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A Home in the Arts: From Research/Creation to Practice

OR

The Story of a Dissertation in the Making, in Action – So Far!

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Abstract

“What does it mean to ‘find home’?” and “How might an experience and understanding of ‘home’ be represented and enhanced by the art form of collage?” These are the two questions that have been guiding my work and life for several years, in ways this article describes. I outline some basics of my initial formal engagement via my award-winning multi-modal PhD dissertation, *Finding Home: Knowledge, Collage and the Local Environments*, describing the theories and approaches I propose as a result of this work. I then discuss my first implementation of these ideas in Toronto high school art classes and conclude with an elaboration of the questions’ continuing relevance and viability in my own life and for the young people in my community.

Introduction

“What does it mean to ‘find home’?” and “How might an experience and understanding of ‘home’ be represented and enhanced by the art form of collage?” These are the two questions that have been guiding my work and life for several years, in ways this article describes. Here, I outline some basics of my initial formal engagement via my award-winning multi-modal PhD dissertation, *Finding Home: Knowledge, Collage and the Local Environments*.

Finding Home is a work of arts-based educational research whose specific approach can be described by the Canadian term “research/creation.” In addition to elaborating that term, this article offers background to my two questions, various definitions of home (including my own), discussions of my research as an interdisciplinary inquiry and an educational inquiry, an exploration of my collage method and form, and a few key findings— a description of the theories and approaches I propose. I then move to practice: this article describes the application of my research in teaching a short-term visual art project at a Toronto high school in the winter and spring of 2008. I conclude by describing the questions’ continuing resonance for me, and indicating plans for future work that will enable my undertaking of research/creation to inform subsequent projects of practitioner inquiry.

In summary, *Finding Home* is an interdisciplinary exploration of means by which individuals may use creative practices to develop a feeling of being at home in the world. As an education scholar, I approached my topic as an epistemological question, rooting experience and understanding of home in knowledge. As a visual artist who advances and embodies inquiry in visual artefacts, I brought to bear artistic and aesthetic theories and practices. *Finding Home* is a work of arts-based educational research, specifically of research/creation, as defined by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2005). (I elaborate on the term below.) In the language used for dissertation formats by Toronto’s York University, *Finding Home* is multi-modal, meaning that my dissertation is a work in which the key component is a piece of art, which is dependent on direct experience by the viewer (Faculty of Graduate Studies, 2005, p. 39). According to my own broad definition of the term, the work is a collage, comprising an illustrated text that combines theoretical writing and auto-ethnography or memoir, plus a visual art installation in mixed media: large-scale drawings, textile maps and sculptures, archival and contemporary photographs. The installation is further elaborated in an eight-minute narrated video visit to the exhibition site¹ and in documentation on my website, <http://www.akaredhanded.com>.

¹ The production of the video visit to *Finding Home* was achieved with the collaboration of director/composer Nicholas Stirling.

As I mentioned above, *Finding Home* addresses two questions: 'What does it mean to "find home"?' and 'How might an experience and understanding of "home" be represented and enhanced by the art form of collage?' Crossing disciplinary boundaries, my work explores these questions through an interweaving of epistemology and the ethics of care; art theory and practice; cultural and urban theory; history, geography, and environmental education. Proposing that a feeling of being at home in the world may be achieved through immersion in, learning about, and representing local environments, *Finding Home* is structured as a walk through the Toronto neighbourhoods of my home and studio, in the company of my dog, Auggie.

Background to the Questions

Finding Home had its genesis in my own experience: as an individual who felt herself feeling increasingly at home in the neighbourhoods of her residence and studio; as an artist committed to producing and exhibiting creative work that resides in community-oriented values and resonates with common experience; and as a teacher and visiting artist who recognized a yearning for belonging and affiliation in the children with whom I worked in Toronto schools. According to demographics collected by the Toronto District School Board, more than 30 percent of public school students are new Canadians, born in one of 175 different countries (Toronto District School Board, n.d.).² In Toronto many people of all ages have crossed boundaries—national, cultural, economic, personal—to come to this city of newcomers. According to Canada's 2006 census (City of Toronto, 2008c, p. 1), 59.1 percent of Toronto residents were born outside Canada. Many come after experiences of dislocation through personal or political violence, poverty, illness, accident, or natural or cultural disaster. These Torontonians are the survivors of 'domicide,' the term that J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith (2001) have coined to describe the deliberate destruction of a person's home. These individuals can experience, as artist and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha (1994) puts it,

...crippling sorrow of homelessness and estrangement. The process of rehabilitation, which involves the search for a new home, appears to be above all a process by which people stunned, traumatized and mutilated by the shifts of events that have expelled them from their homelands learn to adjust to their sudden state of isolation and uprootedness. (p. 12)

Indeed, in my ten years as a visiting artist in Toronto area schools, I have worked with some of these new young Torontonians and have seen artwork and heard accompanying stories that

² The Board reports that more than 80,000 (30 percent of) students were born outside Canada. More than 27,000 (10 percent of) students have been in Canada for three years or less.

portray their sorrow and sense of dislocation. To the complexities of immigration is often, sadly, added the scourge of poverty. The child poverty rate in Toronto has risen to 32 percent (Children's Aid Society of Toronto, 2008, p. 12), meaning that about one third of the city's children live in poverty, almost certainly feeling its disentanglements and alienations. Through this past decade, I have also worked with children like me, born of Canadian parents into privilege, but whose difficult circumstances such as abuse or neglect compromised their senses of security and belonging in the world. It seems to me that young people like all of the above, as well as their older siblings, their parents, their friends, might well enhance their feeling of being at home in the world—home in this context is understood as that symbolic space where personal and social meaning are grounded, as cultural theorist Nikos Papastergiadis proposes (1998, p. 2). *Finding Home* thus addresses a fundamental concern that has social, personal, and educational implications, a concern that theorist John Rajchman has named as *the* problem of our current, Western, urbanized age. As he expresses it, that problem is

...how to be 'at home' in a world where our identity is not given, our being-together in question, our destiny contingent or uncertain: the world of the violence of our own self-constitution. (1991, p. 144)

I contend that my work on this question of home has significance beyond my own experience. I considered that if I could 'find home,' then so could others. Thus, I proposed that 'home making' might be a learnable skill that can be adapted to an individual's circumstances and needs, that could make a difference to those who for a host of reasons do not feel at home in the world.³ I imagined that if I were able to develop a framework for the cultivation of this feeling, I could take this work to schools and community organizations, engaging with others in creative work on the theme of home. My dissertation embodies such a framework through which home making engagement might be undertaken—and the role that collage may play within it—using my own experience as template, building from cultural and personal notions of home.

Definitions of Home

For some, the word 'home' may call up sentimental visions of Dorothy and the ruby slippers (Baum, 1960), ballads about deer and antelope (Hopkinson, 2009), and other antiquated nostalgisms, but not in my work. My approach was to bring the concept of home into a

³ To be clear, my subject is the inner experience of feeling 'at home' in the world. The huge and troubling problems of the actual experience of homelessness, the reasons for it, and potential solutions to it, are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

contemporary critical context, without negating the positive attributes that the word can conjure. Cultural theorist Angela Bammer (1992) reminds us:

Semantically, 'home' [in the English language] has always occupied a particularly indeterminate space: it can mean, almost simultaneously, both the place I have left and the place I am going to, the place I have lost and the new place I have taken up, even if only temporarily. 'Home' can refer to the place you grew up (the place you perhaps threatened to run away from when you were five), the mythic homeland of your parents and ancestors that you yourself may never have actually seen, or the hostel where you are spending the night in transit. In other words, 'home' may refer to a deeply familiar or a foreign place, or it may be no more than a passing point of reference. (p. vii)

But it is also worth remembering that this English-language notion of home may be relatively culture specific, dependent to some extent on mother tongue and culture. That is to say, German, Danish, Swedish, Icelandic, Dutch, and English all have similar sounding words for home, deriving from the Old Norse *heima*. By example of contrast, the African Tigrayan language (of Ethiopian origin), requires up to five words to circle around the complex meanings contained within the single syllable of 'home' (Hammond, 2004, p. 41).

In the Slavic or Latin languages, there is no word for home that encompasses both a state of being and a place (Rybczynski, 1986, pp. 61-62. See also Huggan, 2001, pp. 1-22). This means that the almost ten percent of my Toronto neighborhood's⁴ population whose mother tongue is Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish have no comparable word for home and so may well conceive of home differently than I do. The Pilipino speakers here (comprising 2.9 percent of the ward and the fourth largest mother tongue group) have several words for home. I am told that one, *tahanan*, is roughly equivalent to the English word, encompassing both the notion of a structure and the feeling of belonging. I am intrigued to learn that the root word, *tahan*, is a verb meaning to soothe or comfort, as one would a crying child. And so the Pilipino *tahanan* embraces notions of peace, comfort, and home.⁵

⁴ These statistics reflect the demographics of Toronto's Ward 21—one official version of my neighbourhood. Here, the top five mother tongue groups are English, at 65.7 percent noticeably higher than the 49.6 percent for the City of Toronto as a whole; Spanish 3.9 percent; Italian 3.1 percent; Tagalog (Pilipino) 2.9 percent; and Portuguese 2.4 percent (City of Toronto, 2008b, p. 1).

⁵ I am grateful to translator and local resident Rick Esguerra for interpreting the various translations of 'home' for me in Pilipino, the national language of the Philippines, whose root language is Tagalog, but which also contains elements of Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, and American English. Personal communications, May 15, 2006.

Of course, cultural issues as much as language figure in the mix of an individual's understandings of home. And so my own notion of home is also inflected with recent feminist reconsiderations of the term. As geographer Doreen Massey reminds us, "That place called home was never an unmediated experience" (2005, p. 8). Mediated by what, then? "By the material circumstances of our experience and by the various narratives that attempt to define and interpret that experience for us," Angelika Bammer (1992, p. ix) suggests. With education theorist Elizabeth St. Pierre, I consider home to be a potential site of theory (2005, p. 3).

Also in the mix in this exploration of home are musings on some ways that individuals have construed or found home: as dwelling, as body and as place/space, as family/kinship, as work and imaginative practice, as learning, and as the developed capacity to relate ethically and affectively to others. Of course, these notions of home overlap and are not exhaustive. My goal is not to decide which is the best, but to explore their various meanings, the applicability of each sense of home to my own experience and to the experience that others may have in their own projects of home making.

As an amalgam of my theoretical researches and my own experiences, in *Finding Home* I proposed a working description of home as an ever-shifting standpoint from which to learn, grow, understand oneself, and contribute to communal life. This formulation inflects my own work as well as my teaching with children in schools, where I talk about multiple ways of understanding home—as a location, an activity, a relationship, a community—and encourage their individual interpretations and representations through visual media

An Interdisciplinary Inquiry

Finding Home is an interdisciplinary inquiry, linking multiple fields of endeavour to visual art and epistemology; that is to say, the philosophy of knowledge. Indeed, philosopher Wilfrid Sellars proposes that the ultimate goal of philosophy is for a person to become at home in the world—reflectively at home, that is (1975, p. 275). With this caveat, Sellars distinguishes the automatic 'at-home-ness' of an unexamined life of comfort (which seemed the norm in the upper middle class suburb of my youth) with the at-home-ness earned through philosophical inquiry into the nature of human existence in the world. This critical, reflective stance is emphasized by other fields of inquiry I drew upon for my dissertation, most notably postcolonial, cultural, and feminist studies. Much of this work shares an overall agenda with mine, which is to promote an individual's sense of well-being in the world, one coupled with reflexive self-scrutiny, as well as with respectful engagement with and working for the social needs of others.

Since the concept of 'home' is so strongly associated with place, my work engages the disciplines of architectural theory and interior design, urban studies, and local Toronto history and geography. While geographer David Lowenthal suggests that "anyone who inspects the world around him [or her] is in some measure a geographer" (1961, p. 242), I am hesitant to claim for myself such specialist affiliation. And since my dissertation is not simply an exploration of place or place attachment, I agree with environmental theorist Edward Relph that an exploration of place must be "concerned with the entire range of experiences through which we all know and make places, and hence can be confined by the boundaries of no formally defined discipline" (1976, p. 6).

And so in addition to taking on the strands mentioned above, my work also touches on environmental studies, with a particular emphasis on "metropolitan nature." This is author Matthew Gandy's term for the way that nature exists in a city such as New York (2002, p. 2)—or, indeed, Toronto—where the 'raw materials' of nature have been successively reworked through human settlement. And so my dissertation explores aspects of the metropolitan nature of my neighbourhood.

Of course, given that this entire inquiry was sparked by my experiences of walking with my dog, this research also includes discussion of human-animal relations and of walking. With respect to the latter theme, I am more interested in the metaphoric resonance and the engaged and surprising encounters of walking in the world than in its physiology or biomechanics. My dissertation research thus explores some of the uses and possibilities of walking, as others have construed them.

For instance, transcendental American writer and renowned walker Henry David Thoreau proposes that the art of walking resides in sauntering, that is, in idly roving the landscape in the manner of someone *sans terre* or without land—"having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere" (1980, p. 93). But unlike my own neighbourhood perambulations, Thoreau's preferred way of walking disconnects a person from human relations:

If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again, —if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk. (p. 94)

In fact, in distinction to Thoreau's deliberate shaking off of attachment, my own experience of walking suggests that it is an activity through which to enjoy the emergence of connections, first and foremost with my dog, Auggie. And so this interdisciplinary dissertation also includes substantial and loving discussion of dogs. After all, Lorraine Daston and Gregg

Mitman (2005) assert, "We are animals; we think with animals. What could be more natural?" (pp. 1-2). Indeed, I have joined the ranks of those who think with animals, among them the venerable educational philosopher John Dewey. In his urgings towards a sensual, embodied aesthetics of art and life, Dewey reminds us that the sources of human aesthetic experience can be found in a non-human animal's approach to life:

The activities of the ... dog ... may at least stand as reminders and symbols of that unity of experience which we so fractionize when work is labor, and thought withdraws us from the world. The live animal is fully present, all there, in all of its actions: in its wary glances, its sharp sniffings, its abrupt cocking of the ears. All senses are equally on the *qui vive*. As you watch, you see motion merging into sense and sense into motion—constituting that animal grace so hard for man to rival. What the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as direction in the present. The dog is never pedantic nor academic; for these things arise only when the past is severed in consciousness from the present and is set up as a model to copy or a storehouse upon which to draw. The past absorbed into the present carries on; it presses forward. (1934, p. 19)

Much as I am enchanted by the image of Auggie in 'full dog' that Dewey's words conjure for me, I also heed biologist Donna Haraway's caution, "Dogs are not surrogates for theory; they are not here just to think with. They are here to live with" (2003, p. 5). And so my dissertation outlines some past and present practices of living with dogs, poodles, and *this* poodle in particular. But life with a beloved other, especially one of another species, seems to lead naturally to thinking, questioning, theorizing, and creating. Indeed, Donna Haraway formulated her well-known theory of 'situated knowledges'—which argues that all knowledge is rooted in the particular circumstances and status of the knowing individual, that there is no universal, 'objective' knowledge—as a result of her daily engagement with her dogs: "These are lessons which I learned in part walking with my dogs and wondering how the world looks without a fovea⁶ and very few retinal cells for colour vision, but with a huge neural processing and sensory area for smells" (1991, p. 190).

Through the research of my dissertation I discovered much current scholarly work on human-animal relations at what some are calling this 'animal moment.' Times have changed: what *was* no longer *is*. This was then:

⁶ A fovea is part of the eye, specifically the small depression in the retina containing cones and allowing for acute vision of details. The structure of dogs' eyes suggests that they do not see as much detail as humans do, but of course their sense of smell is much more powerful and discerning than ours. (Coren, 2004, p. 18ff).

Traditionally, animals have been dismissed as too down home, too trivial, too close to nature for most serious intellectual authorities to consider, even the most avant-garde. In a reflection on animals and children's literature, for example, Ursula Le Guin claimed that "if you want to clear a room of derrideans, mention Beatrix Potter without sneering...." (Emel and Wolch, 1990, p. 8)

Now, my thinking with Auggie seems to be reflective of a broader approach to critical and creative practice, as my dissertation aimed to demonstrate.

As an interdisciplinary project, my dissertation does not aim to present an exhaustive exploration of the various fields the work engages. Rather, I am aiming for creative and generative juxtapositions of ideas, images, texts and objects, the kind of meditative exploration that resembles the organic flow of thinking that can occur while walking. Just as my walking with Auggie allows me to make connections with the creatures and structures around me, so it also enables a stitching together of ideas and thoughts. My approach to interdisciplinarity thus echoes that of Canadian artist Vera Frenkel, who describes the process this way: "Thread by thread, gesture by gesture, in a special kind of intermediality, such work weaves frail and precarious connections across the spaces between locked-in meanings on either side" (2001, p. 41). In addition, I am interested in, as Doreen Massey (2005) phrases the aims of her own writing, "pull[ing] out the positive threads" (p. 15) of others' work to see what they may contribute to my project, rather than in offering a critical analysis of theirs. Weaving and pulling are handwork: *Finding Home* is indeed a work of 'touch,' in my evokings of the texture of my home-place. By texture I mean the processes, structures, spaces and histories that went into its making, the tangibles as well as the intangible communications, acts and multiple human contexts that create and are constituted by place.⁷

I also endeavored to treat my own project reflectively, exploring the antecedents and meanings of my working processes, of the form and content of this undertaking. This is an obligation, I believe, of working from personal material. It is also part and parcel of what I understand to be the role of the artist within academia and within society: to demystify the creative process by being accountable for creative and scholarly choices, and for the ways that they are directed towards the world.

⁷ My understanding here owes much to Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher and Karen E. Till, specifically pages xiii-xiv of their Introduction (Place in context: Rethinking humanist geographies) to the 2001 book edited by P.C. Adams, S. Hoelscher, and K. E. Till, *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

An Educational Inquiry

Finding Home is an educational inquiry in the broad sense, exploring the ways that someone—me—might come to know and represent a feeling of being at home in the world—my particular neighbourhoods. A goal of this research, then, was and is understanding: understanding of self, of place, of self-in-place, of the ethics and eros of relationship between self and other. Indeed, "this quest for understanding sees individual and social transformation as a worthy educational goal," as arts education theorist Graeme Sullivan (2004) notes; he further proposes that a prime means of engaging this quest are the forms of symbolization of the arts (pp. 795-6).

To some extent, then, *Finding Home* also deals with these broad issues of symbolization—which Suzanne Langer has described as the next big philosophical question (1979, pp. 24-5)—and its role in knowledge making and learning. Langer suggests, "In the fundamental notion of symbolization—mystical, practical, or mathematical, it makes no difference—we have the keynote of all humanistic problems. In it lies a new conception of 'mentality,' that may illumine questions of life and consciousness..." (p. 25).

Education theorist Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) also raises these questions of life and consciousness, of self-in-the-making, as she explores how aesthetic, embodied experience of and in place can facilitate learning. She suggests that by focusing on the "means and conditions, the environments and events of knowledge in the making" our work may open into an exploration into the experience of the learning self (pp. 1-2). This is what I endeavored to do in *Finding Home*, elaborate and represent my knowledge in the making.

Ellsworth's (2005) recommended focus on means, conditions, environments, and events parallels Edward Relph's proposed approach for engaging with the phenomenon of place. He asserts that, "what is required is an approach and attendant set of concepts that respond to the unity of 'place, person, and act' and stress the links rather than the division between specific and general features of places" (1976, p. 44). I am indeed exploring and expressing the links between place (my amorphous neighbourhood, as I understand it⁸), my person, and the act in

⁸ Neighbourhood is another problematic word, loaded with various resonances and longings, as urban theorist Jane Jacobs reminds us: "Neighbourhood is a word that has come to sound like a valentine. As a sentimental concept, 'neighbourhood' is harmful to city planning. It leads to attempts at warping city life into imitations of town or suburban life. Sentimentality plays with sweet intentions in place of good sense." A successful city neighbourhood is a place that keeps sufficiently ahead of its problems so that it is not destroyed by them. An unsuccessful neighbourhood is a place that is overwhelmed by its defects and problems and is progressively more helpless before them. Our cities contain all degrees of success and failure." This is from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 2002), page 112. According to Jacobs' terms, our neighbourhood at Bathurst and St. Clair is a successful one. And as for its actual scope, I find writer Brian

question (walking in the company of my dog, Auggie). In both visual and textual forms, I make these links through collage, since I believe that collage can "grasp, without freezing or collapsing, the fluid, continuous, dynamic, multiple, uncertain, nondecomposable qualities of *experience in the making*"—to use Elizabeth Ellsworth's description of the approach she advocates (pp. 3-4). Collage, then, becomes my form of symbolization, as well as the method of my approach, as I describe in the section that follows.

Despite *Finding Home*'s engagement with education, the arts and the environment, specifically that of the city, this is not a project of arts education, environmental education, or even urban education. Rather, this is a work of integrated education. According to proponent Michael A. Parsons, a primary goal of integrated education is promoting greater understanding of the lifeworld: "Integration occurs when students make sense for themselves of their varied learning and experiences, when they pull these together to make one view of their world and of their place in it" (2004, p. 776); that is, by inference, when they develop a greater feeling of being 'at home' in their worlds. They, we, I do so from a particular situated vantage point, from a place. And indeed environmental educator David A. Gruenewald reminds us, "Places are fundamentally pedagogical because they are contexts for human perception and for participation with the phenomenal, ecological, and cultural world. What we know is, in large part, shaped by the kinds of places we experience and the quality of attention we give them" (2003b, p. 645).

Gruenewald also proposes a boundary-crossing approach to education he calls a "critical pedagogy of place," essentially an instance of integrated education:

A critical pedagogy of place ... proposes two broad and interrelated objectives for the purpose of linking school and place-based experience to the larger landscape of cultural and ecological politics: decolonization and reinhabitation. These goals broadly mirror the thematic emphases of critical pedagogy and ecological place-based education, respectively. ...A critical pedagogy of place aims to (a) identify, recover, and create material spaces and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments (reinhabitation); and (b) identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonization). (2003a, p. 9)

These goals reflect my own, as does Gruenewald's further suggestion, that the traditions of natural history, cultural journalism, and action research can be useful in helping to guide

Fawcett's definition of neighbourhood very practical: "the geographical area a relatively healthy person can get around on foot." This is from *Local Matters: A Defence of Dooney's Café and Other Non-globalized Places, People and Ideas*, ed. Stan Persky (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 2003), page 4; and of course needs amendment to include a corresponding understanding of neighbourhood for those who are not ambulatory.

teachers and students explore the perceptual, cultural, ideological, ecological, and political dimensions of places (2003b, p. 637). Given my own research and orientation, I would adapt Gruenewald's triumvirate of educational traditions to include natural history, collage (or more broadly, an arts rather than journalistic approach), and place-based civic activism. This latter mode of thinking about and engaging with social justice issues is proposed by Grace Lee Boggs (2000) who suggests, "Place-based civic activism provides opportunities to struggle around race, gender, and class inside struggles around place. Equally important, women naturally assume leadership of place-based struggles because they are so pivotal to neighborhood life" (p. 18).⁹

Finding Home charts and embodies my own engagement with these approaches in my progress towards greater understanding of the constituting practices of 'home' for me in my world. Based on this work, my dissertation text also offers preliminary suggestions as to how I intended to adapt this research/creation for educational use with children and adults in schools and community associations; this article concludes with a discussion of my first *Finding Home* related teaching implementation. But first, I provide an overview of my collage method.

Method: A Work of Research/Creation in the Form of Collage

In terms of method, *Finding Home* takes the form of "research/creation" the term used by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, known as SSHRC, to describe a research activity

...that forms an essential part of a creative process or artistic discipline and that directly fosters the creation of literary/artistic works. The research must address clear research questions, offer theoretical contextualization within the relevant field or fields of literary/artistic inquiry, and present a well-considered methodological approach. Both the research and the resulting literary/artistic works must meet peer standards of excellence and be suitable for publication, public performance or viewing. (SSHRC, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2005)

⁹ Boggs prefaces the remarks quoted above with the following, "Place-based civic activism ... has important advantages over activism based on racial and gender identity which, in the last few decades, has consumed the energies of most progressives. Important as these identity struggles have been in the continuing struggle to humanize our society, they can lock us into single aspects of ourselves and ignore the multiple ways that we relate to one another in our communities—as neighbors, housewives, working parents, parents of schoolchildren, elders, children, sufferers from asthma and other disabilities, consumers, pedestrians, commuters, bus riders, citizens. Thus they have tended to isolate rather than to unite different constituencies." Like Boggs, I am interested in uniting or at least working across constituencies.

In other words, as research/creation, *Finding Home* both demonstrates and embodies my research, in my case taking within the form of a collage. Collage invokes an aesthetic – artefactual dimension that is crucial to my approach, acknowledging that artworks and texts are made deliberately to conform with or transgress notions of beauty. A collage method thus encompasses concepts of form, craftsmanship, and the historical and contextual meanings sedimented in the various modes of communication used.

Developed in Western art early in the twentieth century by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso (Poggi, 1992), collage has since become a familiar trope of visual art, film and time-based work, music, and dance.¹⁰ My own working definition of collage is an original composition in any media that brings together previously independent components, encompassing associated creative forms such as montage (associated with time-based media) and assemblage (linked to three dimensional work).¹¹ In fact, collage has developed into a creative form not just versatile enough to accommodate any media but also transgressive enough to promote critique, as summarized by scholar Thomas Brockelman (2001). He writes:

Collage practices—the gathering of materials from *different* worlds into a single composition demanding a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element—call attention to the irreducible *heterogeneity* of the 'postmodern condition.' But, insofar as it *does* bind these elements, *as* elements, within a kind of unifying field, ... the practice of collage also resists the romanticism of pure difference. ... Collage depends upon a new kind of relationship between these two

¹⁰ See Roger Copeland, “Merce Cunningham and the Aesthetic of Collage,” *The Drama Review* 46(1) (Spring 2002), 11-27. The article’s first epigram is writer Donald Barthelme’s sweeping assertion, “The principle of collage is the central principle of all art in the 20th century in all media.” And for the 21st century?

¹¹ I began formulating collage as an artist’s method for interdisciplinary arts-based research early in my doctoral work and first published its description in my 2005 article, “Pieced Together: Collage as an Artist’s Method for Interdisciplinary Research,” available in the on-line *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 4(1), Article 3. My work occurred parallel to other scholars’ developing and refining of approaches such as a/r/tography and arts-informed research. (For more on these, see Lisa La Levic and Stephanie Springgay, “A/r/tography as an Ethics of Embodiment: Visual Journals in Preservice Education,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 14, no. 1 (2008), 67-89; Rita L. Irwin and Alex de Cosson (eds.), *a/r/tography: Rendering Self through Arts-Based Living Inquiry* (Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 2004) and the three collections edited by J. Gary Knowles, Teresa C. Luciani, Ardra L. Cole, and Lorri Neilsen (eds.): *The Art of Writing Inquiry* (2001), *Provoked by Art: Theorizing Arts-informed research* (2004), and *The Art of Visual Inquiry* (2007), all published in Halifax, NS by Backalong Books jointly with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/UT’s Centre for Arts-Informed Research.) My use of collage dovetails with others’ thinking (as touched upon here) and suits my own creative practice. In this way, my formulation of collage represents an active construction of a research practice from the tools at hand—the approach advocated by education scholar Joe L. Kincheloe and part of the rationale for his method, *the bricolage* elaborated in his 2005 article, “On to the Next Level: Continuing the Conceptualization of the Bricolage” in *Qualitative Inquiry* 11(3): 323-350.

shards of the traditional concept of worldhood—and, as a result, it promises a new sense of truth and experience, potentially revolutionizing both epistemology and aesthetics. (pp. 10-11)

In terms of implementing my collage method, I first set the creative field of play. I structured *Finding Home* as a particular walk through my local neighbourhood, designing a route that takes in residential streets, small and large local parks, commercial storefronts along two main city avenues, industrial developments, and a large urban ravine. This route enabled me to address a wide variety of educational, historical, geographical, aesthetic, and environmental concerns from theoretical and experiential standpoints. For instance, the text uses neighbourhood structures and incidents as starting points for exploring changing conceptions of the role of the arts and artists in society, from the Modernist era through contemporary times.

Data collection involved extensive reading in multiple disciplines; researching works done by other artists on related themes; identifying place-based art education initiatives; assembling an inventory of photographs of my own taken along the route through the four seasons as well as relevant historical photographs from various archives; participating in local community education events (including tours led by the Toronto Field Naturalists Association, the Toronto Historical Board, the Community History Project, and others), and conducting ad hoc conversations with locals about their own feelings about and understandings of the neighbourhood.

So in other words, while I began from my own experience, I broadened my scope of inquiry to make links to cultural contexts past and present. My work thus approaches autoethnography, the anthropological practice of bringing self to social inquiry. In fact, as anthropologist Deborah Reed-Danahay writes, “Whereas the ethnographer translates a foreign culture for members of his or her own culture, the autoethnographer translates ‘home’ culture for audiences of ‘others’” (1997, p. 127).

My translation occurred through *Finding Home*’s various collage components: a variety of *textual* forms (personal, observational, historical, methodological and theoretical content), a variety of *visual* forms (drawings, textiles, photographs, sculpture, paper collage), and an array of *representational* forms (visual, textual, and time-based digital work).

With respect to *Finding Home*’s collage text, I had originally planned to present these streams of inquiry in what might be called polyphonic, multi-vocal, or layered narrative strands,

offering reading choices (which text to engage first, when to switch between texts) that put the juxtapositions into the mind, the hands of the reader.¹² Granted, such a textual arrangement would have visually resembled a pieced-together collage. So would have a sequential assembly of fragments, "paragraphs of description and reflection and snippets of text cited from critics, commentators, and historians"—the descriptive phrase that George L. Dillon (2004) applies to the components of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (1999), one of the last century's most influential collage texts.

But as I worked I discovered that neither of these textual approaches felt like the kind of research/creation I wanted *Finding Home* to be. A layered polyphonic text seemed too self-consciously visual, each page's multiple components emphasizing the visibility of the reading process at the expense of other ways of engaging with language. I realized that instead of multiple streams, I wanted one single text. That is to say, I wanted to offer the reader a text that mimics the singular direction and flow of body moving through the space of a walk, walking being one of the foundational strategies and metaphors of this research. Even so, this is a meander, not a forced march, and so we dally along the way—while still reinforcing the kinesthetic connection between reading and walking or between walking and enunciating, as French philosopher Michel de Certeau proposes (1988, p. 98). His concept of walking in the city links the embodied, spatial practice with speaking, writing, and by extension, even painting (or, I propose, other visual forms).

In this enunciating, I linked my story with the stories of others who lived and lived in this neighbourhood, remembering that—as Doreen Massey puts it (2005, p. 183)—space is the grounding of intersecting narratives: my own, Auggie's, and others'. A city walk is crowded with fragments of stories of people, pets, and place, past and present. As the guide through this experience of my neighbourhood, I wished to be present in the text. So unlike Benjamin, who according to his own description of his method "needn't *say* anything. Merely show" (quoted in Dillon, 2004, p. 1), I wrote a text that offers an integrating authorial voice, one explicitly situated in my own experience. In sieving my own selection of 'critics, commentators, and historians' through my own experience, I create a textual collage whose component elements' edges are blurred, rather than distinct. I both show and tell.

¹² Texts constructed in this layered way include, on the literary side, Brian Fawcett's *Cambodia: A Book for People Who Find Television Too Slow* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1986), and on the academic side, Patti Lather's work relating to women living with HIV/AIDS (Patti Lather, "Creating a Multilayered Text: Women, AIDS, and Angels," in *Representation and the Text* and Patricia Ann Lather and Chris Smithies, *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997)) and Greg Tanaka's exploration of polyphonic texts, "Pico College," in *Representation and the Text*.

Of course, the visual work of *Finding Home* is all about showing. Right from the beginning, I saw in my mind's eye an installation of various different kinds of pieces, large-scale drawings, photographs, and textile works. And so while I intended to build my visual collage from mixed media, I knew I wished to 'show' recognizable aspects of my neighbourhoods through large-scale drawings that would anchor the visual installation—their paper surface being an echo of the pages on which my dissertation text is printed. Working in drawing, I would do 'field work'—take multiple pictures throughout my neighbourhood—and then return to the studio to integrate a number of these into each drawn interpretation of a location. I chose the style of these drawings very deliberately, to echo the engaged and inclusive framework of my scholarly inquiry. I purposely rendered recognizable neighbourhood elements in a naturalistic style, to link my work with historical traditions of landscape painting and attendant notions of property and power.

My textile maps I conceived as a kind of funky foil to the elegant precision and traditionalism of the charcoal drawings. Also important, they allow me to portray a version of movement through space, as I explain below. These textile maps utilize the tropes of conventional mapping, but here, the maps' objectivity and distance is subverted by the luxury of the component textiles (silks, organzas, velvets)—which of course connect to feminine craft traditions. I designed these maps based on actual City Surveyor's maps of Toronto—precision mock-ups that indicate each structure exactly to shape and scale, each garden shed and garage, each street light, each sidewalk, each pathway. My maps are approximations, enlarged. But I have kept true to reality one key element: I have used red to indicate the buildings where dogs live. This is neighbourhood knowledge I've acquired over the years of walking with my own dog, who of course registers canine residency.

Otherwise, the colours are less cryptically coded: the sap green base represents the ground into which the city was planted, the greys the city's concrete and asphalt built structures. Each block is depicted to scale, which means that I can accurately render the walking routes that Auggie and I take through the neighbourhood. These I've stitched into the organza, each meander in a different colour, the line of red tracing the specific route described in the text.

The text elaborates upon my choices in the use of textiles and other visual media and forms. For instance, I discuss maps as knowledge structures, Western-style topographical and road maps as well as upon alternative versions of mapping used by aboriginal peoples and artists. These latter include, for instance, the City of Cork's Knitting map (Half Angel, 2006) whose pattern of stitches reflect shifts in weather and traffic flow, the nineteenth century American quilts that depicted coded versions of the Underground Railroad routes (Tobin & Dobbard, 1999), and contemporary artist Dennis Wood's quixotic maps of his

own neighbourhood, identifying, say, sites of jack o'lanterns at Halloween (Glass, 1998). These discussions situate my own practice within relevant epistemological and aesthetic contexts and also give me background for teaching. (Later, working with local high school students on their interpretations of 'home,' we explored the appearances and assumptions inherent in maps, and visual connections between street maps and other grid-based representational forms that interested the students, that of comic books, for instance).

My collage also integrated archival and contemporary photographs of the neighbourhood, to portray what had changed and what endured through the 150 years that outdoor photographic images of Toronto had been made and kept. *Finding Home* thus allows me to visualize and particularize moments in history, amazing viewers in general and certainly children in schools with; for instance, the idea that just less than 100 years ago men on horseback hunted with packs of dogs on Bathurst Street; the once-dirt track is now a busy four-lane thoroughfare through midtown Toronto. I accessed images from the City of Toronto Archives and the York Museum and in my text discussed issues of photographic representation and public collections, exploring questions of archives as collective memory.

Selecting archival images and taking my own contemporary shots, I created sequences of photographs, such as one that represents the expanding structural and vehicular capacities of Bathurst Street in moments from 1912, 1936, 1954, and finally at the November 2006 moment of my dissertation defense.

In all, the visual work of *Finding Home* added up to five large charcoal drawings; four textile maps; five series of archival and contemporary photographs—as well as some other components I haven't described here: two handmade textile sculptures; two series of stop-motion frames of my walking; and six chapter-heading paper collages.

In terms of the exhibition of these works, as important to me as these individual components was the location of the show: the venue, too, needed to contribute to considerations of home and ideally be proximate or within my 'home' territory. For my dissertation exhibition, I chose the display areas of the refurbished Gladstone Hotel, an easy walk from my studio, itself a feature of my dissertation. As a hotel—in fact Toronto's oldest continuing operating one (Gladstone Hotel, n.d.)—the Gladstone appealed particularly, by its proto-residential function necessarily evoking issues of 'home'. This particular hotel also emphasizes the related questions of displacement: for many years before its refurbishment as a hub for the local arts community, the Gladstone had served as a low-rent residence for members of Toronto's down and out population, who were displaced through the neighbourhood gentrification that both benefited from and accelerated from Hotel's refurbishment (Roemer & Graham, 2007).

I later exhibited the works in the display space of a local bookstore—a venue even nearer my studio—whose display sign was indeed featured in one of my large drawings. The *Finding Home* visuals were on view in this space during the interval that I worked at a visiting artist in a Toronto high school, engaging students in grades 9, 11 and 12 with thematics of home and mixed media visual art projects on the subject—work I describe shortly.

Key Findings

So, through all this dissertation work of exhibition and researching, making and writing, would I say that I found home? Perhaps I should first address how I answered the two questions my dissertation posed: What does it mean to find home? And what role can collage play in such a process? The answers were embodied in the work itself. That is to say, typically for a work of research/creation, *Finding Home*'s investigations involved not 'solving' the problem, but rather 'surrounding it.' This distinction was articulated by Gloria Steinem in a radio interview, and applied by theorist Graeme Sullivan to the approach of artist/researchers in the studio (2004, p. 806). In other words, in work such as mine, a research question may not yield a definitive single answer, but rather through a collection of ideas and images, suggest possibilities for further engagement.

At the end of my dissertation narrative, I suggest that by emphasizing care and connection—ethics and eros—a project such as *Finding Home* can help a person develop a kind of moral capacity, identified as a form of human intelligence by education theorist Howard Gardner.¹³

Further, I note that with their emphasis on direct experience, both arts education and environmental education—which this work moves towards—engage us (whether student or teacher) with our surroundings, encouraging us to be what Maxine Greene (1995) would call "more wide awake to the world." Of course, the point of this increased sensitivity is increased care for both self and the world, for self-in-world, and ultimately the cultivation of an activist sensibility and agenda—all practices of affiliation with place.

¹³ Gardner's celebrated work on multiple intelligences suggests that each one of us has an individual imprint of capacity and comfort with the "eight-and-a-half" intelligences that his empirical work recognizes to date: linguistic, logico-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences, supplemented by the 'half,' existential or moral intelligence. See Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). More recently, in *Five Minds for the Future*, Gardner has further elaborated a framework in which he proposes that among the mental abilities critical to success in our 21st century world are the *respectful* mind (interest in and engagement with the individual other; appreciation of diversity) and the *ethical* mind (engagement with one's own civic/social responsibility). My dissertation work on care and ethics encompasses both these kinds of 'minds.'

Care can thus enable the finding of home, which motivates further feelings and practices of care: a self-reinforcing cycle of attunement, affiliation and action.

Additionally, in *Finding Home* I conclude that feelings of belonging are based in practice. In other words, I contend that articulating and representing these homemaking practices are key to developing a feeling of belonging. I suggest that my experiences of finding home are generalizable to others, and that by engaging in similar knowledge practices and activities of care, others, too, can enhance their feelings of being at home in the world. I also emphasize that, in the words of cultural geographer Fiona Mackenzie, "To belong is to become—or, rather, belonging is always in a process of becoming" (2004, p. 118). Like her, I suggest that 'finding home' happens not once and for all, but rather becomes a learned way of approaching life and art and researching and teaching that can be applied to familiar and new situations.

From Theory to Practice: The First Implementation

Always oriented to the implementation of my dissertation ideas and practices with others, I aimed to take my *Finding Home* approach into the teaching in local Toronto schools. Thanks to special funding from the Ontario Arts Council's Artists in Education program and the Toronto District School Board, from January through April 2008, I worked as a visiting artist with 100 students in four grades 9 through 12 classes at Oakwood Collegiate Institute, a well-established high school in my home neighbourhood. The Artists in Education program is a competitive granting initiative that funds selected professional artists to work in Ontario schools as a partner to the classroom teacher, implementing a specified project of the artist's design that supports objectives of the Ontario curriculum (Ontario Arts Council, 2003). While this program is not designed with a research focus, having already taught within it for more than a decade, I believed it would provide an effective means for me—at the time an unaffiliated artist and scholar—to engage children in schools with artwork on the theme of home. Such project-based work would allow me to see how the idea worked in the classroom and would provide feedback for my design of a more structured action research project in schools. Given my extensive knowledge of the neighbourhood and roots there, my work at Oakwood Collegiate Institute seemed a good first location for moving *Finding Home* from theory to practice.

According to the latest available (2007) statistics, Oakwood Collegiate Institute serves 855 students, about a third of whom have a primary language other than English; however only four percent are recent newcomers to Canada (Toronto District School Board, 2008-09). The students can generally be described as more-or-less middle class, but some families are struggling and some are obviously more than comfortable. Social need here is not generalized or flagrant. No official demographics on students' cultural heritage were available, but Oakwood seems quite typical of Toronto's extremely mixed public classrooms, which include

students of all shades and backgrounds. Statistics Canada reports that 31 percent of the neighbourhood belongs to visible minorities (City of Toronto, 2008a, p. 2), although the proportion in the art classes seemed a little higher. I liked what I saw of the art program in this school: their teacher seemed flexible and committed and liked the kids, the school had a little money to spend on supplies, even if the budget was still limited. I was able to access donations of supplies, which helped.

In my planning, I aimed to link this art project to the students' lifeworlds and respect their cultural diversities and their interests. I intended the project to be process-oriented but technically mindful, respecting the need to develop hands-on skills and literacies in the arts and their materials. And I also wanted the work to engage with big questions about our selves, our communities, and our roles and responsibilities to each other and the planet. In this instance, I wanted to raise notions of belonging, of course, but also of environmental concerns, which I thought some students might wish to take up.

Obviously, I am particularly interested in art practice, teaching and research that connects art with social and personal identity or, as Vivian L. Gadsen puts it, "arts learning and self-identity, arts learning and persistence and resilience, and arts learning and social skills" (2008, p. 46). These are all suggested as important areas for research by the Arts Education Partnership's 2004 document, *The Arts and Education: New Opportunities for Research* (p. 46).

And so at Oakwood Collegiate Institute, I arranged with the classroom teacher that students would be free to work in any visual media we could make work in the art room, using any metaphoric or literal interpretation of home they wished. They could work collaboratively or individually as they chose, and this degree of freedom seemed to be a novelty to them. I worked extensively with students to engage them on the conceptual side, and to make sure that their work reflected what they wished to communicate.

Students worked individually and collaboratively as they preferred, some portraying the locations of their friendships as they were in the present, others as they existed in memory and imagination. Some students represented their rooms or even their own beds in sculptural form. Others depicted their relationships by creating portraits of the people that are important to them. Some students represented the means they used to connect to those people and creatures, such as the German exchange student's image of her Skype window to her cats and parents back home. Gaming technology featured in a several works, and sports were a big favourite, hockey and basketball in particular.

Pastimes such as graffiti were considered as much ‘home’ as were, say, reading Nancy Drew mysteries and listening to hip hop. In one of my favourite pieces, the art class’s lone Goth created a model of a graveyard and in an uncharacteristic gesture of sociality invited her classmates to claim a gravestone for themselves, put their names and birth and death dates on a grave marker!

I must say that I love the students’ work, its variety and depth of engagement. However, almost no students explored links with the natural environment in the vicinity of the school – the nature in the city, if you will – as I had hoped they might. Two students did invoke a conventional image of nature with which Canadians are all very familiar: the Great North. This means representations of the Canadian Shield landscape: water, rocks, trees, and a canoe, implicit or actual. But these explorations did not probe the surface. My inability to engage these art students in environmental topics may reflect the compartmentalization of teaching and learning at the high school level, where every subject is addressed by a different teacher, desperate to cover extensive curriculum in scant 50 minute periods. At Oakwood, I saw no evidence of cross-curricular work such as that I’d like to do on the subject of home, place, and community, which links science, history, geography, arts, even civics and the students’ community service requirements. And as an outsider visiting on a short-term arts-oriented project grant, I had no ability to encourage teachers into creating such time-consuming links. Also, my politicized ambitions may go against the culture of the art class *per se*, which often seems more concerned with formal and technical issues than with integrating technical work with a critical and creative stance on contemporary concerns. As a result, the students are not particularly oriented to the kind of issues-based creative practice that would naturally encompass questions of environmentalism, sustainability, and place-based civic activism.

At a stretch, I can blame the seasons and consider that during the winter of 2008 Toronto almost broke its century-long record for snowfall, whose white—and eventually brown—blanket may have kept people from considering the variety and specificity of the land and life beyond, beneath or even within the snow. Of course responsibility also resides with me, since I may have underemphasized the environmental education potential of this project by holding back to see what the students would create if left to their own interpretive devices, and what meant home to them.

Expressing the views of many, one student wrote on the feedback form, “The thing I liked best about the home project was because we got to do anything we wanted and nobody could tell us it was right and if it was wrong” (Student A, personal communications, April 2008). In addition to this freedom, students also appreciated the project’s challenge: “I liked the process of trying to figure out what home was” and “I liked the fact that it had me thinking for days about what my true home is and how to describe it in a picture” (Student B & Student C,

personal communications, April 2008). From what I've read on other forms and heard in conversations, it seems that students' work deepened their understanding of themselves and their classmates and brought them pride in their technical, expressive and experimental accomplishments. Students developed their conceptual and representational abilities, as each young person and I talked through their desires for their work and the steps necessary to achieve their ambitions. A few made links to art history, developing new knowledge of other artists' works, and building on their existing technical skills in drawing, painting, collage, and three-dimensional construction. Some students honed their research skills through Internet and print resources.

In terms of identifying what worked with this particular implementation, I would name the following five aspects: (a) choice, (b) conversation, not just between students or the students and me or the teacher, but also between students and parents (as reported to me by the classroom teacher, based on remarks made at his parent-teacher interview night), (c) collaboration, (d) competencies, and (e) and community-building. This latter was and is crucial to me and my own conception of home as an ever-shifting standpoint from which to learn, grow, understand oneself, and contribute to communal life. Community-building took place not just through in-class conversations, but also via the month-long exhibition of student artwork that I arranged at the local SideSpace Gallery just two blocks from the school. The Sunday afternoon opening reception at this site was very important to the teens, who invited their families and friends to enjoy the display of their work in a professional arts venue. Since SideSpace is a window gallery, the students' work was subsequently visible 24 hours a day throughout the month-long exhibition and still resides in photo form on the gallery's website (<http://www.sidespacegallery.com/FindingHomeExhibition.html>).

Did the students 'find home' or enhance their sense of belonging and capacity through engaging in this artwork? Perhaps. As I mentioned, this project did not take place within an actual research framework and so any conclusions I draw are preliminary. However, responses among the student body, teachers, administrators, artists, politicians and other community members who spoke to me at the gallery reception or elsewhere were so overwhelmingly positive that I was encouraged to follow through on my plan to take the student-based aspect of my work further. Based on this first *Finding Home* art education implementation at Oakwood Collegiate and with the right teacher-partner in an appropriate setting, I plan to develop a more extensive school-based research project, a version of practitioner inquiry or action research that utilizes my triumvirate approach of natural history, collage, and place-based civic activism, and that will enable me to work in greater depth on these questions with students in schools.

My own circumstances have changed, however. In July 2008 I moved to Montreal, Quebec, to take up the position of Assistant Professor of Art Education in Concordia University's Faculty of Fine Arts. And so now not only do I have a new school context to learn, but I am also re-emplacing myself, building a new sense of home in a new city and within new communities. The diverse, urban context of Montreal is similar to that of Toronto: about 30 percent of residents of the island of Montreal were born outside Canada and an increasing proportion of residents have as a first language is neither English nor French (the official language of Quebec) (DeWolf, 2007), and about 24 percent of metropolitan families live under the low-income threshold (Foundation of Greater Montreal, 2007). That is to say, these demographics suggest a relevance for work on concepts of home—a relevance I of course feel personally in a new, deep way. And so I will engage a version of my framework again myself, in the studio and in the streets, the libraries and laneways, the galleries and green spaces. And I will connect with young people in schools and other localities, using the framework and orientation of *Finding Home* to learn, grow, better understand ourselves and each other, and contribute to the lives of our communities around us—to knit ourselves into belonging, in other words.

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Author Note

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the Study of Education (co-winner); the 2008 Outstanding Dissertation Award from the Arts Based Educational Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association; the 2008 Critical Issues in Curriculum and Cultural Studies Graduate Student Award given by the Special Interest Group in Critical Issues in Curriculum and Cultural Studies, American Educational Research Association. I am appreciative of this recognition and extremely grateful as well for the open hearts and imagination of the art students at Oakwood Collegiate Institute, their teacher Mike Bodden, and SideSpace curator/director Schuster Gindin, all of whom helped give *Finding Home* a new kind of life. Thank you, and, as we say in Montreal, *à la prochaine!*

About the Author

Kathleen Vaughan is a visual artist, educator, academic and assistant professor of Art Education in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University (Montreal, Canada). Her work in all media explores thematics of identity and belonging; memory, storytelling, and the cultural artefact; and the ethical and aesthetic connection between beings of all species, including spirit of place. In her inquiry into art as research she is also elaborating collage as an interdisciplinary research method and exploring links between artistic and teaching practices. More can be found on her website at <http://www.akaredhanded.com>.

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