

Please insert poll here:

To what extent do you agree with the following proposition::

It is important that specialist classroom teachers continue to practice their subject alongside teaching it.

- a. I agree and think I can articulate why.
- b. I agree but I don't think I can say why?
- c. I don't think it makes a difference either way.
- d. It is not important

This is actually a very complex question that has implications for what we expect of teachers, how their time is allocated and the kind of professional development that we see as being valuable - and it is perhaps a question that is asked with differing intensity in relation to different subject specialisms.

Towards an ethical framework for post-qualitative research

Artist Teacher = Someone teaching school-aged children and, supported by other artist-teachers and arts professionals, deliberately pursuing arts practice expecting that it will *impact what happens in their classroom*

- What ‘ways of being’ does classroom oriented artist teacher practice potentially model?
- What is it that classroom oriented artist teacher practice does (or has the potential to do)?

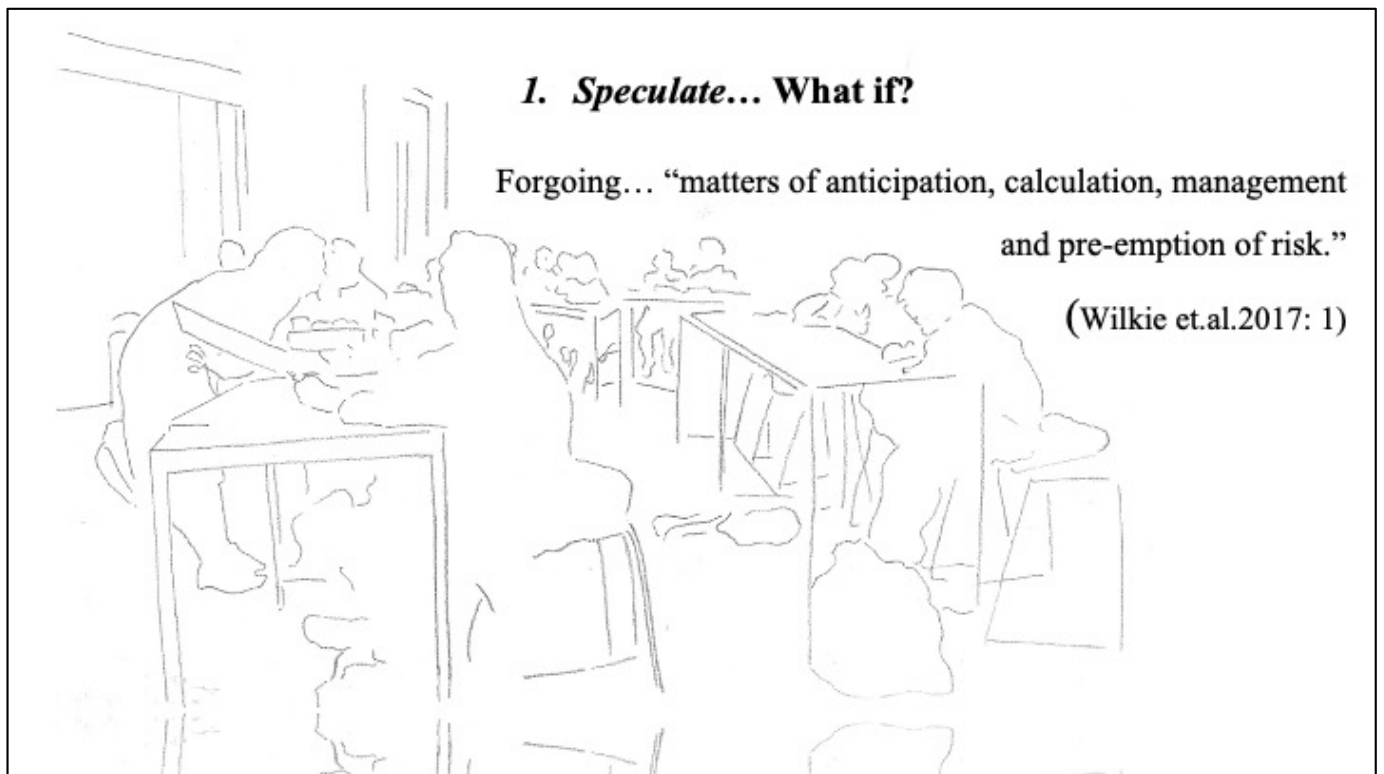
I’m exploring this question within the field of arts education, and within Art & Design specifically - responding to a kind of ‘ideal’ regarding arts education practice that has been influential in the UK over the last 20 years thanks to a scheme initially supported by Arts Council England and the National Society for Education in Art and Design - called the Artist Teacher Scheme (ATs). (Its an ‘ideal’ that also informs ITT and art teacher CPD in other international contexts - Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, the States, Spain).

My starting point has been existing published research about the ATS that I felt framed ideas of ‘impact’ largely in terms of student attainment and sometimes

curriculum content and methodologically has been dominated by mixed methods evaluations dependent on self-reporting surveys and questionnaires or narrative case studies that focused more on teacher identity rather than the *actual arts practices that teachers engage with and what they might do in the classroom*. So I started with this hunch that what was needed was not just an engagement with art teachers, but also with the classroom (or classrooms) and with arts practice - and part of that should involve me taking up and exploring the practices I encountered myself as I went through the study. And this vague sense of direction came together around the idea of asking a group of art teachers to make their own arts practice over a period of time and to spend time with them in their classrooms as they did this and for me to make work alongside as a form of exploration - and I didn't really know how any of that art work would inform the research outcome because I was also committed to *writing* as a means of disseminating to contexts where arts practice may marginalised.


So what I present here are 7 guiding principles for researching as an artist or artistically within an educational context that emerged from the beginning stages of a research project which eventually became a year-long study across four schools and which I am close to submitting in the form of a 'version' of a PhD

thesis. It sits at the boundaries between artistic and ethnographic enquiry - occupying a post-qualitative, non-representational space.... My own background is first as an artist, then a secondary art-teacher before being a programme leader of education and arts related CPD and MA programmes.



Embrace the speculative nature of artistic inquiry

Manning, suggests that traditional research methods have a tendency to function as ‘safeguards against the ineffable’ (2016, 32). Instead non-representational research, whether in the form of artistic or other post-qualitative inquiries, speaks in terms of speculative propositions that emerges from within the research event not from predetermined criteria imposed externally. Speculative experimentation forgoes “matters of anticipation, calculation, management and pre-emption of risk” which lead to ‘business as usual’ (Wilkie et.al.2017: 1; Manning 2016), resisting what is probable by inquiring into what is possible.



HOW DOES
PHYSICALLY
INTRODUCING
YOUR ART MAKING
TO YOUR CLASSROOM
CHANGE THE WAY
YOU OCCUPY IT?

2. Find a safe place to *dive in*...

“...practice of being *inside* the research event”

(Springgay & Truman 2018: 204)

Which brings me to principle number 2 and The problem: getting started

I wanted to engage with a community of art teachers pursuing ATP in their teaching context but knowing *how* to proceed was difficult. ‘*What if I get a whole department making their own art in their classroom?*’, but... What would the time commitment be? How much contact would I have with the teachers? What methods would I use to ‘record’ the process? What would I be ‘recording’? Would pupils be involved? etc. etc. My answer was always, “Well that depends on what kind of art the teachers end up making”, but the ethics application required decisions *before* actively engaging participants in dialogue - it was all about

anticipation, calculation, management, pre-emption of risk...

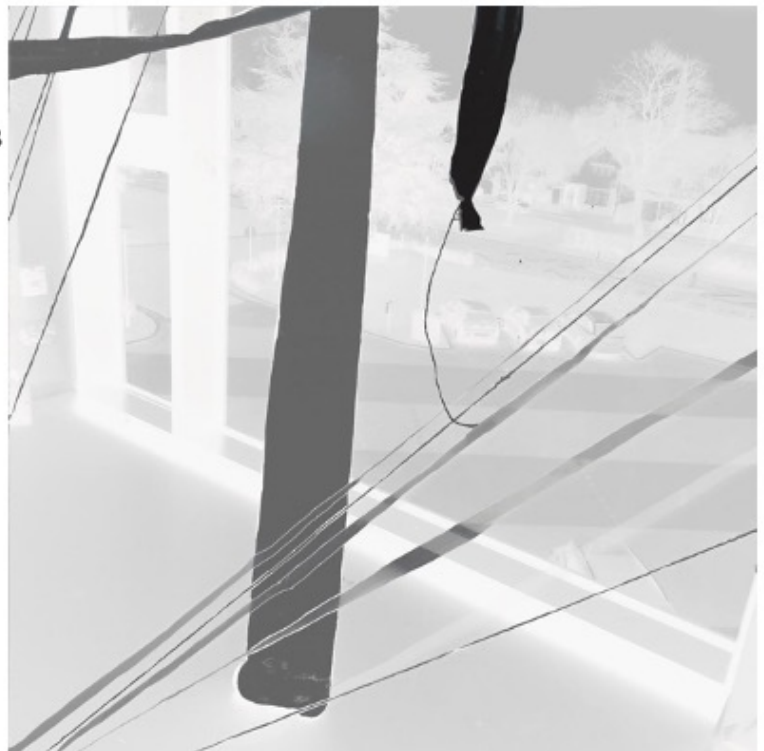
But I felt I needed to

Dabble / Paddle first then Dive in...

The solution: a pilot study - structured around a workshop called Drawing in Space that formed the starting point of Artist Teacher CPD I ran in the University. The workshop was run by an artist who had previously facilitated it for me and, as in the University setting, was paid for her time. It had two parts - part 1 - a day spent drawing 3-Dimensionally in in the classroom. Then living with the installation for a couple of days and perhaps adding to it - and then an evaluative reflective drawing session on the afternoon of day 4 to think through and discuss what came out of the week for each of us.

3. Acknowledge the fragility of *being with...*

The surrender of 'thirdness' soon breaks down into 'twoness'. (Benjamin)



On the first day the classroom quickly fell silent as Julie and Catrin, tentatively began. Silence can be productive, but this felt awkward, I could feel our unease at trying to work out how to behave. Attempting to break the tension I began to play with some of the materials provided and after a while decided that I might as well start my own 'drawing in space'. We each worked in a corner, spaces not generally occupied by students. Sarah eventually asked us to pause in our creations and we looked at what each other had created. The work so far felt tentative, no one brave enough to extend out in ways that would interrupt 'normal' use of the space. The teachers were aware of 'slowing down'; they had lost

track of time. Catrin had removed her shoes. The clocks had gone forward at the weekend, it was Monday morning, and they felt disoriented as a result. We had used string, wool, cotton, rope, tights, ribbon, a bicycle inner tube and a coat hanger in our 'drawings'. The coat hanger, bent to form a hook by Julie, with one slightly pointed end, hung ominously from the rubber tube suspended from the ceiling, swaying almost imperceptibly. It felt menacing.

What we had not discussed in advance was the need to actively 'surrender' to the research inquiry. And in different ways we had to do this - my decision to take part was a surrender of critical distance and the outside stance, but the teachers, in surrendering their habitual occupation of the teaching space made the braver move.

The notion of surrender became increasingly important to the larger inquiry as it progressed related to the idea of 'thirdness' - drawing on psychoanalytic theories of transitional space but also Bhaba's postcolonial explorations of thirdspace - the thirdspace representing a space of surrender to the other where we are able to face the other without objectifying and have to trust the same of them. Benjamin (2017, 39) suggests the play and "surrender" of "thirdness", is fragile, allowing the dissolution of recognisable structures but as part of a

greater process of “breakdown” and “repair” that must continually be revisited. Spaces of thirdness, she suggests (if we attempt to stay there too long) soon collapse into ‘twoness’. the insight from that was both dual facing - related to artist teacher practice but also to my own attempts to create a research space that I felt was ethical, to structure the rhythm of the consequent study around moments of encounter rather (enabling participants time to step outside the study) than expecting constant interaction.

So, we didn’t stay in this tense, defensive space - the workshop did find momentum and there was a sense of surrender.



4. Follow the data that *glows*...

“...data have their ways of making themselves intelligible to us” (Maclure, 661)

What happened next is hard to describe as lots of things happened at once. There was a feeling of sudden energy in the room. Sarah suggested we move to work on someone else's 'drawing'. Two other members of staff, both technicians came into the room to see what was happening and one asked if she could join in for a bit. Julie knocked a jar of pens onto the floor, she did not pick them up. I stuck some masking tape on the floor in a line underneath a table. Catrin extended the line so that it headed across the room and went out of the door. As it went out into the corridor she made the line with some orange cord, stuck down at intervals with small pieces of masking tape. The line reached along the corridor, almost as far as her own classroom.

Eventually she covered the string entirely with tape so that the faint orange thread could only just be seen below it.

When colleagues and students entered the classroom they were apologetic, as if interrupting, carefully manoeuvring around rather than interacting with the installation. The teachers were uncertain in their replies to queries about what was going on as if 'caught in the act'. However, the taped line on the floor had immediate effect. Students and teachers walked along it as if on a tightrope, with others and on their own. Some zig-zagged from side to side over it as they moved along. Questions were not asked, it was not skirted around and the staff themselves seemed under no compulsion to offer an explanation.

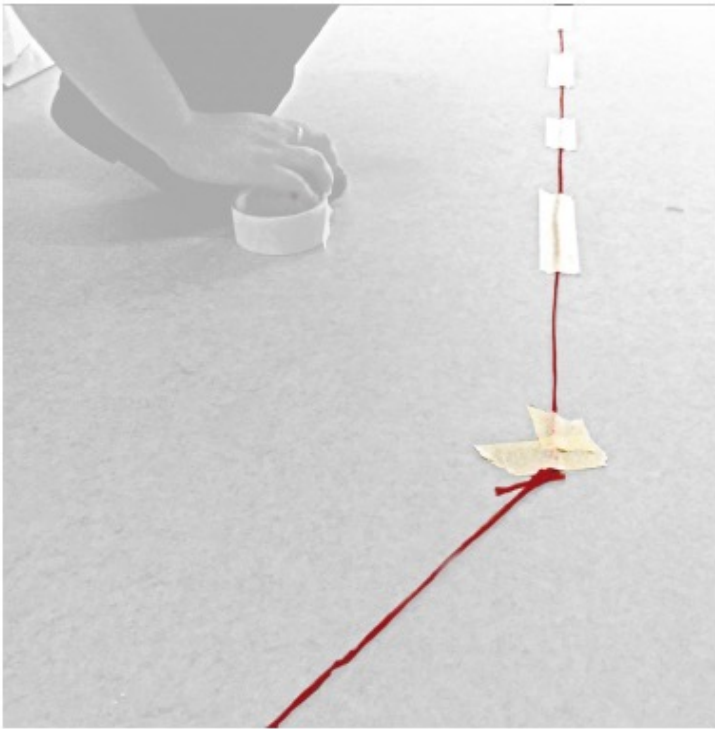
Data that glows:

In our afternoon evaluative session we all named this moment as being significant, a moment of release after which we felt what I would now describe as a third-space was identifiable - as having something about it - but what? How was it nameable? What did it represent to us? - we couldn't really answer that at the time. This moment of energy and movement stayed with me a long time before I felt it began to 'speak'.

Maclure suggests that in post-qualitative materialist research data does not become meaningful through

processes of analysis and critique but that “...data have their ways of making themselves intelligible to us” (661), describing data as ‘glowing’ (662) in moments “that involve a loss of mastery over language” (*ibid*), causing one to wonder, to look more closely, to ponder, to be with for a little longer, carrying it around with you waiting for the ‘emergence of sense’.

-



5. ..attend to human and non-human participants as having a life of their own.

“...the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (Bennet 2010, 6)

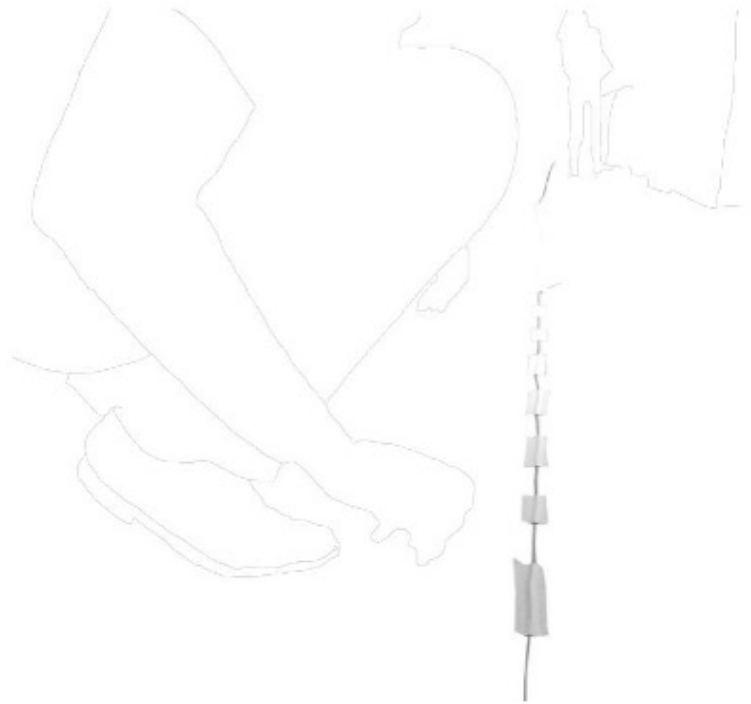
In accounting for the ‘energy’ within the event of the masking tape and orange string line, I returned to Bennet’s *Vibrant Matter* in which she argues for a recognition of thing power, “...the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (2010, 6). This points to a relationship beyond the compliance, disobedience, and circumspection perspectives that Heidegger suggested as characterising our engagement with objects. Here she acknowledges the possibility that *objects might engage with us. (You do not have to wholly agree with Bennet, she herself states that she is not sure if her ideas are ‘true’ - but they are fuel for the imagination and speculation).* One focus for Bennet’s research has been

the relationship that excessive hoarders have with objects noting that hoarders say things like ‘*the things called out to me*’ or that ‘*the things just took over*’ (online lecture 2011) . She suggests that *normal* perception, dealing with the overwhelming amounts of stuff around us that we *could* perceive, subtracts those things that are not *useful* for us to perceive (2012, 245) and hypothesizes that hoarders are ‘bad at subtraction / good at reception’ (246), unable to filter out the call of things that threaten to overwhelm them. But she also acknowledges that artists are good at both...

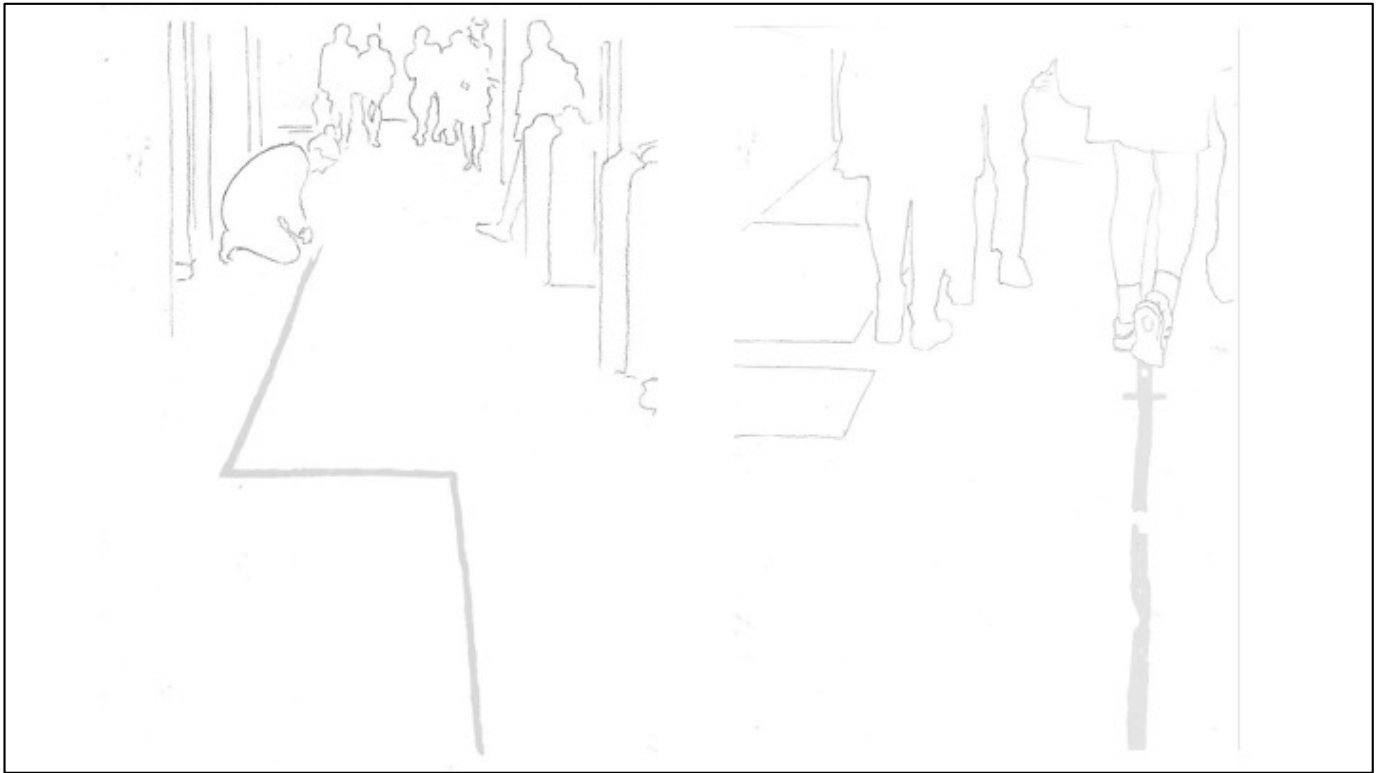
6. Go with the flow...

“I did not know what that something was but my years of practice as a practitioner told me that something would emerge.”

(Meenach 2016, 106)



It felt as if the the masking tape and orange string assemblage ‘called out’ in the classroom enabling a way of breaking through the defensiveness of the first hour or so. And, as what I have named ‘critical objects’ they continued to glow after the workshop ended. I had to ‘follow’ and wait to see where they would take me. Meenach, who is an actor and teacher of actors uses the metaphor of ‘perching’ to describe times of stepping back, waiting to find the flow again, or to take flight again, taking the opportunity to ‘sit with’ the work so far (2016: 106). She explains, “I did not know what that something was but my years of practice as a practitioner told me that something would emerge” (*ibid*).



Knowing that the output of the research would be a written thesis there have been times when I've been uncertain about the worth of time when spent playing with materials. Perhaps the most accessible and easy to justify are the drawings and montages I have made from research data - there's a lovely defense of drawing as analysis, or more specifically tracing given by Maureen Michael and I think I see the progress of my drawings not so much as analysis but as providing a kind of distance (not objectivity) but a way of filtering the glow - to find a kind of residue - the embers if you like. Other later work is harder to explain in this way and falls more into the next guiding principle I think.



7. Respond... or correspond

'is the process by which beings or things
literally answer to one another over time'
(Ingold 2016: 8)

I see others arts processes as ways that help me carry the 'glow' with me but also to be carried along - to continue with speculation - where might this go? What might this become next?

Non-representational, speculative approaches to research are not descriptive or critical in the way that traditional qualitative studies have been. As a process of being *with*, the outcomes of such research are not *of* or *about* but a *response to*. They do not describe, or interpret but reciprocate, or, to use Ingold's term *correspond*. Correspondence, as Ingold describes 'is the process by which beings or things literally answer to one another over time' (2016: 8).

Ingold states that the responses that we give we do not *own* but *owe* (Ingold 2016: 15). I therefore take seriously the responsibility I owe to my participants, but also my own students and the wider artist-teacher community, to give a response that has effect.

Results of the wider study to follow...



References

- Benjamin, J., 2017. *Beyond doer and done to: Recognition theory, intersubjectivity and the third*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bennett, J., 2010. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press.
- Bennet, J. 2011. *Powers of the Hoard: Artistry and Agency in a World of Vibrant Matter*. Lecture at the Vera List Center <https://vimeo.com/29535247> Accessed Oct 26th 2019.
- Bennett, J., 2012. Powers of the hoard: Further notes on material agency. *Animal, vegetable, mineral: Ethics and objects*, pp.237-269.
- Bresler, L., 2006. Toward connectedness: Aesthetically based research. *Studies in art education*, 48(1), pp.52-69.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., 1987. *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Denmead, T.Y.L.E.R., 2015. For the lust of not knowing: Lessons from artists for educational ethnography. *Beyond methods: Lessons from the arts to qualitative research*, pp.25-36.
- Haseman, B., 2006. A manifesto for performative research. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 118(1), pp.98-106
- Ingold, T., 2016. *Lines: a brief history*. Routledge.
- Heidegger, M., 1977. The Question Concerning Technology." *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper, pp.3-35.
- Heidegger, M., 1996. *Being and time: A translation of Sein und Zeit*. SUNY press.

M. MacLure (2013). Researching without representation? Language and materiality in post-qualitative methodology. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 26(6), pp.658-667.

Manning, E., 2016. *The minor gesture*. Duke University Press.

Meenach B. 2016. Practice-led Research: Creating, Embodying and Shifting My Understanding of Research. In: Rossi D., Gacenga F., Danaher P. (eds) *Navigating the Education Research Maze*. Palgrave Studies in Education Research Methods. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39853-2_6

Michael, M.K., 2020. Drawing relationally for an ethnography of practice. *Ethnography and Education*, 15:3 270-285, DOI: 10.1080/17457823.2020.1739544 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2020.1739544>

Ulmer, J.B., 2017. Posthumanism as research methodology: Inquiry in the Anthropocene. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30(9), pp.832-848.

Vannini P. 2015 Non-representational research methodologies: An introduction. In *Non-Representational Methodologies* Feb 11 (pp. 11-28). Routledge.