

Guest Editor's Introduction: The Way of Rigorous Aesthetics

Adam Vincent

When I submitted my article “Poem as literature review: Poetic rumination on the history of Poetic Inquiry” (2020) to *Transformative Dialogues*, it felt like a risk. The journal is known for its high-quality discussions around teaching and learning, and I was coming to the table with something different: I was speaking through poetry. After some feedback from the reviewers and editorial team, I foregrounded the poetry with an explanation of why I chose to use poetry and what I felt it did that added to my own understanding of a vast array of literature. The article was accepted, and I felt pleased that my ideas would be shared with those interested in engaging with them. I continued to direct my attention to writing my then-doctoral dissertation on poetic inquiry from which the literature review poem/article was derived. Much to my surprise, I received an email from Laura Cruz, the editor-in-chief of *Transformative Dialogues*, inviting me to speak with her team about arts-based approaches. I happily accepted, and in the meeting that followed, the idea for this issue was born (with me at the helm as guest editor). This finds us where we are now, with this issue comprising diverse approaches to arts-based educational research (ABER) from scholars and artists across the disciplines. A poem is good for many things, as my mentor Dr. Carl Leggo surmised and promoted (Leggo, 2012) as he lived poetically, and it seems that spurring a special issue is another of its capabilities.

Arts-based (or arts based, no hyphen) educational research is often linked to Barone & Eisner (1997), who together defined ABER as “the process of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and its writing” (p. 73). Cole & Knowles (2008) expanded the notion of arts-based research further and beyond art-only educational purposes with their book *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*. They extended the notion that arts in qualitative research are diverse and include “arts-based research, arts-informed research, image-based research, A/R/Tography, and community-based activist art” (preface, para 4). Leavy (2009) continued to champion arts-based research (ABR) as credible approaches to research noting:

ABR practices are a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during any or all phases of research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation. These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address

research questions in holistic and engaged ways in *which theory and practice are intertwined* (italics as in original, p. ix).

For the purposes of this special issue, we sought to hear from hear from ABER/ABR scholars who engage in poetic inquiry (e.g., James, 2017; Prendergast, 2009; Vincent, 2018, 2020), narrative inquiry (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, 2013), performative inquiry (e.g., Fels & Belliveau, 2008; Saldaña, 1999), making (e.g., Sameshima & Morchel, 2019), and other forms of arts-based and/or arts-informed educational research processes and, I must say, we were not disappointed.

In my poetic-academic work(s) and research in poetic inquiry, I have come to recognize the power of the arts to create meaning. This work requires not only an understanding of aesthetics (beauty, tone, imagery, composition, and the like) but of rigorous aesthetics that have epistemological implications and underpinnings (Vincent, 2022). These types of creative-academic works are not fashioned of vanity, but of purpose. They encompass diverse practices that marry art and meaning to further our understanding and/or to recognize connections that may have been missed before. These practices are more than generative—they are acts of crafting that lead to greater realizations or unveiling of hidden knowledge.

In the spirit of this special issue, I have elected to use a form of prose poetry to highlight the offerings herein. I believe that much can be said in a short line and that evoking sound or feeling through word choice and aesthetics (often shaped through poetic devices such as assonance, consonance, simile, meter, and the like) can add to experience and knowledge mobilization.

As you read these articles and engage in the craft on the page, I ask that you consider what the art did for your reading experience, for your ruminating on ideas, and/or for your consumption of knowledge. Did something different happen for you? Did you experience both knowing and feeling simultaneously? Is this art? Is this knowing? Is this both simultaneously?

The Way of Rigorous Aesthetics (Adam Vincent)

These authors¹ (crafters, artists, teachers, facilitators, practitioners) draw from artisanal ways while bringing forth knowledge (through praxis for you to practise in your own practice) to propagate meaning and promote prosperity through education.

Beavington, Huestis, & Toohey-Wiese bring us to the river to see, feel, and transform while better recognizing our place in the world.

We visit long-term care facilities supported by Tafler, Kelson, & Meyer, who spotlight the aptitude of applied theatre to train, teach, learn, and empower.

Weiser & DeMartino (like prognosticators) posit the future of academic administration through photo-voicing phenomenologically and science fictitiously, making us blend what is true with what could be.

¹ Unlike the convention of using the authors' full names in editorials, I elected to use only surnames for flow and to mimic the convention of a literature review.

DeVita & Liao draw our attention to current issues of social justice through activist art that causes meaningful arcs and sparks for students and those engaging in the works produced.

Badenhorst, Arnold, Halfyard, & McLeod share narratives created out of heard snippets of conversations, eavesdropping with eloquence to create meaning.

Stooshnov directs us to consider the opportunities of the virtual stage like a multimedia mirror of its in-person equivalent.

Patel points us towards narratively pondering the practices of art educators, where their work intersects with placemaking, and the power of Participatory Action Research (providing great insights into art and artistry).

This special issue is full of risk, experimentation, confirmation, deviation (from the norm), exploration, and contemplation. Engage in these works as pieces of art; engage in these works as pieces of rigorous research; follow the way of rigorous aesthetics; and learn as you grow.

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