

Interlude – Part A to Part B

The intention of Part A was to provide an account of the direction and purpose of this inquiry. I also set out the main ontological, epistemological and methodological framework in which I shall be working.

Now in Part B I advance my inquiry into the two key questions around which the thesis is built,

- What is my developing aesthetic in practice?
- How does working in this way influence others?

My first response to these questions is to describe how my alertness to the aesthetic in practice has developed. This has been through an action research process of noticing and reflecting on those experiences that prompt curiosity, or offer some other challenge or delight. I describe and analyse encounters where I am aware of this deepening sense of the aesthetic in my own reflexive practice.

I then move on to consider in what ways this influences my working or being with others. The main vehicle for this is the representation and analysis of the first of the three Silver Street projects, during which I became a volunteer going through a period of induction and orientation. In so doing, I became keenly aware of the different aesthetic of this new community. I also negotiated with staff the dual relationship I was seeking with them, as volunteer and researcher.

The channel for communicating and sharing my personal sense of the aesthetic of these early experiences was through face-to-face dialogue and my written journals, which I made available to staff at the Centre.

The other task of Part B is to illustrate the relationship between the intrinsic aesthetic and the expressive aesthetic of practice. The intrinsic aesthetic, is described as the flow of sensory perceptions, feelings and ideas that is pervasive in our experience; the expressive aesthetic of practice occurs where through conscious choice, inquiry groups use aesthetic processes and artefacts to open up different ways of understanding and mean-making.

Here is a brief guide to the four chapters in Part B.

Chapter 5, What is my developing aesthetic in practice?

The discussion is organised around the intrinsic/expressive spectrum as I review and analyse journal material. Merleau-Ponty provides me with an introductory framing to the chapter as I consider what it means to ‘return to the things themselves’. I illustrate through an analysis of three short journal episodes my attraction to moments that make an aesthetic impact on me.

Then I move on to consider how the representation of my intrinsic aesthetic experience transforms it. I explore this through the inclusion of a sustained piece of expressive writing, which I analyse, from an autoethnographic perspective.

Chapter 6, How does working in this way influence others?

The main material in this chapter is drawn from Silver Street-1 and includes accounts of my initial meeting with staff, a day working as a volunteer in two of the Centre’s units, and a concluding staff meeting where a dialogue developed about people’s purpose in working there.

In analysing these journals I consider how the aesthetic focus of my own first person inquiry influences those with whom I work during this initial stage at Silver Street.

Chapter 7, The intrinsic aesthetic in practice

Here I consider what the concept of the *intrinsic* aesthetic in practice means to me. I explore how sense-making through writing and photos deepens my awareness of the *intrinsic* aesthetic and show how this deeper awareness influences my working with others. The discussion is organized around journal items relating to place, artefacts and relationships.

Chapter 8, The expressive aesthetic in practice

In this final chapter to Part B I draw on my experience of facilitating expressive activities within action inquiries. This discussion is organized around three types of process, – the embodied and kinaesthetic, the evocative and the constructive.

A note on the thematic developments in Part B and beyond

The story of the three Silver Street projects provides a sense of timescale and change during the period covered by this research. Growing out of this story are the thematic topics of the thesis – the aesthetic, both intrinsic and expressive, – play and the poetic, and – action research as the informing participative approach that I adopted. These run like a matrix across and through the story.

As these three pieces of work progressed at Silver Street, the accounts of each stage will show a developing experience of second person inquiry as issues that concerned this community are addressed. It is, however, my continuing first person inquiry into the aesthetic in practice that provides the main thesis focus, although this would have been impossible without the parallel engagement in second person inquiry. The initial attraction to the implicit aesthetic that engaged me in the place and the people of Silver Street, is also progressively supplemented by experience of a more expressive aesthetic through the use of creative media.

Part B

THE AESTHETIC IN PRACTICE