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# Re-membering: restoring embodied arts to experiential learning

Copeman, Peter

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<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/110832>

*Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary*

# a few questions to warm up with ...

derived from Michelson, E. (1998), Re-membering: the return of the body to experiential learning, *Studies in Continuing Education*, 20:2, 217-233. doi: 10.1080/0158037980200208

Are the dualisms that tend to characterise experiential learning — experience/reflection, knowledge/skill, and theory/practice — manifestations of a privileging of mind over body and therefore of rationalist rules of evidence, based on the transcendence of social location and bodily specificity?

If so, might experiential learning of knowledge-practices entail acts of “dismemberment” that deny the connectedness of knowledge to the body, and thus lose sight of knowledge as a product of corporeally and emotionally grounded human life?

May experiential learning therefore require acts of “re-membering” to relocate it in the body, and in the social and material locations that bodies invariably occupy? What contribution might embodied arts have to play?



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# Re-membering: restoring embodied arts to experiential learning

Peter Copeman and Tim Grace

*We wish to acknowledge  
the Ngunnawal people, traditional custodians  
of the lands on which the University of Canberra  
campus is situated. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture  
and the vital contribution they make to the life of Canberra and its region.*

*We also acknowledge other First Nations Peoples on whose lands we live and work, and  
pay our respect to their Elders past and present. As we share our knowledge, teaching  
and learning practices at this gathering, may we also honour the knowledge and  
learning traditions of all First Nations peoples.*

## a brief curtain-raiser to loosen up ...

1. Please get hold of one of the circulated **VISCERA** dialogue scripts, and read it.
2. Partner up with a neighbour, and jointly imagine:
  - a. What's a likely context in which such a dialogue might happen?
  - b. Who are A and B likely to be, in such a context?
  - c. What's going on between them? How does that manifest physically?
  - d. What's at stake? Is it important?
  - e. How might it be resolved?
3. Now cast one of you as A, the other as B and rehearse a performance, adjusting to make best sense for, and impact on, an audience.
4. If you feel up to it, volunteer to perform it to the other session participants.

## ... and a quick reflection on it

Did you learn anything from that exercise? If so, what?

Did it illustrate any of these principles of embodied learning<sup>1</sup>?

1. Body and mind work together in learning.
2. Movement and concepts are connected.
3. Action and thinking take place simultaneously.
4. Science and art influence and support each other.
5. The physical and the ideal are in dialogue with each other.
6. Reality and imagination are intertwined.
7. The living body and the lived body are united in forming human consciousness.

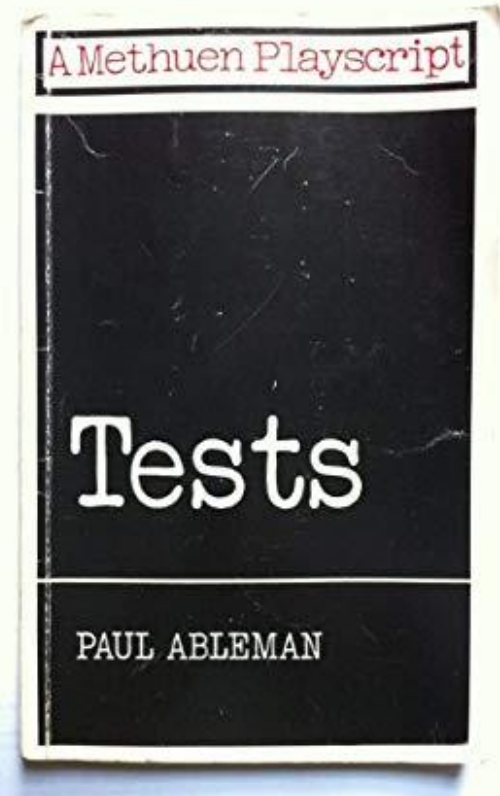
1. Paniagua, A. and D. Istance (2018), *Teachers as Designers of Learning Environments: The Importance of Innovative Pedagogies*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 118.

## Case Study 2011: Literary Studies – Performance Works

- convened this first-year foundational subject filling in for absent colleague
- part of a Lit. Studies major but also a popular elective
- curriculum as received looked at performance texts only as literature, with no attention paid to their nature as blueprints for embodied production
- decided to address this by making one assessment task require students to work in groups to create performances based on Paul Ableman's *Tests* (written in the 60s for Peter Brook's Theatre of Cruelty)
- *Tests* are short playlets that at first reading appear to be meaningless, absurd or surreal nonsense
- chosen precisely because they have no 'literary' value, but still appeal to basic human need to make meaning

## Case Study 2011: Literary Studies – Performance Works

- student task was to devise a way of performing them using clues from the scripts alone, in such a way that they created a dramatic structure and conveyed a meaningful and recognisable story to an audience ...
- ... and then actually present it as an embodied performance
- ... and reflect on this experience via scaffolded portfolio entries
- student response was initially one of some resistance, but with tight scaffolding they rose to the challenge, produced great work and rated the experience highly in feedback surveys and in their reflective portfolios



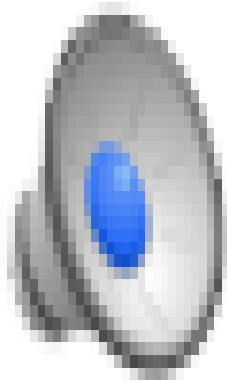


## Case Study 2004: Creativity in Management

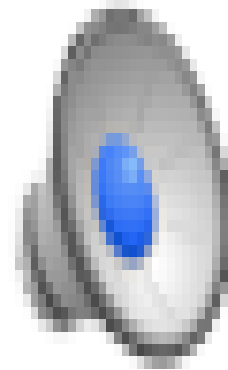
- Invited by Head of Business School at Australian National University to teach into a new Creativity in Management subject in MBA program
- brief for collaborative project exemplifying business/creativity nexus
- designed project requiring student teams to conceive, pitch, script, storyboard and perform 60-second story-based television advertising commercials (with a professional camera-operator/editor provided)
- subject of the commercials was pre-chosen, and in this case T3 – the Australian Government's controversial privatisation of the third and final tranche of shares in telecommunications company Telstra, which had once been fully in public ownership



Stan and Ethel



Matrix



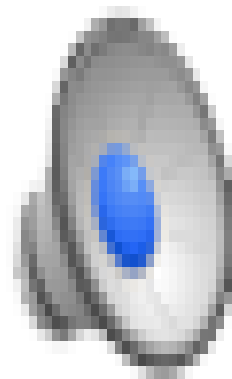
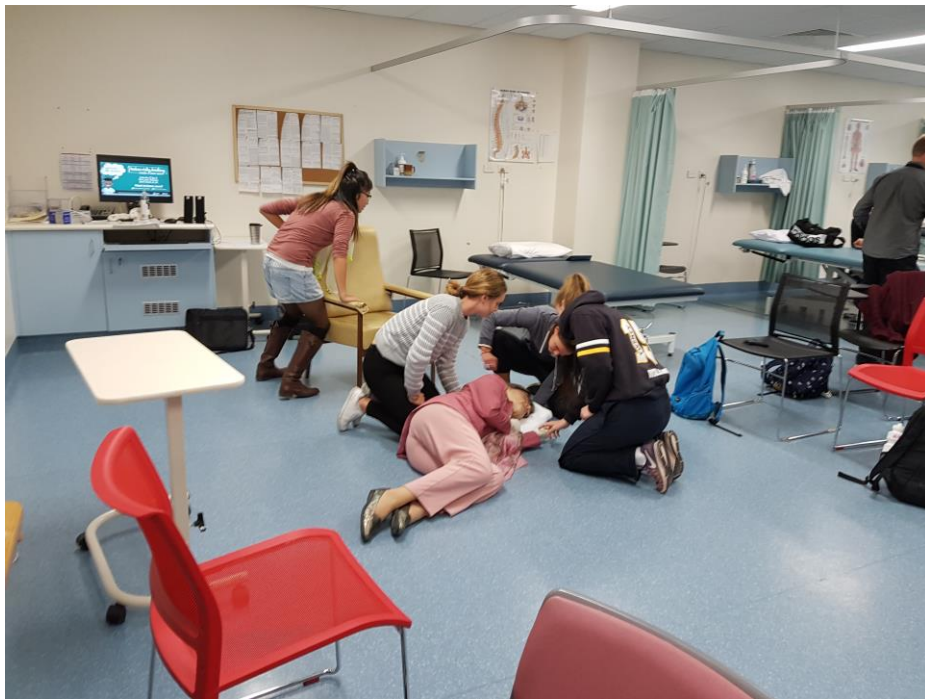
High scores in student satisfaction surveys. Module became regular part of the curriculum.

Case Study 2013 ongoing:  
**Joyce Fullerton, physiotherapy patient**



- Joyce is a 75-year-old retired physiotherapist with an extensive medical history, who regularly attends University of Canberra student clinics
- students get to practice skills such as history-taking and treatment delivery which have included mobilisation with multiple attachments, chest treatment for community-acquired pneumonia, and even in-clinic falls

Case Study 2013 ongoing:  
**Joyce Fullerton, physiotherapy patient**



Case Study 2013 ongoing:

## Joyce Fullerton, physiotherapy patient

Joyce is such an institution at UC she's even given a conference presentation

<https://youtu.be/-qLko-MaEOE?t=18043>

Joyce is actually Dr Bernie Bissett, an Assistant Professor in Physiotherapy, using MASK-ED™ high-fidelity mask-based simulation first pioneered by Professor Kerry Reid-Searl at Central Queensland University. Because she's thus masked, she can guide the student interactions with her from within her character.

*Student comment:* "Joyce makes the theory real. She's a little intimidating but interacting with her helps to reinforce and cement our knowledge"

*Student comment:* "It makes it more practical, immediate, in your face, to have to deal with simulated reactions that we as students may not know about"

# Case Study 2012 ongoing: Three Minute Theatre

- Research communication skills workshop series developed at UC and delivered annually during the 3 Minute Thesis® season.
- 3MT research pitching competition provides gamified motivation for higher-degree research students and early career academics to develop essential dispatchable skills.
- Participants often find that it helps them:
  - a. (re)discover and clearly re-articulate the essence of their projects, and
  - b. reinvigorate their enthusiasm for it.



**Promo Blurb:** Get out of dry academic mode and embrace your inner storyteller. Rediscover the heart of your research, and your passion for it. Crack the scriptwriting and slide design codes, and absorb some basic performance craft. Get the knack of connecting confidently with an audience. Attend these workshops.

# Case Study 2012 ongoing: **Three Minute Theatre**

my 3 minute pitch of the essence of the workshops



*research presentation meets dramatic monologue*

# Case Study 2012 ongoing: Three Minute Theatre

## Published

Copeman, P. (2015) "Three Minute Theatre: Principles and practice for scripting and performing Three Minute Thesis presentations", *International Journal for Researcher Development*, 6:1, 77-92, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRD-09-2014-0028>

## Promoted

Given its own marketing infographic by Emerald Publishers. Heavily downloaded round the world. Still occasionally makes the journal's "most popular papers" list.

## Popular

Participants give highly favourable feedback. UC Teaching Excellence Award 2017. Methods deployed in 3MT training at multiple universities in Australia, UK, New Zealand (that I know of). I am frequently invited to present the workshops at other institutions in Australia.

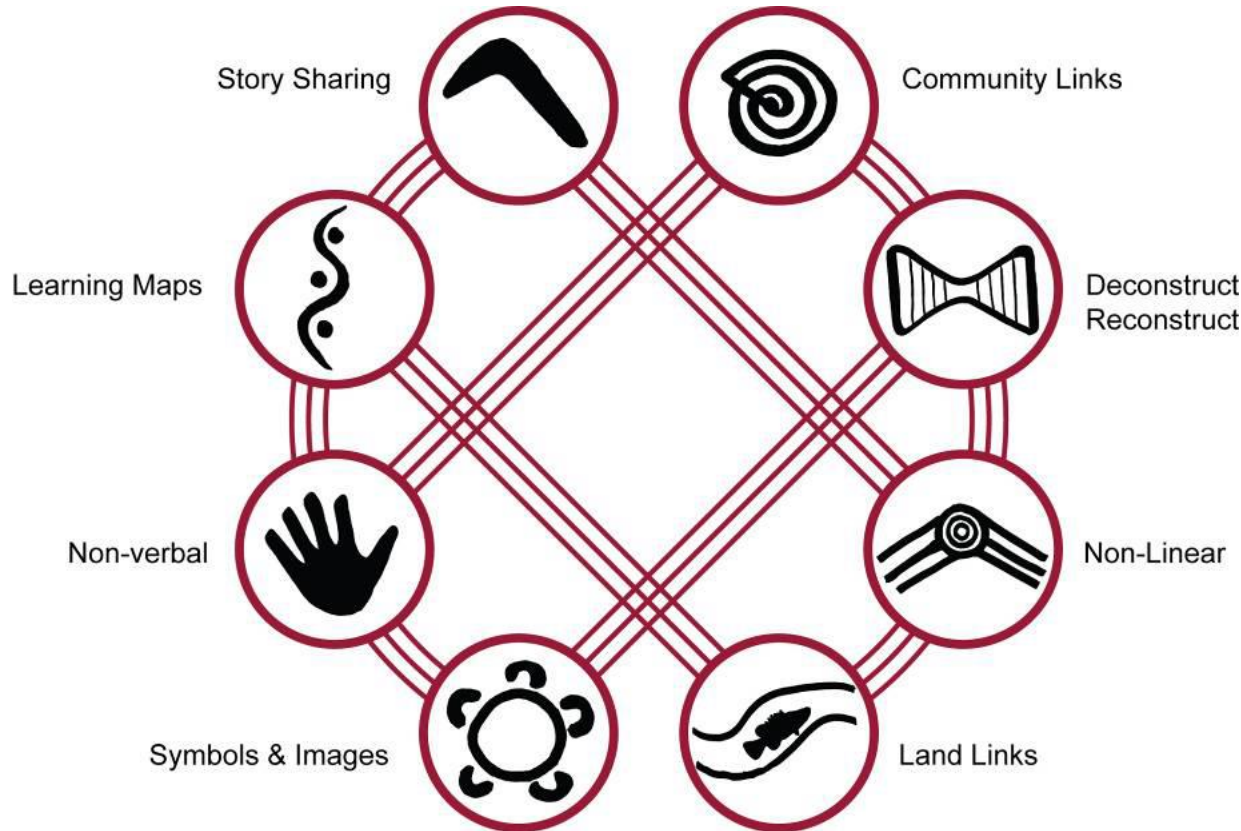
## Productive

I have coached multiple Asia-Pacific Top 10 Finalists including a Runner-Up and People's Choice Winner. One Overall Winner was initially trained using my methods.



# Ancient Experiential Learning

## Relational, holistic ...



## 8 Australian Aboriginal Ways of Learning

Tell a story. Make a plan. Think and do. Draw it. Take it outside. Try a new way. Watch first, then do. Share it with others.

from Yunkaporta, T. (2009). *Aboriginal Pedagogies at the Cultural Interface*. PhD Thesis, James Cook University.

# Ancient Experiential Learning ... and connected by embodied ceremonial arts





# To sum up ...

Two poems in concertina form by Tim Grace, capturing the “dualisms” asserted at the beginning of this session.



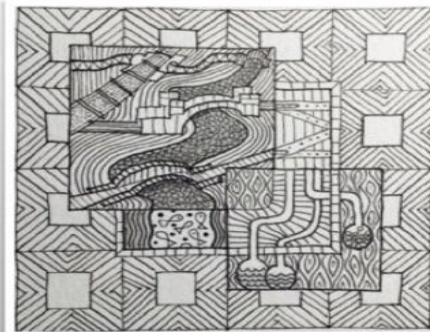
it's arrogant intelligence  
that most of all  
demeans  
the craft  
of playful thought  
dislocates hand and heart from head

© 2016 Tim Grace



make today an improvisation  
surprise yourself  
take a  
detour  
that navigates  
novelty's unintended course

© 2016 Tim Grace



## ... so let's finish with your own arts-based act of re-membering

Think about the conference so far, including the pre-conference workshop if you attended. Have you had a light bulb or penny-drop experience? A moment of creative connection?

1. Write two short sentences, each describing things you previously hadn't thought were connected.
2. Write a third short sentence describing making the connection. Try to capture the feeling – surprise? satisfaction? – of that discovery.
3. Now write it as a haiku. That's a form of Japanese poem consisting of three phrases or lines in 17 syllables (5, 7, 5).

Just get it down roughly. Don't overthink it.

And when/if you have something, share it with a neighbour.

## ... a couple I drafted last night

Inspired by Patti's pre-conference workshop on assessment and reflection:

**Spring azaleas**

**And rubric for reflection**

**A duet of Blooms**

Inspired by the session by Heather, Erin, Hannah, Joshua and Anna on Reconciliation:

**Grim-faced warrior**

**Screams silently on the wall**

**Brave for a brave space**



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**Thanks for your attendance and engagement**