

FROM THE WING CHAIR: STORIES FROM AND ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING AND WORKING IN A TASMANIAN BOARDING SCHOOL

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Abstract

This paper articulates the experience of living and working in a Tasmanian boarding school as told in relation to a sequence of inter-related journeys that intersect and unfold around a domestic object; specifically, a wing chair that has been passed down through three generations of boarding house students, tutors and house masters. Within this article, the researchers unfold an a/r/tographic inquiry that examines entwining inter-generational experiences from and in relation to this wing chair, that through the years, bore witness to distinct yet interrelated personal and professional journeys within a Tasmanian boarding school experience.

KEYWORDS: a/r/tography, relationality, contemporary art, Tasmania, boarding school

The a/r/tographic inquiry adopted a Relational Art Inquiry Tool (MacDonald & McMahon, 2017) to support collaborative researcher enactment of a/r/tographic inquiry in relation to the wing chair in order to articulate through image, prose and reflection the complexities and ‘unseens’ inherent to storied accounts of being and belonging within a Tasmanian boarding. In doing so, these accounts draw from multiple perspectives in relation to the wing chair to capture and crystallise the experience of living and working in a Tasmanian boarding house.

As the central and guiding motif of exploration for this article, accounts in relation to the wing chair move between regional Tasmanian boarding school and domestic home

spaces to entwine a series of interrelated and intergenerational events from the researcher's lived experiences as boarding house student, tutor and house master. In doing so, we illustrate how a/r/tography was enacted by the researchers to make shared meaning of and from their articulated experiences of living and working in a Tasmanian boarding school context, through a process of relational and creative becoming.

INTERSECTING STORIES OF LIVING AND WORKING IN AN AUSTRALIAN BOARDING SCHOOL

School boarding houses, also commonly referred to in Australia as residential education contexts (White, 2004) are paradoxically concrete in some ways, and transient in others. Currently, in Australia, there are 170 independent and government boarding schools, comprising approximately 19,500 students (Papworth 2014). Many of Australia's boarding schools have long histories that run parallel and in curious contrast to their turnover of staff and students moving through the yearly cohorts of their school up until their graduation. Over the course of approximately 180 years of history of boarding in Australia, attitudes and ideas towards boarding school, as well as traditions and practices in boarding schools, have changed dramatically (Papworth 2014; White 2004). Lee and Barth (2009) proposed that the goal of residential education programs is to "boost youth development" and that "residential education is first and foremost an educational program that occurs in a group living setting" (156). This residential-domestic nexus, as experienced by the researchers, creates a space for contemplation of cross-generational intersecting and overlapping stories of learning, living and working in a Tasmanian boarding school context.

For this article, we (the researchers) worked together to construct an intergenerational metanarrative, or entwined storyline, of the domesticity we encountered in our Tasmanian boarding school context, as rendered through reflections, analysis prose and imagery. To achieve this, we were guided by Mykhalovskiy's (1996) assertion that "to write individual experience, is at the same time, to write social experience" (141). Understanding of the purpose of the truths we shared in the process of undertaking this research was always kept at the fore of our discussions with each other. This allowed us to connect our individual experiences to each other and the meaning we made of and from working and living in our boarding house more broadly, which aligned with the notion that "in writing about oneself, one is also writing about the social context in which the self is placed, and therein lies its utility" (Hickman 2010: 12).

It was interesting for us to consider how we perceived ‘home’ and domesticity to be implicated, inhibited or cultivated within our boarding school context. We came to perceive that the relationship between boarding houses and home is somewhat precarious. There is extensive research into the long-term effects of boarding—for example, in terms of benefits such as social status or deficits such as trauma passed down intergenerationally (Barton et al, 2005; Elias et al, 2012; Hirshberg 2008; Pember 2007). Recent research in Australia has revealed there are complex challenges that impact upon different students’ capacity to settle into life in boarding schools, primarily due to their adjusting to the differences between life as a boarder and a student’s home environment (Papworth 2014). We too were perplexed by the complexities of ambiguous home, work and domestic spaces as we lived in our place of work and worked in our home.

During the time the researchers worked together in our boarding school in Tasmania, we both recalled our Head of Boarding imploring his staff (including us) and boarders, on more than one occasion, to be mindful of the marks we make and the marks we leave. He would remind us all that no one occupant at any time owns the boarding house. Rather, we come into this shared space, bringing our experiences, perspectives, beliefs, attitudes and values, and it is with these that we leave our marks upon and within the house. His message was given as a challenge to encourage us all to carefully consider the kind of marks we were leaving, and that these be positive, community oriented, and respectful to those who came before us and mindful of those who will follow. We experienced first hand the intersecting and overlapping aspects of life in a Tasmanian boarding school, and the rich and complex tapestry of inter-relationships that comprise boarding life.

OUR CONTEXT

The impetus for this research derived from our personal and professional experiences of living and working in a boarding house in Tasmania, Australia. At the time of data collection (2016), we were working as lecturers in an Australian University Faculty of Education having finished our administrative leadership roles within the regional boarding school this article refers to in 2015. As of 2016, Author one (female) had six years’ experience of working in boarding and seven years as an academic. Author two (male) had seven years’ experience of working in boarding and six years as an academic. Author 1 is an experienced Arts-based researcher specialising in a/r/tography

methodology, and Author 2 is a mixed methods researcher from a health and physical education background, and with an emerging interest in Arts practice and research.

The perspectives of experience drawn together to shape this article encapsulate the researchers' experience of encountering a Tasmanian boarding school in various roles. Over the course of 12 years, Author 1 had at various times lived within our particular boarding house context as a student, a boarding house tutor and a house co-ordinator (or house master/mistress), whilst Author 2 had lived within the house as a tutor and house co-ordinator. The researchers met each other whilst working together as house tutors, and within this 12 year window, they also married, started a family and assumed shared responsibility of co-ordination for a section of the boarding house. In this way, the researchers' relationship and experiences of encountering the boarding house, and each other within this space intersected, as did our shared interest in research and art making.

This article articulates the experience of living and working in an Australian boarding school as told in relation to a sequence of inter-related experiences that unfolded around a particular domestic object; a wing chair. Within this article, the researchers unfold an arrangement of entwined inter-generational voices from and in relation to this wing chair that, through the years, bore witness to distinct yet interrelated journeys of three generations of boarding house students, tutors and house masters in Tasmania. In doing so, we offer an insight into our experience of living and working in a Tasmanian boarding school, and how the tangible domestic object of this wing chair performed as a the common thread through which we drew together a multi-generational intersecting storyline.

For the purpose of this article, pseudonyms have been assigned to all people (except for the researchers) referred to in the unfolding of their stories of encountering the chair and its relationship to the boarding house in which their stories are situated. This is appropriate given the purpose of this article is to demonstrate the capacity for a domestic object to perform as a platform around which inter-generational stories of experience can be unfolded. The emphasis upon the events unfolding from the chair as opposed to specifics about the people involved serves to prioritise the ambition of the article, which is to emphasise how encounters with various people in home and work spaces can be intersected within examination of what might otherwise be perceived as a mundane domestic object. The investigation underpinning this article extends from pilot research undertaken by the researchers (HREC approval number: H0014784).

CONSTRUCTING THE ENTWINED STORYLINE

Our (the researchers) perspectives of experience are situated within a single Tasmanian boarding school context. The ensuing creative processes and products, stories and discussion encapsulate our experiences and interactions with others whom we have worked with directly, or shared time together either within or in relation to this particular boarding house. In this way, the entwined story line and associated discussions we offer reflects our perceptions of personal truths, aligning with the belief that that there can be no genuine understanding of truths of self-in-relations without attending sensitively and equally to the needs of both self and other (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001). The investigation underpinning this article embraced a constructivist paradigm, aligning with a naturalistic qualitative methods approach utilising a/r/tography methodology (Irwin 2004). Situated within the broader landscape of Arts-based research, a/r/tography methodology and its associated tools and methods encapsulate a distinctive approach to inquiry of the world through processes and practices inherent to art making, research and teaching (Irwin 2004).

Methodologically speaking, Arts-based practices inherent to a/r/tography have been developed and implemented in respect to and for all phases of our investigation, from theoretical, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation (Leavy, 2015). A/r/tography, as a distinctive Arts-based methodology is, to our knowledge, as yet to be employed to examine experiences of living and working in boarding schools. With Author 1 being an experienced art teacher, maker and researcher, she was able to support Author 2 to enact a/r/tographic inquiry. To do this, a Relational Art Inquiry Tool, or RAIT (MacDonald and McMahon 2017) was used by Author 1 as a means of supporting Author 2 to engage in an a collaborative a/r/tographic inquiry. The RAIT was developed as a tool to enhance accessibility into, understanding and enactment of a/r/tographic inquiry for participants and researchers from non-Arts backgrounds (MacDonald and McMahon 2017; McMahon, MacDonald and Owton 2017). In collaboration with Author 1, Author 2 was able to work through the RAIT's guiding questions and lenses to support personal and shared inquiry processes in and through his chosen medium of digital photography. The RAIT's capacity to support researchers from non-Arts backgrounds to engage in and make and articulate meaning through a/r/tography created a scaffolded and accessible paradigmatic frame for both researchers to collaborate within this investigation. This is significant given that exploring different ways to engage subjects and participants from non-Arts backgrounds in meaningful ways within arts-based research should be a priority for those researchers who are well-versed in this space (MacDonald, Baguley and Kerby, 2017; Sullivan 2009).

Having a means to explore and trial different ways and means for researchers from non-Arts and teaching backgrounds to tap into the critical/creative capacities of a/r/tographic inquiry becomes imperative, and the RAIT provided a set of methodological tools to support this.

Throughout the process of identifying critical events and articulating our perspectives from those events, Author 2 was able to call upon the expertise in creative practice from Author 1 to help them navigate and make decisions around the aesthetic ambitions of the images they wanted to capture. We attest that having an experienced Arts-based researcher supporting the a/r/tographic process using the RAIT significantly contributed to creating a space for inquiry that was purposeful with diagnostic tools to support successful self-directed inquiry. This aligns with the suggestion that researchers who are already acquainted with the processes and practices inherent to making art, conducting research and pedagogy are well positioned to employ the methodological tools and concepts that can comprise a/r/tographic inquiry (MacDonald, 2017; McMahan, MacDonald and Owton 2017). We agreed that having a research partnership grounded within shared experiences (personal and professional), relationship, and a perspective of experience in working with the processes and practices inherent to art making, research and teaching was clearly advantageous for us as we collaborated to conduct this a/r/tographic inquiry.

UNFOLDING OUR PROCESS

Through a/r/tography, we generated and collated anecdotal excerpts (in the form of reflective prose, imagery, personal accounts) from each of our stories of experience in relation to the wing chair. We used these to assemble a flowing metanarrative, and from there crafted further critical reflective accounts of how we perceived the wing chair to implicate upon how domestic space was negotiated within our boarding context, where lines between home and work are often blurred. Working through questions and perspectives as outlined in the RAIT tool (MacDonald, 2017; McMahan, MacDonald and Owton 2017), we worked in parallel and through mediums of creative prose and digital imagery to simultaneously examine, articulate, intersect and communicate the meanings we made from our experiences of working in boarding, as situated within our encountering of the wing chair. From this unfolding metanarrative, Author 2 sought to visually render the wing chair in ways he felt would highlight how the physicality of the chair impacted upon, and was implicated within our provision of pastoral care and private family time. In parallel to these visual renderings, Author 1 responded to the

metanarrative and visual renderings with creative prose. These creative processes serve to connect the creative visual renderings and critical reflection inherent to the metanarrative, and tease out the ambiguities of space we encountered between home and work life in our boarding house context.

As a process for exploratory inquiry, the RAIT provided us with “a holistic, flexible and dynamic framework to support critical-creative-reflective thinking and art making that can be considered, mindful and informed by Hetland’s (2013) Studio Habits of Mind, Gallas’ elements of inquiry (2011), and Irwin’s (2004 a/r/tographic lenses” (MacDonald and McMahon, 2017 p. 14). In the following sections, prose and imagery are interwoven with excerpts of critical reflective discussion to draw together a cohesive and a vibrant entwined storyline of how the wing chair both shaped, and was shaped by our time living and working in boarding. Our collective perspective is referred to throughout as ‘our’ and ‘we’, indicating the aspects of our writing that derived from our collaborative metanarrative constructions. It is in and through the layers of this meta narrative that a richly detailed picture of how the wing chair emerges to illustrate and elucidate the complexities of domestic space within home and boarding contexts. We situate our anecdotal excerpts (taken from broader reflections made in our use of the RAIT tool) as indented in italics. Creative prose made my Author 1 in relation to shared and individual response and reflections made using the RAIT tool, and in consideration of Author 2’s photographic practice, is centred in italics.

THE WING CHAIR

Connor and his wife Evie bought the chair in the early 1960s and took it home to the school boarding house they ran throughout the 1960s and 1970s (the same boarding house that the researchers would find themselves working and living in 50 years later). The chair was positioned in a focal point of the lounge room and was primarily used for relaxing, and entertaining friends and family with stories. The chair is covered in mustard coloured deer hide and is very comfortable with its high back and winged arm rests. It is from a time when things were made properly from quality materials, and it is this craftsmanship that has stood the test of time. The chair has a calming presence, and an inviting warmth that might be attributed to the many hours Connor spend relaxing in it, reading books by the fire.



Figure 1 – The wing chair, digital image, Vaughan Cruickshank, 2017

In the early 1980's, a young man would come to work in the day school as a science teacher, whose name was Robert. Connor and Robert came to form a kinship in their work as teachers, and the young man along with his wife Isabelle would later come to form a close friendship with Evie and Connor. During the time this friendship was forming, Evie and Connor concluded their time working in the boarding house, and lived locally. Incidentally, Robert and Isabelle were expecting their first baby, and were not living in close proximity to either side of their family. They had plans to travel overseas shortly after the birth of their baby, and Connor and Evie welcomed the trio into their home either side of their baby's birth. This young couple were the parents of Author 2, and Author 2 was the baby welcomed into Connor and Evie's home.

In my a/r/tographic inquiry, I experimented with how I might utilise photography to convey a sense of presence within my photos. For me, this is a chair that commands space and attention. To encounter the physicality of this chair is to be embraced by it within space. The warm hue of the soft deer hide and gentle curves

of the rolled arms invite you to take a seat. In my experimenting with scale and different compositional arrangements in my image, I realised I was assigning a personification to this object. For me, the wing chair is like a thoughtful and wise old man; gentle, enduring, resilient and reassuring. I recognise that this perception is closely related to how I perceive Connor himself. My knowledge of the presence and influence of this chair comes from my personal experience of sitting in it, seeing others sit in it, and the connections I make to Connor reclining in his chair. I hear his soft gravelly voice and articulate pronunciation, and my attention is his. – (Cruickshank)

Although Evie and Connor had left the boarding house several years before, they still owned the chair and Author 2 is likely to have sat in the chair on the knee of Connor and others during the time he and his parents were living with them. The kinship between Author 2's parents and Evie and Connor's family was enduring, and evolved into a rich and life long friendship that remains strong today as Evie and Connor enter into their 90's. Upon Connor's retirement from teaching, the chair journeyed with them to the East Coast of Tasmania. From there over the course of 15 years, the wing chair found its place and purpose within the homes of both of their daughters in different suburbs of Launceston.

*Curling up into your soft smooth finish
Sometimes squeaking under our squirming weight
Wriggling into a position of optimum comfort and security
You cradle us in your warm, yielding embrace.
In your resilience, strong lines and reassuring curves
We take strength*

RETURNING TO THE BOARDING HOUSE

In 2012, the researchers embraced an opportunity to coordinate a section of the boarding house, which meant they assumed the in loco parentis¹ and pastoral care for 30 girls between the ages of 11 and 21. This opportunity in itself was an interesting intersection for both researchers. Author 1 had herself been a boarder for a short time during her grade 11 schooling in 2000, and it was in 2008 where both the authors met whilst

¹ In Loco Parentis is a Latin term meaning 'in place of a parent' (as cited in Anderson 2004).

working in the boarding house as tutors². From 2000 through to and 2015, the researchers had moved in and out of the boarding house in various roles, and this was the same boarding house that the wing chair had originally resided. Co-incidentally in 2012, Evie and Connor, having re-acquired the wing chair from their daughters, were looking to reduce their belongings as they approached their 90s and Author 2's parents offered to take the chair and return it to the boarding house where we, the researchers, were working at the time, so that it stayed within the 'family'.

You find your place, or does the place find you?

Returning home, you came to settle

Upon a space in close proximity

To your original hearthside resting place

In complementary conversation

With your whispering echoes

Welcoming all into our home

Your wide gestural embrace

After some to-ing and fro-ing, the wing chair came to situate itself within a position that was both central and peripheral in our living area; beside the entrance doorway looking over the familiar fireplace. The reading tradition continued for the wing chair, both for ourselves and for our daughters. Author 1 would curl up in the wing chair, wrapped up in soft shadows with our sleepy eldest daughter. There we spent several years in charge of the boarding house that Connor had been responsible for several decades earlier. In the boarding house, we came into a complex domestic space that had family history literally etched upon the walls and into the furniture. A family height chart etched on the inside of one of the bathroom cupboard doors was clear evidence of the time Evie and Connor had spent raising their children in the boarding house. We went about making our own marks in this space, accidental and otherwise.

Something that stood out for me from my time of living and working in boarding, as a student and a pastoral care provider, is the wear and tear that unfolds upon the resources in the house. Years of wear, tear and care are etched into surfaces, public and hidden. Students and staff go to great lengths to leave their marks, so that others that come after them might know they were there, and

² Boarding house tutors worked under the supervision of a house co-ordinator to assist with the day to day running of the house; supporting boarders to complete their homework, ensuring all boarders were up, to breakfast, and present to their first morning class in good time.

that they something to say about their experience, for better or for worse. –
(MacDonald)

The contemporary Australian boarding house seeks to create, or re-create, a home away from home for the young people that live in them, with the boarding house community aspiring to manifest a large, complex and diverse family space (Lynch 1998). Similar to a private domestic space compartmentalised by personal and shared areas, the boarding house comprises of communal spaces for socialising, eating and relaxing; as well as more private spaces such as bathrooms and bedrooms. In many boarding contexts, these spaces too are shared, however expectations are in place that aspire to cultivate a respect for and understanding of the needs of self and others, although these boundaries in themselves, and different perceptions of where they lie, pose a challenge for staff and student alike to navigate (Papworth 2014). Just as students had their own private spaces that were recognised as personally sacred, we too had our own space within the larger boarding house structure, although emergent situations with those in our care meant this line needed to be flexible, and was something that we too had to navigate as our work and domestic space often became ambiguous and entangled.

It was within our home within this larger home that the wing chair found its' place. The wing chair too embraced the ambiguity of our domestic/work boundaries. Within the wing chair we would attend to our own personal quiet time reading to and feeding our babies, away from the hectic maelstrom of boarding house life. The wing chair was a quiet catalyst for our uncoiling from busy days at university and busy nights in the boarding house. We both described perceiving the chair as having a relaxing presence; and one that we likened to look upon any issue with a quiet, disarming calmness that indicated to us that 'this too shall pass'.

While we generally met with students in our office, there were times that they would come through to our lounge room, either to play with our baby daughters or to share a cup of tea, quiet time and conversation with our family. We noted that the chair had an obvious calming influence on several teenagers in our care, in particular those whose pastoral care included sitting in the chair and debriefing us on what was going on in their lives. Indeed, many of our boarding house staff would also come and sit in the wing chair to discuss and brainstorm the pastoral care of specific students in the house who they felt were having a tough time, or they were having a tough time with; and also deliberate upon their personal, university and other work related challenges. It is inevitably the case in boarding houses that the line between home and work is fuzzy. This in between space of home, work and school is one that must be approached with

sensitivity and awareness (Papworth 2014), but also be embraced for its opportunity to provide enrichment and personalised care so as to provide the level of care that one associates with a positive and secure home life (Cruickshank and MacDonald, 2016). The wing chair has performed many roles in its life, and an important one has been the platform it has provided for us to navigate the in-betweens of pastoral care that strike a balance between adequately personalised and in alignment with expectations around Duty of Care (Australian Standard 2015).

*Tears have been shed here
Quietness was sought
Hugs were provided
Comfort gained
Your arms slick from finger tips
That have passively caressed your surface*



Figure 2 – The wing chair: Pillar, digital image, Vaughan Cruickshank, 2017

(RE)ENCOUNTERING THE WING CHAIR

In 2015, we concluded our time working in the boarding house, taking the wing chair with us as an integral part of the domestic space we recreated within our current family home. The chair continues to be a focal point for conversation, relaxing and reading, both for us and our visitors. It is at this time and place we found ourselves presented with an opportunity to entwine our past boarding lives with our immediate researcher lives in the investigation that underpins this article. As we re-encountered the wing chair, we were positioned to consider the breadth and depth of the wing chair's 'life', and the varying roles it has played and lives it has affected within numerous families over almost 60 years.

It was in our moving from the boarding house that Author 1 noticed the condition of the chair, and considered momentarily its need for refurbishment. This article derived its impetus from the possibilities that emerged in those considerations, which in turn set in motion an unfolding exploration of the marks, movements and people who have shaped and been shaped by this otherwise very ordinary piece of household furniture. Within our inquiry, we made meaning from our motivations to 'amend' the chair, and in turn other domestic objects and spaces that bring with them their own unique histories. Whilst we might scrub, paint, scratch and grind away marks, inevitably, many of them return to the surface as the years continue to unfold and undo attempts of erasure. In this way, we came to pay closer attention to the affective experiences of living and working in boarding, and how these can have an enduring affect upon pasts, presents and futures.



Figure 3 – The wing chair: Remnants, digital image, Vaughan Cruickshank, 2017

*The deer hide grain is smoothed, glass flat
Around scratches, and punctures from pen marks
Made unconsciously whilst your occupant was lost in thought
Potential patterns were noticed
And then cultivated into more enduring marks
A reciprocal exchange
Evidencing your affect*

The reciprocal nature of mark making in this context piqued a curiosity for the researchers in relation to the domestic objects that characterize their spaces; their wear and tear, effect and affect. The emotions, frustrations, anxiety and excitements they bear witness to are both seen and are unseen. This particular chair might not attract more than a cursory glance upon first inspection, however, once the stains, blemishes, patches and cover ups are noticed, questions as to the stories that might unfold from these marks can come to the surface. In examining these marks, we described how these marks made might be likened to how a wise mentor might listen to a younger person's issues and difficulties, and in the process of assisting, they take on some of these issues in order to ease their mentee's struggle. Despite the effect of the marks inflicted (cat claws, pen marks) there is a sense of remaining calm, unperturbed and ready for the next occasion such wisdom might be needed.

The wing chair has moved in and out of a Tasmanian boarding house for almost six decades. While we have bore witness to some, we are left to imagine other sights it has seen, the people that have encountered it, and the stories it has heard. From what we understand, the chair has primarily and historically been used for relaxing and pastoral care. These traditions continue within our present home. Others might be encouraged to consider a similar domestic object that has passed down through their family and think of the decades of family history that object has absorbed, observed and potentially shaped. – (Cruickshank)

Living and working in a boarding house is an incredibly rewarding, yet incredibly demanding experience. Having access to the privacy and comfort of your own space is a vital component of offsetting the busy routine of the boarding house, and creating a balanced sustainable existence (Anderson 2005; Cruickshank and MacDonald, 2016). This is likely to be adaptable countless boarding house masters and their families throughout numerous generations. Domestic objects such as the wing chair are vital for the maintenance of this balance. We find ourselves intrigued by the relaxed presence the

wing chair exudes, and the calming affect it seems to have upon people who sit in it. This is a shared observation that we both noticed at different times and of different people who have sat in the chair over the past three years, be they friends, family, students, staff or parents. It is without doubt a comfortable chair, but there are other equally comfortable chairs within our home. People who know nothing of the history of this chair are inexplicably drawn to it. Further to our own embodied experiences, we have observed people's shoulders drop as the tension appears to drain from their body. They exhale deeply and slowly sink back into the chair's embrace.

It is my hope that those who encounter our inquiry into and rendering of experience in relation to the wing chair might be compelled by the composition, the purposeful lighting, the emphasis placed upon scale, marks and edges as a means of communicating and recognising how domestic space and domestic objects can be powerful mediums for experiences. – (MacDonald)

HOUSE, HOME AND THE AUSTRALIAN DOMESTIC EXPERIENCE FROM A TASMANIAN BOARDING SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

This article has sought to bring to attention to the inter-relationship between the seen and unseen of navigating spaces between domestic and work life in a Tasmanian boarding context. To do this, we have probed opportunities for meaning making by paying attention to a particular object, the wing chair, as a means of putting our feet up, resting and mindfully encountering and re-encountering our experiences from distinct vantage points. Through our a/r/tographic inquiry and subsequent renderings in prose, critical reflection and evocative imagery, we have simultaneously viewed, and viewed from, the wing chair as a medium through which to think about the many people who have lounged upon, sat pensively in, expressed laughter and brought tension to diverse and intersecting experiences of living and working in a Tasmanian boarding house. Hybridised methodologies and methods inherent embrace a plasticity that can speak to diverse audiences through the use of 'accessible, vernacular, and aesthetic language and image' (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008: p. 9). In acknowledging the role of the wing chair as a common thread in the intersecting stories and experience shared in this article, we honour the influence of the chair upon the people who sat in it, and how in doing so their stories can entwine and assimilate into a larger narrative that is always becoming (Deleuze 1995).

Reflecting on our position, we acknowledge that we have a great fondness for this chair, primarily because of the great fondness we have for its original owners. In recognising this, we are aware that there is potential for us to overstate the importance and influence of this particular wing chair in the intersection of our personal and professional lives, and the role it played in our personal experience of navigating home and work spaces. That said, we have personally experienced the calming influence of the chair, and seen its calming influence on others; including emotional teenage girls. It is hoped that our a/r/tographic unfolding and rendering of affective experiences as situated in relation to the wing chair provides insight into the researcher's perspectives of living and working in a Tasmanian boarding school. While we have no control over the meaning readers might make from our intersected stories, we hope that others might get a sense of the significance of the seemingly insignificant, and be compelled to pay closer attention to that which may initially be perceived as lesser, and the in-betweens of affect and effect, object and subject, space and time, person and other.

Research data does not speak for itself; it has to be interpreted (Levi-Strauss 1962). Our a/r/tographic interpretation has been influenced by the various lenses we bring to our research, and we recognise that the fluidity and constantly evolving nature of our perspectives creates a reciprocal and multi-way process (Berger 2015) of and for knowing. Just as reflexivity is a multi-directional process, the influence of the wing chair has also been multi-directional. Just as it has influenced others, others too have also influenced it, as have the spaces in which we situate objects and ourselves. These influencers include the claws of cats, pens in the hands of Abbey and others, and the fading power of the sun. As these influencers have impacted the wing chair, so to have their stories have merged at a moment in time and then continued together, always becoming.

Intersecting spaces

Entangling positions, places and people

Around a fulcrum from which

Lives, aspirations, situations and dilemmas

Unfold

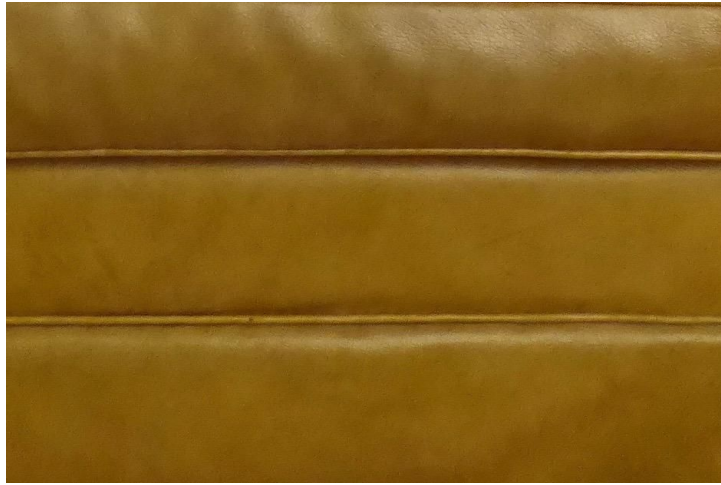


Figure 4 – The wing chair: Excerpt, digital image, Vaughan Cruickshank, 2017

*Swinging into and in parallel to one another
Layers of suggestion, absolution, and requiescence
Gather together in remnants
Stretch thin in others
Shaped by and shaping
Stories told and stories still to come*

Through the sharing of and subsequent reflection upon our stories through a/r/tographic inquiry, we have elucidated meaning into how our experiences of working in boarding and teaching intersected to affect us individually and collectively, which then opened the possibility for much greater understandings of self and other to be obtained (Ahn and Filipenko 2007; Fivush and Haden 2003). This a/r/tographic investigation adopted a constructivist “patching together of experiences, incorporating its contradictory and ambiguous nature, while building a richness and continuity of self” (Pearce and Morrison 2011: 50). As such, the social constructivist qualities of stories seamlessly align to serve the research objectives.

We recognise that our stories are situated in our unique situational context, and our communication of them is therefore grounded in our subjective view. We acknowledge that what might be significant for us might not be for others, but if there is anything we are hopeful for, we hope to encourage others to glance twice, yield to the whispers that linger in stains, grazes and patch-ups, and entertain the complex possibilities that layer upon and within our domestic spaces. Boarding houses reflect complex and diverse

domestic spaces and it is in the grain and weave of objects situated domestic space that we can peel back to unearth enduring stories of experience and perception as they are situated within time and place.

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