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A group at the NEA Representatives' Assembly meeting in Houston, TX helps dry parachute banner designed by Jeanette Arellano. Other banners designed by Nicolas Lampert, Paul Kjelland, and Claudio Martinez. Refer to the article by Art Build Workers for more information.

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Sharbreon Plummer

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The Senior Editor of the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* is indebted to Sharbreon Plummer, PhD, Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy, The Ohio State University, for integral editorial and design leadership in making this issue of the journal

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Collectives and Coalitions: Building Justice and Equity Movements in the Arts

Joni Boyd Acuff, PhD
The Ohio State University

From the beginning of my tenure as *jCRAE's* Senior Editor, I identified my role as one of amplifier and agitator. Specifically and more pointedly, I was committed to supporting and disseminating the work of critical race art education researchers and those invested in racial equity in the arts. Race-centric work is often relegated to special issues of mainstream art education journals or become one off chapters in books that are otherwise colorblind. Therefore, creating a platform to make visible critical race art education scholarship was crucial for me. Scholars who engage in critical race art education research must often look outside of the art education discourse for scholarly resources to support and buttress their research. This additional labor results in research inequalities associated with time and capacity that are rarely acknowledged. Thus, another goal of mine as *jCRAE's* Senior Editor has been to build a publicly accessible, robust archive of critical race art education research. As I reflect on the last 3 years, I am proud of the resource portal that has been curated. Volume 36, my inaugural volume, offered an unprecedented three issues and over 25 research manuscripts and creative works that investigated whiteness. Volume 37 switched up the tempo, disrupting the calcified narrative of suffering and trauma assigned to critical race justice work and building one of joy and pleasure. Now, Volume 38, my last as Senior Editor, highlights creative movement builders who are invested in activating critical race theory in real time in communities across the world.

Volume 38 of *jCRAE*, aptly titled "Collectives and Coalitions: Building Justice and Equity Movements in the Arts" is a natural progression in the examination of race that the last two volumes of *jCRAE* have been attending to. Moving to more macro-level interventions for subverting racism in the arts and art education, the contributions in this issue illustrate how organizing and building capacity works to undermine and transfigure White supremacist structures. Rev. angel Kyodo williams says, "To be in collective process is to allow for the fact that we are coming from different spaces, and when we do that in community, we do that in service to something greater than ourselves, something beyond what my specific needs are. We form around." Collective power is needed to propel and sustain art educational equity. Institutional and systemic change requires bodies in relationship with each other, moving towards the same goal. Deeming it important to share and archive how this vital work

is being done, I invited contributions from exemplary arts collectives, coalitions and organizations that channel their collective power to propel and sustain racial and/or cultural justice and equity in and through the arts. Their examples of programming, interventions, and overarching goals demonstrate a priority to identify and challenge the limitations that impact not only artists and art educators of color, but people of color writ large.

To begin, the **Coalition on Racial Equity in the Arts + Education (crea+e)** hones in on the power of the collective as a *requirement* for disrupting and abolishing racism in the arts and art education. crea+e, who started as a subterranean, underground network of artists, researchers, and art educators of color across the US, delves into the ways their interventionist projects have worked to disrupt whiteness in the arts and art education. Next, we hear from the **Arts Build Workers (ABW)**, a multi-racial group of artists, designers, photographers and educators based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In their manuscript, ABW share their origin story, which articulates their undergirding and sustained commitment to social justice, how their community partner relationships are initiated and nurtured, and the impact their projects have had on a local and national scale. ABW's contribution very wisely offers readers a paradigm for capacity building for social change.

Then, **Ni Santas**, a West coast arts collective of women of color, offers a visual essay that takes readers on a journey through their development and growth as a grassroots, community based arts initiative. Created out of a "need to uplift and empower," Ni Santas' central goals are to support and propel women artists of color in their meaning making; their visual essay simply, yet eloquently, constructs this very narrative. Finally, **Xiaoxiao Bao** and **Hoi Leung** introduce readers to the Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco (CCC), a grassroots, non-profit organization that activates the arts and artmaking in an effort to share narratives and raise awareness about racial injustice in the Chinese community. Bao engages Leung, the curator at CCC, in an interview in which she details how she and others at CCC orchestrate experiences and develop programming that supports community expression and communal action against anti-Asian racism, especially that which has been experienced since the onset of COVID19. Ultimately, the movement makers that have contributed to this *jCRAE* issue model how race, racial equity and social justice should be prioritized in the arts and art education.

The remaining articles in this issue are outside of the theme "Collectives and Coalitions: Building Justice and Equity Movements in the Arts," however, they contribute equally to the discourse around race, racism and racial equity in the arts and art education. The general section of this issue begins with **Debra Hardy** offering a meditation on her experience as a White female researcher studying the life of Margaret Burroughs, a Black art education and institution-builder from Chicago. Hardy's paper is twofold in that it focuses on both her theoretical positionality and researcher positionality. In addition, she establishes an argument for historians to begin to more consciously interrogate the relationship between researcher and subject, even when living participants are not involved in the study. **Mark Graham's** paper argues that the identification of artistic mastery as the primary goal of artmaking sustains and propels racial inequities in the arts. Graham urges art teachers to move away from "traditional" artistic conventions, materials and ideas around art and aesthetics, as they are tools of cultural subordination. Ultimately, he advocates for art teachers to instead invest in understanding the historical, cultural, and political aspects of visual culture. He encourages them to recognize their own social responsibility to disrupt racial inequities that are bred through the narrative of artistic mastery. Next, **Rachel Zollinger** and **Carissa DiCindio** contribute a manuscript that beckons readers to question and consider who has access to cultural resources and technology during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors make connections between the isolation from resources and its impact on art museum audiences. They work to position art museum educators as bridges between museums and communities. **Ryan Shin** and **Xuhao Yang** redress the questions and inquiry methods of teaching about East Asian artists and their works in the classroom, rejecting European White master frameworks when appreciating the arts of East Asia. The co-authors suggest an alternative, holistic lens for viewing East Asian artistic expressions and teaching East Asian art, making East Asian art curriculum culturally responsive and authentic.

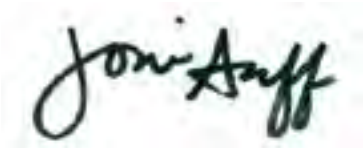
Next, researcher **Xuan Zhang** shares an action research project that utilizes an interactive and playable tool, uniquely coined as Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization (CADV). Zhang suggests that the tool, informed by Critical Multicultural Art Education and Dewey's "Art as Experiences," supports undergraduate students' engagement with contemporary artworks that address social justice. In her article, Zhang describes how the CADV tool fosters a learning community for students to understand various perspectives concerning social justice issues in the context of different experiences and cultures. In **Jennifer Fisher** and **Michael V. Smith's** paper, they share a model for creating meaning-making opportunities for high ability visual art students from marginalized communities. They demonstrate innovation in carving out space for extended learning opportunities for visual arts students who are historically least supported in US educational systems, which are predominately students of color and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. To close Volume 38, **Stephanie Jones** and **James F. Woglam's** creative submission models the internal dialogue as well as peer discourse

needed to cultivate a true consciousness around race and racism in the arts. Jones and Woglam take us on their meta-cognitive journey as they work through and come to terms with the never-ending, multifaceted and ever-evolving nature of critical race work.

Volume 38 concludes my responsibilities as the Senior Editor of the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*. I am sincerely indebted to the jCRAE editorial board, past editorial assistant Sharbreon Plummer and Ryan Shin for supporting my vision for the past three years. Like this volume has emphasized, without the collective, nothing real can happen. I anticipate Cala Coats and Amanda Alexander, the upcoming Co-Senior Editors, will continue curating strong, impactful content that fits the original mission of this journal. I am so honored to have contributed to the art education field in this way, and I am proud to now sit on the other side of this editorial experience with those who served in this position before me.

Thank you for trusting me with this monumental task.

Sincerely,



Joni Boyd Acuff, PhD

Creative Trouble: Making Spaces for Collectivity within Art Education

Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education (crea+e)

ABSTRACT

The *Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education (crea+e)* is a collective body whose primary aims and activities concern advocacy, teaching, research, and publishing on issues related to race and intersectional racism in the arts and arts education. The collective engages in critical race arts-based research practices that incorporate strategies and tactics of disruption that operate on multiple registers to undermine the normalization of whiteness and spur much needed conversations on how to abolish systemic racism in the arts and arts education. This article discusses crea+e's collective orientation, its mission, and how it operates. It also chronicles three interventions the group undertook that illuminate critical, creative, and constructive modes of coalition-building. The article articulates the significance of collectives in resisting co-optation by white normative institutions while insisting on joy in the pursuit of justice.

KEYWORDS: race, racism, anti-racism, equity, justice, collectives, mentoring, art education

The *Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education (crea+e)* is a collective body of artists, educators, activists and thought leaders of color whose primary aims and activities concern advocacy, teaching, research, and publishing on issues related to race and intersectional racism as they manifest and mediate the arts in educational spaces. Racial knowledge and anti-racist practices are underdeveloped in arts disciplines and institutions. In the United States and other settler colonial societies, arts disciplines (e.g., visual art and design, music, dance, literary arts, and theater) and institutions (e.g., museums and archives, art schools and conservatories, PK-12 schools and universities, professional associations and credentialing organizations) operate within the logic of racial hierarchy (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández & Carpenter, 2018). They were designed to support narratives of Euro-American progress and civilization (Duncan, 1995; Lentis, 2017) that valorized the cultural contributions, histories, and self-image of those people who "think they are white" (Baldwin, 1984, p. 91). Not much has changed in the present.

crea+e exists to address the critical need for credible racial analyses

and constructive responses to ongoing racial inequities produced in and through the arts. The collective engages in activist arts-based research practices (Rolling, 2013) to disrupt the normalization of whiteness in arts classrooms, research, teaching, and advocacy and spur much needed conversations on how to abolish systemic racism in the arts. The deep structural nature of racism in the arts demands a response from activist scholars, artists, and educators who can penetrate the pervasive silence about race. Thus, *crea+e* uses collectivity to "get loud" about racism, incorporating various strategies and tactics of disruption that operate on multiple registers as a critical race arts-based research practice.

In the pages that follow, we frame the issues that are important to *crea+e's* collective orientation, its mission, and how it operates. Then, we describe the specific issues that this collective is grappling with by chronicling three interventions the group has undertaken. They illuminate how the coalition engages in critical, creative, and constructive practice. In the conclusion, we reflect upon *crea+e* as an example of how collectives are uniquely situated to resist co-optation by institutions, like the ones noted earlier, and insist on joy in the pursuit of justice.

From "I" to "We" in Two Registers

reg·is·ter | \ ˈre-jə-stər[1]

1. the compass or range of a voice or an instrument
2. a part of this range produced in the same way and having the same quality

Some coalitions are merely assemblies of individuals, each striving for autonomy and recognition as a particular entity atomized and separate from its environment. Others are based on shared identity, a sense of self-sameness. *crea+e* is different from both of these orientations. It is a coalition that was born out of creative solidarity, people working "to reveal new horizons, against which we might not only imagine, but also produce new ways of being together" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012, p. 58). Here we frame the manner of our disruptive coalition building through two registers and show how each is part of a genealogy comprising the Guerilla Girls and Combahee River Collective.

Register 1: Laughing Together

crea+e brings an attitude of play and an insistence on pleasure when tackling the very serious problem of racism. This first register of disruption is a tactical/tactile one. Laughter can be invigorating for those who fight against exploitation, degradation, and exclusion, and it helps us heal from the pain of injustice (brown, 2019). Play and pleasure come through in the way the group employs humor, code switching, and dissensus throughout its work. One important forebear who paved the way for playful tactics is the Guerilla Girls, a group of feminist activist artists. Its membership has included up to 55 people, each participating for different lengths of time. The people behind the Guerilla Girls exercise collective agency by remaining unnamed as individuals. They speak as one. Their anonymity is presented in a humorous way. They always wear gorilla masks in public and for staged interventions (note the gorilla/guerilla word play). This tactic keeps the focus on the group's core issue--the marginalization and exploitation of women and people of color in the visual arts--rather than on the identity of the person under the mask. It is a way to have fun, too.

Guerilla Girls also combine humor with facts as a strategy to critique bias and injustice in politics, art, film, and pop culture. In *crea+e's* (2020) article, "*Art Education in Crisis: A Critical Race Studies Response to Endemic Complacency*," published in the Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education, a similar approach was used. It mixes academic argument, poetry, and idiomatic expression, along with personal reflection on lived experience. When crea+e speaks out on matters of racism, it harnesses the power of the various expressions, thoughts, and experiences within the collective and expresses them through an equally modulated aesthetic. This aesthetic, which is described in the aforementioned article as dropping beats, refuses to erase, smooth out, or subordinate differences in voice. crea+e speaks in a polyvocal style that mirrors what it is to build an intellectual and social movement.

Register 2: Disobedient Discourse

To speak loudly on issues of racial justice (or injustice as is often the reality) necessitates pushing against the limits of acceptable discourse. *crea+e's* general orientation is toward experimentation rather than conformity that typifies life in institutions; risk-taking over complacency that upholds the status quo; collaboration ahead of individuation that attaches rewards to individual productivity; and joyous resistance to overcome silent submission. These values reverberate through the second register of disruption, which concerns how *crea+e* chooses to communicate. Media theorist Marshall McLuhan (1964) once wrote, "The medium is the message" (p. 7). Taking this lesson to heart, *crea+e* considers carefully how, when and where to publish their work, that is to say, *make their work public*. Often the strategic use of publishing leads the group to break

1 https://www.dictionary.com/browse/register

with modernist formal conventions. Indeed, the way *crea+e* writes is intentionally disobedient to the structures and rules that say knowledge production must look this way or that way (e.g., *crea+e*, 2020), particularly in academic spaces. This disobedience challenges readers', reviewers' and editors' tacit racial knowledge, which is often tethered to an unconscious racial bias toward that which most closely approximates the shifting signifier of whiteness (Morrison, 1992).

crea+e has looked to the Combahee River Collective, formed in 1974 by Black feminists as a source of inspiration. Four years later, in a document titled Combahee River Collective Statement, the group articulated its commitment to analysis of and struggle against interlocking racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppressions. *crea+e's* agenda intersects with that of the Combahee River Collective, but beyond that, *crea+e* also draws inspiration from the group's dialogic approach to knowledge construction. In a similar fashion, *crea+e* insists on publishing its ideas and critiques as a collective, not as individuals or individually named co-authors. This is a purposeful strategy. Individual naming is not consistent with the ethics of *crea+e* that are rooted in radical care and movement building. Publishing as a collective and refusing to name names subverts the codes and conventions of White male dominated neoliberal institutions, including corporate and academic publishers, that treat knowledge as individual property, rather than a common good.

Free Forms of Critical-Creative-Constructive Intervention

> **Chord:** The harmony at a given moment. Loosely, a group of 3 or more notes played together.
> **Free:** Without rules. Especially, improvising without regard to the harmony/chord changes, or without any harmony/chord changes.

In amplifying collective knowledge, *crea+e* challenges the harmony of academia. Our range becomes far and deep. Multiple voices speak as one. Chords are strung together without rules or restrictions. Here we chronicle three critical-creative-constructive interventions, free form interruptions to the continued endemic complacency in the arts in education.

Free Form, 2019

The first of our critical-creative-constructive interventions drew from ancestral ways of being and healing in, with and for community. "The Gathering," as we came to call it, sought to define our collective "we." *crea+e* wanted to know who was like us - Black, tired, Brown, frustrated and in need of community - out in the arts education world. And we wanted to feel joy. Together. The Gathering was an underground party held during the National Art Education Association (NAEA) Conference in March of 2019. *crea+e* utilized visual and embodied data collection and dissemination, employing an old survival technique, scanning the room for who here is us. *>>>Head nod<<<Cheek kisses>>> Deep bows<<<*

We drew on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call for "creative maladjustment" in our desire and need to find each other, be free and bold together. As educator Herbert Kohl (1994) writes:

> Creative maladjustment consists of breaking social patterns that are morally reprehensible, taking conscious control of one's place in the environment, and readjusting the world one lives in based on personal integrity and honesty--that is, it consists of learning to survive with minimal moral and personal compromise in a thoroughly compromised world and of not being afraid of planned and willed conflict, if necessary. It also means searching for ways of not being alone in a society where the mythology of individualism negates integrity and leads to isolation and self mutilation. (para. 10)

Drawing on the 1930 painting, "American Gothic" by Grant Wood, we created a series of flyers to advertise the event (Figure 1). The flyers remixed the original White husband and wife characters to Black, Latinx and Asian celebrities and musical artists (Figure 2). Titled "*Our Typa Gothic*," the flyers listed the location, Darryl's Corner Bar and Kitchen, a local Black-owned establishment. The flyer vaguely explained the purpose of The Gathering "*After you fill your belly, come fill your soul*" and included a brown ribbon. Participants were encouraged to wear the ribbon to "*signify you are an art educator and ready to party*" (Figure 3). The flyers did not explicitly signal it was a gathering for People of Color (POC) - just like certain art classrooms do not explicitly signal they have a preference for White male European artists, but you know, you can tell (Figure 4). Organized by *crea+e* and fellow co-conspirators, flyers were anonymously and strategically distributed in spaces frequented by people of color at the NAEA Annual Convention. Those included the Committee on Multicultural Concerns business meeting and various Black, Brown and other scholars' of color presentations. The Gathering relied on word of mouth versus many of the other gatherings and parties hosted at the convention that require a formal invitation, a university affiliation, or the "right" credentials (e.g., a PhD). News of The Gathering spread via the mouths of those who are typically silenced within the arts in education, people of color.

At The Gathering, live music played, drinks were plentiful, and conversations were loud. There was joy, laughter, dancing, libations,

and liberation. The Gathering consisted of students, teachers, professors and artists. The Gathering was intergenerational, tenured and non-tenured. The Gathering was thick with Black, Brown, Asian and Latinx faces. Some came to network but eventually learned to let go, put down the mask, show up, and just be. Those in attendance wondered who threw this party, who was the leader here and who was setting the social norms. People were looking for a head for the body, being so used to things being orchestrated in these very top down ways. The Gathering demonstrated a different organizational structure in which no leader could be identified, everyone was able to be in the space without direction on just how to be. The Gathering was our first experiment in intentional community, in what it would look like to build and honor the radical community. The Gathering became a space where the typical performances were not required and that felt like freedom.

Figure 1: *Free Form 2019 Our Typa Gothic Lil Kim + Biggie*

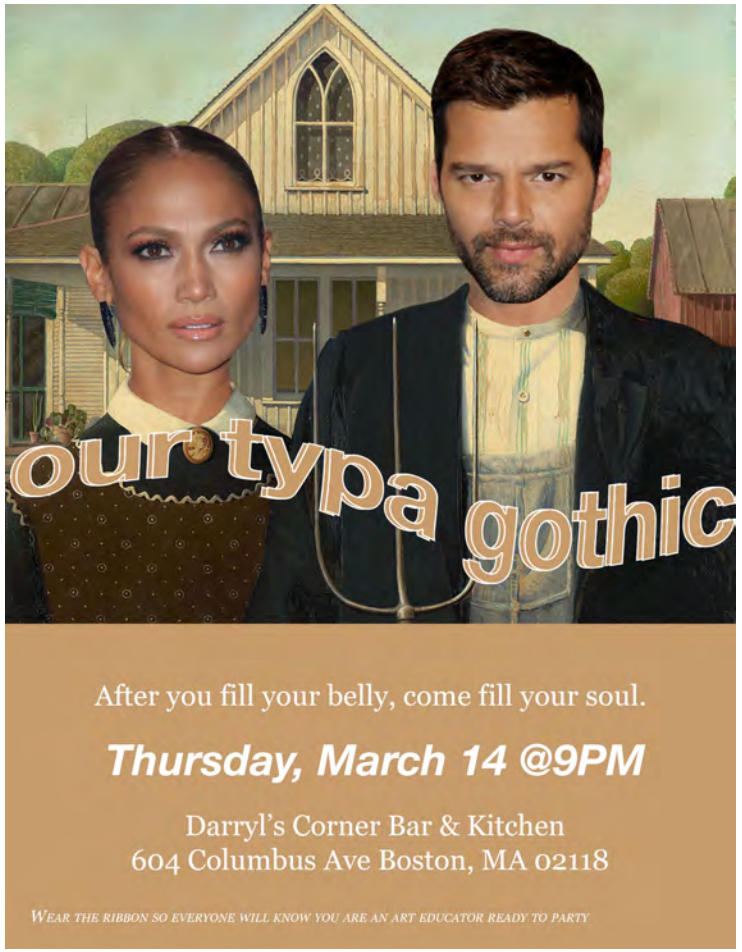


Figure 2: *Free Form 2019 Our Typa Gothic JLo + Ricki*

Figure 3*: Free Form 2019 Ribbon*

Figure 4: *Free Form 2019 Our Typa Gothic Jennie + Kang Daniel*

Free Form, 2020

Our next critical-creative-constructive intervention was the "Color Theory: Whose Map Is it Anyway?" (Figure 5 and Figure 6), a counter flyer created in response to the existing "Mapping the Possibilities in Art Education Research" promotional flyer depicting the headshots of seven White-presenting research experts as viewable at NAEA.[2] We focused our critique on the NAEA flyer promoting the Art Education Research Commission Online Forum in 2020. Our counter flyer is a visual provocation to decenter whiteness in art educational research discourses that force and create racial hierarchies in the knowledge-making process. White dominance in art educational research has persistently silenced and omitted the voices and scholarship of Black and Brown scholars and other scholars of color who dedicate themselves to decolonial and anti-racism research for many years. The counter flyer advanced a set of research directions for art education. As identified through its marketing materials, the event largely excluded art education scholars of color, which begged the question: Whose voice and perspective matters when determining future directions for art education research? Many art education scholars of color are leading the research on issues of racial equity and anti-racist art teaching. They bring an important ontological and epistemological orientation to the field. Yet, their absence in the forum signifies the privileging of White voices and a formation of a disciplinary canon that is always already framed by whiteness (Scheurich & Young, 1997). The flyer developed by crea+e is epistemic resistance to the injustice that occurs in muting the voice, views, and ideas of Black, Brown, and other scholars of color in the research field (Medina, 2013).

Responding to this White-centered event, the *crea+e* event, titled *Color Theory: Whose Map Is it Anyway?* was our critical-creative-constructive interruption of the White dominant research space. It reconfigured the slate of scholars in the original promotional flyer using seven endarkened SuperHeroes. These new Black and Brown Superheroes--including Misty Knight, Question, Colleen Wing, Shakti, Black Panther, Storm, and Verb--signified a space for a new mapping of art education research possibilities that do not reinforce White dominance and racial hierarchies within research. First, we critically view that White-centered art educational space parallels the existing dominant SuperHero rhetoric of the comic world in which Whiteness is comfortably grounded, and racial hierarchy and White privilege are naturalized. We counter the dominant White Superhero's weak curriculum of diversity and inclusion that has grabbed a surface level of understanding of race and racism and treated Black, Brown, and WoC as merely accessories to serve as White futurity.

2 https://www.arteducators.org/learn-tools/need-to-know-webcasts

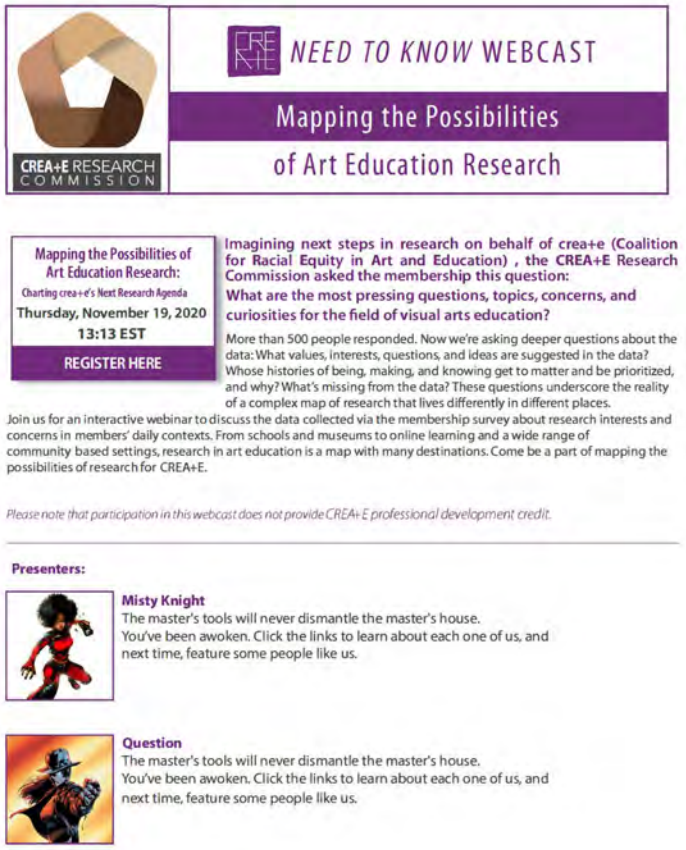


Figure 5: *Free Form 2020 Color Theory Whose Map Is it Anyway?*

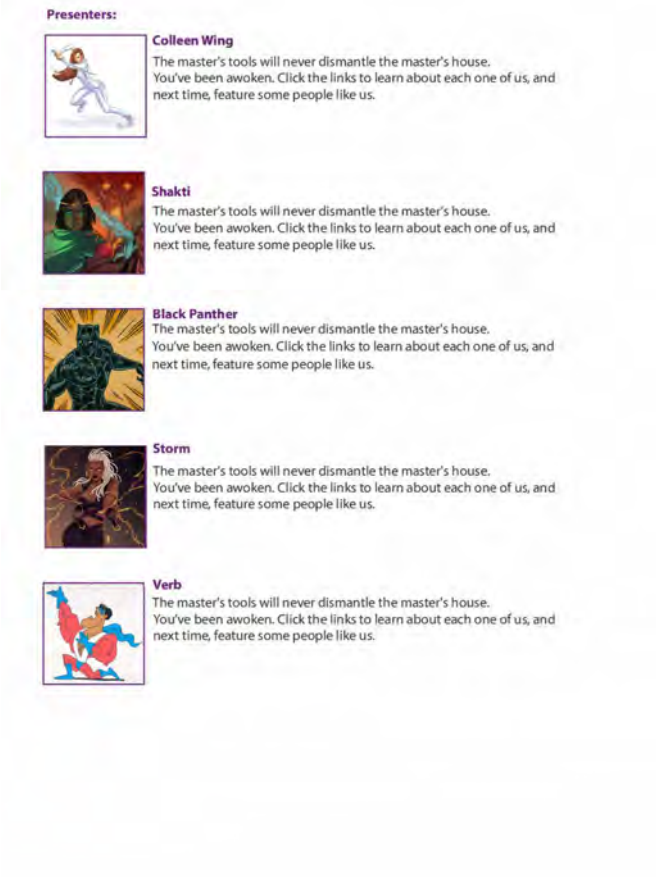


Figure 6: *Free Form 2020 Color Theory Whose Map Is it Anyway?*

Refusing such a weak curriculum, we bring Black and Asian comic characters back to the center stage, rather than the dominant superhero tropes that treat the characters as merely comic relief niche or their roles as helpful sidekicks for the White heroes. The Black, Brown, and WoC superhero(ine)s we chose carry self-confidence, strong power and voice, brilliant mind, and power of healing wounds, and spirit of solidarity to flip the White dominant script. Centering The Black, Brown, and WoC superhero(in)s signals our envision and action with a new map of the art educational research to highlight Black, Brown, and WoC's perspectives, views, and voices as center toward racial equity.

Free Form, 2021

crea+e's most recent critical-creative-constructive intervention, "Kitchen Table Conversations: A Graduate Mentoring Series" (KTC) (Figure 7), continues to be inspired by de-centering logics of White dominance in art education. KTC is a monthly webinar series and intimate space, targeted to serve the needs and interests of Black, Brown, and other graduate students of color in the arts in education. Conceived from enduring traditions of "gathering," *crea+e* was interested in extending prior gathering moments by conjuring a space for graduate students, to serve as an invitation for ritual, sharing and sustenance.

Immediately we conspired the idea of the kitchens, in general and the kitchen table, specifically. Far more than a simple flat surface on which to dine, the kitchen table can be thought of as the heartbeat of any personal gathering. It's a place to talk, connect and reconnect; and depending on the type of conversation, disconnect. We could all recall spending time around kitchen tables and, at some point, long to recreate special memories shared with family and friends around this seemingly mundane object.

It seems the tradition of gathering in the kitchen has endured over the years, and even in today's contemporary world, this modest table continues to be the center for all sorts of activity; and it's not difficult to understand why —meals are prepared and shared around it, school work is completed under someone's watchful eye, board games and card games bring about playful competition. And when we invite others into our homes, we often gravitate into the kitchen to keep company and naturally sit at the table to relax and play with us. Gathering around the table allows the space to unplug from other distractions and sometimes offers time to imagine the possibilities of our lives; in this sense, the table setting becomes the medium (Wilson, 2020).

Figure 7: *Free Form 2021 Kitchen Table Conversations*

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The KTC series was conceived out of initial conversations with Black, Brown, and other graduate students of color in early November of 2020 and with the understanding that the arts in education are inherently loaded with racial logics and assumptions, which necessarily influence the Black, Brown and other graduate students of color experience in and through the processes of teaching and learning. Following these logics, we understood that Black, Brown, and other graduate students of color in the arts and art education encounter specific challenges navigating white dominated graduate programs that their White counterparts do not. Our graduate school memories of being the "solo" Black, Brown, or other student of color (or one of two) and the challenges associated with locating other POC students in our programs fueled our determination to mobilize our plans to organize this intervention.

To these ends, *crea+e* agreed that POC students would benefit from a strategic mentorship campaign via recurring monthly Zoom gatherings. By this time, we had experienced almost 10 months of social-distancing and isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we were decisive in moving toward a goal of creating a communal space where students could come together and learn with and from other POC creative professionals and emerging scholars.

POC students were identified across institutions, nationally, emailed a copy of the flyer and asked to opt in by registering. Approximately 40 POC students registered for KTC, demonstrating a clearing yearning

for the space. In order to know where students desired guidance, we created a survey to assess their interests. We learned that students were interested in topics that included, but were not limited to, taking care of mental health in graduate school; getting the job while POC; navigating whiteness in the content and the classroom; building collectives; allies and co-conspirators and writing; and teaching and researching about and for POC.

KTC was launched in 2021 on a Friday in January and convened monthly for up to 90 minutes per meeting. Thematically targeted, the gatherings online are often peppered with mini career stories from professional creatives of color in the arts and education along with knowledge that many students are unlikely to receive from advisers and mentors who are not racially marginalized and minoritized. KTC encourages students to connect with one another and with more experienced scholars of color in the arts and art education using the small group breakout functions. To round out each session, a post-gathering, called "Barbershop, Bi Bim Bop, Bodega," serves as a lounge space that extends the conversations with a relaxed, open-ended atmosphere.

Social Practice of Freedom

crea+e's collectivity is a conceptual enclave where freedom resounds. It materializes in the rumble of our voices, the pounding of our steps, the call-and-response in our teaching, the pulse behind our making. This freedom is deep, not shallow. Our creative trouble with dissensual methods and improvisational forms is the genetic progeny of a 400-year old social practice of freedom that keeps us keeping on. Terrors wrought of numbing white noise, evidencing the wounds of genocide, colonial settlements, and possession begin to fade in the distance.

soothing // BROWN NOISE // soothing

Freeing us from the fact of enslavements. We laugh. Risking sovereignty of our bodies and minds. Gathering together, in kinship. Embraced by the ancestors. Much like in antebellum America, when enslaved African people secretly gathered to practice joy and faith, braiding together all the parts of themselves, collectives serve as hush harbors. We heal first in community and build solidarity from the enclave. In the sanctity of each other, we revive. Mend. Reconcile what was, what is with what will be. Here, without the white gaze, we look at each other and remember. Our words are our spirituals. We are free. Let us behave accordingly.

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Art Build Workers: Community Building through Collective Art Activism

Art Build Workers[1]

"Before the march and before the strike there is the art build!"
Art Build Workers' Motto

The Art Build Workers (ABW), Jeanette Arellano, Joe Brusky, Kim Cosier, Paul Kjelland, Nicolas Lampert, Claudio Martinez, and Josie Osborne, are a group of seven artists, designers, photographers and educators who are based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Our collective work began in 2016 as the activist art scene in Milwaukee started heating up in response to the killing of Dontre Hamilton, an unarmed Black man by police, immigration issues, teacher union activism, and climate activism. There was a need for a form of art organizing that would support activist organizations to harness the power of art to bring about change. Over time, we saw in each other a shared commitment to social justice, a drive to service, diverse organizational and creative skills, and an over-the-top work ethic that made it possible to do this work.

Since then, we have been working locally and traveling around the country organizing multi-day community-based events called art builds in collaboration with unions and other social justice organizations. Art builds are a form of creative collective action in which we partner with community organizations to create artwork, such as screen printed patches, flags, and picket signs, and hand-painted banners including 24' parachute banners. The artwork makes visible the messages of social transformation our partners are working to promote. Our goals are twofold: to support movements by amplifying their messages through visual art, media, and archiving, and to build community through creative collective action (Lampert, 2016, 2017).

A Brief History of the Art Build Workers

In 2016, Nicolas Lampert invited renowned San Francisco Bay CA area activist artist and art build organizer, David Solnit, to come to Milwaukee to talk about his work as part of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Artists Now! lecture series (Lampert, 2016). Solnit is an art organizer who is committed to racial, climate, and social justice. He has led high-impact art builds in many places including Paris,France, Seattle Washington, Oakland California, and

1 Jeanette Arellano, Joe Brusky, Kim Cosier, Paul Kjelland, Nicolas Lampert, Claudio Martinez and Josie Osborne

the Standing Rock Resistance Camp in North Dakota. Solnit agreed to come only if we would host a multi-day art build during which he could share his organizing knowledge and skills in a more hands-on fashion. Having worked beside Solnit at art builds around the world, Nicolas knew how powerful it would be to local activists and artists to have Solnit lead an art build in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Figure 1. *David Solnit (on the left) with Milwaukee-based art teacher and activist, John Fleissner, with a projection of one of John's banner designs that was later traced and painted.* Photo by Nicolas Lampert

Nicolas reached out to local activist artists Pete Railand and Sue Simensky Bietila to help coordinate the first Milwaukee build. Each of them reached out to a different organization with a goal of having representation from a diverse cross section of Milwaukee. Nicolas worked with Voces de la Frontera, an organization that works on immigration justice reform efforts by growing and mobilizing grassroots activism. Pete reached out to the Coalition for Justice, an anti-racist organization started by the family of Dontre Hamilton, a young Black Milwaukeean who was murdered by a White police

officer because he was sleeping on a bench in front of a Starbucks. Sue made plans with Citizens Acting For Rail Safety (C.A.R.S.), an environmental group that is mostly made up of White people who have been focusing on the hazard of oil transport by trains. They all tapped into their network of activist artist friends who joined with community members and got to work (Lampert, 2016). It was beautiful to have everyone come together to make art that was meant to make the world more racially, environmentally, economically just.

Figure 2. *Community members construct frames for screen-printed picket signs designed by Pete Railaind. Black Lives Matter in background designed by Nicloas Lampert.* Photo by Joe Brusky[2]

The work that goes into an art build is intense. Pre-build duties include coordinating with partner groups on messaging and logistics, working with artists and designers to create designs, ordering hundred yard bolts of unbleached muslin, 24' children's play parachutes, ink, wood, paint, brushes, and other supplies, burning screens, reaching out to volunteers to help during the build, securing the space, tracing parachute banner designs, and so forth. During an art build it is common to work twelve to fourteen hours a day, usually Friday through Sunday. The work is physically demanding, those who are able pitch in to set up stations for all of the different types of artwork that will be produced, lugging art supplies, drop cloths, tables, sawhorses, and sheets of plywood into position.

2 For more photo documentation by Joe, please see his Flickr sites: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KrjgBt9PfdVGtfYBi1RH4WJTVxWccZSi/edit and https://www.flickr.com/photos/126164815@N04/albums/with/72157709545915927

Figure 3. *Aerial shot of an early art build. Banner designs by Raoul Deal and Nicolas Lampert.* Photo by Joe Brusky.

Solnit taught us invaluable lessons about organizing these types of events as well as his practical approach to design, summed up by his frequent proclamation "If they can't read it we can't win it!" which reminds us to keep visual messaging concise and designs uncluttered. The work we made in that original Milwaukee art build included parachute and regular banners, screen printed picket signs, and a large, papier mache blue heron puppet. The artwork was immediately deployed by the partners in actions across the state of Wisconsin. As has been our habit ever since, many of the artists joined our partners in the streets, putting the art to work.

That first art build ignited a fire in the activist art community in Milwaukee and we soon organized a follow up art build with the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA), which is the local union representing education workers in the city's public schools (Lampert, 2017). This is when our team started to gel. We emerged as the diehards who were in it for the long haul. As Joe Brusky put it "everyone is a really hard worker with a passion for justice and a super high sense of efficacy for real change." The MTEA art build is where the seeds of our work with unions nationally were planted through Joe's documentation and dissemination on social media.

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All parents, students, and community members welcome!

Figure 4. *Poster for MTEA Art Build* with artwork by Sue Simensky Bietila.

We began working together regularly after the MTEA build, but it wasn't until we started working with the National Education Association (NEA) that we had to get ourselves organized. Ironically, even though we are all anti-capitalist, it was money that forced us to choose a name and form a limited liability corporation (LLC). We had always worked on a voluntary basis with our local partners, but we started being paid for our work when we began partnering with unions. In 2018, prior to our first national engagement with the Conference on Racial and Social Justice and the NEA Representatives Assembly, we met to discuss what formalizing might mean for us collectively and individually.

Josie, Claudio, Joe, Nicolas, Paul and Kim met in Paul's studio. First, we discussed what we would call ourselves, leaving the uncomfortable money talk until later in the meeting. We decided on the name, *Art Build Workers*, in the same way we come to most of our decisions, through dialogue. We felt the name reflected what we do as well as our alignment with workers and social justice unions. Paul, who had experience setting up non-profits and LLCs in the past, walked us through what each would entail. In the end we voted to go the LLC route because we did not want to have to deal with having a governing board and the rest that non-profit status would require. Each of us affirmed our commitment to continuing in the group and contributed some funds toward the LLC. Jeanette, who had started working with us in earnest a bit later than the rest, was asked to join the LLC in 2019.

Who We Are

Many people contribute significantly to art builds in Milwaukee, but we came to see in each other the important knowledge and skills, commitment to justice, capacity for empathy, and over the top work ethic that is necessary to make an art build work. Each of us brings complementary skills to the table and we all share a goofy sense of humor, which has helped us stay close through the highs and the lows of this work. Following are brief bios of each of the individuals who make up the collective.

Jeanette Arellano is a public school art teacher and activist who identifies as a Latinx cisgender mujerx, straight person. She joyfully teaches art at la Escuela Elemental Hayes Bilingüe/Hayes Bilingual Elementary School. Jeanette also teaches citizenship classes to adults through Voces de la Frontera, and derives great happiness in her students' success. Like everyone in the Art Build Workers collective, Jeanette is part of Voces de los Artistas, an art-affinity group established in 2016 that works in collaboration with Voces de la Frontera. Voces de los Artistas has over one hundred member artists. If that weren't enough, shortly after the pandemic began Jeanette also

co-founded Ayuda Mutua MKE, an all volunteer collective that was formed to address food justice for residents on the city's South Side, many of whom are undocumented and ineligable for the meager support that has so far been offered from the federal government (for more on the visionary work of Ayuda Mutua MKE, see on https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2021/01/27/ayuda-mutua-mke-offers-south-side-food-pantry/). Jeanette is also very active in the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA). Along with a group of similarly dedicated art teachers, she formed an art education advocacy committee through MTEA, which successfully lobbied the school board to commit to better supporting students and art teachers in the district. In the Art Build Workers, Jeanette creates designs, organizes volunteers, and works on the banner painting crew.

Joe Brusky is a public school teacher, activist, and award- winning photographer. He identifies as a white, cisgender, straight ally. Joe works as Social Media Membership Organizer for MTEA. His position, which provides full-time release from the classroom, enables Joe to organize his fellow workers using his camera and social media – documenting their workdays and sharing their stories. He also uses his creative skills to fight for justice and equality in other ways. For example, he is a core member of the Overpass Light Brigade, a collaborative public art project in which illuminated messages are held aloft in public spaces to raise the profile of important issues. Joe serves as the organization's primary photographer, and he has supported the development of an international network of light-brigade groups. Joe has documented movements in Wisconsin and beyond. These include not only various aspects of the labor movement, but also struggles for racial, social, economic, and environmental justice. However, some of his most iconic work focuses on the immigrant rights' movement in Wisconsin, where he has captured numerous marches, rallies, public hearings, and other events. Joe is called "The People's Photographer" and documentation and dissemination of images and video is his primary work in our collective.

Kim Cosier has served as Director of Community Engagement and is an art education professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). She identifies as a non-binary queer, white ally. She has been deeply engaged in teacher activism through various Milwaukee-based teacher activist groups. She is founder and director of the Milwaukee Visionaries Project, an award-winning media literacy and production program for middle and high school youth in Milwaukee. As an anti-racist, gender queer researcher and teacher, Kim's work focuses on art and education for social justice, particularly related to entangled (Knight, 2007) cultural and social factors including race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and class. She has published books and articles on these subjects including *Rethinking Sexism,*

Gender and Sexuality, which won an American Library Association Stonewall Award. She believes in the power of art to create change in community and sees works of the imagination as essential to building a better, more just world. Kim organizes logistics behind the scenes, writes grants to support art builds, creates designs, and is part of the banner painting crew.

Paul Kjelland is an interdisciplinary artist who identifies as a white, straight, cisgender, ally. Paul works collectively with many groups, including: the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, a worker-owned printmaking cooperative of thirty artists in North America that formed in 2007; ReciproCity, a Milwaukee- based collective established in 2012 that works at the intersection of art, architecture, urban sustainability, and a socially-just version of community redevelopment; Climate Prints – a website/activist infrastructure project that shares downloadable graphics on Climate Justice and puts this work directly into movements. Paul's roles in ABW are wide-ranging and include bookkeeping, working with partner organizations to co-create designs and messaging, handling logistics behind the scenes, driving supplies to out of town builds, designing artwork, banner painting, and screenprinting.

Nicolas Lampert is an interdisciplinary artist and author whose work focuses on themes of social justice and ecology. He identifies as a white, cisgender, straight ally. His artwork is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Library of Congress, and over fifty-five archives and special collections across the US and Canada. Like Paul, Nicolas is part of Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, ReciproCity, and Climate Prints. His first book *A People's Art History of the United States: 250 Years of Activist Art and Artists Working in Social Justice Movements* was published by The New Press in 2013 and is part of the People's History Series edited by Howard Zinn. Nicolas is a faculty member in the Department of Art and Design at UWM with a joint appointment in Printmaking and Writing and Critical Thinking. His roles in ABW are many, along with Paul, Nicolas works ahead of the builds with partner organizations to organize messaging, designs, and logistics behind the scenes, he coordinates work with artists from other cities when we travel, he blogs about our work, designs and coordinates revisions of artwork, screen prints and joins in banner painting.

Claudio Martinez is a graphic designer who identifies as Hispanic, cisgender, straight ally. Over the years of working with corporate clients he's learned that being in the trenches with fellow artists working on political artwork and meeting like-minded misfits fulfills his soul immensely in ways his day job does not, so he made a leap and went part-time so that he could have more time to do work that matters to him. Claudio dedicates much of his free-time creating

artwork for Voces de los Artistas and he has recently been hired as a designer on a part-time basis at Voces de la Frontera. Claudio also designs materials for UWM's ArtsECO program. Claudio's roles in ABW include a great deal of designing and working on the banner painting crew.

Josie Osborne is an interdisciplinary artist, educator, curator and activist. She identifies as a queer, cisgender white ally. She has been a long-time advocate of art education and the connections/intersections between contemporary art, art history, political/social movements and social justice issues. As Senior Lecturer and Director of the Art and Design Department's First Year Program in the Peck School of the Arts at UWM, Osborne helps to connect new and continuing students, faculty and staff with issues and opportunities that engage them with community. With her wife, Kim Cosier, she is co-creator and co-PI for ArtsECO, a program that works to recruit, develop and support art teachers as changemakers. Service to her community and on non-profit and advisory boards and for local non-profits has been important to Josie over the past 22 years. Since 2011 Josie's more contemplative and quieter studio practice has taken a back seat to activism and community building through art builds. In ABW, she works on logistics behind the scenes, coordinates volunteer helpers, and is a core member of the banner painting crew.

Who Are Our Partners?

The Art Build Workers collaborate with social justice-based organizations locally and nationally. Here in Milwaukee, we work most often with an incredibly powerful immigrant justice organization called Voces de la Frontera (see figure ?). We have also worked regularly with MTEA, our local teachers' union. MTEA has now started hosting their own art builds, which we love to see happening. Other partners include Youth Climate Action Team MKE and the People's Climate Coalition, which have reached out to us on several occasions to make work ahead of planned actions. We have also collaborated with youth from March for Our Lives MKE, Take Back the Night organizers on UWM's campus, and other local groups.

Nationally, we regularly collaborate with the National Education Association (NEA), which is the largest union in the country with an estimated membership of over 2.7 million members. NEA organizer, Nate Gunderson, saw the photographs Joe took of the MTEA art build and reached out to Joe to see if we might like to take our show on the road. ABW has since partnered with NEA and union locals across the country including in Los Angeles (see https://vimeo.com/306085680) and Oakland, California before their historic strikes in 2019 and Prince George's County just outside of Washington, DC ahead of a statewide action in Maryland. We have also organized massive art

builds at NEA's annual Representatives Assembly and Conference on Racial and Social Justice in several cities where we also presented our work in order to spread the gospel of the power of art in social justice unionism.

Figure 5. *Thousands of people marching through the streets of Waukesha, Wisconsin, on May Day. The gigantic 100-yard long by 10 feet wide banner made the march seem even bigger! The banner reads" "They Tried to Bury Us. They Didn't Know We Were Seeds." Banner design, Claudio Martinez*, photo by Joe Brusky

Figure 6. *Aerial shot of Oakland CA Art Build. Designs by Kim Cosier (based on Emory Douglas' design with permission) Claudio Matinez, Favianna Rodriquez and Nicolas Lampert, and David Solnit.* Photo by Joe Brusky.

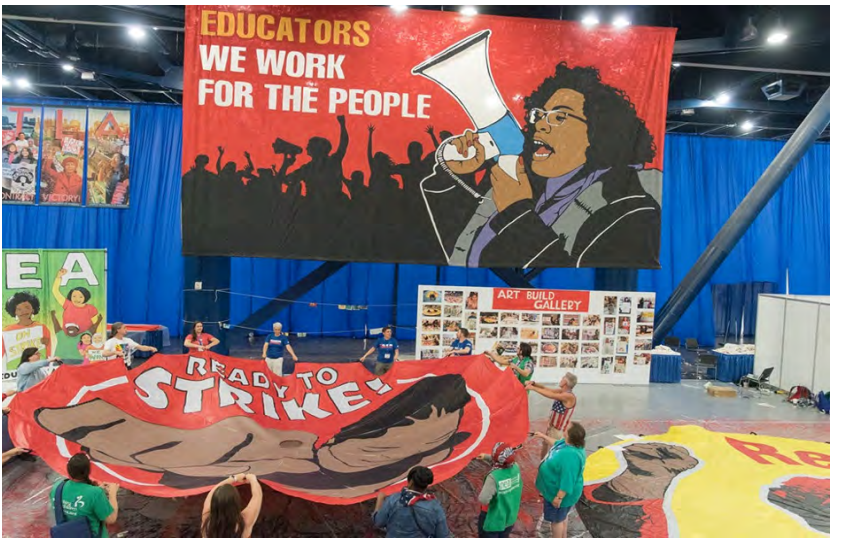

Figure 7. *A group at the NEA Representatives' Assembly meeting in Houston, TX helps dry parachute banner designed by Jeanette Arellano. Other banners designed by Nicolas Lampert, Paul Kjelland, and Claudio Martinez.*

Figure 8. *Bird's eye view from NEA Representative's Assembly in Houston. Banner designs by Jeanette Arellano, Paul Kjelland, Nicolas Lampert, and Claudio Martinez*, photo by Joe Brusky

In addition to NEA and affiliated locals, we also partnered with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the nation's second largest teachers' union in Minneapolis/St. Paul and Chicago. The Chicago build opened up new avenues for collaboration since it was a combination of the teachers' union and Service Employees International Union (SEUI). Through SEIU we have since connected to the folx at Fight for $15 and we have done several builds to support their work, including designing and constructing thirty unique silhouettes of protestors that we drove down and installed outside of the McDonald's headquarters in Chicago when Covid 19 prevented an in-person action. This was just one of the ways we have been creatively addressing the changes brought on by the pandemic.

Our most recent builds have included fewer volunteers because of

Covid19 safety protocols, but we have managed to keep the art build momentum going. We partnered with an activist group in Laredo, Texas, that are taking actions to hold the Biden administration to its promise not to build more on the in-progress border wall. Banners were designed by artists in Laredo and sent to us to trace, paint, and ship because of our reputation for getting things done.

A recent build was a partnership with a national consortium of immigrant rights groups. The Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) is a project of Community Change, a national organization dedicated to improving the lives of low-income people and people of color (for more on their work, see https://www.fairimmigration.org/mission). FIRM was organizing a nationwide action across 34 cities. They learned of our work through Voces de la Frontera and reached out to us to design, paint, and ship banners ahead of the action. We look forward to working with all of these partners again as we collectively fight against White supremacy and its systems of privilege and oppression. We are gearing up for another art build with Voces de la Frontera in early April!

Why we are a Collective

In order to include everyone's voices in this article, Kim developed some questions and asked ABW members to respond in writing. What emerged was a story of seven individuals who each had personal experiences that lead them to want to work for change. Because of local, national and global challenges to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we each felt an intense desire to make art that makes a difference. Some of us had been part of formalized collectives already. Nicolas and Paul, for example, have collaborated for years and were already part of several collectives including Justseeds (https://justseeds.org/about/), a decentralized network of artists who use printmaking as a form of political action. Joe was already deeply engaged in the Overpass Light Brigade (OLB http://overpasslightbrigade.org), which is a group that was founded in Milwaukee during the Wisconsin Uprising[3] by Joe and our colleagues Lisa Moline and Lane Hall. Nicolas also named the Wisconsin Uprising as one of the catalysts for turning toward collective action.

Others in the group had only ever worked alone before the art build movement in Milwaukee took hold. Claudio, for example, said "I

3 In early 2011, thousands of education and other public workers and their allies took to the streets in Madison Wisconsin in sub-zero temperatures. They occupied the state capital building for over a month to protest Act 10, a union-busting bill that eliminated collective bargaining for public workers and made devastating cuts to education. Inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Tunisa, the Wisconsin Uprising predated the more well-known Occupy Wall Street (Yates, 2012). It has inspired many to join fights for social justice.

on me to take a more proactive role in activism after the election of Donald Trump." Responding to a question about why we are a collective, Claudio described the reasons behind our work beautifully when he said:

> We come from diverse backgrounds and with different fields of expertise: we are educators, photographers, graphic designers, and artists, but we all share the same vision for a more equitable future; we fight for the underdog in our society and as a collective, we have power in our actions and voice.

Joe affirmed Claudio's assertion, stating "We are a collective in many ways. Each of us brings individual artistic talents and experiences and we all come from unique backgrounds that when paired together are a force for change."

Jeanette wrote "We are a collective because we see the strength in working together. We bring strength to each other, we learn and grow together, and we teach one another how to be allies." Reflecting on her reasons for joining ABW, Josie wrote that being part of this collective has given her a "sense of hope generated by working with a diverse group of other creative people to build community around significant issues. Kim and Josie, a queer married couple, had long been active in actions organized by others, but their creative energies had previously been rather isolating. They agree with their collaborators about the power of collective creative action and see this work as feeding a spiritual longing in these difficult times. Within this work hope, love, and joy have flourished.

What drew you to the Art Build Workers Collective?

Answering this question, Joe wrote:

> As a member of an education worker labor union, I see every day what workers can collectively accomplish for our students, classrooms, and communities. The ABW is similar because each contributor brings a unique set of talents and experiences that when combined as a collective is a powerful force for justice and change.

Each of us sees the power of collective action. Josie said it was the needs of the time that drew her in, adding that she had "always been an activist, since I was a kid organizing around environmental issues or later as a young woman organizing around women's rights. I have also always loved to work hard and collectively to see what that accomplishes." She also named the Wisconsin Uprising as influential to her development as an activist, saying "we made our own signs

and showed up day after day and it was thrilling!" Josie went on to say, "when David Solnit came and shared his model of community-based art activism, I saw how all of that is key to feeling hopeful, connected and positive in these very strange and turbulent times." We all feel that sense of hope in collective action and we believe that collective power is the antidote to the concentrated power of capitalism and White supremacy.

Claudio explained what drew him to the collective by saying "Personally, I never felt more vulnerable as a minority in this country as when Donald Trump became president and denigrated people of color and the immigrant community as a whole." He came to see that "The only way to fight back was to get out of my comfort zone and use my skills as a graphic designer to create artwork and push back against some of the most egregious policies against immigrants, the environment, and unions." Paul said that having a bigger impact is what drew him to wanting to help form ABW. He went on to say "Creating more of a structure allowed us to tighten up the workflow... which in turn allows us to produce more for movements" than we would have been able to do as individual artists.

How, if at all, has ABW changed the way you think about yourself as an artist/designer?

In response to this question, Josie wrote about the ways her participation in ABW has integrated her creative output and activism, saying "In the past, my activism and studio art making had been two very separate realms in my life, more compartmentalized from each other than they are now." For Kim, being part of the collective has radically transformed her identity. Because of the nature of her academic position, she had been channeling her creative energies into scholarship and supporting the work of others through teaching and the like. Coming into the collective allowed her to reconnect with her roots as an artist and rekindle a love of making that had been dormant for some time, which has been life changing.

Paul's reflection revealed the ways his role as organizer in the group has impacted his thinking, saying:

> Working in ABW has impacted the way I think about my practice. I see my work less and less as being an individual artist producing work for movements, and more as a facilitator or organizer. This fills the same space that producing work as an individual used to. I see the infrastructure that uplifts other people's art and takes movement messaging to new places as a form of art in itself.

Nicolas echoed this shift saying "I used to think of myself as an

activist-artist. Now I often think of myself as an art organizer." He elaborates on this saying, "My priorities are listening to what the movement organizers need and making sure to uplift the work of many artists." For Joe, who's main tasks are to document through photographs and video and disseminate content on social media, being part of this collective is an extension of the work he was doing with the Overpass Light Brigade.

Jeanette had previously shared a story about how she had become disillusioned with the art world while she was a student at a private art college. She joyfully recounts how coming into this work has changed her point of view about what an artist may be, saying "I now see that an artist is not just meant to make something pretty to sit in a gallery." She goes on to say being an artist in a collective has meant that she can "give spirit and energy to support the movement and lift up our people's voices."

Claudio's response was powerful. He said that being part of this collective has been "a true life-transforming experience." He continued:

> I see myself as a more complete person (and artist) being part of ABW. Being part of the team has personally transformed my way of thinking from an isolated commercial graphic designer, who felt unfulfilled doing the work I was doing, to making genuine human connections with people from all over the country and hearing their stories, struggles and triumphs.

Claudio added "From a design perspective, it has freed me from the constant need to be perfect in my work." The differences in the ways work is accomplished in our lives now, as opposed to commercial work, prompted him to reflect, "Often the turnaround time for completion of design for social movements is quick, which doesn't leave me a lot of time to second guess myself." Claudio has found this to be liberating. We all share an intense love of the work and a strong bond of friendship with one another.

How would you describe our collective working style?

We coalesced as a collective after the first couple of art builds because we recognized in each other the capacity to lean in, work hard, and have fun doing it. To a person, each of us named these traits as significant to our work. As Claudio said "above all, everyone in the group has a strong work ethic that makes each art build possible and successful." There are many, many artists and community members who make an art build a success, but our collective has emerged as an organizing force that has been recognized by local and national organizers.

Another thread that emerged was how our group has developed a smooth method of working together. As Claudio said "I feel that our team is very in sync when we work together." Nicolas called it "harmonious." Jeanette said she would describe our style as "fluid passion and organized chaos." She says "in the end we make it happen with the power of the people and the strength of our collective members." Paul said "We play to each other's strengths and interests. Each member brings a specific expertise to the crew, we trust each other, and we work hard." He elaborated on the benefits of our working style saying "This allows us to organize builds in a way that doesn't require a level of communication that adds extra work to the process."

Our shared focus on standing back while amplifying the voices of our partners was also highlighted. As Paul put it, "At the end of the day we are working for movements with a focus on diverse voices, allowing the work to change based on the needs of movements by bringing in artists from all over to produce work." We see ourselves as building a framework upon which the good work of our partners can be seen and felt by a wide audience. Jeanette pointed out that something she values about our way of working is an "awareness to make space for BIPOC activists and artists." She goes on to say "in the end, we can make it happen with the power of the people and the strength of our collective members." Indeed, we feel proud that our little group has had a hand in many hard-won victories of our partners, from convincing the mayor not to deputize police as ICE agents, to the historic teachers' union strikes in Los Angeles and Oakland. The work of the Art Build Workers is making a difference.

Conclusion

Reflecting on our work in order to construct this article has given us a chance to articulate our process, which may help readers start their own activist art collectives. It has also affirmed and given shape to how important this work is to each of us and how we have come to rely on and love the community we have built with our partners and one another. Collective action is good for the soul and this work has created a longing in each of us for the comfort of community in these difficult times. If you ask any Art Build Worker, they will tell you that when we go for any stretch without an art build we start to crave another! We invite others to discover the joys of collective creative action.

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Five Years of Ni Santas

Joan "Zeta" Zamora
Ni Santas

Ni Santas is an all women of color art collective that started in the summer of 2016, in Boyle Heights, California. Ni Santas was created out of the need to: uplift underserved and underprivileged voices, maintain and develop sisterhood, and empower young female artists all while creating art. Ni Santas began when Andi Xoch and a friend, who wishes to remain anonymous, made a social media post inviting women to come to Self Help Graphics & Art and make art with them. Self Help Graphics & Art is a community art center and gallery where Andi Xoch was a teaching artist.

Since its inception, Ni Santas has hosted free monthly workshops to the public. In the beginning, the workshops were free because Ni Santa members would donate their own art materials and time. Later on these workshops were funded by: merchandise designed and printed by Ni Santas, fundraisers, and a private grant received in 2018. These workshops were also funded by the freelance art jobs Ni Santas began to get. In 2018 Ni Santas members began to give a percentage of their Ni Santas art jobs earnings to the collective in order to remain self-sufficient.

Ni Santas membership once peaked at 13 artists. Some of the mediums that Ni Santas have used are graffiti, painting, installations, poetry, silk screening, and altars. The collective prides itself in encouraging its artist to seek opportunities in areas of interest, whether that be personal or professional. Some of the notable opportunities that the members have engaged in are participating in various L.A. Freewaves exhibitions, live painting for the Vida television show's premiere party, and the Branded Arts' Maya Angelou Mural Festival at the Dr. Maya Angelou Community School in South Central Los Angeles. The current collective is composed of: Andi Xoch, Joan Zeta, and The Clover Signs. There is no hierarchy or positionality in the collective. Instead, we all take turns leading the different projects that come into our hands. We also take turns handling the money, emails, meetings, and social media outlets. During the COVID-19 pandemic we have hosted virtual workshops. These workshops include stenciling workshops with Chapman University's Cross Cultural Center and Harvard Latina Empowerment and Development Conference.

Ni Santas Organizing and Rituals

Figure 1: *Ni Santas member, The Clover Signs, burning sage at the beginning of a Ni Santas meeting. She was burning sage as part of a spiritual ritual to cleanse herself and the space.*
August 2, 2016.

Figure 2: *Some of the original Ni Santas members having a meeting about a Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) project. Before deciding how a project would visually look like all members would usually have a talk about it and sketch out ideas. Once these sketches were done we would try and take elements from all sketches to make sure everyone' s voice was included.*
October 13, 2016

Figure 3: *Work in progress photo of Ni Santas completing a mural at the all ages venue, The Smell, Los Angeles, California. The mural was part of an art exhibition that Ni Santas curated along with live bands and vendors. November 30, 2016*

Figure 4: *Ni Santas member, Joan "Zeta" Zamora, headed the mural project at The Smell. The goal of the mural was to make women of color more visible.*

Figure 5: *Ni Santas hosting one of several free community workshops on making stickers at Self Help Graphics, in Boyle Heights, California. In this workshop each participant designed and printed their own sticker on vinyl sticker paper. July 12, 2018.*

Figure 6: *Ni Santas' member, Andi Xoch, showing neighborhood children how to silkscreen. November 10, 2018.*

Figure 7: *Andi Xoch leading a macrame and terracotta pot painting workshop for Mother's Day. Participants were invited to create a macrame and were encouraged to give to a maternal figure in their lives.*
May 9, 2019.

Figure 8: *Attendees painting their terra cotta pot at a workshop. This intergenerational workshop had mother-daughter duos as part of its participants.*
May 9, 2019.

Working on the Dr. Maya Angelou Community School Mural Project

Figure 9: *For a better part of 2019 Ni Santas was so busy that projects would often overlap. Here we see Ni Santas members having an impromptu meeting at the back of The Clover Sign's El Camino car. While knocking out the details of a serigraph print Ni Santas also had to supervise a mural project at Maya Angelou High School, in South Central LA.*
May 14, 2019.

Figure 10: *Branded Art's mural project led by The Clover Signs at Dr.Maya Angelou High School. In this project Ni Santas were paired up with high school students to complete the project.*
May 13, 2019.

Figure 11: *Ni Santas members live printing in support of Black Lives Matter, July 2020.*

Current Ni Santa Members their own projects

Figure 12: *The Clover Signs holding a painting she created, March 2021, South Central Los Angeles.*

Figure 13: *Joan "Zeta" Zamora holding a linocut she carved during the pandemic, March 2021.*

Figure 14: *Andi Xoch standing at one of her two stores, Latinx With Plants, that she opened in 2020*

Figure 15: *With Andi Xoch being busy running two brick and mortar stores, Ni Santas is now being led by Joan "Zeta" Zamora and The Clover Signs.*

Community-Based Art Projects in San Francisco Chinatown: A Survival Strategy

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ABSTRACT

While research about contemporary Asian arts exhibited in mega museums has attracted growing attention, there is little dialogue concerning community-based art practices in everyday Asian and Asian American neighborhoods. This interview article highlights community-based art projects led by a grassroots organization, the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco (CCC), to help understand Chinatown's stories as shared and lived by the community during a challenging time. Hoi Leung, CCC's chief curator, explained how the organization mobilized art to share diverse local stories, celebrate a sense of belonging, and raise public awareness about racial justice issues within the communities it serves. To counter socially constructed assumptions about Chinatown and its residents, CCC actively develops cross-sector partnerships to centralize underrepresented voices through community-based arts and projects.

KEYWORDS: arts, Contemporary Asian American art, community-based art, art education, Anti-Asian racism, non-profit organization, Chinatown

Background

In the previous two years, the anti-Asian racism amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly disruptive for Chinatown communities in the United States. Chinatowns, as sites with predominant Asian populations, quickly became public spaces where overt racism takes place. The Chinatown communities not only struggled with a loss of foot traffic and severe economic downturn amidst lockdowns, as did the rest of the city, but additionally they faced a tremendous surge in incidents related to racial discrimination.[1] The rapid rise in verbal abuse and physical assaults directed at people of Asian origins, especially women and

1 Due to the public's biased association between Asian Americans and COVID-19, San Francisco Chinatown experienced a sharp decrease in visitors even before the city had the first confirmed case of the disease (Ho, 2020). Furthermore, Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council and Chinese for Affirmative Action have launched an online reporting website, STOP AAPI Hate, to record coronavirus-driven discrimination on March 19, 2020. The center has received 3,795 reported cases in less than a year (Jeung et al., 2021).

the elderly (Jeung, Horse, Popovic & Lim, 2021), unveiled that racism and xenophobia are still deeply embedded in our society. While the country has come a long way in moving towards racial equality with the ongoing efforts of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) groups and activists, discrimination and bias against minorities based on race and ethnic origin remain a reality.

Reflecting on historical events such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and Executive Order 9066 (Internment of Japanese Americans), the repeating cycle of anti-Asian sentiment and violence continues to impact people of Asian descent. In response to past and present systematic exclusion, grassroots organizations in Chinatowns have always played crucial roles in delivering services and providing public support to the neighborhoods they serve. During the rise of the Asian American movement in the 1960s to 1970s, Asian American activists, artists, writers, and students established a range of non-profit organizations that combined visual arts and community-based activism to lay the groundwork for the formation of Asian American identity and culture while attaining greater political power (Machida, 2008, p. 27). According to Machida (2008), these community-based arts and cultural organizations helped communicate messages regarding the pursuit of equality and justice for all to a broader audience while nurturing interracial solidarity amongst Asians and other communities of color. The non-profit sector has actively utilized community resources as a "countervailing power" (Wei, 1993, p. 10) to combat racial, political, and economic inequalities in the wake of calls for social justice. For instance, the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco (CCC), a non-profit art organization, emerged in the early 1960s at a time when the Civil Rights Movement was triggering an increase of awareness towards the pursuit of equality, and it quickly evolved into a counter-institution built to resist the dominant narrative that stigmatized the Asian immigrant communities as unassimilable foreigners.

This particular political context influenced the CCC's earlier mission: "to present and promote Chinese culture to an ever-expanding audience both here in the U.S. and internationally" (CCC, About). Initially, CCC focused on promoting contemporary artworks to break down the orientalized perception of Asian culture as archaic and traditions as static. Fast-forward to 2009, the organization has continued evolving and expanding its programs to align with its current mission of "elevating underserved communities and giving voice to equality through education and contemporary art" (CCC, About). Thus, the organization's primary goal has shifted from bridging the East and West to community-centered activities.

I (Bao) was working on a research project seeking to understand how grassroots organizations in Chinatowns operationalize the arts to serve the community, and I have identified the CCC as a perfect match for a pilot study. The following interview featuring Hoi Leung, the chief curator at CCC, was originally performed as part of my qualitative data collection for the study. During the conversation, Leung shared her experience of curating community-based art projects in San Francisco's Chinatown. The dialogue also sheds light on how CCC serves as a versatile platform for community expression and advocates for racial justice work through the lens of art and art education across the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The Interview[2]

Xiaoxiao: Hi, Hoi. Could you tell me more about your work as a curator at CCC?

Hoi: Sure. I learned everything I know about curation by being in the community. So I came from being an artist undergrad, and it's beginning to work at CCC that I was taking on the role of being a curator. What has been really amazing is to see how the community works, and in some ways, it has been very creative, resilient, and grassroots, so I take those into consideration in my curation.

Xiaoxiao: Thanks for sharing that. I know that CCC places Chinese and Chinese American contemporary art to the center of the stage, of which it is a genre less exhibited in mega museums. What is the significance of this artistic choice?

Hoi: The organization champions the use of contemporary art because art must be relevant, so presenting contemporary art is a direct way to support the voices coming out today. Additionally, contemporary art is meant to make people ask questions. We give our audiences full credit to con-tribute their ideas, interpret the work, or ask appropriate questions to understand the arts. We often get a lot of great insights by reaching out to our audiences and having conversations with them; many unknown possibilities come up this way.

Xiaoxiao: The lockdown situation probably has changed the way you interact or connect with audiences, as well as the way you share artworks. How did your organization adapt to the pandemic?

Hoi: Yeah. You can see the efforts of the organization being more physically present outside of the gallery space. A lot of my recent work reflects that adjustment: whether it is to have Chinatown stories into the gallery, or the other way around. Eventually, it is about

2 The interview was recorded and conducted via Zoom Meetings on March 25th, 2021. The transcription is edited and rearranged for readability; for instance, filler words including "like", "you know", "just", "um" and "uh" were taken off from quotes for clarity and consistency without changing their original meaning.

making arts available in common places and in processes that are more permeating or porous within one another.

Xiaoxiao: I can see how these adjustments may be an extension of your organization's long-term project, *Museum Without Walls*. What was your goal for introducing this initiative in the first place?

Hoi: *The Museum Without Walls* project was an initiative with a simple concept of having art in public spaces. We wanted to turn everyday spaces into artistic venues while using underutilized spaces for community goods. This initiative evolves into a community strategy, especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic. We see the strategy being used outside of CCC by all sorts of organizations. For instance, local businesses and other types of nonprofits are able to see the value of placing art in public spaces and they are integrating the arts into the way of survival. With these cross-sectors and community-level changes, we can say that the organization really accomplished the goals of *Museum Without Walls*. After all, the most critical part of the initiative is seeing how the community is accepting the idea in recent years.

Xiaoxiao: That's a significant accomplishment. It seems "the way of survival" speaks to the San Francisco Chinatown today, especially considering the economic downturn, public health crisis and gentrification that continue to trouble the community. In your opinion, how does art play a role in making changes or building the community?

Hoi: I'll use our most recent project, *Art, Culture, and Belonging in Chinatown and Manilatown*[3] , to address that question. The project has a twofold purpose: first, the project elevates and makes visible Chinatown's arts and culture assets through storytelling. Telling stories is a very accessible and approachable way to dive into a much deeper conversation that is ingrained in the Asian American experience. Second, the project highlights the idea of belonging. I worked on the project with a visual artist, Christine Wong Yap, whose roots are in the San Francisco Bay Area.

We (CCC) knew in the beginning that we needed to introduce the artist early and that we would be there every step of the way to assist the artist as she worked with different organizations and the general public. In essence, the project is one completed program, but we also see that as a meaningful beginning that will connect us with many more different partnerships that can also engage the same process and model to see how artists can play significant roles in the community, especially during times of crisis. We planned the project in 2019 before the pandemic happened. The execution part became a lot more challenging because of the lockdown situation and lack of connection among people. However, the artist has been working as a mediator to keep a sense of engagement and hope in the process of collecting stories and source materials. When it comes to the point where we are ready to show the projects, we want to create something distributable. As a result, we opt for a comic zine book for the final presentation of the Belonging project.

Figure 1. *Christine Wong Yap (on the left) is sharing the Art, Culture, and Belonging in Chinatown and Manila-town project installed at the 41 Ross Gallery with two passersby. Image courtesy of the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco.*

3 Art, Culture, and Belonging in Chinatown and Manilatown is a year-long community engagement project that studies the roles of arts and culture in shaping people's sense of belonging in San Francisco Chinatown. During the first half year of 2020, the CCC and Chinatown Arts and Culture Coalition distributed a survey, "Story of Belonging," in the community to collect stories of art, culture, and belonging in San Francisco Chinatown. Individuals who live, work, or visit the neighborhood were invited to fill out the survey. A digital version of the questionnaire was also circulated on the organization's social media platforms. The responses collected from this process became source materials that informed three derivative artworks created by Christine Wong Yap: 1). a comic book featuring real S.F. Chinatown workers and residents' stories on belonging, 2). a text-based public artwork, installed at a local business storefront consisting of community members' wishes and messages for Chinatown amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and 3). a storefront installation at a community art space, accompanied by illustrated bilingual maps for the public to engage in self-guided Walking Tour of Belonging in S. F. Chinatown. Ultimately, the project has evolved into an activist response to counter the xenophobic hate against Asian communities unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic. By centering individual and collective sense of belonging in Chinatown, the project provided a culturally affirming space to celebrate personal histories, experiences, and identities in the community.

We are also using 41 Ross, a gallery space em-bedded in community alleyways, to provide a passersby experience of the project through store-front installations (see Figure 1). Visitors were able to engage with the arts independently, so these alternative ways of sharing arts worked well with social distancing protocols. More importantly, the project outcomes offered a side of Chinatown that is centered on human stories rather than just visuals or objects.

Xiaoxiao: I think the project worked out smoothly to address the temporary closure of the gallery through creating public accessible installations, free copies of books, and Instagram interactions. Speaking of bringing art into public spaces and involving people in conversations inspired by the arts, what is your general approach to community engagement or community-based art programming?

Hoi: We try to maintain our materials, both offline and online, with 80 to 100 percent bilingual. I consider language as the first point of access. If monolingual immigrant elders were to walk into any museum in San Francisco, they would see right in front of their faces if the organization served their language. We want to make this point of access clear. Secondly, as I mentioned about the idea of Museum Without Walls, it is really about bringing the art into unexpected everyday spaces without compromising the art. In doing so, we want to challenge all audiences to think critically through the arts. On top of that, we also market our projects through community partners, outdoor installations, ethnic newspapers and media stations. We adopt culturally appropriate marketing strategies when creating posters and flyers to make the message straightforward to target audiences. Lastly, we would bring out special events where dedicated staff members can really interact with audiences. It is always a challenge for any arts organization to advocate for its value and mission, but we are getting there.

Xiaoxiao: Yes, meaningful community engagement would require multiple points of access at various stages. Have you heard any comments or feedback from community members regarding the belonging project?

Hoi: Folks were really happy about it, and my colleagues have located three slots in the community to share the comic book and install the map of belonging that Christine created. We have people coming into the gallery to get more copies of the book, and they shared with us that the comic zine was popular in their SRO (single room occupancy).[4]

4 Most housing options in Chinatown are Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, in which rooms fit in a bed and a small desk. Residents only have access to communal kitchens and bathrooms shared with multiple units. SROs were designed for transitional stays in the 1990s, but at present, they are one of the last affordable housing resorts for more than 380 families in Chinatown, including 532 children under 18 years of age

We also distributed many books to partnering organizations, and people appreciate the stories that remind them of Chinatown. We found out through the project that for people who are not physical-ly in Chinatown, the book has evoked a sense of place or nostalgia in them. The feeling of belonging is ingrained into their memory and their sense of home. What we want to accomplish here is to understand what makes Chinatown so special and wonderful to people, and our job is to help articulate and make visible the core values of the place that ties the community.

Xiaoxiao: Could you tell me more about how the Art, Culture, and Belonging in Chinatown and Manilatown project came into shape initially? Did CCC come up with the concept first, and then you reach out to the artist, or was it the other way around?

Hoi: It was a little bit of both, and that's happening with every project we do. We always start with our project by curating with the artists and the partners to determine the rules of engagement. We know that there have been a lot of talks in Chinatown about different assets in the community. In the planning process, we approached the artist, knowing that Christine has been delving into the idea of belonging and community-engaged social practices for a long time. Therefore, it was a perfect marriage for the organization and the artist to put together the project.

Xiaoxiao: Thanks for the explanation. Now that you've mentioned community-based assets a couple of times, what are some of the assets you've identified in Chinatown?

Hoi: I think Chinatown has this relentless sense of care for the community. You see Chinatown through different stages in history where we are on its facade, which looks very static. People of Asian descent, who grew up in the U.S. and visited Chinatown, may feel the place looks flashy at first glance. However, the more one digs into the reason why Chinatown looks the way it does; one would find that it was actually an ingenious idea to keep it around and to allow it to survive at a very critical time during the earthquake.[5] If you flip the coin to the other side, the typical outlook of Chinatown is indeed a source of power. I see Chinatown today not feeling disempowered, but I feel very inspired that it was able to come up with such

5 After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and sequential fire, most Chinatown buildings were burned into ashes. When the Chinese Exclusion Act was made permanent in 1902, the anti-Chinese sentiment was at its peak. There were public proposals in the city that suggested the removal of the ethnic neighborhood conveniently with the natu-ral disaster. A news report titled "Let us have no more Chinatowns in our cities," published in the Oakland Enquir-er (1906), used discriminatory words to describe the ethnic enclave as a "plague spot" and the residents as "lower and vicious classes of Orientals".

a brilliant survival strategy. The idea of Chinatown as a tourist destination has also been adopted all over the United States. I'll say there are slight side effects of doing so, but what I see is power at the very heart of it.

At the same time, it was also a community heavily underserved by the local governments and agencies; that is why it has so many excellent social services around that are unparalleled with what the state provides. I consider that as an incredible cultural resource. It is a sense of care for its people and for the neighborhood. And you see that sort of theme manifesting in every sector of the neighborhood, from the businesses to artists, cultural bearers, and practitioners.

Xiaoxiao: Absolutely. Upon reading the comic book that Christine created, I can see Chinatown is a very close-knit community. The community contributors of the book also mentioned how local restaurants, architectures, organizations, art, and cultural sites make them feel a sense of belonging. And these, of course, also translate into community assets. That leads to my next question, what do you see as the value of art and art education in Chinatown?

Hoi: That's a tough one. Okay. There are so many complex issues in the world, and art is one of the most brilliant tools we can have to understand complex things because it allows us to ask endless questions. When we think about designing community-based projects, urban planning, activism, or policymaking that is not top-down, it meets that process of critical thinking. The other side about art is that people are getting on to the critical race issues at times, and the level of feeling disconnected, threatened, or unsafe is especially intense. Art is one of the best ways to build humanities and encourage empathy amongst different people. It is an integral part of building your voice and allows you to see other people as people. That is why every neighborhood in every community needs artists as support systems. Without art as a resource in the community, the relationships may be less stable (see Figure 2).

Xiaoxiao: Yes. Especially at present with murders of Black bodies and thousands of reported hate incidents against Asian people, these kinds of traumatic experiences constantly remind us about how many more miles we still have to go to progress toward equality. But at least we have art as something hopeful to help us advocate and imagine that future. How's your organization coping with the anti-Asian racism? Do you talk about it in the group?

Hoi: Yeah, everyone in the team has a different background with being treated in different ways coming into the country. We're always very supportive of one another, and we're lucky to be surrounded by an organization that is literally at the forefront of what they do. We

feel supported and we have the resources to make the space to talk about these things. And right now, we have been a bit more direct about it. But at the core, we just want people to understand that they are being centered, focused, and highlighted.

Figure 2. *Community members reading bilingual posters on Black Lives Matter and racial solidarity. The bulletin board showcases public submissions of artwork and related bilingual resources. Image courtesy of the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco.*

Then we think about how we can advocate for these issues in the different spaces we're in. AAPI communities face unique challenges in the struggle for racial justice (i.e. the model minority myth) and are left out of both mainstream and BIPOC conversations. In our neighborhood and nationally, we believe AAPI voices are crucial in advocating for all marginalized communities. Anti-Asian hate is nothing new, and it's reflective of a damaging, dominant attitude towards Asian people at-large, and our work is about shaping a narrative that counters white supremacist systems. We do so by supporting artists of diverse voices and allowing them a platform to be unapologetically who they are. Especially during times of crisis and trauma, the media can portray a homogenized or binary way of thinking that neglects different sorts of experiences that also existed and are valid.

I also think the problem is always there in the current state, people

have their misunderstandings. We're called the Chinese Culture Center, and that's literally our name regardless of what we do. Occasionally, we have people coming in to say that "this is not Chinese culture" or "that's not what I'm expecting" and things like that (see Figure 3). If people can open their minds to different sets of experiences, they will understand that culture is never static. There exist a plurality of stories out there and I think they all should be represented. Reclaiming and shaping our own narratives is a liberating process.

Figure 3. *A group of children learning about the arts through artworks on view in CCC's gallery. Image courtesy of the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco.*

Xiaoxiao: There are indeed expectations or stereotypes that people might have toward a particular culture or a group. It's like you can only be one thing, but not the other. However, in reality, there are multiple ways of being Chinese or American. The narratives that show diverse possibilities of people or the intersections of identities just don't get across to the public very often. The reduction of people to stereotypes continues to be a socially constructed tactic to separate the self and the other while perpetuating systemic racism. After all, there is a lack of space that facilitates this kind of conversation, so I think CCC is making a lot of effort in telling different groups' stories through what you do with the arts.

Hoi: Thank you for saying that. What you highlighted here is important because it's hard to enter the discussion of race. How do we begin this conversation? I think, especially now, we need more spaces to gather diverse communities to dialogue on equity (see Figure 4). Having some kind of small opening up to let different communities occur is very important, as it provides an entryway into understanding the larger, wider landscape of issues related to people of color in this country. I think we really need that level of educating the community.

Figure 4. *Hoi Leung (on the left) and Vida Kuang (on the right) pose with murals created during "Share the Square" Art Action Day in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter in San Francisco Chinatown. June 20, 2020. Image courtesy of the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco.*

Xiaoxiao: So, with this being said, if you were to tell stories about Chinatown, what kind of stories would that be?

Hoi: Yeah, I would talk about its history of ingenuity. Like, there were a lot of moments where I couldn't help thinking this is so brilliant and smart as I work in the community. While the Bay Ar-ea has a reputation for tech companies in Silicon Valley, the smartest and most innovative process-es and strategies actually came out of community building and grassroots organizing. I think that's the story I'd like to tell and that's the one thing that I've always been inspired by.

Xiaoxiao: Thank you so much for your time this morning. That was very informative and inspir-ing.

Hoi: Sure, keep us posted on how your project is going. Let me know how we can support your research and study. We're reachable!

Conclusions

One key takeaway from Leung's curatorial practice was that placing the community at the center is pivotal to keeping the organization and the art it offers relevant to the people. Through CCC's art programs, specifically the project that investigated belonging and local assets, it became clear that meaningful public engagement involves integrating accessible content, spaces, and a fully facilitated participation process. By using a participatory decision-making approach in its community-based programs, CCC was able to tailor its services to meet the community's changing needs.

In summary, the interview offered a glimpse into how CCC pioneered practices of making art more accessible and relevant to the community's everyday life. Through visual art and community-based activities, CCC's approach is geared toward developing inclusive and multifaceted narratives to centralize underrepresented voices. Acknowledging the dynamic and complex nature of Chinatown's stories, combined with ongoing efforts to end racial discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans, the proactive community arts led by CCC and similar organizations aid in tearing down stigmatized portrayals of ethnic groups as we build towards social justice for all in the future.

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Using Positionality and Theory in Historical Research: A Personal Journey

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ABSTRACT

As histories within art education expand to cover topics outside of the majoritarian narrative, historians need to take into consideration the ways in which their positionality influences their relationship with their historical subjects. This paper is a meditation on the experience of a White female researcher studying the life of Margaret Burroughs, a Black art education and institution-builder from Chicago. By focusing on positionality in both theoretical positionality and researcher positionality, a case is built for historians to interrogate the relationship between researcher and subject, even when living participants are not involved in the study.

KEYWORDS: History, Black history, art education history, Black women, whiteness, Margaret Burroughs, Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory, Positionality, Identity

Using Positionality and Theory in Historical Research: A Personal Journey

In 2019, I attended a research conference panel of art educators discussing their work around the histories of art education. The moderator asked the question to the panel, "How do you use theory within your work?" The White female professor on the panel answered first, stating that she didn't think theory was necessary when researching history, despite her presentation covering the work of a Black man. The next panelist, a Black female professor, responded to the initial question, "Theory is everything."

Histories have always been a way for me to explore and explain the systems we humans find ourselves in. Historical narratives give those of us in the present a way to understand the progression to where we are today; a blueprint for further understanding who we are, how we got here, and where we can go. In the field of art education, I have been intrigued by the ways that particular histories of certain White male figures have been reified and the mechanisms that have similarly kept important Black, Indigenous, and people of color's (BIPOC) names away from textbooks. The naming of and calling out racism in historical writing is important, but the mechanisms within methodology that exist to support White patriarchy are just as important to explore. As I worked to challenge and insert the histories of Black art educators into a historical context in my own research, I began to realize that not only does the inclusion of BIPOC voices matter, but the ways that I approach my work and myself as a researcher matter just as much. While BIPOC subjects continue to be underexplored in art education (Acuff, 2013; Bolin & Kantawala, 2017), it is important for White historians to begin to do the work of understanding and untangling our positionality in our research in order to curb the "epistemic violence" (Dozano, 2020, p. 4) that occurs through a largely absent narrative of who is undertaking the research.

Within my experience of researching the narrative of Dr. Margaret Burroughs, a Black female art educator from Chicago, I realized how little consideration White historians have put into considering their positionality within and around their research, and how this lack of consideration has continued to replicate White supremacy. As historians and educators attempt to un-frame and re-frame histories in art education (Kantawala, 2020), it is paramount that historians re-consider the ways that historical research is undertaken. By locating my own positionality within my research, I saw ways that I could be in conversation with my subject rather than dictating her narrative, and how historians can include rather than ignore how positionality influences their research. By reflecting on my own journey, I hope to demonstrate the importance of understanding positionality within historical research, and assist other White historians to similarly consider how theory and positionality impact their subjects.

Personal Narrative

My interest in Black histories within art education started during the first semester of my master's program at the University of Texas. In my History of Art Education course, my first research project led me to Mavigliano and Lawson's (1990) The Federal Art Project in Illinois. The book, a slim read primarily filled with tables detailing the work of Federal Art Project (FAP) employees throughout the state, intrigued me. Having lived in Illinois most of my life, I was surprised and excited when my small hometown's post office mural neatly catalogued alongside hundreds of pieces of art in the Chicago area. While the book itself was interesting, one section caught my eye in particular. Six paragraphs detailed the founding of the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) at 3831 S Michigan Avenue in Chicago. The SSCAC was the only completed art center funded by the FAP in Illinois and was explicitly founded to help support the arts in the growing Black neighborhood of Bronzeville on Chicago's South Side (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). After realizing that the SSCAC continues to exist today, I became fascinated by this story and needed

Throughout my master's program, I became invested in the SSCAC's narrative, curious about its founding and the ways that it has continued to thrive (Hardy, 2017; Hardy, 2018). I also quickly

realized that my writing would be incomplete without a thorough examination of race within art education generally and within the particularities of the SSCAC's founding. The SSCAC's existence was defined by the fact that it was made explicitly for Chicago's Black community and many of the struggles it faced were due to the lack of support for Black artists during the 1940s and 1950s. My experience of race had been one of almost complete Whiteness up until this point and, while I challenged that experience in college, I knew that my ignorance would make my research inadequate and fail to capture the real experience of those who founded the SSCAC. I could not believe how correct I would be. My understanding and conceptualizations around the SSCAC's existence expanded dramatically as I became exposed to authors like DuBois (1903), Hartman (2007), and Collins (2009). I was able to examine closely the ways that a gap of archival data could give key insights into the middle class Black women who took over the SSCAC during its darkest periods (Hardy, 2018). However, during my initial investigation, I did little to examine my own positionality within my research. While I was aware of my outsider position and my little knowledge of the community I entered into for my research, I did not go far enough in examining the ways that my position as a White female scholar could simultaneously inflict harm.

As my research for my dissertation moved from looking at the SSCAC to looking at the work of one figure within it, my own internal work similarly moved from considering the overall image to deeply interrogating myself and my field prior to the beginning of my research. I wanted to learn more and write about the life of Dr. Margaret Burroughs, a Black art teacher from Chicago who helped establish the SSCAC and eventually also founded the DuSable Museum of African American History. I wanted to dig into her life narrative more to understand the ways that she used her art teaching to empower her students and helped her in founding the first Black history museum in the US. The evolution of my own project led me to want to consider how my interpretation of her life may not capture its true nature. Are there ways that my Whiteness can fail to interpret important events in her life? What blinders do my Whiteness give my interpretation, and what are the ways to minimize them? As I dug, I realized this was a larger conversation than simply an internal one. I am invested in and want to fix the ways that historians approach their research subjects in ways that help bring their subjects into the conversation. I believe that historians need to reflect on their own positionality within their research in order to fully understand the impact of how they write narratives. Most importantly, as White historians begin to fully take on and investigate non-White histories, it is especially important for us consider the ways that our work may continue to inflict harm if we are not careful or considerate to their needs.

Historians and Positionality

Positionality and theoretical stances are often important in work dealing with participants and is a key cornerstone of methodologies such as action research (Knight & Deng, 2016). Some historians, including oral historians (Henry, 2018; Thompson, 1978) and public historians (Neufeld, 2006; Osterud, 2018) also consider their own positions as researchers within the context of their research, as who they are can impact the narratives they receive and interpret. Methodologies without direct participants, however, have spent less time discussing what it means to be aware of one's own positionality or being culturally responsive. Within traditional archival histories, the position of the historian as influencing the research is rarely touched on at all. While it is often remarked that historians are influenced by the contemporary time that they are working in (Bolin, 2017; Conrad, 2016), there is less explicit work written on the position of the historic researcher and the impact that positionality has on the interpretation of data.

Positionality here will be discussed in two fronts: t*heoretical positionality*, which utilized critical theories to interrogate historical events in context of theories, and *researcher positionality,* which takes the form of critical self-reflection, understanding one's position in relation to their subject, and the histories that surround and inform both actions and perceptions between the researcher and subject. Both theoretical and researcher positionality are linked, and adopting a critical theoretical position that aligns with and highlights the experiences of the historical subject directly feeds into a need for researcher positionality. While theoretical positionality has been traditionally embraced by art education historians, researcher positionality has gone under-examined.

Theoretical Positionality

In contrast to the broader field of history, theoretical positionality has been utilized in art education historical research for some time, particularly in relation to postmodern

(Bolin et al, 2000; Garnet, 2017) and feminist theories (Stankiewicz, 1997). More recently, Kantawala (2012) has worked to bring postcolonial theory and the concept critical cultural framing (Kantawala, 2020) into research. Centering BIPOC subjects in historical literature enables new and challenging narratives to occur. However, few of the currently-written histories about Black art educators state a particular theoretical position. Even many historians of Black history outside of art education disagree with the use of theory or positionality, pointing out that histories should be free from any bias on the part of the author (Thorpe, 1971; Taylor, 2008). While there has been a rise of Black art education narratives (see Bey, 2011, 2017; Hardy, 2017, 2018; Holt, 2018; Peete, 2020), outside of Lawton (2017), few have yet to identify particular theoretical lenses they used to unearth these narratives.

Within my own investigation into the life of Dr. Burroughs, I chose to employ critical race theory (CRT) paired with Black feminist theory (BFT) to better understand the systems of oppression that she dealt with as a Black female educator. Both CRT and BFT work to center marginalized voices through understanding the overlapping and interconnected oppression of individuals through race and gender. CRT's implementation of counter-narrative, paired with BFT's centering of Black women's embodied experiences as a site of knowledge, help to disrupt and critique the White male-dominated conceptualization of art education histories. By centering a Black woman's narrative, a whole new world of knowledge opens up; one where it is clear to see that resistance to racism has always been at the center.

CRT employs the use of narrative, and particularly counter-narrative, as a way to highlight the voices of marginalized individuals within racially oppressive systems and question what Delgado and Sefancic (2012) call "majoritarian interpretations of events" (p. 24). While the majoritarian interpretations presents "the ways things are as inevitable" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2417), counter-narratives are stories that reveal what is often hidden in plain sight. Revisionism and counter-narrative developed as a way to amplify the voices of people of color, particularly within legal settings where false narratives around race often result in dire legal consequences. CRT has been underutilized within histories, despite its ability to fit in well with historical subjects. Within educational settings, counter-narrative has been framed as a successful approach to complicating and disrupting implicit bias within the educational system (see Milner & Howard, 2013; Miller et al, 2020). As counter-narrative "holds promise to expose, analyze, and critique the racialized reality in which… experiences are contextualized, silenced, or perpetuated" (Miller et al, 2020, p. 273), I believe that CRT and counter-narrative are particularly useful for reinterpreting histories. Especially in entrenched histories where BIPOC rarely if ever make an appearance, CRT can help extract the structures that have kept narratives hidden for so long.

The explicit implementation of CRT into historical studies is currently sparse (see Coloma, 2011) but yields interesting ways of re-articulating other forms of narrative to fit historical research of marginalized individuals. Lawton (2017) described her investigation into the life of Thomas Watson Hunster, a trailblazing Black art educator in Washington, D.C., using what she has named *critical portraiture*. By combining CRT and portraiture, she was able to both look at Hunster as an individual who worked and resisted systems of oppression while simultaneously contributing greatly to the field of art education for Black youth. Similarly, Kelly (2013) articulated the ways that he investigated the life of Marion Thompson Wright, a Black sociologist, educator, and historian, as *critical race biography*. Wright's life, looked at through an explicitly racial lens, gained insight into the ways that gave a "nuanced understanding of a life lived strategically in quiet struggle" (Kelly, 2013, p. 58), dealing with both racism and sexism from her colleagues. Both Lawton (2017) and Kelly (2013) use CRT as a way to further understand and explore the ways that their particular individuals had to navigate the United States' educational systems as Black teachers. By incorporating the tenets of CRT into historic narrative styles, more light can be shed on the ways that racism has been endemic to the structures of educational systems.

Similarly, BFT has begun to slowly become recognized within art education literature. Acuff's (2018a) call to embracing BFT within art education encourages "[challenging] traditional conceptions of methodology and methods" (p. 206). Using BFT and centering the lives and experiences of Black women in histories of art education automatically challenges the current majoritarian narrative that asserts that the most important

figures are White lawmakers and scholars. Instead, BFT allows for a view in which the power of art education is situated with Black teachers, who used art to empower Black students. In Dr. Burroughs' case, art education became a vehicle for her to talk to her students about Black history and help them gain confidence in themselves as Black young adults in a pre-civil rights world. By situating art education with Dr. Burroughs, art education can see beyond the Lowenfeld-Barkan dichotomy that often dominates conversations about mid-century art education.

BFT has often been used to explore and interpret histories of Black women and theorists such as Collins (2009) have considered the ways that Black women have been shut out of history. Scholars like Hine (1989) and Hartman (2007; 2008) have explored the limits of traditional history and have embraced the use of BFT as a way to bring into focus the narratives that have been hidden or erased. The privileging of empirical data for historians fails to consider the ways that Black women's narratives were either never recorded or were kept away from public view. Hine (1989) argues for the concept of "dissemblance", where Black women shielded themselves and their narratives through a practice of secrecy "to protect the sanctity of inner aspects of their lives" (p. 915). Dissemblance led to "the appearance of disclosure, or openness about themselves and their feelings, while actually remaining an enigma" (Hine, 1989, p. 915). Between the archival silences that Hartman (2007) encountered to the culture of dissemblance described by Hine (1989), the methods of traditional White history simply fail to work. Instead, BFT can help to challenge and reinterpret the ways that histories are written. Understanding the archival gaps created by systems of racial oppression gives historians opportunities to interpret the silences and gaps in different ways. Hine (1989) defines it as "historical reclamation" (p. 919), where historians should focus on the ways that Black women were able to find and create agency in systems that dehumanized them.
Theoretical positionality is both a choice of using a tool that best works for the story being told and also a stance in what matters to the researcher. When it comes exploring the lives of Black women, failing to consider the ways that their lives were shaped by the particularities of their race and gender and failing to center that experience means missing some of the key reasons why information may be hard to find or missing. While theoretical positionality here helps connect Dr. Burroughs' narrative to larger ideas around Black women's agency, it similarly questions and critiques a White majoritarian narrative that has failed to recognize Black art educators. As a White historian, I have benefited from this majoritarian narrative.

Researcher Positionality

When I began my research, I wanted to find information pertaining to the struggle of researcher positionality as a historian. I felt deeply that I had to consider my own positionality within my research in order to see and correct to the best of my ability any possible blind spots when it came to my interpretations of Dr. Burroughs' legacy. Although I found a significant number of White historians writing and producing histories about Black historical events in Chicago (see Hagedorn, 2020; Knupfer, 2006; Mullen, 1999; Rocksborough-Smith, 2018), their writings were not accompanied by any type of analysis into their own subjectivity as White researchers. A certain subset of historians value empirical research over other forms of knowledge and therefore reject researcher positionality outright (see Coloma, 2011, 2018; Partner & Foot, 2013). This privileging of gathered archival data above all else seems to lead to a lack of disclosure of positionality, as supposed "objectivity" de-emphasizes the role of the researcher. The value that many historians place on the objectivity of history often means a rejection of any bias that may be inherent in the researcher, including the use of theory or an admission of one's own positionality.

Knight and Yeng (2016) note that researchers "cannot escape the influence of our positionality" (p. 108). Our positionality inherently impacts who and how we research. While there have been many critiques of histories within art education (Acuff, 2013), there is still a lack of research around how to challenge and reconceptualize histories. A growing number of historians are interested in the ways that their own positionality affects their work. Scholars such as Crane (1997), Coloma (2011), Long (2005), and Roediger (2007), have been taking steps to acknowledge their positionality while writing history and the way that their position affected their entrance into their research. Crane (1997) argues that the addition of researcher positionality into histories "serves as a marker of the author's acceptance of subjective responsibility as well as a caution

against assuming the authority to speak for others" (p. 1384). While a growing number of historians are interested in putting their positionality forward as an additional layer of subjectivity, it is still rare for White historians to consider the impact of their own race or their complicity within a racialized system on how they interpret and understand Black history.

The only White art education historian I found writing about the issue of race in history was Stankiewicz (2013). Stankiewicz' investigation into the life and pedagogy of Frances Euphemia Thompson, a Black art educator and graduate from the Massachusetts Normal Art School, gave her insight into blind spots in her own interpretation of who art education is for and the ways that Thompson had to navigate her own identity. Stankiewicz' (2013) meditation on her own positionality as a White historian and its influence on her work begins the labor of untangling one's own assumptions, but I would argue it does not go far enough. Understanding ones' complicity with White supremacy also means engaging with the complicated relationship between White women and Black women.

The Limitations of White Womanhood

What does it mean for the future of black feminist studies that a large portion of the growing body of scholarship on black women is now being written by White feminists and by men whose work frequently achieves greater critical and commercial success than that of the black female scholars who carved out the field? (DuCille, 1994, p. 87)

In my own research, interrogating my positionality has meant uncovering and unpacking the complicated relationship between White women academics and Black women. There are specific limitations around my knowledge and understanding that are complicated by my status as a White woman. Rather than just being a White person, the specifics of White womanhood compounds my outsider status when attempting to theorize and craft a narrative about Black women, primarily due to the histories of tension between White feminism and Black feminism. Black women's voices have been historically excluded in academic feminist discourse through a failure of White women to recognize or challenge their own inherent racism (Alexander-Floyd, 2012). Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech (1851, quoted in Siebler, 2010), Ida B. Wells-Barnett's exclusion from White women's suffrage movement (Parker, 2008), and the Combahee River Collective's (2017) statement are just a handful of the myriad demonstrations that Black women have had to confront White women's lack of understanding of the intersections of race and gender (see also Brown, 2018; Lugones, 2003; Ortega, 2006). In art education, a field that comprised mostly of White women, scholars of color have been forced to confront and challenge the normative Whiteness that often goes unstated and unexplored by both White scholars and White students (Acuff, 2018; Wilson et al, 2016). The co-opting of Black women's language and scholarship by White women without deep interrogation of their own complicity within White supremacy has left Black feminist scholars exhausted and frustrated (see Alexander-Floyd, 2012; DuCille, 1994; Lugones, 2003; Ortega, 2006; Wilson et al, 2016).

Whiteness shields White women from having to experience the overlapping and reinforcing marginalization of race and gender that Black women face. The protections offered under the law to White women have continuously failed to protect Black women (see Crenshaw, 1989; 1993), demonstrating the continued power imbalance that exists, even between shared genders. However, this has not stopped White women scholars from believing themselves experts on Black women, and appropriating the language of Black feminists due to the false equivalency of gendered oppression. DuCille's (1994) caution to how Black feminist studies has begun to be co-opted by White women researchers and Ortega's (2006) deconstruction of White female ignorance both point to the ways that the specific knowledge of Black women have become academic fodder for researchers within the dominant group. Ortega (2006) described the "lovingly, knowingly ignorant" (p. 61) ways that White women have listened to and use women of color's theorizations, without fully comprehending the real, lived experiences or stopping to think about the impact of their work. This knowing ignorance, therefore, continues to presuppose the White woman as a knowledge-producer over the woman of color, even when White women are using the language from Black feminists and feminists of color. For Ortega (2006), the issue of most White women feminists writing about women of color is in the desire to control "which woman of color gets to be let in the club, being able to speak for women of color, being able to feel that she is the one responsible for their salvation" (p. 68), and continuing to exert power of how women of color

use their voices. This ironic type of love, then, is the love of being able to occupy and use otherness without inhabiting it.

In relation to my work, I see myself as another White woman researcher in a line of White women researchers (see Cain, 2018; Hagedorn, 2020; Knupfer, 2006; Schlabach, 2013) attempting to define one particular Black woman's experience while unable to truly comprehend it. For both DuCille (1994) and Ortega (2006), White women must be cautious in our undertaking of Black women as individuals of study, as it is too easy for us to make sweeping generalizations rather than understanding the individual complexities of the narratives we explore. Historians need to make sure that their work is "not just thinking about race and racism but doing something about it" (Ortega, 2006, p. 71). In a primarily White field like art education, historians hoping to disrupt the majoritarian narrative need to deeply consider how they approach their research and the relationship between their positionality and their subjects'. Without this type of consideration, further knowingly ignorant research will be produced, possibly continuing to replicate power structures instead of doing something about it.

Reconsidering Positionality

After the panel discussion I mentioned in the opening of this article, I found myself frustrated at the ways that White women historians could so easily deemphasize their own theoretical and researcher positionalities and its impact within their work. I started this journey of interrogating my positionality in relation to my work because I knew that I did not want to reproduce and replicate harm onto Black historical subjects whose histories are still far too rare within art education. Additionally, many of the questions I have around Dr. Burroughs, the SSCAC, and Black art education in general have to just as much with the structures surrounding their obfuscation within the literature as they do with the details of their lives and legacies. While traditional histories within art education do need to be tackled and interrogated, I also believe there is another alternative methodology which actively encourages the use of the researcher's positionality within the project: that of microhistory.

Microhistories are small narratives of one particular individual, moment, or even object, that the historian examines in order to make broader observations about the time period (Stern, 2020). Microhistorians are not interested in writing *the* history of a particular moment; rather, they are interested in the ways that a history can illuminate greater understanding. Paul (2018) notes that microhistorians use small interactions and experiences to craft "an observational lens, or a point of view, onto larger landscapes and structures of history" (p. 64). Rather than the assumption of objectivity, microhistorians are very aware of the limitations of their work and frame these limitations—such as researcher positionality, time period, and scale—throughout the process of writing. As "this method clearly breaks with the traditional assertive, authoritarian form of discourse adopted by historians who present reality as objective" (Levi, 2001, p. 10), microhistorians are able to embrace theoretical and researcher positionalities while exploring the "micro-macro link" (Peltonen, 2001, p. 355) between a subject and the ways that their lives exemplified larger phenomena.

In doing the internal work of articulating my own theoretical and researcher positionality within my study, I realized the ways that a traditional historical narrative cannot truly encapsulate what I find so fascinating about Dr. Burroughs or her legacy. The bounds of typical historical studies have created a Bronzeville trapped under the weight of its own history, exhumed for its cultural memory but not seen as a living community (see Baldwin, 2016; Boyd, 2008). Does repeating Dr. Burroughs' story through another White lens just replicate this same power imbalance? A strict biographic interpretation also fails to consider the ways that Margaret likely kept parts of her narrative hidden and unknown as one way to protect herself and her agency. The concept of the singular individual as a historical subject fails to properly articulate the myriad of influences that Margaret herself articulates as important to her development as a community leader (Burroughs, 2003). In order to account for my new understanding, my approach had to change.

My research has since shifted from a biographical understanding to instead focusing on interpreting Dr. Burroughs' pedagogy as part of an educational lineage still underexplored within the histories of art education. Using microhistory, I am able to craft a macro-micro link between Dr. Burroughs' pedagogy, the history of Chicago, and Black art education. Focusing on what I can learn about her pedagogy

means using her words and actions to better understand her educational philosophies, and continually centering her own words and how she chose to define herself. By articulating the ways that Dr. Burroughs' teaching was informed by early and mid-twentieth century Black intellectual thought and her physical location within Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, connections can be made between the art classroom and the work of Black educational scholars such as Carter G. Woodson. Instead of an individual, I have begun to see Dr. Burroughs as a link that demonstrates the ways that Black art educators have always used art as a way to create and sustain cultural pride. Individualizing her narrative made Dr. Burroughs an outlier; by interpreting her through a new lens, many new possibilities of understanding many more Black art teachers emerges.

When considering the legacy of White women's failures to understand or stand in solidarity with Black women, it is crucially important that White historians in the female-dominated field of art education both acknowledge and actively confront this relationship. It is important to make sure that the histories of art education do not continue to push a White supremacist notion of education, even implicitly, through a lack of researcher self-reflection. The omissions of Black art educators from contemporary histories is silence that continues to marginalize and has the ability to continue to damage until corrected. Being able to see further examples of Black women art educators working in public and community settings further negates and challenges the belief that Black art educators were only important after the development of multiculturalism. By beginning to articulate both theoretical and researcher positionality, historians can begin to interrogate the ways that histories are constructed and actively engage with their own possible biases. While it is important for us to diversify our narratives and seek to highlight the legacies of BIPOC art educators, it is crucial that White historians do so in ways that interrogate ourselves first and foremost. In so doing, I hope to bring to the fore that within histories, theory should be everything.

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Deconstructing Narratives About Artistic Mastery in Art Education

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ABSTRACT

A recurring challenge for art educators is how to include Black voices within the art curriculum. This challenge seems ever more relevant as a pandemic underlined the inequalities and injustices within our culture and society. A critical question for many White visual arts educators is: How do I, as a White educator, bring important issues of race, privilege, ideology, gender, and anti-racism into the art classroom? How can I help students to understand Whiteness as a cultural text and set about destabilizing White identity? How does one make space for an anti-racist pedagogy? One way to begin conversations about these issues is to bring the voices of Black artists into the classroom through viewing their artwork and listening to recorded accounts of their experiences. These artists have a transformational urgency in their work; they embody another artistic canon that includes ways of working that are on the cutting edge of contemporary art. The artwork and stories of Black artists are not just alternative voices, their work is shaping the future of art, culture, and society.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary Art, Black Artists, Anti-racist Pedagogy, Artistic Canon

Artists, art teachers, and scholars are re-imagining the content of art education and teaching practices (Acuff, 2020; Duncum, 2010; Gude, 2013; Rolling, 2020). Visual culture, contemporary art, digital media, cultural studies and critical race theory have invigorated the field. For example, when educators adopt a visual culture studies framework, they may emphasize how visual texts are produced and represented (Hall, 1997). Instead of focusing on abstract formal principles, teachers might emphasize understanding the historical, cultural, and political aspects of visual culture and their own social responsibility (Duncum, 2010). This is a shift from materials, techniques and objects to concepts, problems and ideas that are socially engaged (Darts, 2011). Teachers may view student artwork not so much as aesthetic objects, but as a platform for learning, inquiry, and relationship. Art becomes a kind of research text that is framed by critique, analysis, theory and documentation (Marshall & D'Amamo, 2011).

A recurring challenge for art educators is how to include Black voices within the art curriculum. This challenge seems ever more

relevant as a pandemic underlined the inequalities and injustices within our culture and society. A return to normal life is not going to be an adequate response. A critical question for many White visual arts educators is: How do I, as a White educator, bring important issues of race, privilege, ideology, gender, and anti-racism into the art classroom? How can I help students to understand Whiteness as a cultural text and set about destabilizing White identity (Wilson, 2019)? How does one make space for an anti-racist pedagogy?

One way to begin conversations about these issues is to bring the voices of Black artists into the classroom through viewing their artwork and listening to recorded accounts of their experiences. As much as possible, I let these artists speak for themselves in order to build bridges of understanding within my own students. I do this primarily through the artists' own account of their work through written interviews, critical commentary, and video documentation. The art, narratives, and the response of art critics to Black artists was one way to understand more deeply this key moment in history and to build bridges of understanding between teachers and students with both the history and experience of Black Lives. These artists can also have a transformational urgency in their work; they embody another artistic canon that includes ways of working that are on the cutting edge of contemporary art. The artwork and stories of Black artists are not just alternative voices, their work is shaping the future of art, culture, and society. I think of these as counter narratives that have a transformational potential to disrupt taken-for-granted ideas about race and culture (Kraehe, 2015; Spillane, 2015).

Background

After years teaching in public schools in the New York City metropolitan area, I moved to a large university in the Western United States. I am a White straight cisgender male art educator who is committed to critical race inquiry, both for myself and my students, I recognize the importance of understanding systemic racial inequities education and critically examining and adjusting my own teaching and research practices.

Artworks are important texts in my classroom and I want my students to have significant encounters and experiences with art. As a consequence, the idea of the artistic canon has become an important theme in my curriculum and teaching. The art canon is an educational construct that defines whose art is important enough to include in exhibitions, in the museum or in the art curriculum. It is a cultural representation of what is most valued. The canon produces and reproduces what counts as art and how art is interpreted (Guthrie & Kraehe, 2015). In addition to defining artistic conventions and ideas about aesthetics, the traditional Western art canon was and continues to be used as a tool of cultural subordination that reinforces the superiority of the art of White people while marginalizing the art of everyone else (Leake, 2015). For example, Melanie Buffington's study of reproductions produced for the K-12 art room indicated that the overwhelming majority of 'master works', are made by White artists. (Buffington, 2019). The civilization that is defined by these masterworks is often a euphemism for cultural racism (Kendi, 2019).

One way to destabilize the perception of the neutrality and universality of Whiteness is by disrupting the canon, questioning what is included and excluded in curriculum, and deconstructing narratives of artistic mastery (Acuff, 2015; Acuff, Hirak, & Nangah, 2012; Grant, 2020). The typical canon of artists and artworks can be reconfigured to include the work of contemporary Black artists (Rolling, 2020). This is more than just expanding the curriculum, it can be a complete reshaping of the fundamental content of art education. Amelia Kraehe and David Herman said:

> "Making black lives matter will require that we open ourselves up to being decentered by the voices of other people and concerns that extend beyond our own immediate needs—that is, the voices of Black people, Black artists, Black thought leaders who show us that the only way forward is to confront the legacy of antiblack racism."

The narratives of those whose voices are rarely heard can affect change by allowing students and teachers to get closer to the experiences of those whose artwork, stories, and histories have been left out of our classrooms (Kraehe & Herman, 2020). Stories can be powerful, empowering, and enlightening.

The stories that Black artists tell about their work illustrate the complexity of race, helping to demonstrate that racial categories are not neatly defined, but are social constructed and malleable. Stories are both positional and oppositional. Stories can help us understand the lives of others in ways that cultivate a sense of lived context (Guthrie & Kraehe, 2015). The grand narrative of a racist Modernism can be disrupted by counter narratives that foreground personal experience and alternative artmaking methodologies, helping students and teachers to reflect on the past through an anti-racist lens (Kendi, 2019; Leake, 2015; Salcedo, 2018). When Columbian artist Doris Salcedo discussed the construction of Shiboleth, a large crack in the Tate Modern, she wanted to introduce a chaotic element into the rationalism of Modernism. She described the gap between race and language as "this bottomless gap that divides humanity from inhumanity…or white from non-white." In what she calls the dark history of modernity, she said, "The word Shiboleth I took from Judges, it is a word that describes the dangers of crossing borders. I used the word because I wanted to refer to the experience of racism,

the experience of crossing borders" (Salcedo, 2018).

Rather than just introducing students to a broader mix of artists, I was more interested in how Black artists are reshaping and redefining artistic representation and art education. Many K-12 art teachers teach foundations courses or include foundational ideas in their curriculum. But foundations in art is a troublesome concept that often begins with the metaphor of basic building blocks and ends up being an unquestioning approach to re-representing the Western canon in some form (Barney & Graham, 2014). One way that the traditional teaching of foundations reinforces existing social and cultural structures is by giving the formal aspects of art the qualities of universal beauty or good design. There is a long tradition of trying to maintain the art room as an apolitical haven, where race and racism are not discussed (Desai & Chalmers, 2007). An apolitical classroom results in a continued emphasis on White artists and "universal" art truths like the elements and principles of art and design. The artists included below suggest other possibilities for what might be foundational in art and its education.

I describe the work of five Black artists whose artwork re-envisions what is valued as artistic representation and what counts as artistic mastery. These are exemplars, chosen from many other possible examples. They were chosen because their stories illuminate important issues about race, artistic representation, and artmaking. Art can enable new representations of identity to emerge that can be both humanizing and emancipatory (Desai, 2009; Greene, 1978). For example, the Los Angeles artist Mark Bradford created a video of himself playing basketball, called *Practice*. He disrupts the viewer's expectations by creating conditions of difficulty and struggle. He does this by wearing a huge antebellum skirt made from a Los Angeles Laker uniform. "It was about roadblocks on every level; cultural, gender, racial, regardless that they are there, it is important to continue" (Bradford, 2007). This piece upends assumptions and taken for granted signifiers of race and racial boundaries, while at the same time creating a poignant description of his own personal experience.

Mark Bradford

Mark Bradford makes work out of paper that is layered, sanded, power washed, collaged, and décollaged. His work has many connections to specific places, communities, signage, current events, politics, visual culture, and the contexts of postmodern art. His large paintings are made from a process of collage construction and deconstruction that reflects improvisation, layering and an awareness of the politics of representation. His artistic skills include how use a power washer and hand sander. His artistic practice includes reading the visual culture in the neighborhood, gathering paper signage the streets and critically examining the history of communities.

He describes his process as:

> My practice is décollage and collage at the same time. Décollage: I take it away; collage: I immediately add it right back. It's almost like a rhythm. I'm a builder and a demolisher. I put up so I can tear down. I'm a speculator and a developer. In archaeological terms, I excavate and I build at the same time. (Bradford, 2018)

His method provides insight into postmodern approaches to artmaking and his artistic heritage:

> My art practice goes back to my childhood, but it's not an art background. It's a making background. I've always been a creator. My mother was a creator; my grandmother was a creator. They were seamstresses. There were always scraps of everything around. There were always two or three or four projects going on at the same time…I never knew what the postmodern condition was before I went to art school. I never knew about Michel Foucault, bell hooks, Cornel West, or Henry Louis Gates, Jr. But even though I had never read those types of writings, I lived with people who were living those types of lives. (Bradord, 2018)

What is foundational to Mark Bradford's social abstractions is an understanding that materials are embedded with cultural associations, and artistic representations have layered overlapping meanings with political subtexts (Art21).

Kerry James Marshall

> You can't be born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1955 and grow up in South Central [Los Angeles] near the Black Panthers headquarters, and not feel like you've got some kind of social responsibility. You can't move to Watts in 1963 and not speak about it. That determined a lot of where my work was going to go. (Marshall 2016)

Kerry James Marshall uses the conventions of Western art and art history to create his own ideas about representation. He questions the canon through traditional form of painting, using the conventions of landscape, portrait, and historical tableau. When Marshall called his retrospective exhibition *Mastry,* he made reference to his own skill in mastering and remixing a wide range of skills, techniques, compositions, and concepts gathered from the history of painting. However, his work takes the conventions of Western artmaking in new directions as he revises how African Americans are depicted in painting. His work reminds us that painting take place within

a history and system of cultural conventions, which are never politically or culturally neutral. Marshall deconstructs ideas about skills, mastery, and representations of the human form in Western artistic traditions.

Narratives of Mastery in Education and Art

The 'Old Masters' of the Renaissance are often used as exemplars of drawing skills using the human figure. A small drawing of Michelangelo or Raphael can be the anchor for an entire museum exhibit. Art teachers often include experiences with traditional drawing techniques and conventions of representation such as perspective. It is important to question the affordances and cultural contexts of drawing skills associated with these practices. Traditional ideas about artistic mastery can be problematic. As Kerry James Marshall points out,

> We take it for granted that the people who make the best stuff are all European [. . .] . At some point, you become acutely aware of your absence in the whole historical timeline that develops this narrative of mastery. (Marshall, 2016)

For Marshall, traditional skills and conventions of representation are part of an existing system that aspiring artists enter into, a set of cultural practices that artists work within or work against. Rather than rejecting the system, which largely excluded both women and people of color, Marshall chose to engage with these conventions of artistry at the highest level. He explains:

> And so if we go back to why this idea of mastery is important, it's precisely because if you want to get in the game you've got to play it at the level that the people who are playing it at the highest level are playing it at. And the only way you can do that, really, is to know what they know, be able to do what they do, and then figure out how to put all of those things together and synthesize them in such a way that you can project your ideal into the world, so that it has an equal chance of assuming the preferred position as any of the other things that were already out there. That's how you do it. (Marshall 2014)

Marshall's refashioning of mastery is one way to respond to the question: How might traditional art practices be meaningful or relevant within the context of culture and societies that are reexamining their histories of colonialism, oppression and racism? Images of the human body in both art and popular visual culture often reflect troubling and problematic issues of intimacy, power, beauty, agency, stereotypes, compliance and the artist's gaze (Blessing, 2015). In Mastry, Marshall's reference to technical mastery in the title of his exhibition is made credible through his own technical skills as well as in his poignant depictions of Black lives, which are mostly absent in the history of art (Art 21: Kerry James Marshall).

However, art education scholar Joni Boyd Acuff has suggested that the use of the word *mastery* in art and education should be abandoned altogether because of its connotations or connections to slavery:

> The concept of the 'old masters,' which art teachers refer to when discussing Western canonical artists, is problematic and loaded with violent, oppressive historical memories for some groups of people. For example, as a Black woman in the US, when I hear the word 'master,' regardless of context, I immediately think about European White men who enslaved, tortured, raped, and sold African people like material goods hundreds of years ago [. . .] . The word 'master' furthers a hierarchy of power that educators should no longer want to support in a future art curriculum. (Acuff, 2020, p. 13)

When we bring Kerry James Marshall into our classroom through his artwork and his own reflections about being a Black artist, the history of art begins to look very different. His work challenges and disrupts the traditional canon, while at the same time, making reference to the artists and artistry of the canon. Kerry James Marshall speaks the language of painting, but with an eye that is critically aware of who has been left out of the history of painting.

Kara Walker

Skill within traditional artistic conventions of drawing the human form is often associated with accomplished artistry and is a prerequisite for many artists, illustrators and animators. Contemporary artists can provide alternative narratives and methodologies that disrupt conventional and uncritical approaches to representing the human form (art21.org/artist/kara-walker). Like Kerry James Marshall, Kara Walker references historical narratives in her use of the human form in much of her work (Kara Walker Studio). She explains:

> Before I even started working with a narrative that circled around representations of blackness, representations of race, racial history, minstrelsy, and everything that I wanted to investigate, I was making work that was painterly and about the body and the metaphorical qualities of the body. So, I always think about this work and think about images that require the viewer to confront the unsettling history and ongoing tensions of race relations in the United States. The images resonate with racial stereotypes that are perpetuated and questioned today, asking viewers to consider

their position in relationship to a brutal history. (Walker, 2016)

Her work addresses ways that history is represented and understood (Desai & Hamlin, 2010). Kara Walker's silhouettes reflect traditional drawing skills that are subverted in order to disrupt artistic conventions of drawing mastery. Using the simple graphic style of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century silhouette, she creates highly charged and provocative images that work within existing, dominant conventions of representations, but at the same time unsettles and disrupts these conventions. Her work makes a graphic representation of troubling histories which, in the past, have been hidden or obscured.

Outsider Artist or a Beacon for Contemporary Art Making?

I often see teachers referring to universal notions of artmaking such as the elements and principles of art and design. Many K-12 schools have foundations courses, as do college art programs. A common theme is that the fundamentals must be understood or mastered before students can go on in their artistic endeavors; that they must learn the rules before they can break the rules. In spite of Olivia Gude's encouragement to look beyond these principles and the projects encoded with them, they remain strong themes in K-12 education (Gude, 2004, 2007, 2013).

Perhaps new kinds of foundations, a revisioning the artistic canon, and an altogether new measure of art is needed. For example, a teacher might ask; What foundational methods are evident in the work Mark Bradford, Kerry James Marshall, Kara Walker, Rosie Lee Tompkins, or the Gee Bend Quilters? The art critic Roberta Smith recently appraised the quilts of Rosie Lee Tompkins as a new measure of what should be valued in contemporary art. She described Tompkins, a black, relatively obscure, deeply religious, rural quilter, not as an outsider artist, but as a beacon for contemporary artmaking (Smith, 2020).

Rosie Lee Tompkins

In June 2020, Roberta Smith, an art critic for the New York Times, made a remarkable statement about the artwork of Rosie Lee Tomkins, which she described as an exemplar of one of the country's premier visual traditions: African-American improvisational quilt-making. She said that Tompkins work was "one of the century's major artistic accomplishments, giving quilt-making a radical new articulation and emotional urgency. I felt I had been given a new standard against which to measure contemporary art."

Roberta Smith's commentary was unusual because Rosie Lee Tompkins was an outsider to mainstream Modern and Contemporary Art discourse. She was Black. She was a woman. She was a devout Christian. At first, Smith placed Tompkins in the category of outsider artist, the place where contemporary art critics allow for the un-tutored, mystically inclined or religious artist. The outsider artist is someone whose work deviates from the canon because of their lack of training, they are outsiders to the dominant culture of the artworld.

The critic then changed her mind: "But on reflection, the term "self-taught" or "outsider" does not fit quilters. Rosie Lee Tomkins…was her mother's apprentice in a kind atelier, a small town full of female friends and relatives who were quilters." The important point is that Rosie Lee Tompkins, like other African American quilters was part of a rich, but largely ignored, artistic tradition (New York Times).

Smith describes her work as exhibiting; "extraordinary skill and idiosyncratic abandon that creates a new sense of the possibilities of the hand, visual wit and beauty in any medium." What is foundational for Rosie Lee Tompkins? Perhaps it is improvisation, collaboration, collage, juxtaposition, color, and biblical text. Like Mark Bradford, she grew up in a culture of making, not school art making (Efland, 1976) but a community of family and friends who made things. Her work also includes a poignant connection to her religious community.

Sanford Biggers

For the artist Sanford Biggers, artistic content comes from a deep consciousness of injustice in America. He works with antique quilts along with other media, which he calls "material storytelling," a form that is evident in the African American quilting tradition. His work is a catalyst for new understanding about Buddhism, American violence, and art history. According to art critic Siddhartha Mitter, Biggers was influenced by the exhibit of Gee's Bend quilters at the Whitney Museum. In these quilts, he saw new futures for painting: "There was color, modulation, rhythm, and all these compositional things," he said. "But seeing them in these beautiful textile works made by a woman's hands, it was touching on sculpture, touching on the body, touching on politics." He often works by subtraction, cutting sections from quilts, a proocess that is both improvisational and meditative (http://sanfordbiggers.com/). "To create two things with red, white and blue, and then take something from it, is the gesture," he said. "Working through the idea of the demise of our democracy" (Mitter, 2020).

Conclusion

This commentary began as a description of how teachers and their

students might gain deeper understanding of contemporary art and Black Lives. Many art teachers teach art foundations courses, where formalist versions of universal beauty such as the elements and principles of art are used as the building blocks of artistry (Gude, 2007). These courses often include traditional artmaking conventions such as observational drawing that make reference to a certain kind of artistic mastery and a canon of artists. However, the traditional artistic canon can be limiting and even oppressive by virtue of the artists who are excluded. In the work of Black artists Rosie Lee Tompkins, Mark Bradford, Kara Walker, Sanford Biggers, and Kerry James Marshall other foundational approaches emerge, along with stories about race, culture, and artmaking. Methods such as improvisation, reconfiguring text and using popular visual culture, cultural storytelling, and bricolage emerged as fundamental ways to create meaning and keys to understanding important issues of equity, race, and Black Lives.

The work of these artists can help students to understand Whiteness as a cultural text and destabilize White identity. Reshaping the canon may build bridges of understanding between students, teachers, and the Black artists who have often been left out of art classes. These artists have a transformational urgency in their work that embodies other ways of working that are on the cutting edge of contemporary art, helping students and teachers to think about the past and future of art in entirely new ways.

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Cultural Disconnection During the Pandemic: Access, Art Museums, and the Digital Divide

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ABSTRACT

This article considers who has access to cultural resources during the pandemic, and how isolation from resources due to insufficient technology can impact art museum audiences. The authors consider the benefits and consequences of digital programming during the pandemic through the framework of a museum ecosystem, and how museums can circumnavigate the digital divide. This article also addresses the precarious position of art museum educators during the pandemic and their critical role in serving as bridges between museums and communities.

KEYWORDS: Digital Divide, Cultural Resources, Art Museum Education, COVID-19, Community Access

When the spread of COVID-19 in the United States caused closures of public spaces in March 2020, museums quickly considered ways they could heighten digital programming to maintain audiences and offer ways to connect during a time of physical isolation (Cieko, 2020). Art museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA, n.d.), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Smith, 2020), and the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery (Snyder, 2020), created Zoom backgrounds to showcase their galleries and give users visually appealing settings to their virtual meetings and presentations. Audiences engaged in recreating works of art at home and sharing their interpretations over social media through the J. Paul Getty Museum's "Getty Museum Challenge" (Barnes, 2020)[1]. Lists of the best virtual art museum tours sprung up online (e.g., Lovell, 2020; Santos, n.d; Wilson, 2020), sharing digital connections to art and architecture for people cut off from cultural activities.

1 This challenge was inspired by a Dutch Instagram, Tussen Kunst & Quarantaine (Between Art and Quarantine in English).

Educational offerings changed as art museums sought to engage adult audiences and support families and K-12 classes when they could not visit public spaces safely, and many of these initiatives were digital. Online gallery talks and lectures for adults and virtual field trips and activities for children became consistent features of art museums' schedules during this time.

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), in 2020, museums globally increased digital content by 15%, and with the inclusion of social media, live streamed events, and educational programs, this content increased almost 50% (ICOM, 2020). In a survey of 330 museum educators by the arts and culture evaluation firm RK&A and the Museum Education Division of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), 91% of respondents said that their workload was redirected to create new digital resources, and 72% modified existing museum resources to digital formats (Chevalier, 2021). When answering a question about what work they are most proud of during the pandemic, 110 educators, the largest response for this question, mentioned digital and virtual programs and resources.

These digital initiatives have been resourceful, responsive, and creative. However, with amplified digital programming comes issues of access. While digital technology may offer greater geographical reach, audiences become limited to those with reliable internet, sufficient technological devices, and proficiency in navigating the digital landscape. The digital divide, as the gap between digital inclusion and exclusion is known, emerged as a major source of social inequality during the pandemic (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021), and should be part of museums' conversations and programming considerations even as the pandemic abates.

How do digital programming initiatives in art museums work within a system of inequitable access to the internet? How can museums reach communities without digital access, especially during and after COVID-19? What role do art museum educators have in this programming when reduced resources, staff, and budgets as a result of lost revenue during closures affect how educators are able to do their work and the amount and types of programming they can offer (AAM & Wilkening Consulting, 2020; Chevalier, 2021)? In this article, we examine digital programming in art museums through the framework of ecosystems by considering how the digital divide affects access to these resources. We consider the implications of heightened digital offerings on museum audiences as well as impacts to the field of art museum education.

The Deepening Divide

The pandemic made painfully apparent the complex nature of the digital divide and its mirroring of broader sociocultural inequities. The previously unimaginable constraints on everyday life posed by the pandemic cannot be understated, and the unequal diffusion of digital technology in society only magnified some existing inequities and accelerated others. From work, to school, to basic daily tasks, the internet quickly became important, if not essential, to pandemic life, yet access to necessary technology is beset by difficulties. The digital divide is not a single, binary gap of the "haves" and the "have nots" of digital technology, but multiple gaps that vary in points of access and accessibility, and are complicated by demographic differences, including geography, age, gender, education, and income.

The most common definition of the digital divide, according to research of the concept and its attendant problems, is "a division between people who have access and use of digital media and those who do not" (van Dijk, 2020, p. 1). This definition is overly simplistic, as anyone who struggled during the pandemic to necessarily shift job, school, and personal life to virtual avenues could attest. We have been hampered by varying degrees of (un)connectivity, from inadequate or nonexistent resources including devices and broadband services, to unfamiliarity with or inability to use necessary programs, to simply an appropriate physical space to do work or school in digital formats. Screen-time burnout, clumsy platforms, and sluggish internet plague even the most digitally privileged individuals. At the other end of the spectrum, difficulty or inability to access basic resources compound social isolation.

The digital divide is concomitant to the internet, becoming apparent nearly as quickly as the introduction of the internet for public use in the 1990s. The term was coined to describe the pattern of unequal access to information and communication technology based on income, ethnicity, geography, age, education, and other factors (IMLS, 2004). In the early days of the internet, the issue was largely viewed as binary, with those who could access a computer and modem positioned outside of the divide, and those who could not within it, as first revealed by studies from National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) (Mossberger et al., 2003). Initial policy responses to the disparities framed the issue as a problem of physical access and sought to establish schools and libraries as points of connection. Widespread availability of computers, internet, and digital literacy classes for students and the public significantly boosted equality of access and utility in users' lives (IMLS, 2004), and helped gradually move society online. As reliance on computers, smartphones, and internet connection increased, it became apparent physical access was only the start of the problem (van Dijk, 2020). Studies conducted in the early years of the new millennium soon demonstrated the digital divide was multidimensional, affecting not just disparities in access, but skills and literacy, economic opportunity,

and civic participation (Mossberger et al., 2003). The boundaries of the "haves" and "have nots" grew fuzzier, more complex, and invariably reflected entrenched social and economic inequities.

Fixed and mobile broadband availability have made significant gains toward near universality in the U.S. (World Bank, n.d.), at least on maps if not in user experience. Income and geography persist as major obstacles for digital inclusion. The economic burden of technology and connection is recurring and interminable, thanks to subscription fees and rapid technology turnover (Anderson & Kumar, 2019). Obsolescence and disposability of technology long ago opened an ever-deepening abyss of devices, peripheral accessories, and supporting technologies that are quickly rendered outdated and require upgrades at individual and community levels (van Dijk, 2020). Similarly, rapid turnover of hardware and software requires constant adoption of new techniques and skills to maintain digital readiness/literacy (Micklethwaite, 2018; Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). Rural areas continue to lag urban areas in terms of availability and quality of internet connection, with fewer choices in providers and higher prices for lower quality service (West & Karsten, 2016). Tribal areas are particularly impacted by proximity to reliable internet access points and are often underserved or unserved by mobile services (IMLS, n.d.; Perrin, 2019).

The internet is now an essential service and a necessity for daily life, so interwoven into our networks of communication and social participation that it should be treated as a public utility service, much like electricity and water. In the wake of the pandemic, some have taken this concept further, insisting digital access is a human rights and social justice issue. The implications of digital disparities have adverse economic and social implications for those left behind, extending from basic tasks such as bill paying and shopping, to connecting with family and friends, to facilitating learning and finding employment (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). Dutch sociologist and new media researcher Jan van Dijk (2005; 2020) argues that in affluent countries where broad physical access has been largely achieved, the digital divide is deepening rather than widening, which tends to lead to more digital and social inequality. While stark differences in physical access have diminished, the conditions of access and the capacity of the technology available shapes the user experience.

In other words, someone who has the means and proximity to advanced resources tends to sustain digital proficiency to effectively and advantageously navigate the digital landscape, while outdated or inadequate technologies tends to discourage or inhibit learning digital skills and negatively impact personal, political, and economic capabilities (Micklethwaite, 2018; van Dijk, 2020). Consequently, those with more access to the latest technologies benefit substantially more from internet use and participation than those with less access. The more digital technologies are immersed in society and necessary for everyday life, more inequalities of access exacerbate broader existing inequalities.

The Ecology of Education

The role of museums in circumnavigating the digital divide may be understood through an ecological framework. Ecology, or the study of the systems of relationships within complex assemblages, originated within the field of biology as a way of beginning to describe the immensely intricate dynamics of living things and their contexts, and emphasizing a systemic view over the study of individual organisms or elements (Falk & Dierking, 2018; Hecht & Crowley, 2019; Morin, 2011). The strategies and analytics of ecologists to understand the structures and functions of key elements of a biological community have been adopted by some researchers in other fields as useful approaches to multidimensional, dynamic environments, including human communities and education infrastructures (Falk & Dierking, 2018).

Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposed an "ecological systems theory" for studying human development "in the actual environments in which human beings lived their lives" (p. 287), advocating for an approach in which the interaction of processes, person, and context are taken into consideration (Johnson, 2008). Bronfenbrenner theorized that a social environment consists of nested layers of patterns of behaviors and activities occurring over time that interact in complex ways and can both affect and be affected by a person's development (Johnson, 2008).

In their extensive study of the functionality and relevance of museums, Falk and Dierking (2018) "share the idea that learning is a complex phenomenon that needs to be understood as occurring within the context of a range of sociocultural and physical contexts, multiple factors and players" (p. 13). Their research locates museums as part of a complex ecology of education deeply interconnected to other educational organizations and institutions including schools, universities, and libraries. While formal education entities such as primary and secondary schooling are "critical and necessary components" (Falk & Dierking, 2018, p. 11), they represent only a small part of the entire system of educational opportunities and resources, as learning experiences can, and do, happen in a wide and diverse range of contexts in and out of schools. The expanded notion of the learning ecosystem includes informal and free-choice learning organizations, and acknowledges the importance of community-based, social resources such as peers, educators, friends, and family (Falk et al, 2014). In their studies of art museum education, Knutson

et al. (2011) define learning ecology as "a landscape of art learning opportunities that exist across a network of informal and formal educational organizations" (p. 311). They suggest that while formal environments support systematic instruction, informal environments can be more responsive to lifelong learning interests and learner-directed experiences. The two learning domains operate in tandem, offering complimentary experiences of creating, experiencing, and engaging with art.

The analogy of the ecosystem has proved useful for studying interdependencies across contexts, allowing insight into how life-long, life-wide, and life-deep learning needs and interests may be more equitably addressed and fulfilled (Falk & Dierking, 2018). Issues in education are not just complicated but complex, meaning they are interconnected and must be approached in multidimensional ways that reflect the relational processes that exist between and among its constituent entities: youth, parents, adult learners, educators, and the range of formal and informal learning settings. Knutson et al. (2011) argue that an ecological perspective of educational organizations as connected and interdependent allows for a holistic evaluation of the full range of education experiences available across institutions within a region, rather than assuming a single organization with limited resources and capacity should provide all components of education.

Education scholars have recently argued for a less metaphorical ecological approach to education in favor of a more literal study of the relational processes and interactions between and among the multifarious elements of the learning ecosystem (Falk & Dierking, 2018; Falk et al., 2014; Hecht & Crowley, 2019; Jung, 2011; Knutson et al., 2011). The study of biological systems has shown communities with higher diversity and more integrated, collaborative systems tend to be more resilient and able to withstand perturbations and disturbances (Morin, 2011); the same can be said for learning ecosystems. Robust systems are reciprocal, having "numerous, often redundant and reinforcing feedback loops that feed information and resources back into the system" (Falk & Dierking, 2018, p. 12). Multiple opportunities and two-way avenues for information and resources translates to adequate support for a broad diversity of learners, not just a favored or privileged few.

Multi-Faceted Museums

How does heightened digital content contribute to community ecosystems? Who is being left out? In a recent study of memory institutions, including museums, during COVID-19, Samaroudi, Rodriguez Echavarria, & Perry (2020) found that digital programming appealed to audiences who were already interested in the institutions, although there was effort to bring in new programming, especially related to societal developments such as anti-racist activism. The authors recommended that these institutions consider a more direct focus on vulnerable populations, including their "interest, requirements, and digital capabilities…to avoid digital exclusion" (p. 357).

This was not only an issue during the pandemic. An earlier study in the United Kingdom indicated that, even before the pandemic, digital offerings in the cultural sector did not expand the reach and impact of museums on communities not already visiting museums and galleries (Mihelj, Leguina, & Downey, 2019). Researchers examined data on the growth of cultural participation over a decade, noting an increase in internet access and on museum and gallery websites during this time period. They also investigated if this rise resulted in an increase in diversity of museum audiences online and offline, finding the same population utilizing increased online content was visiting these spaces physically. Because digital content is driven by commercial profit, search engines and recommendation systems online "that operate in this environment, and which shape citizens' digital cultural diets, are driven by commercial considerations" instead of public interests (p. 1469). The authors argued that through this system, rather than diversifying audiences, digital resources reinforced and even exacerbated inequity.

A multi-faceted approach to art museums focused on resources in the community can expand the reach of both digital and physical museum experiences. To implement this type of programming, museums must include community voices in every step of the process. Simon (2016) argued that museums using a service model to meet the community needs as they see them is demeaning and "suggests that people are passive consumers" (p. 95). She instead proposed an asset-based model that looks at strengths, stressing people's skills and resources in the community. This approach is supported by Murawski (2018) in his vision of museums in communities:Museums and cultural organizations hold the potential to be these places where community assets can be powerful together. We just need to take bold steps to value the skills, interests, culture, and heritage of our communities and neighborhoods and begin to de-center the traditional power structures of museum institutions. (n.p.) By taking a multi-faceted approach to the digital divide that not only addresses the gaps in the system, but also ways in which the museum can work with the assets of the community, museums can broaden their audiences through innovative and collaborative programming that is community-driven.

Ecosystems of museums evolve if museums rethink what an art museum community can look like, expand their scope to include more voices as part of this conversation, and find ways to create

openings to build communities both physically and digitally. The museum does not have to be only one thing. It can serve in multiple roles to multiple communities by creating programming that is flexible, far-reaching, and attending to the many different groups of people who wish to access it.

Jung (2011) wrote that the ecological museum is "immersed in the community" and because of this, the museum hears and reflects the voices of the community members. Art museums that are ecological museums will consider whose voices are left out in programming during the time of the pandemic and after. She took up Bateson's (2000) position that organizations that embrace "social flexibility" are open to "the uncommitted potentiality of change," writing that it allows museums to "transform knowledge and perspectives in multiple ways and to abandon the practice of transmitting knowledge only from top to bottom." Social flexibility does not limit us to traditional informal and formal learning institutions; instead "the greater community and natural world can be embraced as learning sites through outreach, collaboration, consultation, exploration, and experimentation" (p. 335).

We saw the ecological museum in innovative programming during the pandemic that responded to communities. For instance, Explora Science Center and Children's Museum in New Mexico (Zollinger & DiCindio, 2021), a science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) organization, reimagined their outreach programming not only through virtual events and digital content, but also paired with other local organizations to print and distribute thousands of bilingual, hands-on STEAM activity cards in Grab-N-Go meals at elementary schools, through libraries, by mail, and even published them in several small town newspapers. While the idea of easily distributed, highly accessible education resources for at-home learning existed prior to the pandemic, their usefulness and popularity made them an invaluable connection to the local communities and individuals most deeply impacted by the digital divide and loss of learning opportunities. Encouraged by the success of the activity cards, Explora and their robust network of community partners and liaisons kicked off the assembly and distribution of thousands of hands-on learning kits to students throughout the state, an collaborative effort demonstrated to be additionally beneficial to teachers and families even as children returned to in-person schooling.

Other museums reached out to their communities in similar, non-digital ways. The Denver Art Museum distributed free Creativity Kits to schools and community centers in and around the city in lieu of their Art Lives Here community-led exhibitions (Denver Art Museum, n.d.). Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art paired with Boston Public Schools to provide thousands of "creative nourishment" art kits along with meals and grocery boxes to local families (Shea, 2021).

We also saw museums responding to the community by serving as vaccine sites (O'Neill & Lee, 2021) and when the International Museum of Art & Science in southern Texas became a daytime warming center for people without power during Winter Storm Uri in February 2021 (Martinez Gray, 2021). We saw it in the Anacostia Community Museum when they partnered with the nonprofit organization Feed the Fridge and put a refrigerator stocked by local restaurants with healthy food in their parking lot for the community. The museum also created a physical outdoor exhibit, in addition to virtual programs, to reach more members of the local community than they could online (Adams, 2021).

Museums have been built, and most continue to operate, as institutions of power and inequity and have a long way to go to truly be spaces of civic engagement and public trust (Watson, 2007). By adopting an ecological model, museums can reposition themselves as receptive spaces that contribute to the overall benefit of the community. It is critical that these initiatives are both digital and physical for greater community access.

Art Museum Education during COVID-19 and After

Jung (2011) argued that the ecological museum shares characteristics with the concept of an emancipated museum that is free from "the illusion of a fixed reality" (p. 335). Emancipated museums realize that museums are both a community and a piece in a broader community. Jung and Love (2017) see museum ecosystems as part of a systems thinking paradigm that involves interconnected internal and external museum systems. Working outward with communities is necessary to create relevant programming that is visitor-centered and community driven, but museums also must look inward to replace hierarchical structures "with networks where all involved parties are equally valued and their input and perspectives are reflected in major decision-making processes" (p. 9).

There is great potential for art museum educators to create meaningful experiences through digital content at a time when there is a demand for it, but digital initiatives need planning and support. Amplified digital programming is happening at the same time that museums have less resources, especially in museum education. A recent survey during the pandemic by AAM and Wilkening Consulting (2020) found that, on average, 53% of responding museums had furloughed or laid off staff during COVID-19. Museum staff most affected by layoffs and furloughs due to the pandemic were Guest Services/ Admissions/ Frontline/ Retail (68%) and

Education (40%). 67% of responding museums reduced education, programming, and other public services due to budget and staff cuts.

The survey by RK&A and the Museum Education Division of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), discussed in the introduction of this article, noted the impact of the virus on art museum education (Chevalier, 2021). The results of the survey reported that 30% of respondents were negatively affected in their employment and job security, including furloughs, reduced hours, and layoffs. One of the authors of this study from RK&A, Amanda Krantz, (2020) considers the repercussions of laying off museum educators from the perspective of an evaluator, writing that museum educators are essential parts of museum's missions and "often the name and face of the museum to the community." She worried that without these staff members, "museums will have burned bridges into their communities" (n.p.). Additionally, Juline Chevalier, Director of NAEA's Museum Education Division, speculated that there is potential for museum educators to be stretched too far both now and after the pandemic. Although the work is getting done, it is by less staff with less resources and a lack of technology and technological support. Chevalier noted her concern that museum educators will be expected to keep up with this amplified online programming while bringing back in-person offerings.

A study conducted by HG&Co and deployed through American Alliance of Museums (AAM) just prior to the pandemic found that even before COVID-19, American museums often had limited dedicated staff, strategy, and audience data dedicated to digital programming (Knight Foundation, 2020). Arts institutions were more likely to have strong partnerships for digital projects, but less likely to work to understand audience needs. These projects were typically siloed into singular initiatives, rather than more holistic integrations into programming, and lacked defined goals and outcome measures. Size was a factor in digital innovation, with smaller museums lacking staff and resources. With fewer resources after closures due to the pandemic, it could be difficult for museums, particularly smaller museums, to gain traction in creating a more holistic digital model, one that fits into the ecosystem of the museum and the community. We fear that if digital preparedness was a problem in art museums before the COVID-19, the digital divide will deepen through this rapid increase of digital museum programming during the pandemic.

Incorporating flexibility in multiple program offerings needs the support of museum leadership. We are concerned that educators and their knowledge of communities and collaborations are left out of the conversation, as museums develop content without deeply understanding who has access to it and who does not. If museum educators still employed are responsible for more programming and content with less resources, as indicated in recent reports, there is potential for the digital divide for cultural resources to deepen at a rapid pace. While time and energy are needed to maintain digital programming, which many museums relied on during a time when physical access is limited or impossible, resources should also be given to efforts to promote collaborations with assets in communities through partnerships and programs that have access to communities without digital resources.

The discussion recalls issues that arose in the field of art museum education during the Great Recession of the early 2000s. Writing in 2010, Tina Nolan argued that museum educators are best suited to be leaders in social justice and civic engagement and "can and should be the bridge that connects the museum directly to the challenges that face our society" through community engagement (p. 119). Today, museum educators serve as leaders in this role, but they need consistent resources and support to continue their work. By acknowledging the critical role museum educators play in these relationships and providing resources through funding, staff, and materials to art museum education to build community connections, museums can create a foundation of collaboration. They can share materials and programming with community centers, libraries, and other points of access for people in the community without or with limited online resources. These types of programs have long-term benefits after museums reopen because these relationships can develop and evolve into partnerships that offer avenues to expand museum programming outside of the digital realm.

New Possibilities for Art Museum Education

The circumstances of the pandemic have created a sort of Venn diagram of the digital divide and art museum education, with digital programming converging in the middle. In addition to issues with museum content catering mainly to digitally privileged audiences, we see similarities in the motivational aspects of digital inclusion and museum inclusion. Difficulty of access, insufficient resources, and perceived irrelevance tend to discourage or inhibit people from actively participating in and benefiting from opportunities offered by both digital technology and museums. Conversely, easily accessible and relevant resources tend to sustain interest, generate enthusiasm, and are meaningful to the lives of participants. Prior experience always informs our understanding of and views about the world and our patterns of participation in it (Falk & Dierking, 2013), whether in regard to the value of digital tools or interest in a museum's cultural resources. Building deep engagement with whole communities now ensures a museum's future is not limited to those with the lion's share of digital access.

With these challenges comes the potential for new solutions. Wided Khadrawoui (2020) considered this time as one of "opportunity for genuine digital engagement to gather traction and rediscover its place in creating meaning and connections with audiences in profoundly different ways" (n.p). This is a time when museums can rethink their role in communities, and by adopting the ecological model, they can take critical steps to rebuild broken internal and external systems of inequity in their institutions. Museums must understand how the digital divide impacts programming, especially because technology can be both a tool and a hindrance in this ecosystem. Supporting educators in physical and digital community-led initiatives is a critical part of this equation because they can lead these necessary and transformative changes.

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Culturally Responsible Approach to Teaching East Asian Art in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Drawing from the rich philosophical traditions of East Asia, we redress the questions and inquiry methods of teaching about East Asian artists and their works in the classroom, rejecting European White master frameworks when appreciating the arts of East Asia. To illustrate our approach, we have chosen two contemporary Asian artists, Do-ho Suh and Wou-Ki Zao, and we discuss why and how European White pedagogy has limitations in appreciating these works. As an alternative, we focus on a holistic lens of viewing East Asian artistic expressions, which is one of the key methods to understand artworks by many East Asian artists (Sullivan & Vainker, 2018; Stanley-Baker, 2014). To make East Asian art curriculum culturally responsive and authentic, we suggest that art educators adopt the holistic approach of teaching the East Asian art, in which art is seamlessly weaved with worldview, culture, and philosophy as one.

KEYWORDS: East Asian Art, pedagogy, master narratives, art curriculum

As art educators who migrated from East Asia to the United States, we often think of cultural and philosophical differences and contrasts between the East and the West[1]. Recently, while examining East Asian philosophies such as Confucianism and Daoism and exploring their pedagogical significance, we learned that art educators in North America often pay minimal attention to these philosophies and cultural belief systems, as well as their fundamental contributions to the origins and developments of art pedagogy. After teaching Western art pedagogical traditions for pre-service art educators while rediscovering the art and philosophy of East Asia, we recognized the lacking consideration of cultural and philosophical foundations in the art classroom (Bae & Dimitriadis, 2015; Ballengee-Morris, & Stuhr, 2001; Chung & Li, 2017). In this article, we discuss why and how the European White pedagogical approach does not suit teaching artworks of East Asia. Instead, we suggest adopting a holistic lens to teach East Asian artistic expressions, which is one of the key methods to understand artworks by many East Asian artists (Sullivan & Vainker, 2018; Stanley-Baker, 2014). To make East Asian art curriculum culturally responsive and authentic, we emphasize that much of East Asian art represents and is reflected on its worldview, culture, and philosophy as one.

This article is also self-reflective in nature, as we critically examine our own teaching practices and curriculum that rely on the framework of European Western ideals of pedagogy. As we studied more art and art practices of East Asia in recent years, we have realized that we miss some of the important aspects of art from the perspective of East Asia. We also note that many art education resources developed in the U. S. include Asian art from the perspective of the mainstream and formalistic art education drawn from Western art ideologies and theories. It appears that students have missed an opportunity of learning the art from its native philosophies and contexts. In this paper, we address this concern employing a critical multicultural perspective (Acuff, 2016; Lea, 2010; May & Sleeter, 2010).

To address these concerns as well as the limited resources or pedagogical approach to art in our field, we explore East Asian ontological and epistemological foundations embedded in philosophy as the basis for an authentic art experience. To illustrate our approach, we have chosen two contemporary Asian artists: Do-ho Suh (1962-) and Wou-Ki Zao (1921-2013). They were born and grew up in Eastern Asia and made their successful professional careers in the West as well-known by the Western art world and audience. In particular, we focus on a holistic lens, which is one of the key methods to understand artworks by many East Asian artists (Sullivan & Vainker, 2018; Stanley-Baker, 2014). In East Asia, a holistic and connected worldview of things is deeply ingrained in everyday life and belief systems (Bertschinger, 2011; Yigang & Qianli, 2011). We also note and emphasize that in East Asia, philosophy, art, and life are not separate from each other but are an organic whole. This article aims to shed light on East Asian philosophy in teaching and learning art from beyond the European Western pedagogical lens. First, we address the concerns of lacking art pedagogical models of teaching art from East Asia after our review and examination of curriculum resources. After that, we describe two case studies as examples to provide a stronger connection between art-making and East Asian philosophies. We also offer some implications for art education drawn from the two examples.

1 The term East Asia used in this article refers to the geographic region of East Asia. East Asian countries have shared a long tradition of cultural and philosophical traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. In this paper, we acknowledge the diversity of various forms and expressions of artists from East Asia, as some of their works are created in hybrid or liminal spaces through mobility and migration. However, we focus on identifying the cultural and philosophical foundation of art to understand East Asian artist's creative works.

East Asian Art in the Art Curriculum

We have reviewed art education literature following a systematic review[2] to examine Asian art in the existing literature on U.S. art curricular and pedagogical praxis over a decade from 2010 to 2020. Using two key terms, "art education" and "Asian" to search peer-reviewed articles in EBSCOhost[3], we identified only nine pieces with topics that center around East Asian art and artists.

Among them, nearly half of the studies have grounded its discussion in Western-based theories and perspectives (Morley, 2014, 2015; Park, 2014). Also, four other studies are predicated on the framework of multicultural art education but without an in-depth examination of the cultural meanings and connotations of a lens of East Asia (Cai, 2017; Chung & Li, 2017; Hanning, 2020; Li, 2019). There is only one exception that calls for a different sort of analytic patterns with an endless state of flux that does not depend on the West as a dominant and anchoring concern. Following critiques of globalization and postcolonialism, along with the accompanying logics of neoliberalism and resentment, Bae and Dimitriadis (2015) argue, "much of this conversation [about postcolonialism and education] has taken the West as its primary interlocutor or organizing node – a dynamic that has led to something of an impasse in the field" (p. 327). The authors thus propose an alternative system of discourse that draws our attention away from Western Euro/ U.S.-centrism. In so doing, a space for discussing Asian contemporary art could be preserved from Western domination.

In addition to those nine peer-reviewed articles discussed above, we were able to locate a few books during the same period of time (e.g., Chung, 2012; Shin, Lim, Bae-Dimitriadis, & Lee, 2017; Jesty, 2018). However, a limited number of publications shows an obvious lack of research and practices of teaching East Asian in the extant art education research. Our findings suggest that East Asian cultures have long been overlooked and marginalized by the mainstream discourse framed by Euro-American-centric values that have dominated most teaching and learning in North American art education. Therefore, we believe that East Asian art demands a culturally responsible approach (Gay, 2000; Knight, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lai, 2012; Nguyen, Terlouw & Pilot, 2006; Smith, 2010) to respect cultures, philosophies, and histories embedded in East Asian art to buttress its authentic interpretations.

2 According to Grant and Booth (2009), a systematic review "seeks to systematically search for, appraise and synthesis research evidence" in an attempt to reveal "what is known, what remains unknown, uncertainty around findings, and recommendations for practice and future research" (p. 95).

3 EBSCOhost is an integrated academic search platform, including 44 databases that cover many major art and education-related databases, such as Art Full Text, Education Full Text, ERIC, and so forth. EBSCOhost is thus an ideal platform for a systematic review due to the broad coverage of various sources.

Challenging European White Master Pedagogy

Asian art and artists have often been introduced into American art education under the framework of multicultural art education or cultural diversity in an attempt to enrich and diversify art education curricula (Garber, 1995). However, many pedagogical practices of multicultural education mainly focus on the stylistic elements and formal skills of Asian art, including the artist's biography and historically fragmented information and facts. Our literature review shows that few articles discussing East Asian art with multiculturalism lens employ culturally responsible praxis. Often, their approaches do not even address the fundamental and philosophical beliefs and worldviews in East Asia. As Garber (1995) argues, "without a strong conceptual understanding of the complexities of culture, and without immersion in the patterns of a culture other than our own, that these efforts will oversimplify and misrepresent other cultures and their artifacts" (p. 218). Presenting students with the authentic knowledge and cultural meanings of a particular culture, through its own lens and framework, is to realize cultural diversity in our art classroom, along with the decentralization of the mainstream Western master pedagogical lens.

Issues of representation lie at the core of decentering European Western pedagogical praxis and curricular planning when introducing and teaching about another culture in art classes. No matter how we phrase those common pitfalls (e.g., stylist appropriation in the name of cultural diversity, defining art only from the mainstream perspective, or exoticizing a culture by focusing on superficial differences) (Garber, 1995), this could result in distorting and misrepresenting a culture and its artifacts. Representation, as Desai (2000) points out, "is understood as a historically determined construction that is mediated by social, ideological, and cultural processes and not as a reflection of reality" (p. 115). The act of mediation implies the political nature, more precisely the dynamics of unequal power relations, which is ingrained in various ways of how a culture is represented (Desai, 2000, 2005; Grant & Price, 2020). The process of representation is not neutral because it "involve[s] some act of violence or decontextualization to the subject being represented" (Mariani & Crary, 1990, as cited in Desai, 2000, p. 116). That is, cultural meanings are shaped through the act of representation with inevitable "violence," and the power of mainstream/dominant forms of representation often determines who is "us" and "others" and how others are constructed in various institutions, especially education. Then we as art educators should ask: what kind of violence or distortions could be caused by our teaching, and would it be influenced by the dominant European White perspectives and

values consciously or unconsciously? How can a culture other than our own be authentically represented in day-to-day knowledge production? Who has the power to decide what should be selected for representation and how? Who has the power to define what is authentic? In the context where we situate our analysis in this paper, those questions raised above are in close relation to our concerns about the current status of how East Asian art can be represented and discussed authentically in classroom practices.

Different forms of misrepresentation can be observed in art education practices, especially those related to multiculturalism in an attempt to teach other cultures (Chalmers, 1999; Desai, 2000; 2005; Garber, 1995). Some critical educators argue that "current practical demonstrations of multicultural education in schools often reduce it to trivial examples and artifacts of cultures such as eating ethnic or cultural foods, singing songs or dancing, reading folktales" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 61). They further point out that the current multicultural education practice is rooted in an assimilationist thought; in an attempt to reduce prejudice, it can assimilate others culturally, economically and politically, marginalizing "aliens" as part of America's melting pot (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This denies that ethnic or cultural groups have their unique culture, history, and belief systems, even though the legitimacy of their ethnic or racial identification does not depend on the acceptance by or standards of the dominant and privileged group or the mainstream European discourse (May & Sleeter, 2010; Lea, 2010). The danger of this perspective assumes that all art forms can be taught and appreciated by Western meta or master pedagogy.

The absence of local or cultural insiders' perspectives and voices erodes the very intention of presenting our learners with accurate and authentic representations in teaching and learning about art and artifacts from cultures. As Chalmers (1999) criticizes how we treat another culture under multicultural post-colonial art education, it causes the peril of cultural voyeurism, "the tourist image frequently played out in art education by having students vicariously voyage to a smorgasbord of selected and safe exotic places to make trite and decorative copies of decontextualized crafts" (p. 178). In fact, exoticization oftentimes results in labelling, homogenization, stereotyping, and decontextualization, which would keep us far away from the culture we study (e.g., Desai, 2000, 2005; Garber, 1995; Ross, 2014).

Most of the Eastern Asian people and artifacts studied and presented in the dominant Western pedagogical practices have been treated as others without a strong conceptual comprehension of and immersion in the complexities, varieties, and subtleties of their culture and philosophy, as well as their local lens or interpreting framework, as

Clarke (2002) calls it "an emphasis on the local" (p. 239). To avoid cultural homogenization, or an "act of [cultural] removal" (Saldivar, 1990, p. 254) or a "multicultural quick-fix" (Garber, 1995, p. 220), is to restructure and enrich our curriculum, when teaching foreign cultures such as Eastern Asian art and artifacts, by addressing epistemological or ontological foundations, which refrains us from misrepresenting the messages or meanings presented to students. That is, we argue that Eastern Asian artists and artifacts should be addressed and discussed in association with their culture systems. In the rest of this paper, we examine several artworks by two Eastern Asia-born artists, Do-Ho Suh and Wou-Ki Zao, as the examples of a holistic approach of seeing art, philosophy, and social and cultural beliefs as a unity.

Two Case Studies: Do-Ho Suh and Wou-Ki Zao

In this section, we provide two case studies to share and showcase how we understand and approach two artists from China and Korea, suggesting a pedagogical lens of locality and philosophical underpinning. We also see them as alternatives to Western aesthetics and formalistic approach. The following discussions address a core question: how does an art educator introduce and teach art and artifacts of other cultures to which he or she does not belong, such as East Asian art? Garber (1995) suggests, though she does not specifically refer to East Asian art, investigating "the culture that nurtured the artist who made it – the experiences, beliefs, practices, artifacts, and literature of the people the artist calls his or her people" (p. 220). To avoid "flattening" diverse ethnic groups, individual artists, art works, cultural patterns, and voices in the East Asia region into a homogeneous humanity/category (Garber, 1995, p. 220; Saldivar, 1990, p. 255), it is worth noting that these two artists discussed below by no means represent the whole body of East Asian art, because the complexity and depth of East Asia cultures cannot be exhausted by a small group of artworks/artists. They serve as examples showing what cultural information/meaning should be included and deconstructed in teaching arts from cultures other than the teacher's own. Furthermore, the following examination emphasizes the culture behind an artifact/artist, such as philosophical beliefs, customs, values, and how it impacts the creative process. By doing so, we argue against the taken-for-granted manipulation of exoticizing a culture outside the Euro-centric traditions in multicultural art education practices by only highlighting those superficial and formalist differentiations, which is still shaped and determined by the mainstream (or the selectors') cultural values (Garber, 1995).

We also confess our positionality as Asian American art educators who share the similar culture with the two artists described below.

We are insiders of the cultures and thus resonate with the artists' cultural connotations constructed and informed in their artistic expressions. Throughout analysis, we demonstrate and emphasize the necessity of using local knowledge and theoretical/philosophical frames to deepen and enrich the cultural meanings in teaching students about other ethnic cultures. More importantly, our approach can serve as an exemplar for other art educators who are interested in teaching art from a culture other than their own.

Zao Wou-Ki: Spirituality, Emptiness, and Interdependence

Zao was born in Beijing, China in 1920. He grew up in Nantung, a small town north of Shanghai. Zao entered Hangzhou School of Fine Arts at the age of fifteen and spent six years there studying brush-and-ink techniques and the traditions of Chinese art history. For further artistic exploration, Zao decided to migrate to Paris at the age of twenty-eight and spent most of his lifetime in France from 1948. Zao's education in Chinese art and Chinese culture at an early age left a remarkable impact on his aesthetic understanding and style in his art, even after decades of his engagement with European modernism in France. Zao called this mental and spiritual attachment to his original cultural root as being "in spite of myself" (Beres & King, 2013, p. 75). Zao acknowledged this usual "return," which was reflected on navigating two different cultural systems. He recollected that "although the influence of Paris is undeniable in all my training as an artist, I also wish to say that I have gradually rediscovered China. In my recent paintings, this is expressed in an innate manner." (Molcard, 2018, para. 5).

Zao travelled back to China in 1985, spending a month in his alma mater – Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, now called China Academy of Art, to offer a special class for art teachers coming to hear him from various art colleges across the country. In the discussion of basic principles in traditional Chinese painting, Zao articulated his understanding of Daoism and Buddhism, saying:

> Laozi [Lao Tsu] said 'the great image has no shape,' which is the real principle for drawing and painting. Painting is not only about the issue of painting itself. It is like Buddhist monks' practice of being quiet to keep fit. [When you] think of how to paint, forget the topic, and forget about everything in the world. You put yourself inside [the creative process], connecting yourself to the emotion and the painting together. (Zao & Sun, 2016, p. 53)

The phrase "Buddhist monks' practice of being quiet to keep fit" refers to Buddhist meditation, which is supported by Zen Buddhism. Nothingness and forgetfulness, two similar key concepts from both Zen Buddhism and Daoism, are the main theme of Zao's statement. What he suggested to his students also emphasizes the top level of professional skillfulness in Cook Ding's story about three different levels of skills in cutting up an ox – "When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now – now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes." (Zhuangzi, 2003, p. 46). This kind of "spirit-like state" would occur when a professional such as a painter keeps himself/herself away from daily trivialities and draws a high-degree of pure attention to his work, even without consciously thinking of the task. The power of high mastery of skills means that "perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants" (Zhuangzi, 2003, p. 46). Zao thus recommended his students to "forget the topic and forget about everything in the world" in order to reach the ultimate state that Cook Ding describes. He also expresses the mental state of nothingness in his art practice, as Zen meditation concept of 'emptying.' Regarding nothingness asked by one of his students, Zao further detailed Daoist thoughts that influence his artistic creation:

> Laozi's philosophy is about emptiness, nothing fixed. It talks a lot about the space, offering the viewer numerous discoveries and imaginations… painting is something like breathing. Human beings need breathing, otherwise we will die, so does painting … The representation should include both tightness and looseness. If everywhere is tight, there is no way to breathe. If everywhere is loose, there is only a void. Contrast and comparison exist between different things in the world. Music always has the moment to pause, and there are spaces for a 'pause' in Chinese paintings – emptiness. This is very important. Those who don't know how to paint always hope to fill the canvas completely, and do not understand the concept of 'breathing'" (Zao & Sun, 2016, p. 55).

Zao naturally merged two Daoist concepts, emptiness and interdependence, into his artistic and creative practices – a painting needs "emptiness" as humans need "breathing." Additionally, both tightness and looseness in Zao's paintings are presented as a coexistent relationship of opposites, as seen in the push and pull of yin and yang. For painters and musicians, the result of an active action is either "tightness" in painting or "continuousness" in music, which is oftentimes the focus of a viewer or a listener. Zao particularly highlighted the idea of "empty space" in painting and "pause" in music, or negative space, *ma* in Japanese landscape term, as a consequence of non-action, which is usually overlooked by the audience.

Figure 1. *Wou-Ki Zao, Juin-Octobre 1985, oil on canvas.*

He claims the awareness of the interdependence of two opposites creating the balance and comprehensiveness of the world. "If one consistently tries to focus on or uphold one specific side of an idea, then half of reality is being ignored: to understand life one must recognize and come to terms with all of its features" (Lochmann, 2018, p. 26). *Juin-Octobre* 1985, the largest-ever painting by Zao is an exemplary piece showing the beliefs of Daoism, including both tightness and looseness in a contrasting yet harmonious manner (see Figure 1). It is obvious that the darker tone on the left, right and bottom periphery of the piece represents the "tightness" (i.e., purposive action) of elements, in order to make the center outstanding with brighter colors, which denotes the idea of emptiness as the absence of purposeful action.

Zao's understanding of interdependence of two opposites, from an artist's point of view, also demystifies the encounter between the East and the West embedded in his artistic experiment of abstraction throughout his career. For example, he reinterpreted the Song Dynasty landscape painting to show the harmony of land, sea, earth, and sky (See Figure 2). He refused to label his art as only "Chinese" or "Western" by saying, "I think that there is no conflict between Chinese art and Western art; they can only help each other and complement each other. It is hard to say that you paint Chinese paintings, and I paint Western paintings, which makes no sense to distinguish them clearly" (Zao & Sun, 2016, p. 57-58). In addition to Daoism, Confucius's doctrine convinces people to maintain their focus on the interdependence of two opposites, rather than a polarized or dichotomous way of thinking, suggesting a "middle-of-the-road" philosophy. As Schneider (1971) defines Zao's approach, "the West liberates him from the East, the East saves him from the West. Between the two he builds his empire of the middle" (p. 132-133). In fact, Zao really embraced and enjoyed the hybridity of his cultural identification – "everybody is bound by a tradition – I, by two. To make a good painting, you have to understand" (as cited in Weitz, 2016, p. 17). The interrelationship and co-existence of two opposites, in Zao's view, served as the foundation of his works, deeply ingrained in his life and East Asian philosophy.

Figure 2. *Wou-Ki Zao, Les Carnets de Voyages I,1950–2006, oil on canvas.*

Do Ho Suh: Movement and change, interdependence, and karma

Do Ho Suh has a strong family tradition of engaging with art: his father was a famous Korean artist and scholar who practiced ink-and-wash painting, calligraphy, poetry, and literature, and his mother also loves art and has a strong art knowledge about traditional arts, costumes, and architecture (Kim, 2008). Suh acknowledges that he was influenced by his parents' aesthetics and tastes, i.e. his father's preservation of traditional house *Hanok* against Korea›s modernization between the 1960s and 1970s (Choi, 2012). Suh studied Oriental Painting for his bachelor's and master's in South Korea. The acquisition of training in traditional painting techniques became an important part of his early artistic learning before his migration to the United States in 1991.

Suh's artworks include many symbolic pieces, including gate, house, home, bridge, and star. His sheer fabric sculpture, *Seoul Home/L.A. Home* (1999) is one of the early pieces showing an emerging concept of

his art world. He explained that the noise generated by the fire station right across the street from his apartment in New York kept him awake, and thus, he thought of his quiet and peaceful Korean house (Art21, 2001). His memory brought him an idea to install a cultural embodiment, a fabric Korean house, in his New York apartment. Suh names it as "a way of dealing with cultural displacement" – "the experience [that] was about transporting space from one place to the other." Suh also specified, "Leaving Korea for the US was my most significant experience of displacement" (Choi, 2012, para 4).

His personal experience of cultural displacement was derived from his involvement with constantly navigating across two cultural systems and with the establishment of his dual cultural identities. Also, a lack of a sense of belonging in the context of situating the artist self in a foreign land leads to the "choice of the material." According to him, he needed to make "something that's light and transportable, something that you can fold and put in a suitcase and bring with you all the time" (Art21, 2011, para 7). He wants to always carry his "spiritual home" along in his life journey. Movement and change are some of the significant parts of his art world. His view on constant movement and change as the essence of East Asian culture, rather than structured or categorized construction of the world, appears in his work, *Gate* (2005). In this work, he created a gate as a point, entrance, or networked node between cultures, reflecting his concept of things being changed and moving.

The constant movement and change in Suh's art, resonating in the main thesis of *I Ching (Book of Change*, 1000–750 BCE), describes the cause and effects of all things resulting from the dynamics between yin and yang. The *yin* and *yang* symbols represent this worldview of an ancient East Asian cosmology. The symbols visualize the interaction of two forces: the white dot on the black field and the black dot on the white field. This symbol even explains all changes and movements in social realms. Interconnectivity and interdependency of these two powers and poles are well addressed in Daoism, as well as *I Ching* becoming one of the Confucian classics. They are the axes of East Asian ancient philosophy, and Suh's flux and change themes were influenced by this world view (Lee, 2012).

Suh's installation piece, *Home Within Home Within Home Within Home Within Home* (2013), is another example of displaying the interweaving of his memories of the two opposite cultural experiences. The life-size purple fabric sculpture includes two homes: his traditional Korean house, where he lived during his childhood, was enveloped and hung inside a bigger building, his first apartment in Providence, Rhode Island when he first arrived in the United States. The two seemingly diverse patterns are constructed together within a harmonious ecosystem, "this" and "that" give birth to one another. A similar theme can also be found in Suh's piece, *A Perfect Home: The Bridge Project* (2010), where the "perfect home" in Suh's ideal was placed in the middle of an imaginary bridge across the Pacific Ocean to connect the two continents. Suh recognizes his navigation across different systems and cultures but rejects using the term "international voyager" – "But I spend a lot of time on the airplane. And I'm not in one place – just in between [the two different cultures], definitely" (Art21, 2011, para 5). Suh's experiences in both Korea and the U.S. appear somehow contrary but can be interpreted as interdependent, coexisting to shape his current self – the two sides of one thing.

Figure 3. *Do Ho Suh, A Perfect Home: The Bridge Project, 2010.*

His view on relationships or connections of people, things, and places have extended to his sculpture and installation art. Themes, such as movement and change, the interdependent relationship, are reflected in his work, which he calls karma, or the cause and effect. Karma in East Asia as a concept or principle of life is popular common knowledge often associated with Buddhist beliefs, which represents a worldview explaining the causes and effects of all things in the present and the past, and even in the future. This concept includes how we see social, political, economic, and even moral realms of life. His sculpture titled *Karma* (2010), a 23-foot bronze tower of people perched atop one another's shoulder, echoing the pagoda towers of Buddhist temples in Asia, shows one's connection to another (Lee, 2012). His other sculptures were often created with many small figures (*Net-Work*, 2010; *Cause and Effect*, 2007; *Floor,* 1997-2000; *Who Am We?* 2000) or objects representing humans (*Some/One,* 2001), which expresses how a person cannot exist or live alone but is part of a bigger system, even connected with many others.

Figure 4. *Do Ho Suh, Karma, 2011, Brushed stainless steel and stone base.*

The interdependence of people, groups of people, or even nature and the human is considered as one of the deeply-rooted beliefs of Daoism. Daoists see interdependence as a complement (Danylova, 2014), emphasizing the relationship, interaction, and interdependence between one another. They are different aspects of one thing, which to some degree, reject classificatory categories and divisions. To Daoists, the dichotomous point of view, therefore, is misleading. As seen in Zao's paintings, viewers find the significance of the negative or empty space as being intendedly left out but as equally significant for the work. Suh's metaphor of the connection of numerous anonymous people with strings represents individuals being understood as part of an interdependent relationship with each other in the holistic perspective of East Asia (Nagatomo, 2018).

Conclusion

Drawing from the rich philosophical traditions of East Asia, we redress the questions and inquiry methods used in the classroom to propose a new lens or approach to discuss and understand artists and artworks from East Asia. Sharing the two examples using a holistic lens, we focused on why and how these artworks reflect East Asian philosophical and epistemological concepts and themes. Therefore, we encourage art educators to understand that many artworks ingrained in East Asian concepts and epistemology require a holistic framework to fully appreciate their authentic meanings. As Garber (1995) and Chalmers (1999) pointed out, when we look at art from different times and places, we should not neglect their ways of seeing the world and belief systems. Many artistic expressions in and from East Asia are not only addressing or advocating philosophical or aesthetic inquires in art, but also making strong connections with their culture, beliefs, values, and worldviews. As seen in the works of Suh and Zao, many contemporary artists in East Asian backgrounds still make art to share their epistemological and ontological views in association with their cultural insights, struggles and conflicts, inviting the audience to see their world. This approach is a reiteration of cultural anthropologists who understand artifacts in a culturally responsible way (Gay, 2000; Knight, 2015; Lai, 2012; Smith, S. (2010). When avoiding Western art languages but focusing on meaning-making and understanding people, art teachers focus on such questions as why an artist creates an artwork, for what purpose, and how the work represents the way of life of people who see and use in their life. Art teachers can also take advantage of online and museum resources to develop a deeply engaged research about an artwork (Garber 1995), as we note that more resources are available online in English, examining and accessing to making meaningful connections among art, philosophy, social values, and worldviews.

As we interpreted the artworks of Suh and Zao, art does not only root in their philosophy but is also deeply connected with their worldviews. We illustrate their main conceptual themes drawn from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, which are fundamental in understanding their life values, social systems, nature, and universe. That is, art is a small part of the connected universe expressed as a visual form. This tradition was reflected in many East Asian art forms, such as Japanese tea ceremony, bronze vessels of Shang Dynasty in China (Fahr-Becker, 2011), and Korean folk paintings and folding screens (Shin, 2018; Shin & Choi, 2006). For example, art educators can teach Japanese tea ceremony to engage students with Zen aesthetics, mono no aware, meditation, and symbols that reflect Japan's cultural values. Korean folk paintings are full of symbolic objects and icons that can lead to understanding Koreans' social values and their world views, including moral and religious lessons from Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Early in the paper, we criticize European Western frameworks of teaching Asian art or other ethnic products from the narratives of homogenization, exoticization, and cultural voyeurism. We encourage art educators to reflect critically on how East Asian artworks are presented on websites and textbooks, as many of them are

eatured through a Western lens. We see that the oversimplification, homogenization, even Westernization of art and culture only detaches artworks from their historical origins, philosophies, and culture. To make East Asian art curriculum culturally responsive and authentic, we suggest art teachers adopt an authentic and holistic lens by creating art curriculums which seamlessly weave art with worldview, culture, epistemology, and ontology as one.

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Playing the "Data": Constructing Interactive and Enjoyable Experiences of Social Justice-Oriented Contemporary Art

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ABSTRACT

Many art educators are committed to engaging students with social justice issues to guide them "to know themselves and their worlds, and to live and act as part of community and society as critical citizens" (Garber, 2004, p. 6). This paper details an action research that utilizes an interactive and playable Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization (CADV) tool informed by Critical Multicultural Art Education and Dewey's "Art as Experience." The author suggests that this tool supports undergraduate students' engagement with contemporary artworks that address social justice. Using varying, diverse artists as points of departure, the CADV tool initiated students' open dialogues about social justice issues. Furthermore, using the CADV tool as a class built a learning community for students to understand various perspectives concerning social justice issues in the context of different experiences and cultures.

KEYWORDS: social justice issues; critical multicultural art education; enjoyable experience; contemporary art; data visualization.

An inquisitive undergraduate student who enrolled in my digital artmaking class asked me after class why I chose so many social justice-oriented contemporary artworks as a source of inspiration for their art project. He then explained that he only wants to select relaxed and happy topics for his photo project. The students' inquiry made me consider creating a new teaching tool that can assist students in understanding the correlation between contemporary art and social justice. To create an open and enjoyable space for students to explore their own "big idea" (Stewart & Walker, 2005) of social justice issues through direct and personalized contemporary art engagement, this study designs and examines an innovative and playable Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization (CADV) tool as a pedagogical device to support learning experience.

Literature Review

Social Justice Education

Social justice education is regarded as a goal and a process that involves students and educators in a democratic and collaborative way to change the unfair distribution of resources that trammel the equal right of all social groups (Bell, 1997; Desai, 2010). It is

widely recognized that the arts offer students a way to experience and understand their worlds, to better understand themselves and to become better human beings (Willis & Schubert, 1991; Albers, 1999). Especially over the past three decades, young people across the United States are creating artworks that aim to question and challenge inequality and injustice and make a significant impact (Dewhurst, 2011). Art practices focused on social justice issues allow individuals to establish a personal connection to justice and equity issues, then use their imagination to understand the world, create meaning in life, and eventually re-create a better world (Lee, 2012). Thus, implementing social justice-related art practices in art education classes to better help students' understanding of social reality has become imperative.

Critical Multicultural Art Education

Critical multicultural art education is the primary theoretical framework that guides how contemporary art could be experienced socially and culturally. It is a "transformative" teaching framework that brings different students' preexisting social experiences and voices to the center of classroom discourse. This framework enables students to criticize and challenge universal social norms (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997; Ghosh, 2002; May and Sleeter, 2010; Banks, 2015). Kraehe and Acuff (2013) note that numerous art educators and scholars attend carefully to ways "art education is deeply implicated in the production and maintenance of social inequalities" (p. 295). For art educators who aim to pursue educational equity and inclusivity, how to envision a suitable and comprehensive "art education discourse" under the premise of inclusion becomes particularly important (Acuff, 2013). Hence, art educators should conduct their practice and research within the framework of critical multicultural art education to question institutional power, cultural creation, knowledge ownership, and educational and community resources (Acuff, 2013). Meanwhile, students in art classrooms should be encouraged to understand how society is structured hierarchically to help them conceive social changes in their classrooms and communities (Desai, 2010). Therefore, this study examines a new tool with specific classroom exercises to enable students to explore their lives, experiences, and social justice issues from a critical multicultural perspective in a low-risk, enjoyable environment.

Art as Experience

Experience is a central concept of Dewey's educational philosophy, and "to learn from experience" and "learning by doing" (p. 145) is the core concept of his educational advocacy of experiential learning. Dewey (1997) used *Experience* against the idea of *Expert*, defining *Experience* as something that personally affects people's lives. He proposed that students should be allowed to explore knowledge consciously and actively in the actual teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to take deliberate actions in his or her environment and to acquire new ways of knowing through the interactive process of experimentation and experience (Wu, 1998). In talking about how and why art education and art experiences should connect with people's lives, Dewey (1997) stated that learning in the classroom setting relates to the experience outside of it. However, "We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on the experience" (p. 78), and art is the most effective form of reflection and communication. Therefore, an interactive and experiential teaching tool that could allow students to directly experience and interact with artworks plays a crucial role in creating open, even enjoyable, spaces for students to explore social justice issues through contemporary art engagement.

Data Visualization as a Teaching Technology

There is a rapid growth and interest in information design and data visualization as a technology and a discipline over the past 30 years. Numerous fields such as finance, transportation, and business intelligence have been using this new technique to help people better understand "information" and "big data." In the art education field, the establishment of the NAEA's Data Visualization Working Group (DVWG) indicates that more and more art educators have begun to use either "infographics" or "data visualization" to teach in their art classrooms. Tufte (2001) defines that infographic "display measured quantities by means of the combined use of points, lines, a coordinate system, numbers, symbols, words, shading, and color" (p. 12). "Data visualization" is typically used to express big data or complex logical relations in a visualized form that makes data more accessible as well as comprehensive, which provides an interactive experience for users. Thus, "the use of computer-supported, interactive, visual representations of abstract data to amplify cognition" (Card, Mackinlay & Shnerderman, 1999, p. 6) is referred to as data visualization.

Taylor (2017) incorporates data visualization with assessments, stating that teaching and learning strategies and environments will be encouraged and informed by using assessment information. Grodoski (2018), one of the research commissioners of the DVWG, is interested in "using data to link theoretical foundations of visualization to the practical aspects of teaching and learning" (p. 37). He suggests that the application of data visualizations is beyond a tool to visualize artistic information or a transformative way of assessment. In general, however, using computer-supported interactive data visualization to teach art courses involving various learning objectives is still very rare in art education classrooms. Therefore, the research question turns to: How can the use of data visualization to introduce contemporary

art impact students' engagement with social justice issues in a digital artmaking class? Is it possible to use the new data visualization tool as a pedagogical model in art education courses outside of digital artmaking?

Methodology

This study is positioned as action research. It requires observation and note-taking on students' real-time responses to the new teaching tool, Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization (CADV), that I designed for the digital artmaking class. What inspired me to choose this research methodology is my attempt to rely on the "feedback loop" (Figure 1) to revise the course content of the digital artmaking class. The nature of the feedback loop is consistent with the cyclical nature of action research. Action research seeks to "depicting the context, change processes, resultant learning and theorizing of individual or groups in the process of mutual change and inquiry" (Fisher & Phelps, 2006, p. 158). As Figure 2 illustrates, the process of action research is cyclical and usually involves two or more cycles. The cycle includes planning, implementing the plan, observing and reflecting on results (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990).

Figure 1. "Feedback Loop" of implementing a new teaching tool in the digital artmaking class.

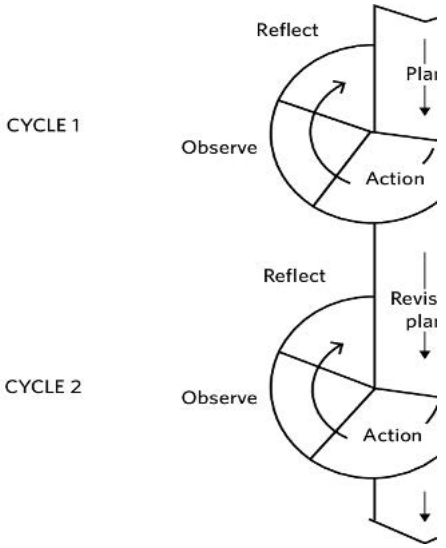

Figure 2. Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart's Action Research Model.

I collected data throughout the semester using qualitative tools, including semi-structured interviews, project journals, case studies, document collection, discussion posts, and field notes (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001; Young, Rapp & Murphy, 2010). The data collection process involved two fundamental components: Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization (CADV) and Thematic Photos. Students' interaction with the CADV provided data on how the tool helped them position their "big idea" of social justice. Then, "Thematic Photos" allowed students to reflect their critical consciousness of social justice on their photo-taking and creation. Hence, to stimulate students to take the initiative to connect social justice issues to their thematic photos and then collect students' "user experience" as the primary research data, the design and the implementation of the CADV in the digital art class was decisive.

Design and Implementation of the CADV

This section details the interactive and playable design project, Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization (CADV), which aims to increase the presence and sophistication of student engagements with and inclusion of social justice-related issues in students' art practices.

Components of the CADV

Glossary of Key Terms. The CADV tool includes two primary components: 1) selected contemporary artists and artworks, 2) and social justice themes (Figure 4 & 5). However, to keep the

thematic coherence of the two components, developing a specific glossary of key terms that contains a sufficient number of accurate, relevant keywords to precisely "filter" the artists and social justice topics is indispensable. Specifically, the glossary refers to language choices that contemporary artists, educators, and scholars, use to demonstrate their concerns and standpoints regarding social justice issues (colorful bubbles shown in Figure 3). I created this glossary by combining existing glossaries and extracting new keywords from selected articles and books that discuss contemporary art movements. The first glossary, Diversity & Social Justice Glossary, collected terminologies from people's conversations about diversity and equity in terms of the lived experience (UWT, 2015). Notably, this glossary included various resources of universities, community centers, and experiences of diverse people engaged in social justice, which had great significance to the CADV. The second glossary, Racial Equity Tools (2019), is one resource of the first glossary. As the title implies, it collected languages related to racial equity and provided the source of each word including articles, books, websites, and other types of glossaries. Undoubtedly, the two glossaries laid a solid foundation for constructing the CADV's glossary, which aimed to connect contemporary art and social justice topics.

In addition, *Artwords: A Glossary of Contemporay Art Theory* (Patin & McLerran, 1997) provided valuable references for finding the meeting point between social justice and contemporary art. This book explained more than 400 terms and phrases related to contemporary visual art aiming at helping contemporary art learners, art critics, and even artists themselves better defined theories and criticism of this new era of art and culture (Patin & McLerran, 1997).

I then explored keywords and phrases from the literature that contains contemporary art movements, art theories, and artists' work explanations. In the process, I was thinking of two central questions: What is the internal relationship between contemporary art concepts and social justice topics? In subsequent data mining, can the summarized and extracted keywords filter the expected social justice-oriented artists and artworks out? It is important to note that the process of keyword extraction is subjective because the understanding of social justice and contemporary art varies among researchers. Despite this variable, the results were not affected since modifying and adding new terms to the glossary based on students' learning experience is the most advantageous attribute of the CADV, which makes this study an ongoing process.

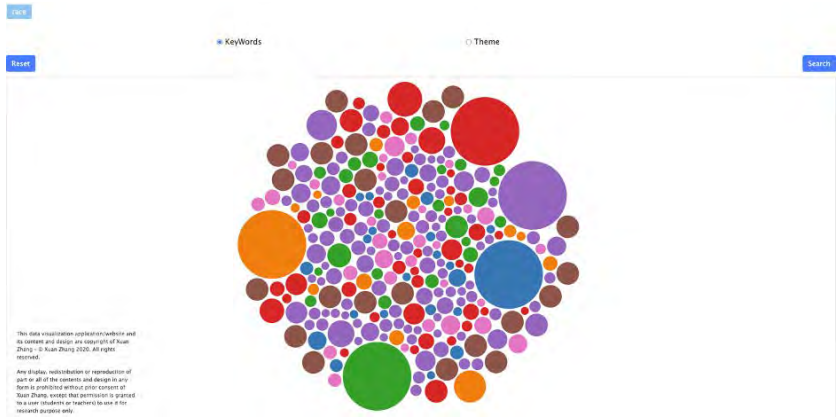

Figure 3. Keywords of social justice and contemporary art on the homepage of the CADV.

Figure 4. The artist results of searching the keyword "Race."

Figure 5. Intersection between the theme of "Race" and "Gender."

Databases of the CADV. To make the CADV function, I connected the glossary of keywords and phrases to three selected databases, Art21, The Art Story, and the MoMA online collection. I considered three criteria to select databases:

1. The database needs sufficient numbers of contemporary art forms as the digital artmaking course content covers.
2. The database needs diverse artists and their artworks.
3. The database needs enough textual information of artists and artworks so that students could click on the keywords and phrases bubbles to "filter" the most relevant artists.

"Filter" here means that the process of searching contemporary artists and artworks relies on programming tools I used to code the CADV. Thus, students' exploration of their interested keywords of social justice is vital to the search result of the contemporary artwork and artists when using the CADV. As students were able to modify keywords of the CADV, each student then could construct their own specific interest-driven database of contemporary artworks. Eventually, the CADV directed students to the specific artist's profile page offered by the three external databases. The overall results indicated that the glossary and selected three databases of this study were successful and effective. Notably, if the keywords failed to filter relevant contemporary artists and artworks through the three databases, the databases can also be easily changed.

Instructor's Selection of Artists and Themes. In addition to providing students an interactive platform to explore their "big idea" of social justice, the CADV also included my selection of artists and social justice themes as an instructor. Guided by critical multicultural art education and my teaching engagement with social justice, I selected five themes of social justice: Race, Mental Health, Gender, Sexuality, Religion. Under each of the topics, I searched 20 contemporary artists through keywords related to each theme in the CADV. Moreover, I picked one representative artwork for each artist to offer students the most specific information from the teacher's perspective (Figure 6). Students were able to sort the 20 artists by different art forms, including photography, sound art, installation art, video art, and so forth (Figure 7).

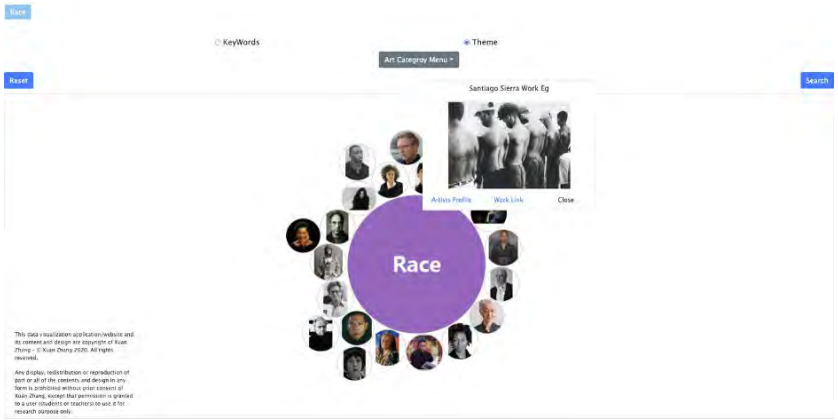

Figure 6. Artists and selected artworks under each social justice topic in the "Theme" section.

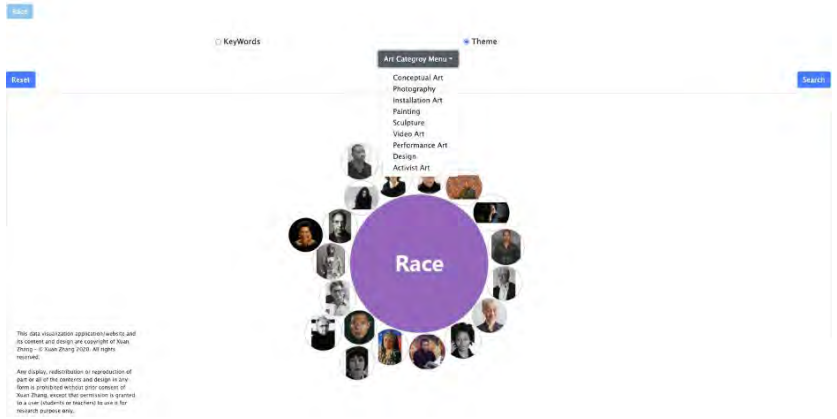

Figure 7. Artistic forms covered in the Digital Artmaking class.

Implementation of the CADV

In implementing the CADV, I guided students to play with the CADV exploring their "big ideas" of social justice in three rounds. The first round of exploration allowed students to randomly select color bubbles, keywords/phrases, based on their pre-existing experience and interest in social justice. Specifically, I divided 24 students of the class into five groups, with each of them have both American students and Asian students to achieve ethnic diversity. Then, I asked the five groups to first "play" with the CADV individually for 10 minutes and then share their used keywords and filtered artists with their group members for another 15 minutes. Additionally, I provided students several prompts to help students further communicate with their group members. These prompts were:

1. Before you start to search these keywords in the CADV, do you have any ideas on the social justice issues that you expect to explore first?
2. What kinds of keywords/phrases have you tried to search? (At least ten items, in addition to the five main themes: Race, Gender, Sexuality, Religion, Mental Health).
3. What is the result of searching for artists? Does the result surprise you? Please provide an example to talk about it in detail.
4. What social justice issues did you and your group members find that mainly need to pay attention to? Why?

Students' responses to the prompts showed that they were highly interested in "race," "gender," and "mental health" (Figure 8) in the first-round exploration.

Then, the second-round exploration first started with a comprehensive introduction of the "Theme" section (Figure 9) of the CADV, as it contains my selection of social justice topics and artists as a class facilitator. I intentionally highlighted some artists that coincided with students' first-round search results of artists, such as Kehinde Wiley and Santiago Sierra. After that, I let students explore the CADV for 25 to 30 minutes and expected them to further refine their keywords and artist search results from the first round, in order to find their "big idea" of social justice for the first two sets of thematic photos. Figure 10 shows that "mental health" replaced "race" as the most frequently searched topic in this round. Additionally, "gender inequities" emerged as another prominent topic among students, particularly female students.

Figure 8. Students' interested social justice topics in the CADV.

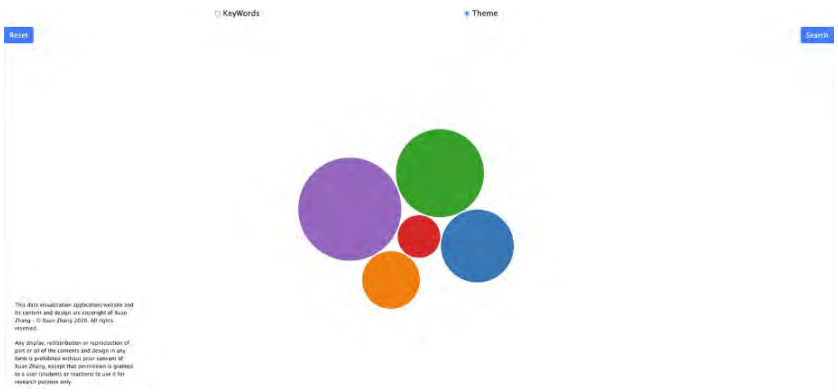

Figure 9. The instructor's selection of artists on five themes of social justice issues (race, gender, sexuality, mental health, religion).

Figure 10. Students' second-round "big ideas" of social justice issue

After students finished exploring and discussing their chosen big ideas of social justice, I encouraged them to think of some new keywords that they would like to add to the CADV. Though not all students contributed new keywords, their input to the glossary integrated into the CADV has taken a giant step towards providing students' direct learning experiences and personalizing their most fascinating social justice topics. Statistically, 13 students out of 24, 54%, chose social justice topics as their themes of the first two sets of photos.

The third-round exploration of CADV was conducted one week after the first two rounds and following students' completion of their first two sets of thematic photo-taking and creation. This round aimed to help students continue exploring the "big idea" for their photos and artistic ways to convey the idea, given the observed phenomenon that some students were struggling with how to express their thoughts about social justice issues through photos. Furthermore, I intended to motivate students who did not select a social justice topic for the first two themes to develop a deeper understanding of their chosen artists' inspirational sources and artistic styles. Thus, I added a discussion task titled "Borrow an idea for the third theme from selected artists." Essentially, this task required students to keep exploring the CADV, then targeting a specific artist's central idea and borrowing this idea to create the third set of thematic photos.

Before students started this round's exploration, I first provided two examples that were shown under the "Theme" section of the CADV. I told them that they can also find the artist they would like to borrow an idea from my selection of artists if they want. The two artists I discussed were Kehinde Wiley's "Portrait of Barack Obama" and Felix Gonzalez-Torres's "Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)". Then, students were able to explore the CADV in class for 30 minutes, and

my role as a facilitator was to observe their actions and offer them help when needed. As a result, eight more students decided to make social justice their photo theme. The total number of students who voluntarily planned to carry out social justice-oriented photo-taking has reached 21, which was 87.5% of the class. The new strategy of the "borrowed idea" played a crucial role in helping students find a feasible approach to convey their ideas of social justice.

Discussion and Conclusion

This section discusses the impact of the innovative CADV teaching tool on the discussions and art practices related to social justice issues in the digital artmaking class. The analysis includes several dimensions: feasibility, effectiveness, and application. Data analyzed from interviews with student and teacher participants, and samples of students' thematic photos.

Feasibility

Direct and Interactive Experience. This study integrates design thinking and strategies into art education teaching. "User experience" centered applications employ "interaction design" as a strategy to help users achieve their goal through pleasurable, smooth, and convenient interactions with an object or a machine (Inc., 2018). It is clear that the CADV tool is designed with a commitment to providing a comprehensive and enjoyable "user experience" for students "to do," organizing their own knowledge; and "to learn," incorporating personal experiences, through an interactive process of "play," and eventually construct for themselves an accumulative system of knowledge. In other words, the CADV tool provides a more visual and interactive way to present "data," which allows students to directly interact with the artworks and reflect on their experiences in an enjoyable context.

Most of students mentioned how the CADV helped them achieve autonomy in their artistic experience and practice in the interview. One of them said,

> When I glanced over all the topics and subjects [on the homepage of the CADV], it was all there. And then I wanted to click on them and see where that takes me to get a feel on how the site was laid out and what information can be found from it. I liked visiting different artist pages and see how they were set up and see what information you could gather from them.

Accessible Searching and Learning. The CADV provides students with more targeted searching and accessible learning of the subject

matter. A notable phenomenon in many classrooms nowadays is that students, and even some teachers, heavily rely on Google search to acquire information. Although using search engines is one of the most important channels for students to gather information, it requires students to use appropriate keywords, which is one of the fundamental components of the CADV. Inputting the most relevant keywords to search for accurate and effective results requires a high degree of understanding and knowledge accumulation of social justice and contemporary art. Contrarily, the CADV enables students to focus more efficiently on learning about the artists and artworks that they are genuinely interested in, instead of struggling with which keywords to use. Furthermore, the CADV tool allows students to add their own keywords to the CADV's glossary, which means using the CADV as a personalized search engine. The student participant mentioned in the interview,

> For someone like me, who does not have a lot of prior experience with social justice, I think the amount of information the CADV provides is simply sufficient. Because these keywords contain a lot of content that I never thought about before, it seems like it has everything, and we can search through them to find numerous artists and numerous artworks underneath each artist. When I found the artist that I am really interested in, I was able to explore more by myself.

Indeed, there are some existing contemporary art websites, but most of them only display basic background information about the artists and their key artworks. What these platforms lack, is the ability to provide users with a big picture of relational connections among different contemporary artists, topics, and artistic forms. I believe that the CADV tool achieves the goal of data visualization, which is to provide a more straightforward and accessible way to observe and understand data (Taylor, 2015), and "to reflect and inspire deep understanding and engagement – compelling the viewer to look critically and thoughtfully" (Taylor, 2017, p. 60).

Effectiveness

Opening Dialogues and Building a "Buffer Zone." Sanders and Vaz (2014) assert that opening the conversation of controversial social justice topics in the classroom comfortably is the essential step to begin with. The CADV successfully helped both students and teachers open the dialogues of social justice issues and contributed to constructing an open and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Students showed great enthusiasm in classroom participation, group discussion, and individual discussion posts regarding their exploration of social justice topics. Furthermore, using the CADV tool as a class successfully built a learning community that allowed students to construct a shared experience of understanding various perspectives concerning social justice issues in different cultures. Such an inclusive and enjoyable learning environment further motivated students to develop more ideas and new opportunities to discuss social justice topics. As a result, students actively provided many new keywords (brown and pink bubbles shown in Figure 3) for the CADV, which further demonstrated the tool's effectiveness.

When interviewing five teacher participants, all of them stated that "learning all arts and all social justice issues is impossible, and our own biases and interests become apparent." Unquestionably, art teachers' choices of social justice issues and relevant artworks can never cover every student's interest; rather, it can sometimes trigger topics students are not willing to bring up. Thus, the CADV effectively served as a critical "buffer zone" in helping students and teachers eliminate the fears and potential "minefields" that might arise when confronted with controversial social justice issues, making the teaching and learning experience easy and enjoyable.

Motivation of Extended Studies. After students' enthusiasm for learning about social justice issues has been fully activated through playing the CADV, there is a greater possibility for them to learn more and deeper. Students' knowledge of social justice can only be generated through their interests in the topics because knowledge and human interests are forever linked and inseparable (Habermas, 1971; Herr & Anderson, 2005). As the CADV was linked by keywords and databases, students also had to discover the "visible connection" between the keywords and the filtered artist's work contained in the database. In other words, if students could not find valid and direct keyword-related content in the database, they had to look outside of the CADV to find evidence to prove whether or not the connection that the CADV proposed was correct or incorrect. Hence, such a process of seeking the relevance or irrelevance of the CADV results led students to do much necessary in-depth research to ensure a more accurate interpretation of the work they searched out. Additionally, students demonstrated a great interest in doing additional research out of class to support their ideas of social justice issues presented in

Critical Reflection in Photography. After students gained a more profound experience and understanding of social justice through surfing on the CADV, students were intrigued to critically reflect on their experiences and illustrate concerns about social justice through their digital art practices. This is the most important indicator of the effectiveness of the CADV tool. As a result, students' thematic photos touched on all of the five social justice themes, of which I added to the CADV followed by the theoretical framework of critical multicultural art education: race, gender, sexuality, mental health, and religion. In analyzing student works that focused on racial issues, one thematic

photo named "We are the same on the inside" (Figure 11) captured my eyes immediately. For most, apples are simply a common fruit that people see and think nothing else of, but student A used it as a metaphor to express his thoughts and demands for racial equity. He explained in the photo description,

> This is a rather simple picture at first glance, but it has a deeper meaning once it is given more thought. No matter what color the apple is on the outside, it is clear that they are still the same fruit and pretty much the same on the inside. I think this can be an analogy to the human race. It does not matter what race a specific person is, every human is essentially the same. A human is a human like an apple is an apple.

This work used straightforward objects to express the profound truth in the way of understatement. It explains why we need the language of art, the visual symbols, to show our thoughts on controversial topics, especially when verbal languages or writings cannot simply convey those thoughts to audiences. As A-17 reflected his critical consciousness of social justice in his essay, "Photography can be an effective and emotional medium where feelings are expressed to the world. Often, these feelings have to deal with social justice."

Figure 11. Student A's thematic photo, "We Are the Same on the Inside," Spring 2020

In addition to racial inequities, discussions about mental health featured prominently in the students' thematic photos. The most representative example is from student B, as he described how this issue has been widespread and affects everyone, including himself. He originally got inspired by Frida Kahlo's T*hen Broken Column,* in which the artist exposed her inner struggles and pain through "symbolism of outside elements." He highly resonated with this work and hoped that his thematic photos would convey the same message. In this layered photo, "Inner Battle" (Figure 12), student B tried to show his commentary towards mental health. What he aimed to express in this photo is that while everything looks good on the outside, "When the person opens up (as symbolized by opening of the shirt) you can see the chaos going on inside." He further explained, "For people struggling with mental health issues, their biggest enemy is sometimes themselves, as they are tearing themselves apart from the inside out."

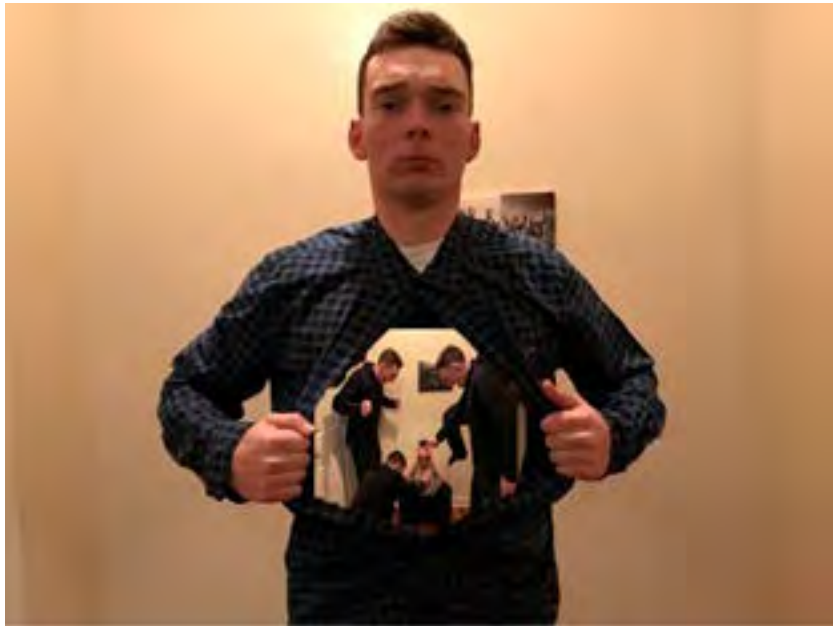

Figure 12. Student B's thematic photo, "Inner Battle," Spring 2020

Four female students out of six actively showed their desire to discuss gender equity issues in this class. Among these students' thematic photos, I can think of no better demonstration of this theme than the example of student C's work that addressed the issue of compensation discrimination in the context of gender equity, "What a Woman's Worth" (Figure 13). In this set of photos, student C

intuitively layered the number "0.79" on top of three headshots of her friends to represent the fact that "on average, women in America make 0.79 cents to every dollar a man makes." She also thought that this photo could also fall under education equity issues because while "both women and men have access to the same education, they do not make the same amount."

Figure 13. Student C's thematic photo, "What a Woman's Worth," Spring 2020

These representative photos above manifest the importance and effectiveness of using the interactive and playable CADV tool to inspire students' explorations and understandings of how artists infused their own personal and social experiences into their works. Most importantly, the CADV tool motivates students to critically reflect their own experiences and observations of social reality on art practices.

Application

The CADV tool demonstrates its feasibility for being applied in different art classrooms other than the digital artmaking class as a pedagogical model. Due to its design flexibility, the keywords and databases can be customized to meet various course content and learning objectives. One of my colleagues who had already implemented the CADV in her arts integration class for two semesters mentioned that the tool provided students "personal connections and dynamic learning experiences to specific social justice topics."

Most importantly, the CADV allows students to improve their ability of self-learning. It makes students stay engaged because the tool primarily requires students' participation to function. Compared to traditional teaching approaches, the interactive data visualization technology employed by the CADV has shown its irreplaceable superiority after the worldwide outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, during which online education became an irreversible trend over the next five years. It is an effective way to help teachers and students trapped in the predicament of the inefficiency of online teaching and learning find a viable means to improve outcomes and make education more engaging. Therefore, the author suggests that the application of the CADV and the technology of data visualization should be implemented on a broader scale of the art education field as early as possible.

In today's education climate, scholars from different fields always consider the actions we should take to fight against social inequalities and discrimination in our society. This study and the design project, Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization, was the action I successfully took in the art education field. The employment of data visualization technique was a practical and feasible means to facilitate dialogues and relevant art practices surrounding social justice issues.

Meanwhile, students' learning interests toward social justice had been greatly stimulated. They were able to position their "big idea" of social justice in the process of exploring contemporary artists and relevant artworks guided by the CADV, and eventually, successfully applied the "big idea" into their art projects. Furthermore, the study indicates that using the tool as a class built a learning community for students to understand various perspectives concerning social justice issues in different experiences and cultures. Therefore, the author proposes that social justice education in art classes should be conducted through a "user-experience" oriented digital learning tool, such as the CADV, in order to increase students' participation and reduce teachers' burden to present and promote a focus on social justice on their own.

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Establishing Fine Arts Festivals as Equitable Learning Opportunities for High Ability Visual Artists

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ABSTRACT

This article describes how leaders in a university-based educational fine arts collaborative worked to create an equitable learning opportunity for secondary-aged high ability visual artists from backgrounds that are typically underrepresented in gifted education. It discusses how issues of inequity and representation in gifted education can be partially addressed by incorporating visual arts-based elements to existing music festivals.

KEYWORDS: high ability visual artists, gifted, talented, ability grouping, equity

"It was nice to see that I'm not the only one my age who likes art this much. Who cares this much. There are other people out there like me." This was how one high-school aged high ability visual artist (HAVA) expressed their feelings about taking part in an all-day visual arts festival geared toward meeting the needs of HAVA learners. Fisher (2019) describes HAVAs as "students who exhibit behaviors or produce artworks that display a visual artistic aptitude considered well above average for their peer group" (p. 28). While this population of students has often been referred to as "gifted and talented", Fisher (2019) prefers to utilize the more descriptive phrase "high ability," noting common negative connotations associated with the terms "gifted" or "talented." Within this article, the authors will describe how a long-held music festival for students from low-income school districts throughout the St. Louis region expanded in order to incorporate the visual arts and partially meet the needs of underrepresented HAVA learners. It is their goal to describe how others may adopt this model as a means of serving HAVAs from marginalized groups.

The Des Lee Fine Arts in Education Collaborative and Festival

The Des Lee Fine Arts in Education Collaborative is funded through an endowment from the E. Desmond Lee family and the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The Collaborative is dedicated to enhancing the quality, influence, attitudes, and accessibility of fine arts by

connecting educators, artists, and performers for St. Louis students. The Des Lee Fine Arts Festival has been an annual activity of the Collaborative for nearly twenty years, focusing primarily on high ability musicians. While this type of festival is exceptionally common in music education, under the leadership of Dr. Michael V. Smith (second author of this article), the visual arts have recently been invited to join, making it a true Fine Arts festival. Before committing to the invitation, Dr. Jennifer Fisher (first author of this article) began by searching for existing examples of fine arts festivals that included both music and the visual arts. The search yielded no results. Without a foundation from which to build, the authors decided to model the visual arts portion of the festival off of the format set forth by musicians.

Within the current iteration of the festival, students are selected from Collaborative school districts, again focusing on providing fine arts experiences for underserved school district populations. High school students participate in a day of clinics, specifically in a Festival choir, band, orchestra, or most recently, a visual art studio or theater troupe. The day concludes with a culminating concert performance and art gallery opening.

Benefits of Ability Grouping for High-Ability Learners

The Des Lee Fine Arts Collaborative Music Festival has long served as an extracurricular form of ability grouping for high ability musicians throughout the St. Louis region. Numerous studies have shown the positive effects ability grouping yields for high ability students (Clark and Zimmerman, 1984; Worcester, 1976; Steenbergen-Hu, Makel, & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016) These experiences are particularly important for high ability learners hailing from backgrounds that are traditionally underrepresented in gifted education populations. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) (2019) states that "gaps in support of and services for our most advanced students are even more pronounced for children from minority, ELL, and low-income backgrounds." A major goal of the Des Lee Fine Arts in Education Collaborative is to reduce those gaps.

Clark and Zimmerman (1984) state, "Students in the ability groups are more likely to explore and exchange ideas with greater group acceptance and can pursue advanced study in selected areas. Ability grouping also supports more opportunities for independent study, through special courses and non-school activities" (p. 158). While critics suggest that ability grouping contributes to achievement gaps and disadvantages lower achieving students (Belfi, Goos, De Fraine, & Van Damme, 2012), since 2017, the Des Lee Collaborative Fine Arts Festival has actively sought to provide students from underrepresented backgrounds (within gifted education) the

opportunity to converge at our university and work with other high ability students from similar backgrounds. It is the authors' desire to share this model with other arts leaders who may be seeking to provide challenging enrichment opportunities to students from NAGC's identified minority, ELL, and low-income backgrounds.

Positionality and Opportunity

Both authors have acknowledged that they approached this festival in positions of both dominance and privilege. They are both White college professors with doctoral degrees who have worked extensively with socioeconomically disadvantaged students in K-12 environments. While formal demographic data about festival participants was purposefully not collected, the authors informally observed that all teachers who participated in the festival appeared to be phenotypically White, presented as female or feminine, and were likely college-educated given their teaching positions; this corresponds with data showing that in the 2017-2018 school year, 76% of K-12 teachers were female, and 79% were White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Alternatively, informally collected data from the authors estimates that approximately half of the Festival participants phenotypically appeared to be students of color, gender representation seemed to be evenly split between male and female, and all students attended schools who served primarily students from low-income socioeconomic brackets. The students represented schools from urban, suburban, and rural communities.

The positionality of all participants is important in light of research that outlines how autonomous funding structures and an emphasis on "academic" rather than artistic giftedness lead to inequality of opportunity for underrepresented HAVAs. Brian Wright and Donna Ford (2017), both Black scholars of gifted education, state,

> Gifted education is not federally mandated. This autonomy allows schools to ignore…racial disparities in gifted education…all children, but especially those from low-income and non-White backgrounds, [deserve to] have access to the rigorous academic environments they need and deserve... These children may exhibit special talents in academics or the arts. Thus, limiting the recognition and the identification of giftedness to the three Rs [reading, writing, arithmetic] can miss untapped potential (Wright & Ford, 2017, p. 112).

Acuff (2020), citing herself (2018) and others (Lopez, Pereira, & Rao, 2017; Sions, 2019), states, "[students of color need] to see themselves in the curriculum that art teachers develop and the resources that they use in the classroom." This idea influenced Dr. Fisher's eventual decision to lead brainstorming on the theme "Declaration" beginning

the festival day by displaying and discussing a black and white photograph of the 1965 Selma march (details about this process are discussed in further detail in the next section). Further, Acuff (2020) goes on to say,

> Teachers' emphasis on certain media and artmaking processes in the classroom communicates messages to students about their significance in the art world writ large. For example, textiles and fiber arts such as weaving and quilting…have a marginalized position in the U.S…"Crafts," which are grounded in community and shared kinship (Katter, 1995), are most often associated with the artmaking practices of indigenous communities of color. (Acuff, 2020, p. 19).

By choosing to emphasize fiber arts, Dr. Fisher made the intentional choice to utilize art making media that has been marginalized by the mainstream art world (discussed further in the next section).

Creating the Experience

Observing the model followed by the music educators, Dr. Fisher decided to create a flexible, yet rigorous, agenda for her incoming HAVA students. Throughout the process, the authors chose to utilize Glaser and Strauss's (1967) Grounded Theory framework due to its flexible nature, as well as the paucity of existing research surrounding this type of visual arts festival. Methods and data collection were purposefully informal, due to the Authors' fear that lengthy IRB forms, school and guardian approval forms, and the possible perceptions of HAVA students, their guardians, and their teachers that it was "too much work" to apply for consideration in the festival would prevent students from coming. In an educational environment that already disadvantages many of the student populations present at the festival, the authors did not wish to implement another barrier. The process began by contacting the high school art teachers from each of the member schools in the Des Lee Fine Arts Collaborative.

Nominations and Student Selection

The secondary art educators were contacted via email and encouraged to nominate students from their programs according to the criteria outlined in Table 1. (Table 1) (M. Smith, personal communication, December 14, 2018).

Teachers who wished to nominate students were directed to a website where they could submit student names according to their perceptions of student need and ability. Once all student nominations were submitted, Dr. Fisher compiled lists of which students would be accepted for participation. Facility restraints meant that approximately

30 students could be served, and students were chosen based on a combination of school size and the number of students nominated. Fisher (2019) describes HAVAs as "students who exhibit behaviors or produce artworks that display a visual artistic aptitude considered well above average for their peer group" (p. 28). Further, Clark and Zimmerman (2004) assert that HAVAs often exhibit task commitment and high levels of creativity with regard to the visual arts. There is no universally agreed upon definition of giftedness, and thus, HAVAs (Fisher, 2016), making it more difficult to advocate on behalf of the existence and needs of these students. While some states require gifted students be served by Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), few require IEPs on the basis of artistic giftedness or talent. A complete lack of federally-mandated consistency, alongside ever-evolving state educational laws, makes developing widespread educational recommendations for HAVA students extraordinarily challenging. In the authors' state of Missouri, gifted students, and thus HAVA students, are not served by IEP procedures (unless they qualify for an IEP in other learning areas).

Teachers who wished to nominate students were directed to a website where they could submit student names according to their perceptions of student need and ability. Once all student nominations were submitted, Dr. Fisher compiled lists of which students would be accepted for participation. Facility restraints meant that approximately 30 students could be served, and students were chosen based on a combination of school size and the number of students nominated.

Foundations of Creation

On the day of the festival, the high school students arrived at the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis at 8:45 A.M. alongside their musician peers. Dr. Fisher had already organized supplies, set up workspaces, and created nametags for each student. As expected, the high school students immediately sat down next to their peers from the same high school they attended, clustering in small groups and talking quietly. Their teachers had been notified via a previously sent email from Dr. Fisher that the students would be separated from their schoolmates:

> ...in order to help facilitate a community of young artists, I ask that you encourage your students to engage with students from other schools. I will be assigning them mixed-school work tables so that they can get to know students from outside their comfort zones--after all, intentional collaboration is an essential part of Des Lee's vision! (J. Fisher, personal communication, February 3, 2019).

When Dr. Fisher numbered students off according to tables, many seemed reluctant to separate from their peers, some even insisting upon sitting near a friend from their home school at the adjoining table. In order to facilitate collaboration, Dr. Fisher asked each student to introduce themselves, share what high school they attended, and outline their favorite art media to work with. Several quiet conversations began to take place, with mostly muted conversations unfolding among table groups.

Each year, in an attempt to cohesively connect themes throughout the festival, a visual theme has been selected from the name of a song performed by one of the festival's various music ensembles (orchestra, choir, band). Dr. Fisher introduced the theme for the 2019 festival—"Declaration." Among the many song title choices of the musical groups, titles including numbers and words like sonata, hymn, and prelude did not seem to elicit the type of engaging phrases that would, in and of themselves, inspire students to create. Alternatively, the theme "Declaration" was agreed upon by the authors as a strong foundation from which to begin brainstorming.

Students were also shown a poster-sized black and white photograph of the 1965 Selma march and asked to reflect upon the image in light of the theme "Declaration." Dr. Fisher was surprised to learn that, in a room of students representing a variety of different races and ethnicities, only one of the students seemed to know about the historic march. This reinforced Acuff's (2020) assertion that students "need to see themselves in the curriculum." After Dr. Fisher described what was happening in the artwork, the photograph spurred conversations among the students about the different means by which artists can make a declaration. While students began preliminary sketches of their artworks, students heard a recorded version of the Declaration song they would be hearing performed live later that evening. Next, Dr. Fisher introduced the students to the fiber materials they would have access to in order to create their artwork. Fibers materials were chosen for a variety of reasons. First, they provided a relatively clean medium with which to work--a requirement of the Touhill Performing Arts Center management in order to utilize their workspace for art creation. Further, an informal email discussion with the art teachers of the participating students revealed that many of them felt their students had been underexposed to fibers processes in their home classrooms. Thus, Dr. Fisher believed the medium might "level the preparedness playing field" from which students were entering the festival. The feedback from participating teachers supports Acuff's (2020) assertion that U.S. art culture tends to de-emphasize "crafts" (Katter, 1995) as a marginalized or "othered" art form.

As the brainstorming commenced, many students began to feverishly

sketch ideas, jot down concepts, and even write poetry outlining what type of work they wanted to create. Some seemed nervous to work with fibers, asking if they could draw or paint instead; this is not uncommon. Hurwitz (1983) points out that HAVAs have often invested a significant amount of time into developing their skills in particular areas, and sometimes, they are reluctant to branch out into creative risk taking. After 20 minutes of brainstorming, Dr. Fisher asked students to take turns at their table describing their ideas with their peers and new table-mates. Each student had a chance to take a turn, and their peers generally listened attentively while projects were being described. After quick demonstrations of how to responsibly use the needles and low-temperature glue guns present, students were given a timeline of two hours to work before lunch, with the understanding that they would have only four hours after lunch to finish their artwork. Dr. Fisher encouraged students to utilize their new table mates as sources of inspiration and inquiry, ensured they knew where the restrooms were located, and turned on the day's "theme song" at low volume--it was time for their creations to take shape!

Figure 1. *HAVA student working on project*

Figure 2. *HAVA student working on project.*

Creation and Art Making

The variety of student styles was immediately evident. Some chose to draw on the fabric with markers or paint, others chose to sew, and one student even began tearing apart her sketchbook to construct a three-dimensional piece involving fibers. Some students worked on the floor beside their tables, others stood, and others sat rigidly upright, sewing needles poised just inches from their noses. (Figures 1 & 2) As the day progressed, students began to slowly warm up to their HAVA peers from other high schools, sharing stories about procedures in their own art classes, interesting pieces they had made throughout the year, and their plans after high school graduation. One student, then a senior, shared that he planned to attend a university across the state to major in art, another stated that she hoped to major in biology and minor in art, while others were still undecided regarding their post-secondary plans.

There was a low hum of conversation while all students focused hyper-attentively on their work. Winner and Martino (2003) describe this phenomenon in gifted students as the "rage to master"; "that is, they are intensely motivated to make sense of their domain [visual art] and show an obsessive interest and ability to focus sharply in their area of high ability" (p. 335). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes

this state as flow, or, "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) goes on to outline that flow is only possible when high levels of ability are matched evenly with high levels of challenge--an experience that Drs. Fisher and Smith endeavored to create for the purposes of the festival.

Figure 3: *HAVA student's finished project.*

Figure 4: *HAVA student's finished project.*

Gallery Presentation

After eating lunch amid six full hours of working on their projects, students began to clean up their workspace and transform it into an art gallery. (Figures 3 & 4) The gallery was assembled to be viewed by the family and friends of those who would also be attending the festival's music concerts that evening. Tags were placed by student artwork outlining their names, schools, grade levels, and the titles of their pieces. Students dressed in their personal interpretations of semi-formal attire and stood near their pieces to talk about their artwork with curious patrons. While some seemed reluctant to discuss their artwork and mainly chose to let it speak for itself, others enthusiastically engaged in discussion with curious parents, friends, and peer musicians who were also participating in the festival. After an hour of guiding interested viewers through the gallery they created and curated, students joined one another in a section of the performance hall that had been set aside for them. Together, they watched the musicians perform the songs they had practiced throughout the day with their respective clinicians. After the concert, students retrieved their artwork, loaded busses, and headed back to their respective schools.

Responses from HAVAs, Their Teachers, and Their Families

Before the students left for dinner, but after they had finished curating their gallery, Dr. Fisher asked the students to briefly reflect on their experiences that day. One student stated that their favorite part of the day was being around other "art nerds"—a sentiment echoed by a peer who said the best part of the day was meeting people who were "like me." Nine of the thirty students noted that meeting like-minded peers was the best part of the day. Another student shared that the best part of their day was the "ability to completely challenge myself, even to the point that I would never do on my own or intentionally" (Anonymous student, personal communication, February 5, 2019) (emphasis is the student's own).

Several weeks later, one teacher emailed Dr. Fisher a new photo of a student's finalized artwork, stating, "...one of our students that came to your [festival]... kept working on his project and added to it...I wanted to show you his finished piece. He had a blast" (A. Anderson, personal communication, April 2, 2019). This student was the same one who had earlier discussed his excitement about his plan to attend a university to major in visual art.

Conclusion

The success of the festival's inclusion of the visual arts suggests that this model could be replicated by others who wish to extend opportu-

nities for underrepresented HAVAs. In order to reduce the real and perceived critiques of gifted education as an elitist institution (Gaztambide-Fernandez, Saifer, & Desai, 2013), those in leadership positions within the visual arts must actively design opportunities to extend enrichment opportunities to HAVAs from underrepresented groups. Further, in order to establish the arts as an important and equal area of gifted education, arts leaders must actively advocate for their own inclusion. Simply put, if arts educators do not advocate for the educational needs of their most high ability young artists, no one else will.

Included here is a concise set of suggestions for others who may be interested in implementing a similar program. First, try to build off of an existing fine arts festival. By adding to an already well-established program, art educators and leaders may find that much of the logistical heavy lifting has already taken place. This was the case for Drs. Fisher and Smith. Second, and if possible, attempt to enlist the support of a local university or college. In addition to their frequent possession of large performance and creation spaces, post-secondary institutions are often enthusiastic to welcome high ability high school students onto their campuses. Some may offer their spaces in exchange for recruiting opportunities. Lastly, start small. It can be tempting to want to welcome a much larger group of students than the space and staff can accommodate. However, as with all new programs, issues will arise, and they are easier to take care of with smaller groups of students.

Winner and Martino (2003) referencing Winner (1996) state, "It is our position that hard work is necessary for the development of any gift. But there is no evidence that hard work is sufficient, and thus no evidence to allow us to rule out an innate component to artistic giftedness. Indeed, the strikingly early age of emergence of gifts in art, and the fact that high levels of skill make themselves known prior to formal training, are both strong pieces of indirect evidence for an innate component (Winner, 1996)" (p. 343). Keeping Winner and Martino in mind, in conjunction with assertions made by the National Association for Gifted Children (2019) that students from minority, ELL, and low-income backgrounds are underrepresented in gifted education opportunities, it becomes obvious that it is the responsibility of arts leaders to *intentionally* create opportunities for these students to work hard, grow, and find success as young visual artists. Gifts and talents may be innate, but *opportunities must be provided* in order for our young high ability visual artists from all backgrounds to reach their full potential.

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The Pep Talk: Today We Do the Work

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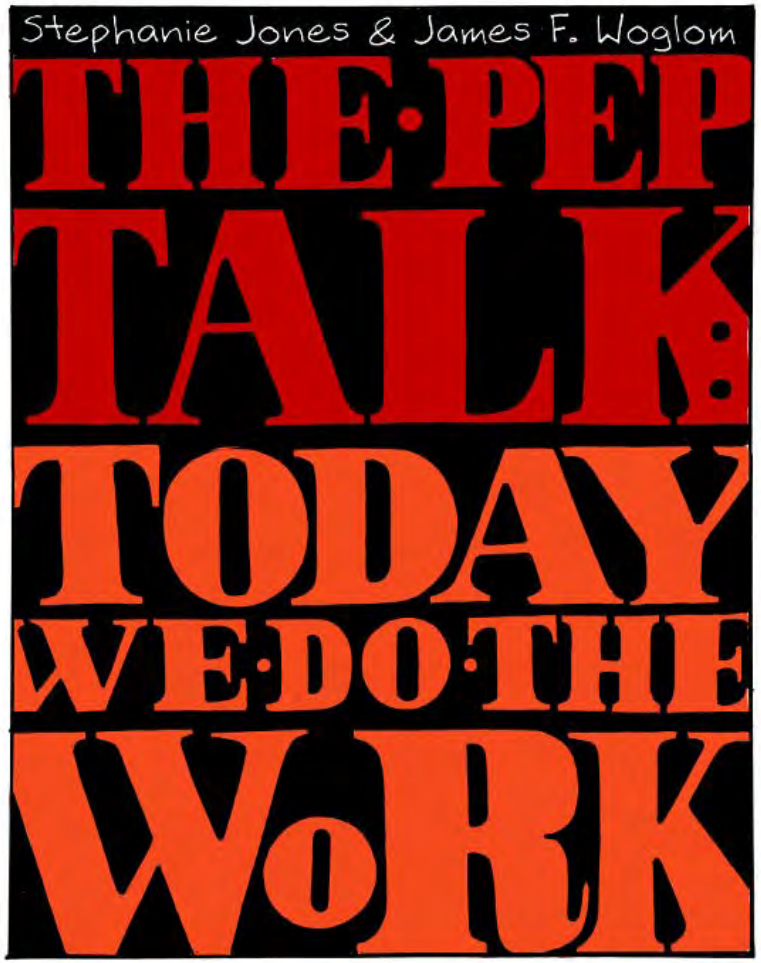
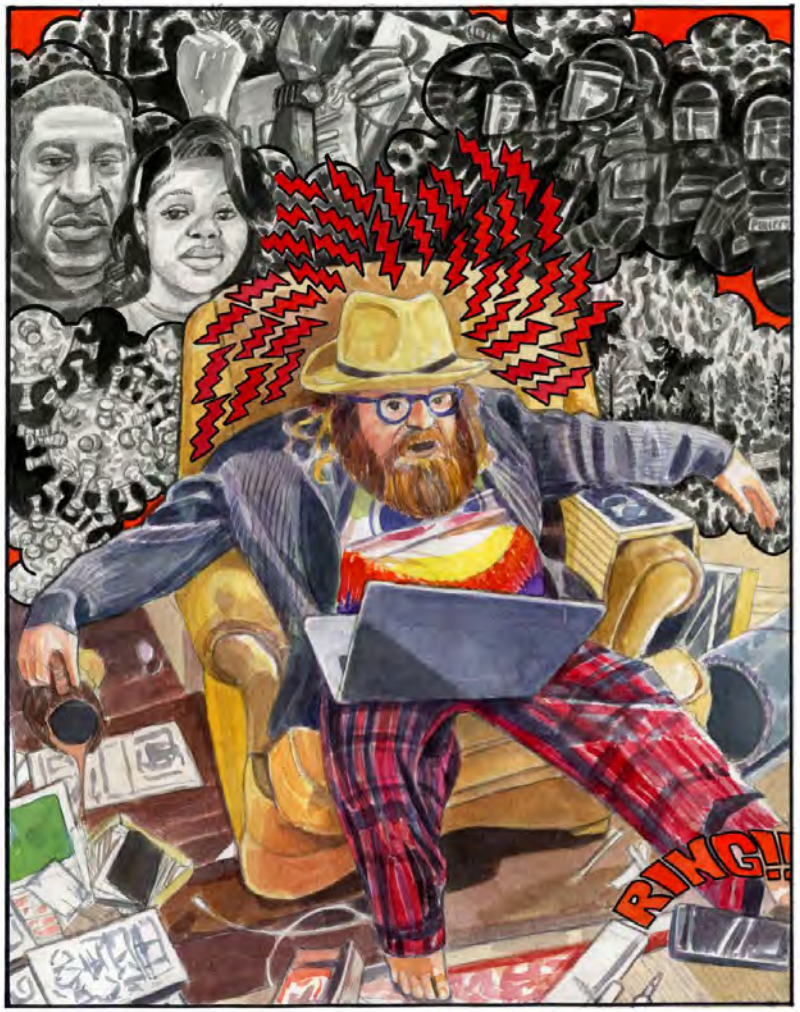
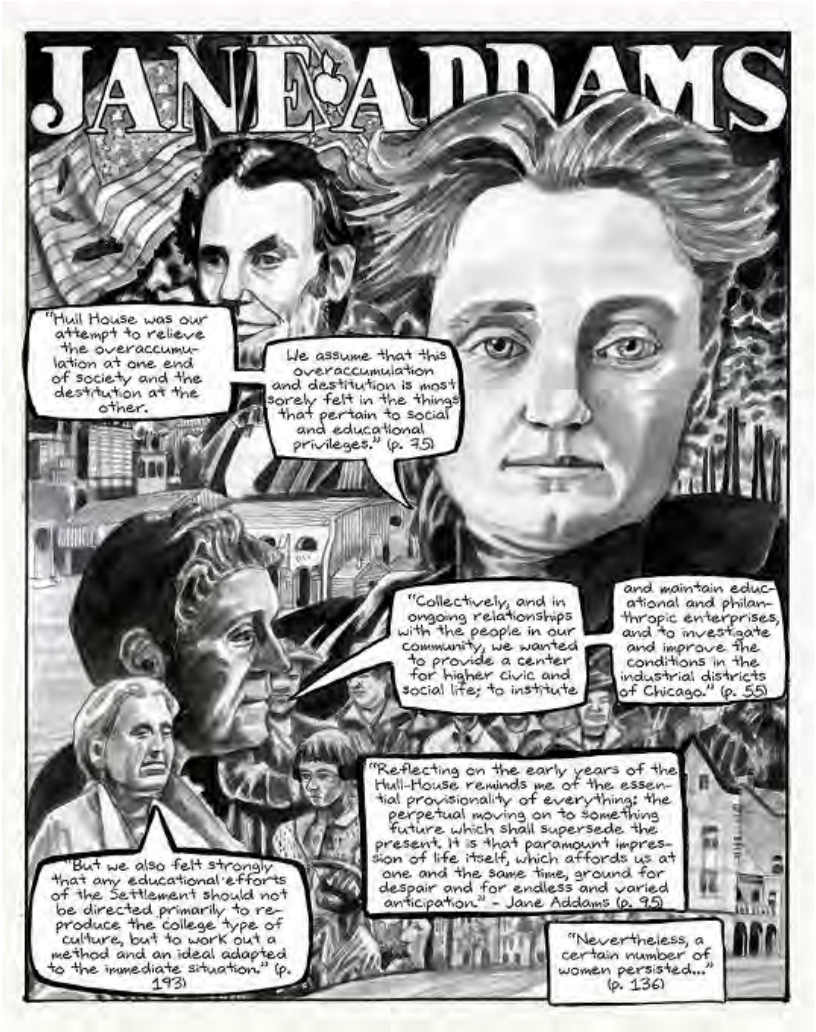


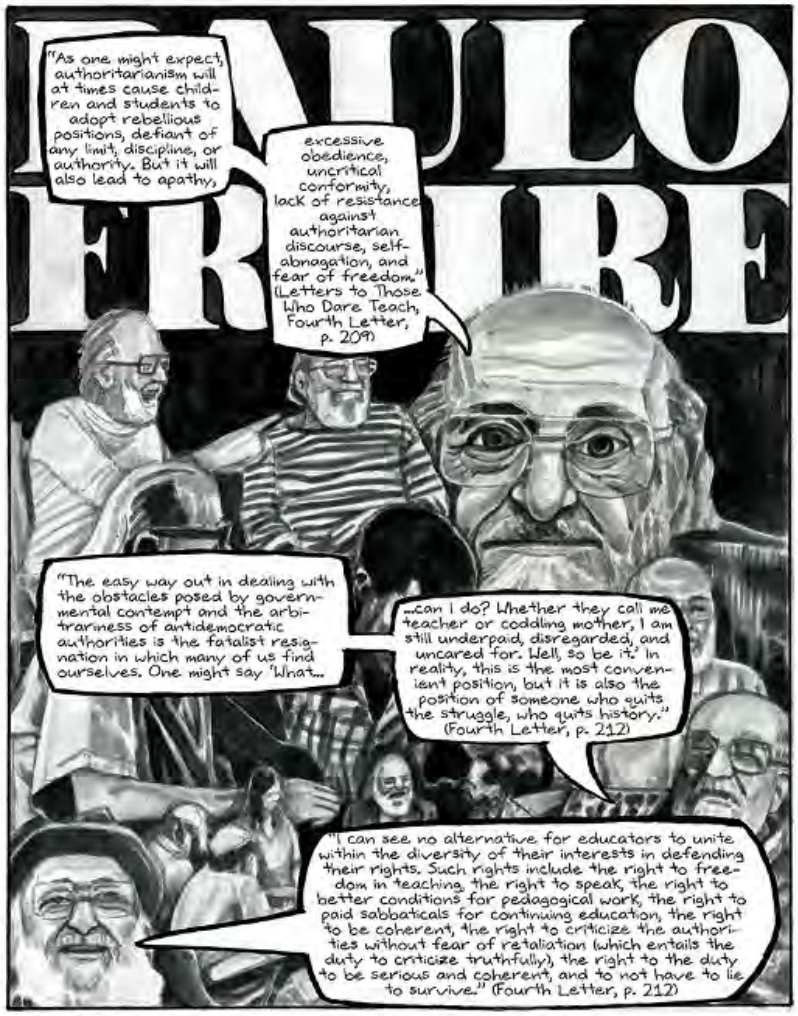



Hey Stephanie!
Hey Jim! How're you holding up?
Barely. I feel a little overwhelmed by, well, everything...
It's all so overwhelming. Everything feels so unstable and out of order doesn't it?
How can we know anything for sure, much less how to prepare teachers when everything is uncertain?
I don't know. But it seems like people keep trying to re-establish things that appeared to maintain order in a pre-pandemic and pre-insurrection society.
A lot of those things didn't work for a lot of people to begin with. But some of them kept up a facade of institutions carrying out their business, like grading and testing in schools.
The old things just aren't going to work anymore, including teacher education.
Not many people opposed these pre-pandemic, and even though their fault lines are more visible now, a lot of people seem to be doubling-down on requiring grades and testing.
Yeah, it's almost like we can't imagine learning and teaching happening without the assumption that they progress along a predetermined path and should be measured against predetermined outcomes. Grading and testing uphold a facade of progress, productivity, or accountability.
Isn't it ironic though, that we've also witnessed people learning so much by pursuing their interests? Baking bread, studying racism and white supremacy, creating TikToks, painting, exploring nature, learning about voting rights and election processes, studying the U.S. Constitution, cooking, and so many other things!
It's like the uncertainty of these times has opened up infinite creative and even joyful possibilities. But we're not in unique times, unfortunately. Other crises in history, including movements toward authoritarianism and fascism, have inspired everyday people and educators to create new ways of being and doing.
You're right, and their persistence in not giving up and not giving in, especially to fascism, can offer some hope to us all as we improvise our way through this day, time, and opening for possibility. Let's highlight a few that we can be inspired by in this tumultuous sea of unpredictability.

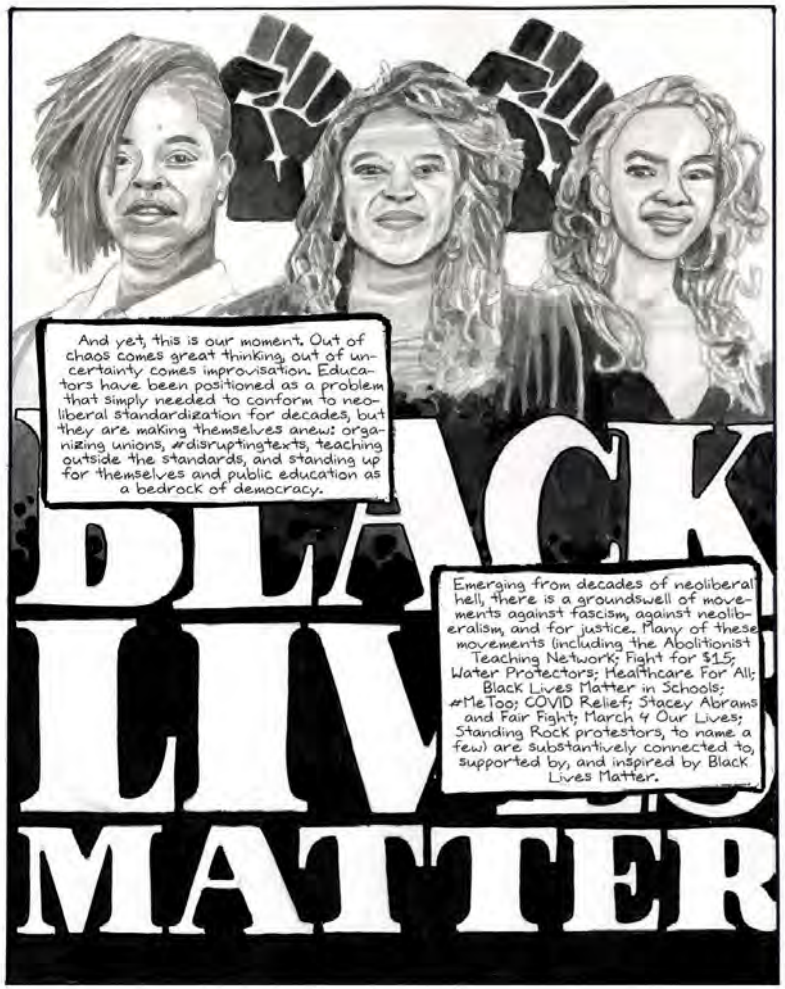

Some folx who generated newness out of crisis:
Jane Addams (1860-1935) and her colleagues, for example, were creating new ways of working for justice on the heels of the U.S. Civil War. They lived with and listened to the most vulnerable people during Reconstruction, ongoing racialized violence, and an intensification of industrialized capitalism in Chicago. What they learned shaped the educational offerings for young children, adolescents, and adults. Organizing workers, buying communal property to provide security for women to live together and protect them from evictions, supporting immigrant youth to honor their home languages and families, providing childcare and meals, advocating for the end of child labor, setting up a labor museum, and bringing in influential intellectuals to give public lectures are some of the free and public education Addams and her collaborators provided.
Septima Clark (1898-1987) created community-based literacy schools throughout the Civil Rights era to expand Black voter participation and political engagement. While much of her and her colleagues' work was focused in the U.S. South, Clark worked all around the country, including her influential work at the Highlander Center in Tennessee with Myles Horton. She faced discrimination and mistreatment by many men in the Civil Rights Movement, but her eventual recognition as one of the matriarchs of the Movement indicates the power of her work as both someone who assembled critical pedagogies for teaching literacy and as someone who organized against structural racism.
Paulo Freire (1921-1997) and colleagues were using Cultural Circles in Brazil as anti-poverty, democratic education spaces in response to the devastation of the Great Depression until the 1964 right-wing, authoritarian coup d'état in Brazil shut down his work, imprisoned, and then exiled him. Cultural Circles were designed to teach literacy to adult workers by centering the importance of their work to the larger cultural context and society, thus illustrating the value of their work and their rights as workers to be treated with dignity and decent wages. While exiled, Freire worked around the globe with adult literacy educators to adopt and create many versions of Cultural Circles for transformative literacy and language education. He also published books on literacy education and the importance of teachers being intellectuals committed to their own deep learning as well as their students'.
Patrisse Cullors (1984-), Alicia Garza (1981-), and Opal Tometi (1984-) founded Black Lives Matter in 2013, creating an evolving grassroots, social media, and educational network in response to systemic anti-Black racism and police violence in the U.S. and around the globe. Black Lives Matter provides ongoing multi-platform education (in person and via media) about race and economic inequality, racist policing policies and practices, and interpretations of current events as well as affirmative practices humanizing Black, brown, and indigenous people, LGBTQ folx, people with disabilities, and people across the gender spectrum, building an inclusive network of action toward justice.
BLACK LIVES MATTER


JANE ADDAMS
"Hull House was our attempt to relieve the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other.
We assume that this overaccumulation and destitution is most sorely felt in the things that pertain to social and educational privileges." (p. 75)
"Collectively, and in ongoing relationships with the people in our community, we wanted to provide a center for higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises, and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago." (p. 55)
"But we also felt strongly that any educational efforts of the Settlement should not be directed primarily to reproduce the college type of culture, but to work out a method and an ideal adapted to the immediate situation." (p. 193)
"Reflecting on the early years of the Hull-House reminds me of the essential provisionality of everything: the perpetual moving on to something future which shall supersede the present. It is that paramount impression of life itself, which affords us at one and the same time, ground for despair and for endless and varied anticipation." - Jane Addams (p. 95)
"Nevertheless, a certain number of women persisted..." (p. 136)


"I learned from my mother not to be afraid. She was a very courageous person, and I could see her in action doing many things there on Henrietta Street. She had a way of letting you know that she was never afraid of anyone, and she wanted you to be able to stand your ground regardless of where you were or whatever happened." (p. 96)
"A lot of people...are worried about the things that are happening today. I'm not, because out of the chaos, I feel, has come great thinking." (p. 124)
"...they considered me a Communist because I worked with the Highlander Folk School...
I was too much of a head woman, a controversial leader, and I couldn't get any job here." (p. 37)
SEPTIMA CLARK


PAULO FREIRE
"As one might expect, authoritarianism will at times cause children and students to adopt rebellious positions, defiant of any limit, discipline, or authority. But it will also lead to apathy,
excessive obedience, uncritical conformity, lack of resistance against authoritarian discourse, self-abnagation, and fear of freedom." (Letters to Those Who Dare Teach, Fourth Letter, p. 209)
"The easy way out in dealing with the obstacles posed by governmental contempt and the arbitrariness of antidemocratic authorities is the fatalist resignation in which many of us find ourselves. One might say 'What...
...can I do? Whether they call me teacher or coddling mother, I am still underpaid, disregarded, and uncared for. Well, so be it.' In reality, this is the most convenient position, but it is also the position of someone who quits the struggle, who quits history." (Fourth Letter, p. 212)
"I can see no alternative for educators to unite within the diversity of their interests in defending their rights. Such rights include the right to freedom in teaching, the right to speak, the right to better conditions for pedagogical work, the right to paid sabbaticals for continuing education, the right to be coherent, the right to criticize the authorities without fear of retaliation (which entails the duty to criticize truthfully), the right to the duty to be serious and coherent, and to not have to lie to survive." (Fourth Letter, p. 212)


Before his death, Paulo Freire began pointing to neoliberalism as an oppressive and violent force in our world, birthed by the Chicago Boys and spread and implemented by many including Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Freire passed before witnessing the overwhelming damage it would do to education globally and of course in the United States, where we have lived with this phenomenon for a solid forty years.
A Nation At Risk, a 1983 report about education under Republican Reagan, started a formalized neoliberal attachment to public education. His Democratic successor, Bill Clinton, did nothing to disentangle the two. In fact, Clinton's Welfare Reform called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996 solidified the idea that individualistic neoliberal economic policies would be preferred by both major parties in the U.S. In hollowing out welfare as a necessary social safety net, Clinton amplified discourses of personal responsibility for economic poverty and publiceducation would be witness to the devastating consequences of children and families not having the means for basic survival.
These forty years of neoliberal hell, as we like to call it, included Republican George W. Bush signing No Child Left Behind into law in 2001, a move toward standardization and opening up the "market" of public education to private corporations. He was followed by Democrat Barack Obama who enacted a federal education grant in 2009, Race to the Top. This grant was filled with language of competition, rewards, punishments, and giving more money to the "winners" of efficiency rather than to those who needed resources. Then, in 2016, Republican Donald Trump appointed a wealthy donor as Secretary of Education who was explicitly anti-public education and had a goal to privatize education for corporate (and personal) profit.
And here we are in 2021 wondering whether people should have access to universal public education; and if we do assume that universal public education is necessary, many of us are wondering how we will ever be able to fund it again after such political and economic devastation.
This is where decades of neoliberalism has gotten us, and we see the destruction across society: mass incarceration, exploding wealth at the top and deepening poverty in the middle and at the bottom, tuition for higher education skyrocketing, student loan debt crippling a generation, the gig economy with no benefits, corporations being subsidized as their workers seek food and shelter assistance, and on and on.


And yet, this is our moment. Out of chaos comes great thinking, out of uncertainty comes improvisation. Educators have been positioned as a problem that simply needed to conform to neoliberal standardization for decades, but they are making themselves anew: organizing unions, #disruptingtexts, teaching outside the standards, and standing up for themselves and public education as a bedrock of democracy.
Emerging from decades of neoliberal hell, there is a groundswell of movements against fascism, against neoliberalism, and for justice. Many of these movements (including the Abolitionist Teaching Network; Fight for $15; Water Protectors; Healthcare For All; Black Lives Matter in Schools; #MeToo; COVID Relief; Stacey Abrams and Fair Fight; March 4 Our Lives; Standing Rock protestors, to name a few) are substantively connected to, supported by, and inspired by Black Lives Matter.
MATTER


These four examples of educators working for justice and creatingnewness in the face of crisis and even potential authoritarianism and fascism during their times can inspire contemporary thinking in teacher education.
Neoliberalism, a hegemonic discourse that has shaped so much of the last forty years in the United States, brings new challenges with its intensities. However, it also opens up new possibilities for rupture, for standing up and speaking back.
So how do we teach people who want to be educators right now, when there is so much uncertainty and nothing that has been used in the last forty years makes any sense at all?
Our four-decades-long neoliberal experiment of producing docile, submissive, passive teachers who are easily controlled by others has failed. Not only are teachers resistant to such positioning, they simply won't put up with it anymore.
Young people coming to education will have lived through a global pandemic; experienced overwhelming sickness and death; witnessed the violent killing of Black men, women, and transgender folx by the state; suffered hunger and homelessness; struggled to discern fact from fiction; fought with politically polarized family and friends; and watched in horror as extreme white supremacists attempted to overthrow the democratic election of a president.
They will find joy in doing hard things and creating different ways of thinking and being; in learning as much as they can because they know that they need to in order to affect change.
It's funny how that happens, how history turns on itself. Once Margaret Thatcher insisted that "There is No Alternative" (TINA) to a neoliberal capitalist market economy. Today, young people who wish to be creative educators engage in the work to undo a violent, neoliberal society because they know that there absolutely has to be a prerable alternative.
We can support them in their pursuit of philosophy, theory, and creative making-spaces, and encourage their ongoing joys of learning to bake bread, make memes, study history and economics and politics, film documentaries, paint, sculpt, hike, build, plant, and otherwise find more humanizing ways of being in relation with the world.
We can create an evolving teacher education for anti-fascism, improvisation, creativity, and justice. Today we do the work.

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