

Inquiry through our skin.

Silvia Luraschi & Gaia Del Negro

Paper

Text

In April 2019 we facilitated together a workshop in an ESREA Spring School. The workshop addressed issues of embodiment in research and educational settings.

It was the first time that we designed and facilitated a workshop together. We both felt busy and jumping from one commitment to another at the time, as many researchers and workers in uncertain times do. So, after discussing our ideas for the activities of the workshop on the phone, we decided to bring the creative material and refine the details and schedule on the day. This worked incredibly well for us. We quickly found a meeting point, assigned roles to one or the other for different activities, and situated the activities in the two conference rooms we could use. The compositional workshop had three moments.

(1) After reading a leaflet about an artwork that was on show in the city centre, we lead a sensitizing activity in pairs about the skin, and elicited words from the room about the object of inquiry of each pair.

(2) Then we moved to the other room for a biographical poetic activity, individual and then shared, that produced new compositional texts and knowledge.

(3) The texts were read aloud, and a collective artwork created with a selection of sentences from the texts.

We saw a lot of beauty in this process. Beauty, in this moment of our trajectories of becoming professionals and sometimes researchers, is very important. We see beauty as connectedness. To our sensing bodies, to our families, to our friends, to our emotions good and difficult, to food shared, to desire, to strangers we happen to talk to or exchange a glance with, to the contexts and projects we live by, to nature.

This story of how we created and facilitated a workshop speaks about this and our questions around activism in auto/biographical and performative research and practice. These issues have to do with uncertainty and the place of improvisation in our own lives.

The workshop took place in a familiar atmosphere for us, so some holding was provided for us to improvise. The rooms and the landscape that surrounded us were very beautiful and this, we think, made us comfortable and creative (we had the idea to use pebbles from the patio, for example). This was an artful atmosphere of harmonious, eco-logical relationship between human and natural. It was easy, perhaps, to embrace beauty and walk into the unknown.

In our presentation, we would like to show some of the material produced, and ask questions:

- What qualities make beauty in our lives?
- Are we sensitive to resources of beauty in our lives?
- What are the participants' responses to quasi- improvised facilitation?
- Can our skin be an embodied site of knowledge of the good and beautiful in our evolving activism on the fringes of academic research? ...

Question: What it means to be an activist and whose values we represent?

Keywords: learning lives, ecology, beautiful, connectivity, improvisation.

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