Artist Statement: Curriculum as a City.

I have engaged in this arts based research to tests the theory of employing architecture as a metaphor for curriculum. To do that, I constructed the last twenty years of my curricular experience in a diagrammatic form and physicalized it as an urban syntax. I suppose, this artwork is my self portrait as a curricular city.

I have built this theory upon a wide breadth of literature. The references to my sources are listed and color-coded on the artwork itself. I employed seven groups, each informing my process and my theorizing in a particular way. The groups are: ABR Methodology, Urban Syntax as Curriculum, Student Autonomy, Architecture as Curricular Metaphor, People as Places, Curricular Issues, and Methodological Colonialism. Most of my references engage with more then one of these group at a time — this intersectionality is reflected in the color code labels that demarcate each of the sources and quotes on the artwork. During this process I realized that my artwork itself dwells in the intersection of these seven theoretical frameworks.

The theory of urban syntax as the curricular experience may be instrumental for empowering university students, particularly architecture students, through the heuristic curricular design. The students may construct their desired curricular experience employing the grammar and syntax of the architectural language. The language of architecture is well suited for the orchestration of the human experience, thus employing it allows one to focus on the organization of the desired habitat within one's education. I have wrote an IRB proposal (for my research class) to test the validity of my theoretical assumptions on human subjects. Before offering it to others, however, I decided to test it on myself and produced this artwork.

In this artwork I diagrammed each studio and each class that I took or taught over the last 20 years, my atelier seasons, my commission paintings, my illustration jobs, my architecture firm period, meaningful relationships, children, intellectual infatuations, etc. I employed the particular morphology of the diagram shapes to portray how all the discreet parts fit together to form the chaotic but synergetic tapestry of my life. Juxtaposed to this life

diagram is its articulation as an architectural plan, which I hand drew and rendered in a realist way to produce a bird eye perception of this metaphorical city — it is Anastasiya, that Italo Calvino has described in his Invisible Cities, where "your labor which gives form to desire takes from desire its form" (Calvino, p.12). Both, the diagram and its architectural interpretation are organized on a timeline and are intertwined with the theoretical underpinnings that informed my theory and this art-making.

This ABR inquiry allowed me to validate the possibility of employing architecture as a curricular metaphor. This process lead me to discover that I experience other people in my life similarly to the way I experience the academic curriculum. Additionally, I realized that both, the experience of other people and the experience of my studies (the curriculum), carry more physicality, more color, more volume and texture then the actual spaces I occupy. Particularly, I physically dwell in those people whose portraits I paint, and I paint people who infatuate me with their curricular potential. People I paint become the curriculum I embody and the architectural space that I walk. I conclude that my life, somewhat in a Frerian fashion, is centered around a visual dialogue. Visual language is inherently free because it transcends culture, language, accent, time, politics, and tradition. I believe that the Arts Based Research methodology as defined by James Rolling (2013) is perfectly suited to continue my investigation of this intersectionality of the curriculum, people, and space.

I would like to continue developing this theory and eventually hope to impart it on my students in the hope to empower them to freely design the architecture of their education with due respect to their creative, cultural, and personal visions.

Reference:

Calvino, I. (1972). Invisible Cities. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Rolling, J. H., (2013) Arts based Research. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.