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About storytelling as self study in studio art.

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Background

I used to be a graduate student in the United States. I was in a prestigious art school, with a luxurious situation in regards to personal work space, time with experienced professors and hard cover notebooks, that had the name of the university imprinted upon them in golden fonts. I never realized an importance of this while I was there. What I did realize was that storytelling was my most sincere way of self-expression and it developed to be both a source and outcome of my studio practice. There was also the issue of a thesis. A written text, never called research, with blurred structure requirements that seemed to grow somehow out of the advisors' opinions, but was indeed meant to serve as a quest for knowledge. Knowledge about oneself, as an artist in the world. As a reflection of one's own artistic creation through a critical discussion, which placed one's art work in historical and theoretical context. This text was also a sort of an internal journey; writing which trawled through the life-wide as well as lifelong influences of other people, one's ancestors so to speak, let them be connected by DNA or ideology.

It was not until later that I learned words like Action Research and Self Study. The word Research actually can make some Artist shiver with disgust as they feel that a name of a world, that threatens their whole being, has been mentioned. Others embrace the word and use it frequently, with the result of a similar shivering taking place within Researchers that hear of the abuse of this activity special to their field.

Research Questions

My journey into the world of PhD in educational research is based on my desire to bridge the two worlds; the worlds of art and research. In my art I always was curious about bridges like this. My BA study in fine arts resulted in a secret space, with an entrance through the back of an IKEA wardrobe. The space was dark and filled with a crunching sound of one person walking in snow. A little girl told me there was a tiger in there. A respectable older man told me there was the sound of running horses echoing in the space. Both experiences were true. The space lead nowhere, it was only intended to serve as a bridge; and in-between space, leading each viewer to his or her own fantasy world.

Later I worked towards bridging the thin line between history and fiction. There also I wanted to dwell on the bridge, pondering what it was made of. I found the most helpful bridge to be storytelling. A narrative which promises to tell only of things that are true, but not necessarily reveal every little detail discovered. Rather it constructs a path of true facts that serve as a possible reflection of the whole truth.

My quest, my question, became a search for the answer to the question: What is art?

Methods

The process was one of making, drawing, telling, writing, exhibiting, listening and visiting. Part of the end result was a written paper, constructed of narratives, stories that all were true, but everyone read them with a feeling of imagination. It was like the sound in the IKEA wardrobe which was only a simple recording of the feet of a person walking in snow. Snow that was of the snowball kind; the one that presses down perfectly with a sound that beholds a promise of creation. This simple sound was completely true and had not been adjusted to sound as anything else. Yet it provoked images of tigers and running horses. That was the creative part of the viewers. The same happened in the self study,

the paper I titled Beginning at The End. I aimed for the simplest version of the truth behind the reality of my own life and work. The result was a weave of narratives, shifting between the rhythm of a story to the rhythm of a theoretical discussion. The act of writing brought me towards the realization of this reflection of myself. A reflection built up of different layers; layers of myself as a student, a creator, an individual influenced by historical facts and texts, art works of others and theory of art, literature and psychoanalysis.

Research findings

The findings of this self study was a puzzle ground, from which I could walk into different directions, or upon which I could stand firmly with the possibility to build more work, let it be art or research. It gave me an image of myself and my work that I can always look into for definitions, if any of my life and work is ill-definable by other means. It gives me the knowledge of where I come from and what my echo can be like. The risk is that the certainty and security this offers might bring me the inability to realize my hindrances and incapacibilities. But I have a faint knowledge of this risky behavior being connected to creativity. So I embrace the risk. One result is the submission of this abstract. I'm testing a possible bridge towards educational research. My hope is that the bridge might not only lead to somewhere, but also could serve as a place to dwell in, while pondering possibilities. Possibility thinking, said Dr. Anna Craft on an international conference about creativity held in Reykjavik, Iceland in December 2009. Creativity as possibility thinking. I like this possibility more and more.