

Cultural Transgression: The Pursuit of Art and Education

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Thesis in Progress

I am both the author and focus of the story, the one who tells and the one who experiences, the observer and the observed, the creator and the created. I am the person at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller, [and depicting as an artist]. (Ellis, 2009, p. 13)

Abstract

My research focuses on the transformational role art and education played in my life and seeks to explore broader cultural and educational implications of these experiences by answering the following questions. How did the experiences of art and education influence the life of a female learner and educator whose culture of origin sanctioned neither? What can be learned from these experiences? At an early age I expressed a passion for visual art. My enjoyment of art was accompanied by a love of learning, but there was one major obstacle. My desire to pursue education was continuously discouraged by my parents who because of their ethnic and religious culture believed education outside of the separatist Old Colony Mennonite tradition from Mexico was wrong. My struggle to obtain an education in Canada and thereby develop my artistic skills was a *cultural transgression* against Old Colony Mennonite ideology. I was born in Mexico, migrated between Canada and Mexico, and was eventually raised in south-western Ontario.

My research methodology, autoethnography, is a triadic research model consisting of the following components; auto, ethno, and graphy (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). Auto refers to the content orientation as autobiographical; it comprises of the personal experiences of the researcher (self) as primary data. Ethno refers to the interpretive orientation as cultural (I also use an artistic lens); it strives to provide a cultural understanding and does not focus solely on (self) the individual. Lastly, graphy refers to the methodological orientation as an ethnographic research process; that of gathering and analyzing data, and writing a descriptive narrative of the findings (Chang, 2008, p. 48-49).

My research is situated within a postmodern theoretical framework; it offers new creative ways of doing academic research including opportunities for self-study such as autoethnography, for mixing genres and disciplines as well as accepting alternative perspectives (Glesne, 2005, p. 15). It sanctions the expression of emotions and feelings, and endorses greater creativity in writing style and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 15, 27). My research examines, in part, my silence, my otherness, my cultural experiences, my passion for art and education, as well as my determination to transcend existing social arrangements; it serves as a critique.



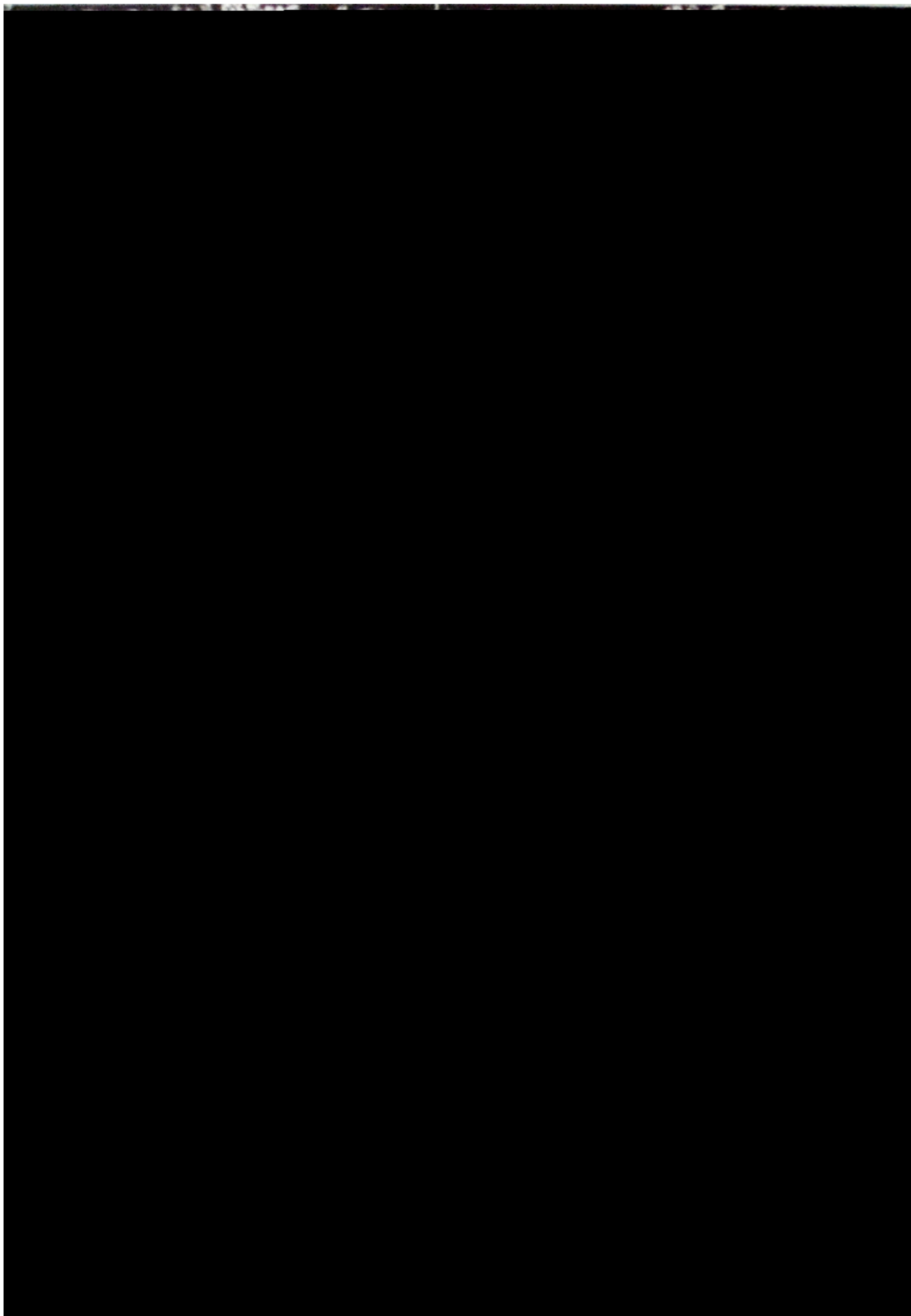
Ann Langeman, *Diversity*, 2006. Graphite on paper, 75 cm x 57 cm. Collection of the artist.



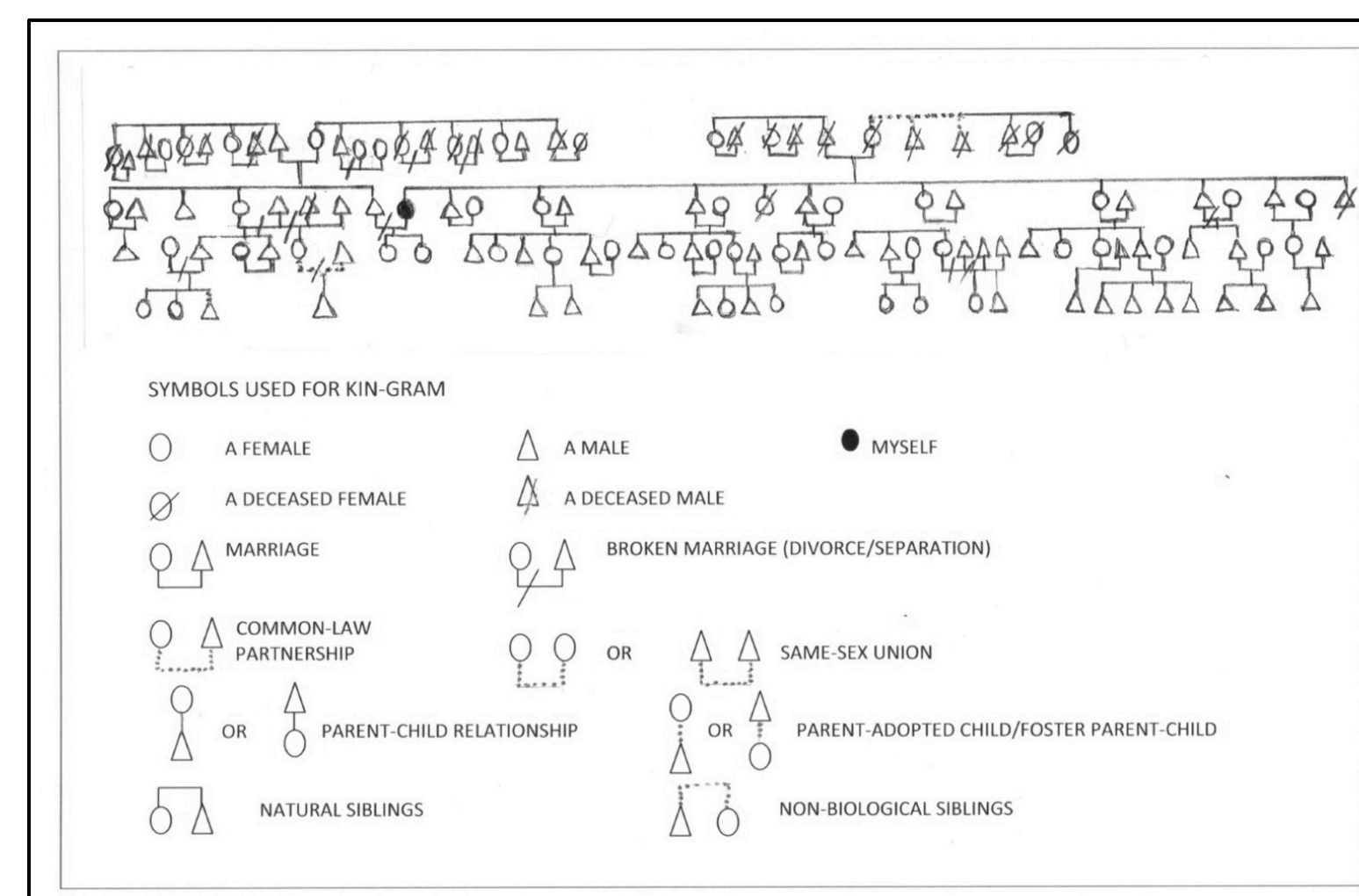
Ann Langeman, *Renewal*, 2005. Oil, acrylic, and spray paint on plywood, 60 cm x 60 cm. Collection of the artist.



Ann Langeman, *Three Sisters*, 2009. Graphite on paper, 55 cm x 38 cm, collection of the artist.



Ann Langeman, *Self-Portrait*, 2010. Graphite on paper, 56 cm x 75 cm, collection of the artist.



My kin-gram; an ethnographic representation of my immediate family.

My Culture Gram; a current representation of self using a culture web.

