

The Graduate School of Education  
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# UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts

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SPECIAL ISSUE

## A/r/tography and the Visual Arts

Volume 3 | Issue 1 | 2013

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Guest Editors *Rita L. Irwin*  
*Anita Sinner*

Editor  
Associate Editor  
Designer

*Lindy Joubert*  
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*Rosie Ren*

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## ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

*The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.*

*Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.*

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# Special Issue: A/r/tography and the Arts

## Guest Editors

*Rita L. Irwin | Anita Sinner*

### THEME

To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any art form and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create relational and/or enhanced meanings. A/r/tographical work are often rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess, which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. A/r/tography is inherently about self as artist/researcher/teacher yet it is also social when groups or communities of a/r/tographers come together to engage in shared inquiries, act as critical friends, articulate an evolution of research questions, and present their collective evocative/provocative works to others (see <http://m1.cust.educ.ubc.ca/Artography/>).

This special issue of Multi-Disciplinary Research in the Arts invites original creative and scholarly inquiry that engages in critical debates and issues regarding a/r/tographical methodologies; are exemplars of critical approaches to a/r/tographical research; and/or extend the boundaries of inquiry-based research. Contributions are welcome from disciplines across the arts, humanities and social sciences and in a wide range of formats including articles, essays, and artistic interludes, which explore diverse forms of the arts from drama, dance, poetry, narrative, music, visual arts, digital media and more.

# Educational Research, Photo Essays and Film: Facts, analogies and arguments in Visual A/r/tography

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## ABSTRACT

This paper has two complementary and intertwined objectives. The first is methodological: How can film editing narrative structures be used to organize arguments and demonstrations in visual a/r/tography reports? The second is thematic: What analogies can be drawn between three different symbolic spaces such as classrooms, museums and films? The semantic interactions between visual images on education, painting and movies provoke new ways of interpreting the roles of academic learning (students versus teachers) and aesthetic consumption (spectators versus artists). Narrative structures in visual a/r/tography need to develop specific uses, differentiated from other narrative uses in mass media and visual arts, to fulfill the functions of academic research. How then should new problems about learning be described visually? How are innovative educational theories proven using visual a/r/tography research techniques?

## KEYWORDS

*Visual A/r/tography, Arts-based Research, Educational Research Photo Essay, Film, Primary Education, Teacher Training*

*Figure 1*  
*Visual Abstract*





Figure 2

## INTRODUCTION

The images used by visual arts-based research (drawings, photography, designs, videos, installations, and any other form accepted in the artistic practices), in addition to the strictly documentary function, must exhibit outstanding artistic and aesthetic qualities (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Roldan & Marin-Viadel, 2012). A/r/tography is a form of arts-based research which combines three professional positions in a balanced way: the artist, the researcher and the teacher. These three personal and social identities, which traditionally had been dissociated, have been gathered holistically and dialectically in a/r /tography (Irwin & Springgay, 2008).

Visual a/r/tography is the a/r/tographic speciality of systematically using visual images. Visual arts-based educational research and visual a/r/tography advocate the use of professional knowledge in the visual arts field for educational research. This new methodological approach forces us to refine the ways in which visual data are obtained, analyzed and visual consequences are drawn. To extrapolate directly the uses of images from visual arts it is not enough for the uses required by academic research, prompting questions including: What are the more suitable narrative structures of arguments for artistic and research purposes in visual a/r/tography? What changes or adjustments must be applied to the series of photos (typical in contemporary photography), or photo essays (very common in journalism), to meet the requirements of visual a/r/tography?



Figure 3

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, PHOTO ESSAYS AND VISUAL A/R/TOGRAPHY

Visual images can adopt different narrative structures in a research report: Independent drawings or photographs, collections, photographic series, photo essays, photo-discourses, etcetera. Of all these, the photo essay is one of the most useful and eloquent structures (Marin Viadel & Roldan, 2009).

The narrative structure that organizes visual images in a research photo essay is the determining factor for this artistic and investigational quality: (a) because this structure is responsible for introducing, defining and describing the problem, the characters and the context; (b) because this structure establishes the narrative style of research; (c) because this structure organized the ideas in a logical sequence (from the visual and from the argumentative point of view); (d) because this structure sustains the metaphorical capacity of visual associations established in the photo essay, (e) because this structure determines the possibilities of interpretation of the events; and (d) because in this structure lies the explanatory power and demonstration of visual concepts and ideas that are affirmed or denied.

The uses of educational research photo essays are still poorly developed. Consequently it could be a good methodological approach to look for models to deduce visual ideas for use in research. One such model may be cinema, and more specifically, film editing. Different schools of film editing have developed very effective and persuasive visual narrative strategies useful to resolve several tasks in an educational research report: How to present the data? How to define the problem? How describe the context? How to interpret phenomena and events? How to establish causal relationships?

In addition, some films gather two key qualities of arts-based research: a highly effective communication and high artistic quality. In visual a/r/tography it is not enough that the data is clearly presented, the arguments must be consistent and the conclusions congruent. These three criteria are necessary, but not sufficient. We suggest three supplementary criteria: (a) Seduction – similarly to what happens in movies – the person reading a a/r/tographic reports must not only understand the data, but must also be seduced by the information; (b) Emotion is not enough to recognize that the arguments are correct, but arguments must be moved by the beauty to which they are exposed; (c) Identification is not sufficient that the findings are properly deducted, indeed the person reading the research report must identify, him or herself, with the finding.

Figure 4



## FILM EDITING AS A MODEL FOR VISUAL RESEARCH NARRATIVES IN VISUAL A/R/TOGRAPHY

Film editing is a discursive strategy that is primarily visual; verbal language is not a decisive factor and in many cases it is absent. Film editing has three functions that are of great interest to researchers that use visual narratives: (a) it provides continuity to the visual discourse; (b) it converts a sequence of events in a narrative; and (c) it provides a narrative style. Continuity, narrative and style are three crucial concepts in visual a/r/tography. The continuity between a photograph and the text, in films as in photo essays, is achieved through visual connections between successive images, which correspond to a formal and argumentative logic that is clearly understandable. If there is no continuity, we lose the possibility of the argument. If there is no style (light, proportion, composition, rhythm, etc., of each of the images and the set) then visual forms do not acquire a proper artistic value. If the sequence of data and facts do not become a narrative then it is impossible to achieve an interpretation or explanation of events.



Figure 5

## MAKING OFF: PSYCHO, MONA LISA AND THE EDUCATIONAL SPECTACLE IN THE CLASSROOM.

This article is a photo-discourse articulated by eight photo essays. We have established metaphorical comparisons and analogies between three symbolic spaces in which the eyes play a key role: (a) films, in this case the work by Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960); (b) art museums, in this case, the room in the Louvre which displays the *Mona Lisa* painting by Leonardo da Vinci (circa 1503-1506); and (c) the school, here represented by an art education classroom at the School of Education and in the University of Granada, Spain.

1. Figure I presents a visual abstract equivalent to the verbal abstract. It is a descriptive-comparative photo essay to show the three intertwined subjects: film, art museum and art education.





Figure 6

2. Figure II juxtapose two panoramic photo-collages made from photographs taken in the room of the Mona Lisa in the Louvre and the art education classroom where we teach. The screen shows a frame of *Psycho*. The analogy between the rectangular shapes on the walls of both scenarios (Renaissance and Baroque Italian paintings on the walls of the Louvre and functional cabinets and windows in the university classroom) reinforces the visual comparison. What are the similarities between the attitudes of the public in the museum and the students in the classroom? What roles do teachers and museum staff embody as the human figures that are closer to works of art?

The following five Figures (III, IV, V, VI and VII) develop the argument:

3. Figure III has a linear organization and presents three spectacles simultaneously: school, museum and cinema. Now the emphasis is on three individual figures: the teacher, the Mona Lisa and the murderer. The actions of each of these characters, and their silhouetted forms, begin to streamline the story.

4. The photo essay of Figure IV focuses attention on the hands: explaining, listening, looking and stabbing.

5. The photo essay of Figure V is organized in three rows and three columns. Thus, horizontally, it is possible to describe the sequence of events that occur in each of the three symbolic spaces, while simultaneously, vertically, the photo essay is equated the three human figures against the light: professor, murderer and viewer.

6. Figure VI argues about the violence of the gaze.

7. In Figure VII, the heads of students in the class are symmetrical to those in the audience at the museum. Its circular shape frames the 'dead look.'

8. Figure VIII is a photo-collage that works as the conclusion: the visual surprise.

Figure 7





*Figure 8*

## IMAGE CAPTIONS

Figure I. Visual Abstract. Authors, (2012). “Marion, Mona Lisa and Joaquín teaching drawing”. Descriptive photoessay composed by a direct visual quotation (Hitchcock, 1960) (left), one photograph by Author 3 (center) which include a indirect visual quotation (Leonardo, ca.1503-1506), and one photograph by X. Molinet-Medina (right).

Figure II. Authors, (2012). “Art Class and art museum”. Comparative Photo Essay composed with two digital photo-collage by Author 3 (up right and down left) and X. Molinet-Medina (up left and down right).

Figure III. Authors, (2012). “Three arms”. Comparative Photo Essay composed with two digital photographies by Author 3 (up right and down left) and X. Molinet-Medina (up left and down right).

Figure IV. Authors (2012). “Hands”. Narrative Photo Essay organized with two photographs by Author 3 (down right and down left with an indirect visual quotation Leonardo (ca 1503-1506), one photograph by Author 1 (up left), one photograph by X. Molinet-Medina (up right) and a visual quotation up center) (Hitchcock, 1960) (up center).

Figure V. Authors (2012) “Three shapes”. Comparative Photo Essay organized with three photographs by Author 3 (down left, down center and down right), two photographs by Author 2 (up left and up right) and one photograph by X. Molinet-Medina (up center) with three visual quotations (Hitchcock, 1960).

Figure VI. Authors (2012) “Psycho/photo/spectator”. Comparative Photo Essay organized with two digital photo by Author 3 (center and right) and one visual quotation (Hitchcock, 1960) (left).

Figure VII. Authors (2012) “Students/psycho/spectators”. Comparative Photo Essay organized with one photograph by Author 3 (down), one photo by Author 1 (up) and one visual quotation (Hitchcock, 1960) (center).

Figure VIII. Conclusion. Authors. “Psycho’s eyes for an spectator” (2012). Photo Collage organized with two visual quotations (Hitchcock, 1960) and one photograph by Author 3.

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