

Experience and identity

The ethnographer as a practising artist

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Introduction

This paper stems from a doctoral study of the development of art education in the Islamic Republic of Iran at the Visual Arts Departments at Tehran University and Al-Zahra University for Women, and the interrelationships between art training in theory and practice and the concept of identity. In light of the increasing discussions and reflections by scholars positioning and viewing social phenomena within interdisciplinary perspectives, this study might be considered a milestone in the evolutionary path of interdisciplinarity in qualitative research. In this instance the boundaries of enquiry in education, sociology and art are softened as the participants' personal histories and experiences are related and the site of the research is expanded to include the researcher's studio in Canterbury. The production of art objects by the researcher are thus given parity and equal weight as other data within the work, especially as they are reflections of the participants' shared and common experiences and heritage. This has ultimately meant that the theoretical tools adopted in the field in Tehran are also applied to the researcher, who is of Iranian birth and educated in Britain, in order to better understand the field and determine her location in the enquiry.

With regard to time and place, three extended visits were made to the primary site of the enquiry in Tehran over a period of six months, between January and December 2002. These visits