

(Re)Mapping Disciplinary Values and Rhetorical Concerns through Language: Interviews about Writing with Seven Instructors across the Performing and Visual Arts

Anicca Cox

This small study, based on interviews with seven university-level instructors of visual and performing arts from ceramics and sculpture to painting and drawing to music and field arts, investigates the uses of writing in art-making practice and instruction. The chapter explores personal narrative, interview analysis and extant literature on the subject, ultimately arguing that visual and performing arts disciplines have much to offer to writing studies in terms of a reconsideration of reflective, embodied, exploratory and assistive approaches to writing.

I'll never forget the moment I developed my first photograph when, as if by magic, a blank sheet of paper, in a dance with a chemical bath, brought forth an image out of the dark. Profoundly delighted with the language of light and form I saw before me, I began my undergraduate art career. Moving forward, I quickly learned from my instructors that while dexterity with the principles of visual language would be central, I would also need to use writing to better understand art-making codes and to successfully enter into a community of visual art practitioners. And though I ultimately decided on a career in writing studies, I never let go of the connections I made as an undergraduate between visual and written language, between multiple modes of seeing, thinking and making—principles that have in fact, all these years later, helped me better understand my own writing and teaching.

Study Design

In the fall of 2014, inspired by some of the conversations I'd been having with colleagues in the visual and performing arts for years, I decided to investigate more closely how those instructors use writing in their disciplinary practice. The impetus to do so, however, was both personal and scholarly. Because I use visual imagery

in my classrooms to prompt writing assignments and prompt students to work in alternative modalities, I have often wondered if I am coopting my own experience in art making merely because I find it interesting, or if the work I have students do with visual analysis lends itself concretely to their better writing work? And because theory in visual rhetoric has so wholeheartedly advocated for use of multiple modalities in writing studies, I also couldn't help but wonder what was going on on the other end? How *do* art-makers use writing? And what kind of instruction do students receive in it? And more importantly, why?

In order to more closely examine the landscape of writing in the visual and performing arts and its potential connection back to writing studies—I conducted a series of phone interviews with seven instructors of visual and performing arts (hereafter “VPA instructors”) at the university level, focusing on two elements of inquiry: First, in what ways do these instructors make use of writing in their classroom to effectively teach disciplinary values?; specifically, how does writing support disciplinary participation and practice in ways that are particular to that domain? Secondly, I wondered, what might qualitative data highlighting language around writing instruction in the visual and performing arts have to “say back” to writing studies itself? Interview questions ranged from how these instructors view and value writing abstractly, to how they employ writing practice concretely—how they give evaluative feedback on writing, to what texts they offer as readings in their courses and how they perceive their students' abilities.

Using grounded theory analysis borrowed from sociological research methods (now familiar broadly to compositionists) I identified recurring language and conceptual descriptors in an initial series of interview questions. From that analysis, I developed further lines of inquiry to examine research data. Some emergent concerns which are reflected in the following sections were: what language is used to describe disciplinary or rhetorical concerns within the visual and performing arts? What practices and values do instructors employ when teaching writing? Working with a hypothesis that visual and performing arts use writing as an essential component of disciplinary praxis, I hoped that some analysis of interview data could provide a site for intervention to the emerging assessment-based controls in writing studies. This trend too frequently can position process externally and as primarily in service of a summative, final written product. The results suggest that visual and performing arts instructors do, in fact, use writing in ways that uniquely support relationships between multiple modalities of expression (writing, visual, tactile among others). Further, the results of this study look at the importance of meta-cognitive reflective work, individuated instructional techniques, and multimodal or cross-disciplinary approaches to writing.

While the original study (Cox, 2014) was purely academic in nature and more

extensive than this chapter, in the text here I additionally employ my own reflective and interpretive analysis of art-making and its connection to my current identity as a writing instructor with the inclusion of images I made as an undergraduate photography student. By examining my current understanding of the role process and inquiry play for me as a writing instructor and what role they previously played for me as a practitioner in the visual arts, my hope is to provide an additional layer of meaning here—exploring potential articulations of the data from the study in my own experiences.

Discourse Communities, Visual Rhetoric, Visual Analysis

In hindsight, my memories of making visual images as an undergraduate now seem more complicated than the photographic objects themselves. I remember the initial delight, the power that came from being able to explore and discover the way I see, or want to see. I was fascinated that a photograph could uniquely represent, like DNA, how its creator existed in the world. My first instinct, and perhaps one that carried on, was to make/find things of beauty and use my camera to interact with them. Early images, like the one you see here, paid some attention to composition and form but were made in the course of my daily life, simply by turning my eye toward things that struck me as interesting—a trip to the beach with a girlfriend in cold and empty Northern California for example. I learned to print images with contrast or focus depending on what I *felt* about them—the low light, the mist, the silence, long stretches of waterside with a single figure upon the landscape seemed evocative, at the time, of the loneliness I felt in that physical setting.

But slowly, over time, I also learned to become a part of a community of student-practitioners and my visual work became a product of the conversations that took place with others. I was beginning to make the uncomfortable and complex, sometimes invisible moves of enculturation into a fine arts community. I learned to make work in new ways, through trial and often failure, through the reading my instructors asked me to do from artists like Edward Weston or various art critics, and also from classroom settings where I learned to engage in “critique” sessions and apply interpretive analysis to the work of others and my own. This “peer-review” model later became intimately familiar to me as a writing teacher. And these sessions were also where things became complicated, as any enculturation process is bound to be. I suddenly had an audience and had to make a relationship with them. It wasn’t enough to merely find beauty and delight in it—or so I thought, but rather, I had to find a way to make meaning. The process was, I remember now, both intensely personal and vulnerable and intensely public.



Figure 2.1. “Blackbirds at Dusk,” Humboldt County, CA (photo by Anicca Cox).

While writing studies is also interested in how to make meaning in multiple modalities and currently engages scholarship about visual rhetoric, digital humanities and multimodal writing instruction in dynamic ways, much of my fascination with a described relationship between image and meaning via language came before I had entered the discipline, when, in an art history class, I read Barthes’ *Camera Lucida* (1980). In this theoretical work, he maps his own fascination and emotional response to photographs as a wielder of language. He explains that because the composition itself remains a “referent,” the nature, form, or truth of a photograph is often elusive and symbolic; because of this, photography is, for him, uniquely compelling and uniquely personal. By tracing the ways in which, for him, writing falls short of the task of appropriately addressing photographs so often, he asserts his own exigence for writing a book on the subject; Barthes writes, “the photographs which interest me . . . give me pleasure or emotion” (1980, p. 7) and in a sense, in this moment, assures the reader that subjectivity, pleasure and emotion are integral parts to understanding the world of experience, even in critical writing practice.

In my own visual practice at that time, I began to further understand, as one mentor photography professor always reminded me, “a photograph is finished by the audience.” Unlike argumentative prose, visual art production, arguably, is

meant to be interpreted directly by the viewer, through all their lenses of experience and understanding. For this reason, I found fascination in the way Barthes gave a book's worth of attention to that very experience, making connections to his own scholarly *and* personal identity.

Many years later, as I entered into a new community of practice, I discovered that of the concomitant realms of image and text within the disciplinary discourse of writing studies, much has been said. Examples include our investigations of the materiality of text, language as complement to artistic practices, multimodal composing, and expansion of notions of "textuality" itself (Childers, Hobson & Mullen, 1998; Fleckenstein, 2004; George, 2002; Wysocki, 2001, 2005; Yancey, 2004, 2014). How these considerations of language/meaning relationships are shaped and articulated by the practices and values of each of these disciplines, or "discourse communities," is salient to our understanding of how writing appears, and gets used for process and production (Gee, 1989; Johns, 1997; Harris, 1989; Hyland, 2004; Porter, 1986; Swales, 1990; Wardle, 2010). Scholars like Kostelnick (1989) and Purdy (2014) as well as others have employed the term "design" and investigated intersections and articulations of "design" pedagogy with composition pedagogy and have in particular explored writing process modalities in design disciplines.

Additionally, visual and performing artists themselves have explored linguistic/textual spaces, from the work of Ed Ruscha, to Andy Warhol and Barbara Kruger, and many more. These artists have frequently used texts in visual (and other) ways that speak to intervening, re-directing or subverting language—principles visual rhetoric suggests as being useful within new communicative technologies.

In an image I made toward the end of my undergraduate years (see Figure 2.2), I too became very interested in how I might draw some sort of relationship between image and text. I made several series of images that incorporated text, usually in illustrative ways. Here, I employed an excerpted line from a poem I wrote and an image of a friend peeling an apple. Admittedly, I wasn't very successful (as my peers and instructors frequently let me know). I struggled to create a concept and execute it, though I was certain I knew what I wanted my viewer to see. For example, when I worked to be directly illustrative, the work felt didactic and oversimplified, and when I worked to be more abstract, the audience (my peers and instructors) became confused. Yes, for me, there was something compelling about this mundane/poetic act of apple peeling and the gravity of human hands. Add to that the self-referential (I was trying to be metacognitive I think) choice to include the film strip markings at the bottom and I was pretty sure in the darkroom that I was moving beyond just something beautiful into something with a message. I found that I liked the color: the sepia toning process and gold pen felt like it matched. But in the end, I made visual choices subconsciously and was frequently unable to articulate those choices or make them of value to my viewer. Perhaps it was why I felt eventually that I would be more successful sticking to text.

Perhaps, initially it was also the sense of immediacy of photographic image that lulled me into thinking it was a simple process of meaning making? Years later, as a writer and teacher of writing, I understand that a dedication to process is not merely symbolic. I often share with my students that in my own practice, one piece of short writing can require weeks of writing, and perhaps hundreds of hours of my time by the time it make its way to publication. And it is writing that continues to teach me that I may need to look at a text a hundred more times than I think necessary before its internal rhythms emerge, before connections, meaning, organization and style become focused and clear.



Figure 2.2. "Peeling the Apple," Arcata, CA (photo by Anicca Cox).

Luckily for me, as a somewhat failed art student, writing studies became a place I could articulate ideas and execute them a bit more clearly. As discourse community theory suggests, communities of practice are rarely identical in their ways of knowing or communicating. That does not mean they are cleanly distinct from one another either. As I embarked on this study, I was curious to see what bridges might materialize, giving insight into how both domains (visual and performing arts and

writing studies) use writing as a way of “knowing,” whether that knowing be epistemological, phenomenological or otherwise. By examining an adjacent discipline, I wondered, where might writing studies explore and most appropriately engage the sometimes-competing concerns of subjective versus critical/analytical practice via composition?

Methods

The methodology for this study included, as mentioned, a small sample of participants from a variety of demographics and examined both what they viewed as the value of writing for their particular teaching practice or discipline and also the practicalities of how each of them employed writing in their work. For ease of information, Tables 2.1 and 2.2 list the interview objectives and resulting descriptive markers identified as well as the participant demographics themselves.

Table 2.1. Interview categories

Interview Objectives/Descriptive Markers:
Value sets—pedagogical/instructional philosophies
Practices—particular pedagogical techniques that articulated instructional values
Disciplinary exigencies—support or articulation of values and practices in service of professional or disciplinary identity

Table 2.2. Participants

Participant Demographics:
Sculpture, ceramics, drawing, installation art, performance art, painting, jazz—history and practice, art history/visual studies, “ecology and art” (field studies).
Institutional affiliations: community college, private institution and four-year research institution.
Age and gender varied. *Most participants were Anglo (reflecting national faculty demographics).

Findings

The study illuminated several points for further investigation and categorization. Figure 2.3 is a sample of sub-category themes that emerged from the coding process. While points of divergence were investigated to a certain degree, the aim of the interview process was to discover what, if anything, might be shared across instructor and institutional experience in regards to the use and value of writing in

visual and performing arts pedagogy. Table 2.3 represents a close-up examination of what instructors pointed to as relevant for their practice and values.

Table 2.3. Coding themes

Sample of Sub-category Themes from Third Cycle Data Coding
“professional identity/professional practices”
“best practices for instruction”
“clarity”
“reflective writing”
“analytical writing”
“novice verse expert concerns”
“differentiated/individuated instructional techniques”
“inquiry guided practices”
“physicality/materiality”
“imitation/lineage/tradition”
“disciplinary changes/disciplinary identity,” et al.

Using the interview objectives for the study (see Table 2.1) and the information from the initial categories above, the data yielded the following broader areas of interest:

- Aspects of “good” writing in visual and performing arts with identifiable values;
- Disciplinary exigencies clearly expressed through various relationships to writing; and
- Everyday instructional praxis as vehicle for both articulations.

Although this project aimed to evaluate the benefits and character of writing instruction in the domain of the visual and performing arts and, secondarily, to evaluate how that might in turn inform writing studies, it became nearly impossible to extract some of the values instructors prioritized regarding writing instruction (clarity, sincerity, reflexivity) from those they held about the practice of art-making, a concept familiar to WAC/WID pedagogy. For example, a self-reflective awareness of the “experience” of viewing or making art translated directly into values associated with writing practice. Ultimately, writing in the visual and performing arts frequently appeared in the data as working in tandem with art-making. However, it is important to note that, unlike my own failed attempts at coupling image and text, this process is not necessarily an illustrative one—writing translating art or vice versa, but rather writing and practice working in relationship to one another in specific ways. What follows are the results of a sampling of an extended data set. Table 2.4 presents that larger, umbrella-style

categorization of interview feedback related to instructor values and aggregated to represent an approximation of shared values.

Table 2.4. Categories schema from coding

Value Sets: categories and sub-categories of interview response from coding:
“What Makes Good Writing?”
Criticality
Clarity
Connection
Writing Relationships: Enculturation and Identity Formation
Process
Professionalizing
Community lineage(s)
Category 3 “Instructional Praxis” (above) was suffused throughout so does not merit a separate category of discussion below.
*Each instructor is referred to by an alias. See below.

Clarity, Criticality, Connection

As a first grouping of value sets pulled from coding data, the following elements emerged consistently: “clarity” in writing, or the ability to articulate intent, “criticality,” or the ability to think beyond initial impressions and to look more deeply at a thing over time and respond with language, and “connection,” or an ability to connect personal experiences in art making to a larger disciplinary context. Further, instructors in the sample identified these values with specific language, evincing the key terms themselves. Though they thought the values were a bit nebulous at first, the interview participants came to see them as a central thread around which they are able to measure not only their students’ writing and their grasp of classroom content but also to connect to larger, professional exigencies within the visual and performing arts.

Naturally, some divergences did appear in the articulation of those concerns based on variations in individual pedagogical demands. For example, T. Miller, a professor of jazz studies, acknowledged that writing was valuable for his students to successfully navigate the contemporary world of jazz studies, but he did not necessarily believe writing makes “better players,” as he views the act of playing itself as an intuitive, reflexive, physical set of skills or a “doing” practice instead of a “thinking” one (Cox, 2015). Miller’s comment underscores an important aspect of writing here—writing in a writing class as something other than second-nature, or intuitive. In his mind, writing is a deliberate performance, a composition, as we call it, distinct from one of the intrinsic components of jazz performance as

art—namely that it is a result of intensive training in order to purposefully enter into unrehearsed, free-form, and ad-libbed production.

Yet, another art instructor, F. Stella, a seminal 1970s feminist artist who teaches performance art, drawing and painting, asserted that, “the reading and the writing and the research and thinking, changes their (visual/performance) work more than anything” (Cox, 2015). Regardless of divergences in data, all participants in some way clearly marked a connection between a student’s potential to be successful within an art discipline and their ability to write successfully in service of that art-making practice.

Process, Professionalizing, Community/Lineage

Table 2.5. Shared practices

Identifiable Shared Instructional Practices/Core Principles:
Inquiry guided, “process” approaches via individuated instructional techniques
Document production aimed at “professionalizing” participants in the domain of study
Writing of documents that foster awareness of individual “artist” identities within a “community” or “lineage” of practice

While participants clearly saw writing work for their students as particularly integral to the disciplinary enculturation process (F. Stella, C. Hesse, Y. Wilson, T. Moore, S. Martin; Cox, 2015), interviews also consistently revealed that these instructors privilege and value the ways in which art-making goes beyond the analytical or reflective elements of writing practice into subjective, physical and emotionally based expression modalities. As F. Miller and other instructors suggested, reflexivity through and engagement in an art-making process may support practitioners well beyond the analytical components accessed via writing work. For example, as one instructor related, students need to “understand it in their bodies not just intellectually” (S. Martin; Cox, 2015). Therefore, writing becomes a complement, informant, or tool for an art making process and vice versa. Interviews showed that instructors navigate the distinctiveness of these potentially dichotomous ways of knowing (Wysocki, 2001) and work to foster integrated, balanced relationships between “doing” practices, like art-making, and critical thinking practices, like writing.

General consensus in interview data notwithstanding, some instructors saw more connections and overlap than others: one related, “I’m trying to help them hone their technical skills and their compositional skills at the same time because critical thinking and creativity go hand in hand, and to make them aware that one feeds off the other” (C. Hesse; Cox, 2015). Another instructor remarked, “Our *intention* is that the two [writing and art-making] would seamlessly come together

and be two expressions of the same, but in fact I see that there’s often a major disjunction between the two [for students]” (B. Smiley; Cox, 2015).

Despite such differences in opinion regarding how an interrelationship of artistic modality and criticality is best navigated in the classroom, all participants acknowledged their own efforts to put students through some of those challenges for the purpose of helping them grow, expand and deepen within the disciplinary and classroom community. T. Moore, a professor of art and art history explained, “there’s a different level of engagement that happens through the medium of writing.” He continued by explaining that he sees this level of engagement as critical to understanding “art objects” (Cox, 2015). Further, several participants expressed a valuing of engaging ideas, art objects and art-making from multiple viewpoints and pointed to writing work as instrumental in that process.

As an example of the articulation of these ways of knowing, particular textual documents were discussed at length by each instructor (see full article). Table 2.6 is a brief sampling:

Table 2.6. Document listing

Sample Documents/Practices in Visual and Performing Arts Instruction
Artist statements
Research and Reflection Documents
Process Papers
Artist’s Proposals
Visual Culture Papers

Textual Loci: The Artist Statement

In the course of the interviews, each instructor pointed to specific textual documents that they employ to help students enculturate to some of the values discussed in the previous sections. While instructors ask students to compose various documents unique to their own pedagogy (see Table 2.6), one document in particular appeared in every discussion I had and crossed the boundaries of all artistic disciplines: the artist statement. This document was further deemed unique in that it provides a vehicle across the membrane of public and private spheres in the minds of these instructors and, therefore, for their students. Specifically, it is a document that is both deeply reflective for the practitioner and is a way to articulate artistic practice but also, as a document, it becomes beholden to an audience beyond just student, instructor or peer. They are used in gallery shows and often accompany proposals for funding. Below I offer two brief discussions of the artist statement both as locus of articulation for art-making values and as a document which enculturates and professionalizes the art-maker to their discipline.

Clarity

Y. Wilson, an instructor of sculpture and ceramics at a mid-sized community college, referred to writing as a “process that allows someone to really *clarify* what they’re seeing and to think about it, to ponder it” (Cox, 2015). For him, this ability is central when it comes to the practice of writing an artist statement, which acts for students as “a reflection of how their own work and writing about their own work” come together to assist an audience, be that a curator or a viewer, to better understand with what they are engaging. Within the artist statement, he explained, he values “simplicity,” “sincerity” and a connection to “emotional experience,” stating that writing about the self is an “inherently narcissistic” process and he must work with his students to clarify their ideas and arrive at a more sincere, readable expression of their own practice. Guiding students to such sincerity/clarity, for him, is a key component of the work he does with students, resulting from what he sees as a need for them to avoid large generalizations about “the world,” “life,” “the universe,” and instead focus on expressing sincere experiences via visual modes and via their writing. This, he argues, enables an audience to feel a more substantial connection to the visual and written work and enables the students to better understand their own motives (Cox, 2015).

Professionalizing

Again, as the most frequently mentioned written document in the interview sample, the artist statement elicited varying responses from the instructors. Opinions on the value of this written statement, which is included in exhibitions, gallery catalogues, press releases, is used to garner funding for art projects, and is included in CVs and any number of other professional situations for artists, naturally varied from instructor to instructor. One joked “someone should just pass a law that there’s no more artist statements” believing they are difficult for students to accomplish successfully without sounding overly self-important (B. Smiley; Cox, 2015). Conversely, another explained that this document for her has, over time, become a primary tool for both her reflective and professional practice as well as that of her students. She explained, “my artist statement is as much a practice as my visual art, one really feeds off the other” (C. Hesse; Cox, 2015). Regardless of the perceived challenges in writing a successful artist statement—“narcissism,” “ego,” or “stilted” prose, to name a few (Y. Wilson, B. Smiley; Cox, 2015)—the majority of interview participants upheld that they remain a central written document within the world of visual and performing arts, corroborating earlier findings within this study suggesting that writing is imperative to visual and performing arts production and that students who practice writing in their classes will find themselves more deeply connected to their art and more equipped to navigate the professional art world. Students must learn to write this discipline-specific document—one that outlines

for a reader their materials, purpose and philosophy—successfully in order to support their professional identities.

Teaching the Artist Statement

Approaches to teaching students how to write a successful artist statement naturally varied. Borrowing from his previous work in clinical psychology and psychotherapy, Y. Wilson works through a “sociogram” with students, essentially mapping, through writing, their values, influences and relationship to the work and audience as scaffolding for a successful artist statement (Cox, 2015). Alternatively, S. Martin, an instructor of installation art at a small arts college, asks students to write about their experiences entering into the process of making work to bring to light, via writing, their “instinct and inspiration” in a manner that “integrates the brain and the body” (Cox, 2015). Still another instructor has students sit with their own work, engaging in contemplative visual experience of that work as a means to begin writing about what they are “seeing” and what it means for them and their audience (C. Hesse; Cox, 2015). Engaging in the ongoing, recursive process of viewing, reflecting on and engaging their own art objects as well as those of others supports the earlier conclusion that visual and performing arts is unique in the way it successfully uses writing to integrate concerns of subjectivity and experience into the process of developing analytical abilities.

Writing an Artist Statement

I don’t have my old artist statement, but I well remember writing it. These instructors are correct: it’s difficult to be self-reflective and analytical about your own creative process and convey that to a reader in a way that makes sense and is sincere. As a writing instructor, I frequently try to remember this process as I ask students to write reflective documents about their own work, process and learning throughout a semester in my courses and to remember how challenging it can be to simultaneously be analytical, reflective and precise. All those years ago, fellow students in my class took varying approaches as well—a young man from Laguna Pueblo wrote a hilarious manifesto-poem about what he loved about life on “the Rez,” though I think he mentioned his art not at all. Digging through an old box recently I found I had a saved copy of his, because I remember it being impressive in its divergence from the form and its honesty about how his identity and experience form his art making, though again, I think he didn’t mention his work once. An older student in my class, a middle-aged housewife, wrote passionately about her work dealing with breast cancer and focused specifically on the body of work at hand—an homage to a friend who died, evincing the importance of personal relationships and the politics of the disease itself in our culture. As for me, I remember that I tried to be serious and poetic at the same time and in some ways like this early self-reflective

image (made long before the term “selfie” entered our lexicon), I tried to see multiple facets of self, exploring the importance of beauty and trying to convince my reader of the meaning underneath it.



*Figure 2.3. “Triple-Exposure, Moonstone Beach,”
Mckinleyville, CA (photo by Anicca Cox).*

In retrospect, I realize I was trying to convince myself of something and answer the question, “Am I really an artist?” “Is this a community I belong to?” Being an artist seemed then, more like an identity than a practice and that identity was one that intimidated me a bit. It took me a while but what I am, I found out, is a teacher. Where the real magic appeared for me wasn’t just in those first moments when an image comes out of the chemical bath under the darkroom lights, it was in seeing the looks on my students’ faces as their own images emerged, years later in a

community darkroom I started and where I taught classes to high school students. Those first classes were where I felt connected to my purpose for the first time. That first classroom which, ironically, wasn't a writing classroom, led me to my career in writing studies. However, my early attempts at art making, particularly in a darkroom where you make print after print of the same image, refining it, playing with it, becoming intimate with image and light, later supported me in my work as a writer, and as a teacher, reminding me to be compassionate with my students as they struggle with revision work and with the intensive process it takes to write successfully. To value interpretive ways of knowing and doing, to move beyond my notions of objective truth into subjective experience and see the real, rigorous potential in that mode of meaning making came from my training in the creative space of a darkroom.

Discussion

Several of the original assumptions held about writing instruction in the visual and performing arts were confirmed through the course of this study—the need for effective analysis and an emphasis on reflection in particular were shared values. Also, several illuminating differences with respect to the purpose and articulation of writing practice within visual and performing arts emerged, evidencing what discourse community theory, as well as WAC/WID studies, argues about writing—that it is a situated, community-based or disciplinary-specific practice. The study reestablished that within a given discipline, instructors adopt individuated modes tailored to serve the needs of their community. Ultimately, both points of connection and divergence could offer entryways for collaboration and mutual understanding between the disciplines of writing studies and visual and performing arts.

Two possible sites for closer examination appeared in the data. First, as hypothesized, writing in the domain of visual and performing arts carries the unique function of serving what Barthes refers to as its “referent”—the art object or the process of making meaning which often primarily exists in a non-linguistic format. This evidence appeared again and again as instructors discussed the particular relationship of art making to textual documents employed in their classrooms in tandem to the art-making process. Though art objects/written documents are not necessarily *directly illustrative* of the other (a key concept I reiterate here) they are instead inextricably linked in a relationship that exposes the potential for a complex layering of meaning. In terms of the subject of this study, the artist statement, for example, would add an additional tier to the dense layering of meaning-making since their (the artist's) explanation of how and why they captured the object through art (their process) would inevitably vary from the way(s) in which the viewer anticipates and perceives the relationship between object and image.

The ways that writing and art-making mirror one another enables the disciplines of the visual and performing arts to use writing effectively to *serve* art-making practices, both in terms of using writing analytically and reflectively to refine the process of making art and to communicate to broader, outside audiences. Simultaneously, it pushes artists to access, develop or value the subjective, and physical experience necessary to create that art itself. In fact, interview subjects in this study sometimes pushed back against polarized dichotomies between meaning-making in their medium and the way in which writing work could serve both the analytical and subjective needs of that process by viewing them as integrated components.

Though some may disagree (proponents of therapeutic writing, in some cases Expressivists), this dynamic practice of process and reflection provides some contrast to constraints in writing studies pedagogy which has arguably most broadly worked in a tradition relying on text itself as the primary product of writing. In order to be successful (at least in our current rhetoric), those texts typically must make clear arguments, provide concrete evidence and provide some measure of analytical distance from the object of their investigation. And yet, there continues to be room in writing pedagogy to reconsider how and what we ask students to write that would reflect, in much the way Barthes' shows us, that writing about process can inform writing as product (art). Through asking students to read their own work, make observations and understand the how and why moves that yield the x number of words on a page before them, they start to recognize a pattern or series of behaviors that *produce . . . yes, they begin to see themselves as producers or composers*, much like the artist sees herself. In fact, recent trends in the writing about writing approach suggest a renewed commitment within our discipline to fostering these very same meta-analysis abilities.

Second, the results of this study, though extracted from a disciplinary domain ostensibly disparate from writing studies, might provide space for a re-investigation into the work we do with students in writing studies and connect back to some of our own studies in literacy and critical pedagogy, which value identity formation and subjectivity as features of academic prose styles. This reinforces the potentiality for writing to access emotional or embodied spaces alongside aspects of criticality and analysis. Further, as suggested by the work of visual rhetoric and the work of The New London Group (1996) on "multiliteracies," multimodality may continue to be a site that encourages or investigates these broader notions of textuality and meaning within writing studies. Much as visual and performing arts instructors in the study consider the art object in relationship to an integrated writing process, placing value on subjective, material, or emotionally-based modes of meaning-making alongside critical thinking-writing processes may continue to be an area of re-engagement and development in writing classrooms.

As current scholarship in writing studies suggests, with the rise of electronic

writing mediums where text, image, and both objective and subjective experience converge, we may do well to observe further what studies like these indicate. Specifically, that there is value in learning how other disciplines navigate their communicative aims via discipline-specific relationships to process, individuated instructional techniques, and reflexive practices aimed at producing meaning in multiple formats. These practices allow participants to directly respond to their own perceived disciplinary exigencies, communicate with audiences and among practitioners and craft disciplinary identities for themselves.

Finally, powerfully, these instructors continually noted a perceived secondary position within the academy, pushed back against stereotypes of their practitioners only being capable of being “creative” as opposed to analytical, and rejected the notion of merely being in “service of” other disciplines in larger academic conversations. These instructors consistently argued that they deserve a “place at the table” with STEM disciplines and others.

Given the similarities between the disciplines of writing studies and the visual and performing arts, both in the way we use and value process and in the way that writing instruction is frequently seen as secondary to “content” based courses, the data from this study suggests a place for a seemingly natural, mutually beneficial alliance between the two. Perhaps as Michael Carter (2007) suggests, we could be connected within the academy in a “metagenre,” one that would allow for dynamic partnerships and mutual support.

Questions guiding such an alliance might include the following: how could the two domains of practice work more closely with one another, support each other’s disciplinary exigencies or engage in even more cross-disciplinary connections? How would such an alliance articulate itself in both our professional communities and classrooms via borrowing, sharing or mutual inquiry? Certainly, there have already been collaborations in classrooms between writing studies and visual and performing arts and the conclusion of this study supports the value of continued investigation and collaboration between the two as a means of empowering both the work our students do and the work we do as professionals.

References

- Barthes, R. (1980). *Camera lucida*. (Richard Howard, Trans.) New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Carter, M. (2007). Ways of knowing, doing and writing in the disciplines. *College Composition and Communication*, (58)3, 385-418.
- Childers, P. B., Hobson, E. H., & Mullin, J. A. (2013). *ARTiculating: Teaching writing in a visual world*. Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse. (Originally published 1998, Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.) Retrieved from <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/landmarks/articulating/>

- Cox, Anicca. (2015). Mapping disciplinary values and rhetorical concerns through language: Writing instruction in the performing and visual arts [Special issue on WAC, WID, and the performing and visual arts]. *Across the Disciplines*, 12(4). Retrieved from <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/arts/cox2015.pdf>
- Fleckenstein, K. S. (2004). Words made flesh: Fusing imagery and language in polymorphic literacy. *College English*, (66)6, 612- 631.
- Gee, J. P. (1989). Literacy, discourse and linguistics: Education. *Journal of Education*, 171(1), 5-17.
- George, D. (2002). From analysis to visual design: Visual communication in the teaching of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 54(1), 11-39.
- Harris, J. (1989). The idea of community in the study of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 40(1), 11-22.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Johns, A. M. (1997). Discourse communities and communities of practice: Membership, conflict and diversity. In *Text, role and context: Developing academic literacies* (pp. 51-70). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kostelnick, C. (1989). Process paradigms in design and composition: Affinities and directions. *College Composition and Communication*, (40)3, 267-281.
- The New London Group. (1996). A Pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.
- Porter, J. E. (1986). Intertextuality and the discourse community. *Rhetoric Review*, 5(1), 34-47.
- Purdy, J. P. (2014). What can design thinking offer writing studies? *College Composition and Communication*, 65(4), 612-641.
- Swales, J. (1990). The concept of the discourse community. In *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings* (pp. 21-32). Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. (2014). *Race and ethnicity of college faculty*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61>
- Wardle, E. (2004). Identity, and learning to write in new workplaces. *Enculturation*, 5(2). Retrieved from http://www.enculturation.net/5_2/wardle.html
- Wysocki, A. F. (2001). Impossibly distinct: On form/content and word/image in two pieces of computer-based interactive multimedia. *Computers and Composition*, 18, 137-162.
- Wysocki, A. F. (2005). awaywithwords: On the possibilities in unavailable designs. *Computers and Composition*, 22, 55-62.
- Yancey, K. B. (2004). Made not only in words: Composition in a new key. *College Composition and Communication*, 56(2), 297-328.
- Yancey, K. B. (2014). Notes toward the role of materiality in composing, reviewing, and assessing multimodal texts. *Computers and Composition*, 31, 13-28.