Fusion, Counterpoint, Transposition

The aims and methods of research, methods and modes of rendering public across the arts and social sciences are so varied that it very difficult to generalize about how arts and social sciences can draw upon one another. I have found that in my own practice as an artist and anthropologist, when analyzing the work of others or designing collaborative and participatory projects it is helpful to focus on particular ways art and scholarship can blend, inform or play on each other at particular stages of specific projects. One might think of these possibilities with the musical metaphors of fusion, counterpoint and transposition. I propose a few thoughts for each keyword- these will be accompanied by images/examples during my presentation.

**Fusion**: Mingles research methods, concepts, media and practices. Given that the epistemology of participant observation and certain ideologies of art and notions of the artist share a certain Romantic valorization of “experience” as a source of knowledge, Art/Anthropology have plentiful resources for and references to the creative possibilities of fusion. Fusion may feel “natural” and embodied to the artist/researcher, or be encouraged by the design of environments or situations that enable collaborative production to “flow.” But distancing, reflexivity and awareness of analytic and productive processes enter into the production of a successful work.

**Counterpoint**: A melody or line of practice/thought/action emerges that includes different voices that may not be harmonically “resolved”. Projects that engage diverse practices of research and include distinct media yet result in some kind of unified production might be usefully studied or conceived as contrapuntal. Might one consider developing specific *modes* of contrapuntal research/practice? One might think of practices of collage, of juxtaposition and projects that evolve simultaneously in multiple locations as forms of counterpoint.

**Transposition**: May bring to mind musical transposition from one key to another, translation from one media or genre or language to another, or the way an element or object set into a new context redefines concepts, one might think of Dadaism in this light. Transposition often enables ironic displacements. But it can also encourage critical reflection attentiveness to what is over-familiar- the kind of estrangement at the heart of classic ethnographic research. I find working across practices/media/modes of research and analysis is helpful when I’m stuck and can’t move forward, and most exciting when working collaboratively.