

The poetics and possibilities of video in pedagogical narration

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In this presentation I would like to explore the interpretive and poetic use of video in pedagogical narration and how the processes of filming, editing, viewing, and encountering the work together can help us develop deeper attunement and invite more sensitive and diverse ways of knowing, seeing, and responding. I would like to emphasize the poetic capacities of the medium and an enactive approach that tries to animate, bring to life or evoke the moments under consideration: a practice that “sings the world” (van Manen, 1997, p. 13) and engages with the difficult work of noticing (Tsing, 2013). These ideas have emerged out my work as an atelierista alongside children and educators at the Capilano University Children’s Centre.

A particular kind of noticing

Through the practice of pedagogical narration we have tried to orient ourselves to children’s lived meanings; how things matter, how they are experienced, understood, and worked through from children’s perspectives, so that our work with children might be enriched, expanded, and enlivened. This pedagogical practice is process-oriented and interpretive. It requires reciprocity, pedagogical thoughtfulness, and tact (van Manen, 1997), an ethics of listening, and an attunement generated through sustained and learned attention. By this we mean that sensitivity to children’s processes is not something immediately attained. It is cultivated over time. Additionally, we have tried to situate ourselves as researching *with*, not on or about, children. Thus, our focus isn’t about gaining knowledge, rather it is oriented as a collective search for insight and understanding so that we might more closely align ourselves with children’s own experimentations, research pathways, and ways of being and knowing. This requires a constant search for other ways of seeing and attending, for perspectives that will enlarge our vision and allow for greater attunement. If our methods make the world in particular ways (Law, 2004), and if the nature of the attention that we give to things shapes that

which we are considering, then we need inventive practices to help us get to know things differently and in their complexity. *The ways that we attend to things matter.*

Thinking through video

Video in particular has great potential as an expressive, interpretive, and artistic medium. The moving images, moving bodies and materials, gestures, enactments, sounds, voices, and various and shifting perspectives allows for thinking in movement (Manning & Massumi, 2014) and for particular visibilities and ways of seeing. For instance, through video we can explore perspectives other than that of the one doing the recording, disrupting the centrality of the researcher's "I" (eye) and offering other perspectives than the single point and stationary perspective (see Berger, 1977). The camera can be mounted on a tripod or passed hand to hand, enabling the videographer to be both the observer and the observed. It can move with the videographer's body and can act as an appendage to the body, expanding the body's capabilities, seeing what the videographer cannot easily see and taking perspectives other than what the adult's eye would typically attend to. It can also move with a child's curious interceptions offering surprises and unexpected visions. As a "catalyst of attention" (Grasseni, in Pink, 2007, p. 251), it uniquely allows for a focus on moving bodies, a world in motion, and intersecting perspectives.

Some ethical considerations

As we explore the expressive possibilities of the medium we are also compelled by the poetry, sensory, material, and embodied nature of the experiences we encounter and consider. If we think of video not as a representation of the world as it is, but as a creative, composed, particular perspective on what might be happening, then all we ever have are possibilities for how things *might* be. For instance, as the videographer selects what to film and frames a particular view, she or he attends to certain things and not others (Cooley, 2007). The process of filming, editing, and the resulting video segments are also the results of videographer's "discursively positioned actions" (Thompson & Hall, 2016, p. 119). Right from when the camera is turned on, decisions are made about what to attend to, what view to take, what will matter, and what further understandings

the video might generate. We make no claim to truth or objectivity in what is seen and recorded, and acknowledge that we have certain aesthetic, artistic, and poetic interests.

As *pedagogical* narration, video also has pedagogical concerns and orientations. This means that teachers are researching with children with the goal of developing and transforming curriculum, not standing at an objective distance. While the use of video in pedagogical narration borrows from visual ethnography, it still locates educators in the midst as co-researchers *with* children. This ‘with’ is important. Certainly in visual ethnography there is a constant concern about the “othering” potential of visual methods. Yet as Dahlberg and Bloch (in Olsson, 2009) ask, “Is the power to see and visualize always the power to control?” (p. 42)

Quite often in visual research with children, this risk of othering is addressed through engaging children as participants by giving them cameras to document and explore their own views, and engaging them in interpretive discussions about what they have imaged and recorded (Clark & Moss, 2011). While we certainly are interested, as Atkinson (2011) writes, in “a redistribution of pedagogical relations and objects in line with a more participatory and emancipatory aesthetic project” (p. 89) we find this kind of approach limiting. To produce new pathways and possibilities for learning, we must explore other processes than primarily sharing and discussing video with children with an emphasis on the content of the video or images and interpreting them for meaning. We aim for a seeing-with (Kind, 2013) that doesn’t just look *at* children and at their engagements, but tries to join *with* them in their movements. Thus, we try in ethical and participatory ways to come alongside children, to see with, to follow their lines of movement, and to try, however difficult it might be, to get close to the ways and processes that things unfold and come into being. To feel the movements of learning and emerging understandings, and not just reflect on the words spoken, artifacts produced, and so on, and in doing this to try to create “new empathetic routes through which to broker everyday knowledge” (Pink, 2011, p. 451). Video helps us listen to the rhythms and nuanced aspects of the children’s experimentations and to stay in the movements as we try to get closer to

children's relational, intra-active, material, bodied, and storied ways of being in and moving with the world.

Artistic inspirations

Exploring artistic perspectives also has been a significant stimulus in our work, and we have been inspired by one exhibit in particular *Unfolding*, a retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery of the work of Kimsooja, a South Korean-born conceptual artist who works in video, performative and textile installations, while addressing everyday objects, the acts of sewing, and the daily life of textiles. In the exhibit we encountered long panels of fabric hanging as if from a series of clotheslines. The vibrantly coloured silk swayed and brushed against our bodies as we walked through; pinks, yellows, and reds reflected and multiplied along the mirror lined walls. As we walked through and lingered in the space it was impossible not to touch and be touched by the fabric. The artist's larger than life video projections, exploring themes of "time, memory, displacement and relationship of the human body and the material world" (Vancouver Art Gallery, October 2013), invited sensitive empathetic and embodied engagement, drawing us in as participants in her work. We became caught up in the rhythms and flows of movements, colours, sounds, and sensations and the life of fabric. This rich experience continues to resonate with the composition of the fabric experimentation studio, both indoors and outdoors, and our work with video.

Fabric experimentations: the summer studio

In the studio, long lengths of translucent fabric hang throughout the room. Greens, blues, and greys, the colours of the west coast are interspersed with soft pinks, purples, reds and oranges in hues of salmon, coral, ruby, and lavender. In the colours and delicate translucent quality of the fabric we can feel the resonances of the coming summer. This past year was an especially long, dark, and wet west coast winter. For most of the winter and spring clouds hung dense and low in the sky, hiding the sun, colouring the world in muted hues of greys and blues lending a certain heaviness and slowness to the days. But here, in early May in the studio the sunlight filters through the large windows, catches the colours and enlivens the fabric, its surfaces shimmering in the sunlight. With the

emerging sun and the lengthening days, there is a sense of lightness in the air and a colourfulness returning as patches of cherry blossoms, rhododendrons, tulips, and azaleas come into bloom and dot the landscape. Even the trees we can see through the studio windows are livelier in their greens. This fabric has a particular quality of airiness as well, floating as it catches the air, lightly lying over bodies and structures but not quite settling or enveloping. It hovers with a lightness of touch and the lengths of fabric sway slightly like breath awaiting the soon to be arriving children.

As the children enter we find that a straightforward video recording wouldn't do justice to the poetry of what was unfolding: we find ourselves in the midst of weavings, knottings, entanglements, bundlings, knittings, gatherings, coverings, turnings, enactments, and choreographies of exchanges. As we encounter the vibrant fabric experimentations, we are prompted to respond with what Cooley (2007) describes as video poems. That is, poetic video compositions, that seek to artistically enliven the experiences rather than retell sequential events.

Composing a video-poem

The process of composing and editing is one of searching for and expressing embodied insights, intensities, fluidities of fabric-children – noticing an intricate network of forces and entering into what Manning & Massumi (2014) would describe as motional-relational, feeling-knowing, or thinking-doing. Careful attention is given to what is brought out and noticed during these processes such as movements of wrappings, weavings, tanglings, coverings, pulsating bundles of fabric-children, and choreographies of fluid gatherings. Video moments are juxtaposed, intersected, and combined thematically and out of sequence. Through creative editing we become increasingly more sensitive to the interplay of gesture, sound, colour, light, and the liveliness of materials, allowing certain elements to come into view while drawing out qualities that enliven particular ways of knowing and seeing. The editing process becomes a space of emergence and short segments of poetic and interpretive videos are produced.

Interpretive encounters

In the studio, we return video-poem segments to the children while aiming to create conditions for children's engagement and an "artful attending" (Leggo, 2004, p.32). We aim to see the moments in the studio animated or brought to life again in the viewing so that we can enter the experience, feel the movements and the tempo of repetitions, and develop a rhythm and feel for these fabric experimentations. As Ingold (2013) describes, we join forces with the rhythms and intensities of the experimentations. We consider an aesthetic, storied, and bodied response and turn from the desire to draw out from the video children's meanings and understandings and privileging verbalized thoughts and reflections, to a play *with* the video and fabric events. Thus, the resulting video does not become the focus of analysis, rather evokes the experience in such a way that we are moved or animated and new understandings emerge.

We bring the videos into the studio, project them large on the walls in the midst of the colourful fabric and the children begin to dance with, play along, and move to the rhythms and invitations of the videos. We repeat these video poem events, each time with small variances, so we can continue to feel, see, and engage with children's responses and reenactments. Johanna, one of the educators, settles with a small group to the side of the dancing children and reads Devernay's storybook *The Conductor*, playing with an idea of orchestration, trying, as Manning and Massumi (2014) illustrate, to activate the field "by pulling the line of movement into a new direction" (p. 48).

Over time, and over the months of fabric experimentations, the moving video projections weave together with shadow play, bird enactments, videos of birds in flight, constructed paper wings, drawing, mark making, storytelling, running games, and fragments of song. In these ecologies of movement (Manning & Massumi, 2014) we see fluid identities and exchanges, children's desire to stay in movement, relational compositions, and what Bennett (2010) describes as "the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" (p. 6). In this way video documentation and the use of video poems in pedagogical narration and documentation practices, engages with a propositional and processual methodology (Manning & Massumi, 2014) where research events are enacted and we are engaged in contending with making sense of what *is*

happening, rather than analyzing what has happened. We stay in the flow of the movements of curriculum processes and the embodied movements of video. With the children, we are trying to see from within how things move together. What emerges is not a focus on children's theories or ideas or *what* children are exploring and thinking about, although these things are still very important, but rather an attunement and increasing sensitivity to children's movements, thinking processes, and pathways of individual and collective invention, that is, the *how* of children's engagements. Through this there is an emerging choreography *between* educator, material, and child, a delightful dance of attentiveness made evident with the fabric and through the videos.

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