledge, but also negatively by shocking and disturbing. Why are we doing all this? The reason is connected to the profession. Leading soldiers in war, solving missions and taking care of your troops means operating on the edge of what is known and unknown. Arts-based methods are promising and necessary to make the liminal zone a learning zone, in education as well as in future operations.

When exposing our students to such staged pedagogy, we prepare each case carefully. Moreover, we meet with them, hold their hand all during all processes to make them open to learning and growth. Finally, we love our students throughout the learning processes.

Why Love?

Working as a soldier means encountering death in your enemy, in your troops and in yourself, which also means coming closer to life. Encountering death opens up to radical

potential of being and to possibility of existence. So, what has love got to do with it?

The slogan for military leadership is "to solve the mission and take good care of your men and women". While "mission" may speak for itself, you may wonder about the meaning of "taking good care". It means taking care of your troops to the extent that they will participate in the next mission with you, even though that mission could be a mission in which you may take others' life or even risk losing your own life. With life at stake, taking care is no less than loving your troops, your men and women. This means love both in the sense of *Agape* (sacrificial love) and *Philia* (friendly love). So, when you hear the concept "brothers in arms" it refers to soldiers loving each other.

Why love in education? Education is a relational process (Sidorkin, 2002). Students need contact with a variety of adults who are willing to invite them into adulthood to develop their identity. The process is not a fancy one: the educator has to open up forms of mutual engagement and invite the students to participate (Wenger, 1998, p. 277). However, learning as identity transformation through mutuality of relations gives us a paradox of learning:

"if one needs an identity of participation in order to learn, yet needs to learn in order to acquire an identity of participation, then there seems to be no way to start".

Wenger argues that education is about the creation of the mutuality in parenthood, apprenticeship and encounter, and the key connectedness across practices. Finally, there seems to be a solution to the paradox, and here we would like to use Wenger's (1998, p. 277) words:

“... a small gift of undeserved trust – it is almost a theorem of love that we can open our practices and communities to others (newcomers, outsiders), invite them into our own identities of participation, let them be what they are not, and thus start what cannot be started”.

Therefore, even though, or rather because the educators at the Air Force Academy challenge their students far beyond traditional education, they invite them into mutual participation in practices of challenging missions and love.

How are you?

Dear reader, our journey has come to an end. Thank you for joining me on this experience-based journey of learning. I am very grateful that I could help you to feel the learning processes together with the students at The Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy. I hope you loved our journey and that you learned something. I promised to take good care of you within ethical standards, so my question

is, how are you? Is there anything that still disturbs you? My gut tells me that you are still thinking about “the last letter”. Well, that one is not easy to forget, and might even disturb us negatively. I feel this way every time I am facilitating that case. Writing that letter is serious, intimate, dark, heavy and painful, and the most promising process for human living. Every time, I end up telling the people I love that I love them.

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Notes

- 1 This text tells stories of autobiographical experiences from one educator, Kristian Firing. The use of “I” refers to Kristian Firing, while the use of “we” refers to all three authors.
- 2 In modern times, this of course includes both men and women, and today the term “to solve the task and take care of your people” is used.

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Love as pedagogy

My name is
I am an educator
Encounters are important
Nakedness is required.
How is it to be here right now?
Solve the mission and take care of your people.
Sensing feeling bodying
our map for the journey
will be delivered
only in the event of our death.

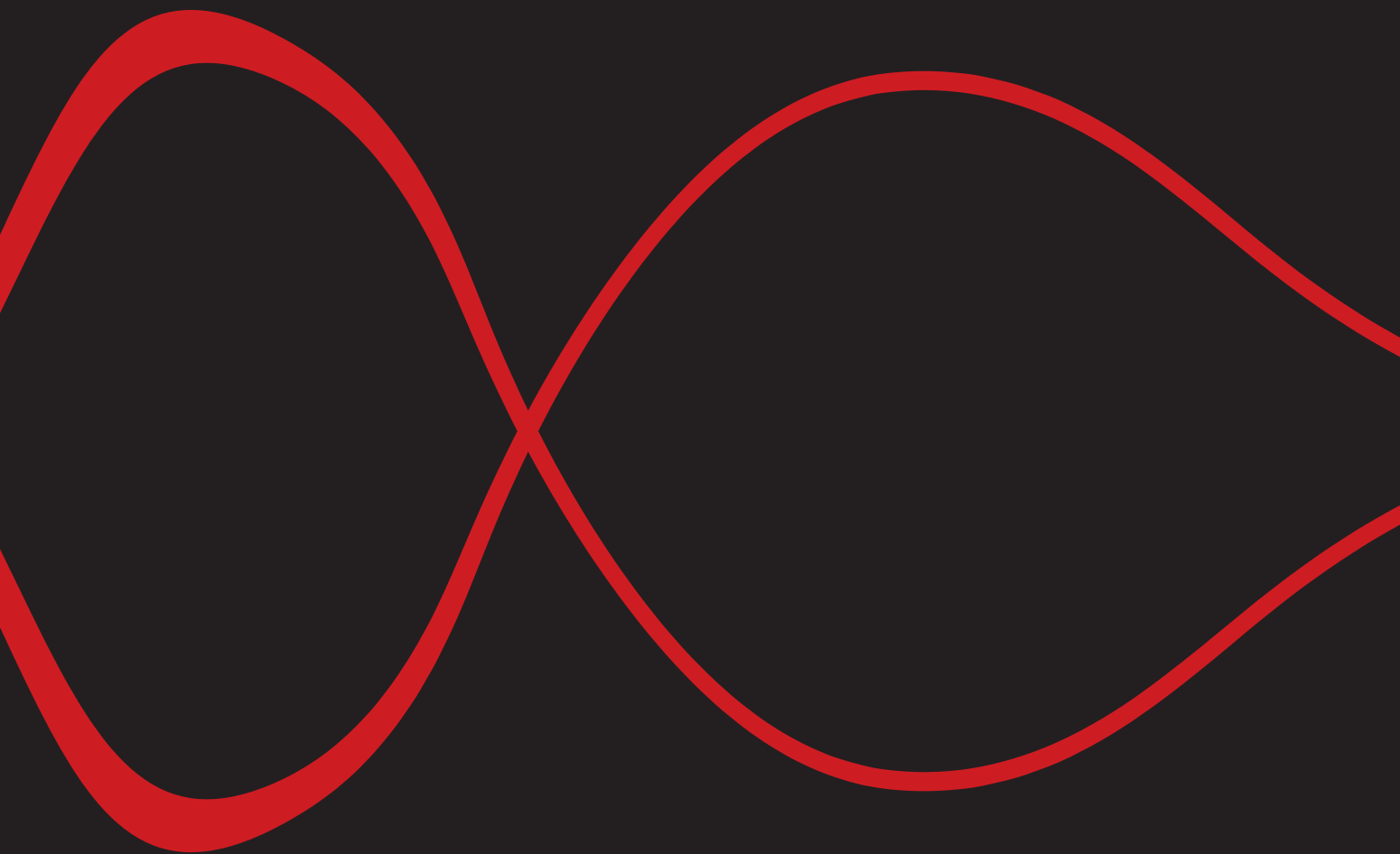
Am I free to dream and to follow my dreams?

Close your eyes.

Compassion never goes out of fashion.
I will guide you
jumping into the icy water.
Jump.
You say “yes thank you”
to everything.
Jump.

We headed for the theatre.
Jump.
Thank you for the encounter.
Not easy to forget.

encounter
educator
compassion
jump



Thread 1: Affects, Transformations and the Artists' Voices

Digging emergency holes near the gate:

A zine about our practice

Alison Laurie Neilson & Andrea Inocêncio, Portugal

Gothic pedagogy

Glenn-Egil Torgersen, Herner Saeverot &

Kristian Firing, Norway

Thread 2: The Artist - Educator Alliance

Artist-led learning in embodied writing workshops

Tatiana Chemi & Pierangelo Pompa, Denmark

Arts-based methods at The Royal Norwegian

Air Force Academy:

A journey of stress, growth and love

Kristian Firing, Glenn-Egil Torgersen &

Herner Saeverot, Norway

Thread 3: Community and Collective Learning

Towards transprofessionalism:

Artists in higher education

Allan Owens, UK, Anne Pässilä, Finland,

Nick Ponsillo, Monica Biagioli &

Charlotte Cunningham UK

Meaning making through artistic interventions:

An aesthetic approach

Federica De Molli & Chiara Paolino, Italy

Thread 4: Performance and Performativity

From simulation to dissimulation

Addressing the dark side of marketing

through art and fiction

Catherine Morel & Philippe Mairesse, France

Performative inquiry: To enhance language learning

Rannveig Björk Thorkelsdóttir &

Jóna Guðrún Jónsdóttir, Iceland