

Editorial

Rethinking Ritual Ecologies: Unsettling Norms, Rewriting Narratives, and Embodying Other Ways of Being

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Rituals are often associated with cultural, ceremonial, or spiritual practices, but they can also take form through individual habits, social norms, or superstitious routines. In art education, rituals are studied through visual and material culture, art history, and studio processes. Rituals are also enacted through established curricular frameworks and institutionalized hierarchies. This issue of *jCRAE* considers how rituals are activated, questioned, and transformed through artistic engagements related to identity formation, community-orientation, historical narratives, and professional expectations. Authors explore the agency of human and non-human elements, including natural materials and man-made objects, place and geography, history and politics, technical and creative skills, as well as formal and informal arts education. Education is bound in ritual practice, where cultural and academic knowledge determines one's role within institutional hierarchies and acts as a threshold for advancement between members of an academic community, where access, assets, and forms of cultural capital reveal forms of privilege and historic marginalization. In this sense, rituals are political. They can act as non-linguistic signifiers of one's social status, illuminating societal constructs and a spectrum of power relations embedded in rituals, from their potential for collective unification to alienating subjugation.

In "dis assembly: Collaborative Rituals with an Autistic Artist," **Alice Wexler** engages in a dialogue with the founder and several other members of *dis assembly*, a neurodiverse art collective that explores movement and the ritualized use of objects and the environment as performative modes for learning other ways of navigating the world. The collective supports and facilitates communication for non-speaking autists through ground-breaking experimental work. Through their discussion and examples of their work, Wexler explores how the collective re-imagines new forms of art, communication, interdependency, rela-

tionships, and community. Shared cultural practices connect groups through collective action and shared values, often taking form as ceremony and social norms. Moreover, rituals can illuminate how cultural values and beliefs are geographically specific, unify communities, and marginalize those from the outside. In "How "I" Shifts When Crossing Borders: Reflections of South Korean Artists Who Study Abroad in the United States," **Jinyoung Koh** investigates challenges for cross-cultural South Korean artists pursuing an MFA degree at institutions in the United States. Koh describes how cross-cultural students adapt to differences in language, values, and social expectations that impact their cultural and individual identity. Through interviews with artists/educators, the article provides suggestions for finding a balance between preserving one's cultural practices and adapting to new environments, as well as ways that educators can realize and embrace a wider range of abilities.

Almost a century ago, John Dewey (1934) described how museums and other cultural institutions separated religion and fine art from the everyday life of communities, arguing that the "esthetic arts" related to ceremonial practices that organized and enhanced the collective life of communities had been separated from daily living. Dewey was concerned that elevating shared ceremonies and the objects associated with them had the effect of fracturing the beauty of everyday rituals that formed community bonds. We more commonly think about cultural rituals being a subject of study in art education, where artists come to life through their cultural values and beliefs, animated and entangled through aesthetic imagery, material objects, and personal histories. Learning other people's ritual practices can introduce new skills and tools or introduce different approaches to familiar processes. In "A Transition of Visual Ritual: Making Medicine, George Flett, and the Historical Emergence of Native American Ledger Art," **Heidi C. Powell** investigates the Plains Indians' historic practice of buffalo hide painting and the evolving practice of Native American ledger drawing. Using historical inquiry, the article illuminates the vitality of historical rituals that simultaneously makes their contemporary presence tangible. Like Wexler, she learns about contemporary lived artistic practices that give voice to historically silenced communities. Interviews allowed a number of the authors in this issue to better understand how individual experiences provide insight to broader cultural phenomena that is often overlooked or unacknowledged. Ritual practices have not only been erased like that of Native American ledger art but also reinforced cultural constructs rooted in colonization to silence or discipline social groups. In "Co-Creating with a Messy Kitchen Floor," **Emily Jean Hood** explores how cultural norms determine the value of

certain individuals. Hood employs Gloria Anzaldúa's (2015) concept of autohistoria-teoría as an interdisciplinary arts-based research practice and creative ritual to unsettle and reimagine the sociocultural power relations embedded in the materiality of her kitchen.

At the same time, art can appropriate historic rituals and transform collective practices to unsettle power relations through social and artistic inquiry. In "Confessing Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education," **Sarah Travis** explores identity and narrative through artistic methods that illuminate communities' frictions and fictions in a community-oriented, socially engaged art show. The show employed the form of the confessional to elicit narratives that explore questions of reconciliation around the power dynamics embedded in identity. The work referenced spiritual aspects of creating and sharing art, using participatory action to co-construct truth, and realize frictions within the community. Like Koh, Travis describes ways that teachers can be reflective practitioners about their own practice and how their identity constructs might reflect challenges occurring for their students. Similar to Hood, she uses artistic inquiry to question established understandings of subjectivity, identity, and positionality borrowing cultural forms and methodologies from other contexts to explore one's own broader positionality through narrative.

In art education, rituals are practiced as classroom norms and procedures. They take shape through handed-down techniques, tools, styles, and aesthetic values. Similar to Hood's arts-based inquiry into identity constructs, **Kate Wurtzel** uses a visual essay to explore how ritualized and emergent practices of artistic inquiry can transform one's self perception through generative forms of accountability and structure in "Showing Up: A Creative Reflection on Ritualization for Art Educators." By letting go of predetermined outcomes and releasing intentions, unanticipated encounters can emerge to expand and resituate relations between people, materials, and practices. Similarly exploring the paradox between routine and uncertainty, in "Warming Up with Playful Routines," **Rebecca Shipe** examines the needs for predictable routines and creative divergence in classrooms, using warm-up exercises that incorporate play and humor as a classroom routine for disrupting established patterns using a more diagrammatic format combining graphic illustration and academic writing. Shipe and Wurtzel both recognize the importance of repetition and routine to embed structure as a form of ritual, balanced with modes of creative disruption for artistic creativity and imagination.

Building on questions of classroom practice and frictions that emerge

from questioning established norms, **Lillian Lewis** reexamines methods and theories learned and established within her own teaching practice as a challenge to develop a different practice in "Pentimento and Palimpsest: Blurring Rituals in the Studio." By shifting from a routinized curricular structure inspired by a Discipline-Based Art Education, to a more open and emergent approach, Lewis explains that philosophical and practical shifts more closely align with the complexity of visual art production. Similar to Wurtzel and Shipe, Lewis recognizes the ritual aspects of teaching, as both a set of repetitive procedures but also as cultural norms. The issue concludes with **Krystyna Henke's** media review of *Visual and Cultural Identity Constructs of Global Youth and Young Adults: Situated and Performed Ways of Being, Engaging, and Belonging*, edited by Fiona Blaikie (Routledge). Similar to the articles in this issue of *jCRAE*, the book explores the shifting identity constructs through visual and cultural markers from transdisciplinary scholars across the globe through a range of qualitative methodologies.

Our rapidly changing social, cultural, technological, and economic conditions require that we reevaluate our individual and collective approaches to art education. This issue illuminates important ways that rituals inform our cultural, institutional, historical, and everyday understandings. It also highlights how artistic approaches create other ways of knowing, by unsettling established narratives and power relations, to illuminate both fictions and frictions embedded in community and identity, othering and adaptation, and experimentation and imagination.

References

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