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jCRAE

2022

Volume 39

Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education

Review Board 2022

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Publication
Once a year by the United States Society for Education through Art (USSEA).

Subscriptions
jCRAE is an open-source online publication of USSEA. While access is free, readers and people interested in supporting the mission and activities of the journal and of USSEA are encouraged to join USSEA (for more information about the organization, please visit www.ussea.net). Annual membership dues are \$25 and include issues of the Newsletter. You can become a member or renew your membership by going to the NAEA Interest Group Membership link: <https://www.arteducators.org/community/interest-groups> Or you can contact Christie Castillo, Director of Member Services and Database Operations, at P: 703-889-1287, F: 703-860-2960, or ccastillo@arteducators.org, for assistance.

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Cover
Co-Constructing Truths, 2019, poster by Angela Baldus, photograph by Angela Baldus. For more information, please refer to the article by Sarah T. Travis in this issue.

The *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* is published through generous support from United States Society for Education through Art (USSEA), The University of Arizona, Arizona State University and Miami University of Ohio.



USSEA was founded in 1977 to promote multicultural and cross-cultural research in art education. It is an independent organization affiliated with the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) and the National Art Education Association (NAEA).



The editors of the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* are indebted to Jennica Jackson, MA Art Education Student, School of Art, Arizona State University for her editorial assistance.

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Editorial

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Building on questions of classroom practice and frictions that emerge

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

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

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dis assembly: Collaborative Rituals with an Autistic Artist

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a conversation with the author and Estée Klar, the founder of *dis assembly*, Klar's autistic son, Adam Wolfond, mentors Chris Martin, Ellen Bleiwas, and Jessamyn Polson. *dis assembly* is a neurodiverse art collective for creation and relation in Toronto, Canada. Because public education in Canada typically does not provide supported/facilitated communication for non-speaking autists, this collective is ground-breaking in its experimental work with neurodivergent people. *dis assembly* highlights the need to honor the autistic ritualized use of objects and the environment as a valid and significant art form. The collective, therefore, re-imagines new forms of art, communication, interdependency, relationship, and community.

KEYWORDS: Autism, Neurodivergence, Ritual, Collaboration, Relation, Artmaking, Language

Rituality, like ritual, performs a shift in register that opens the way for new modes of becoming. Is rituality also capable of generating a shift in kind that opens the everyday object to its more-than? (Manning, 2016, p. 42)

This article discusses a conversation on Zoom with the author and Estée Klar, the founder of *dis assembly*, Klar's autistic son, Adam Wolfond, mentors Chris Martin, Ellen Bleiwas, and Jessamyn Polson. *dis assembly* is the neurodiverse art collective for creation and relation in Toronto, Canada, which was established in response to the lack of access for neurodiverse students in Canadian public education. This collective is ground-breaking in its experimental work with neurodivergent people because it highlights the need to honor the autistic ritualized use of objects and the environment as a valid and significant art form. Klar identifies as neurodivergent and Wolfond calls himself a non-speaking "man of autism." *dis assembly* consists of ten neurodiverse and neurotypical youth and adults who create art, poetry, social gatherings, and education. The collaborators intend to redefine the meaning of neurodiversity as fundamentally relational, and re-form policy, practices,

and architecture that have been extensions of neurotypicality¹.

This article is composed of several sections: first, I describe the insights that have emerged from the relationship between Klar and her son Adam; second, how *dis assembly* is an art studio that is finding new ways to live and work with autists; third, I include the conversation among the main actors of *dis assembly*; and finally, I contextualize how this conversation has meaning for art education.

Klar and Wolfond

Klar and Wolfond have invited me into a process of research and writing that emerges through conversations that align with their resistance to preconceived outcomes. Their resistance to preconceived outcomes also operates in the studio where Wolfond makes art and poetry with his mother and his mentors. This process is ceremonial in that tasks are performed in ritual-like repetition. The performance of art usually includes found objects, toys, sticks, and yarn, which are often woven together, unraveled, and then woven again. Klar noticed early that,

"avoidance" used in behaviorist-speak was a dance that needed to be understood within this relation with both the human and non-human. That is, various lures or movement "rituals" needed to be completed before Wolfond could step out the door. (E. Klar, personal communication, December 12, 2021)

Adam needed the time to complete rituals before he could, for example, step through a door. Doors are challenging for Wolfond because they present a transition, an opening of new space. Rather than "avoidance," Klar observed that his rituals were resistance to behaviorist goals that normalize autistic movement—that want to walk Wolfond at a normalized pace through the door. Doors and other phenomena in

1 Klar (2020) explained in her doctoral dissertation the exclusion of neurodiversity in Canadian public education as the reason for founding *dis assembly*: "This work happens because of exclusion; because there is no support other than segregation for autistics other than professional, institutional and pharmacological. Adam has had limited access to school, and we created The A Collective in Toronto so that he would have access. It is only recently, after finding a school principal who accepted Adam's way of communication by typing, and his movement needs, that he was accepted to high school that delivers the Ontario ministry curriculum. He attends half-time because schools continue to adhere to the neurotypical architecture and temporal measures (although the rubric is slowly being shifted by Adam's presence). The rest of his time is spent creating—with poetry, art and homework at *dis assembly*. We think deeply of the requirements imposed on us both to share ourselves, our thinking, our "knowledge," which has become this work (p. 98, footnote 71).

the physical world are not assumed in *dis assembly* to be barriers to socialization, but rather used as autistic relation to the world.

Adam might need to hold a toy while he walks to school. He taps his toy like an echolocation, creating a rhythm to walk.... Like affect itself, the toy is more than itself. It is colour heard as music, eyes that stay still (so he can look at them), a calming transitional object, a way to tap through space to “line my pace.” (Klar, 2020, p. 5)

At *dis assembly*, Klar (2020) and her staff transform autistic ritual and repetition into artmaking. Repetition in neurodivergent artmaking is not pathologized as “disordered and disorderly, requiring segregation and expert treatment” (p. 54), but it’s enacted as a way of discovering new forms of community, relation, and communication. According to Erin Manning (2016), “What rituality does is activate. It does so outside of systems of value imposed on it from elsewhere: rituality is considered a practice precisely because it is capable of inventing forms of value emergent from the ritual itself” (p.45). The imposition of external systems of value that Manning speaks about are embedded in the mainstream of art, medicine, education, and society. Klar and Wolfond have made me more aware that I, and many non-autists interested in autism, have been writing to a neurotypical audience, thus reinforcing neurotypicality. Often, the result is what Klar (2020) describes as recognition without value because “it requires us to change or explain ourselves” (p.137). Wolfond’s ritualization of objects and his use of poetic language drives the collaborative. In an intentional reversal, neurotypicals enter the world of the autistic rather than the reverse expected in public education, which pathologizes autistic ritualized movement, language, and patterning.

In this “neurocultural intermingling” (Savarese, 2016, xiv), mother and son share in each other’s neurobiology, “thinkingfeeling” together on the multifarious ways of expression and communication, which enables other ways of understanding and interacting with what we have traditionally referred to autism as non-relational and unaware. The conflation of thinkingfeeling places us in the middle of the event which is relation. Significant is this shift from thinking about mother-son, researcher-autistic, environment-body as separate, and how this has traditionally enacted therapeutic practices of curing autism, and also, hierarchical ways of interacting with autistic people. This process shifts the manner of research creation, away from negative comparison towards experimental, processual and creative work without the bias of pathology or the pressure of outcome. (E. Klar, personal communication, January, 2021)

Ultimately, artmaking’s ability to inhabit the liminal in-between spaces becomes the driver that reinvents communication among divergent minds. In the following section, I describe the philosophy of *dis assembly*.

dis assembly

At *dis assembly* we are not interested in independence for its own sake, as autistic non-speakers know innately the need for, and our connectedness to each other and the world. There is no false performance as the independently-speaking neurotypical body. There is only collaboration and relational *agencying* (the gerund suggests intrarelational movement), as non-speakers will not conform. (Klar & Wolfond, n.d., para. 11)

Rather than the traditional programmatic nature of community art centers, in *dis assembly* the collaborators and events become the art itself. Neurodiverse art making is discovered in each changing and moving process. Wolfond asks, “how does art think with neurodiversity?”... if not through movement? (as cited in Klar, 2020, p. 83). He continues, “My art thinks about movement to give people ideas of how I don’t always answer in words” (p. 176). Klar and Wolfond examine the movement of repetition in art, not as an involuntary or obsessive act, but as having distinct identities and meanings in each iteration. Kanner (1943) made doctrine the notion that autistic repetition is monotonous and mechanical and, thus, repetition as pathology has rarely been questioned. Klar and Wolfond coined the neologism *stimvention* in opposition to neurotypical vocabulary that pathologizes the artistic act of ritualized repetition. They experiment with the repetition of simple acts in the studio, such as sweeping the floor, tearing paper, or pouring water, which Klar explains brings both aesthetic and relational interactions that shift and magnify the activity by disrupting our habitual sense of space and movement (Klar, 2020). Wolfond has been making water “stim” paintings, as he calls them, since he was a youngster, as well as collecting, patterning, pacing objects, and poetry as resistance to the pathology paradigm. With the support of *dis assembly*, he invents and reconfigures learning spaces and ways of relating within them (see Figure 1).

Without the space and time to explore and improvise, or the ability to leave and escape, we would be confined to tables, chairs and clocktime—a disabling constraint that gives reason for systemic exclusion of autistic people—as the body must be present and perform in the same time. (Klar, 2020, p. 98)

A chair is an unproductive and menacing learning space for Wolfond, while pacing, dancing, and lying is more conducive to artmaking. Learning from non-speakers also changes the speaking person’s

priorities of language that obligates us to live by the clock, to anticipate outcomes, to get something done.

Artistic and autistic repetition

Repetition exists in the mainstream artworld made popular by artists such as Marina Abramović and Andy Warhol. Although art historians speculate that Warhol had Asperger's syndrome, his art was celebrated for its inventive originality (Rodas, 2018). Klar and Wolfond study such artists. For example, Abramović (1998) wrote, "You can start with any object and create an energy field around it again and again through ritual...because repetition of the same thing over and over again generates enormous power" (p. 35). Julia Miele Rodas (2018) compares autistic repetition with repetitive writing in literature to make the same point by using authors from the canon, such as Gertrude Stein. She explains that the slight differences in each of Stein's phrases creates new concentrations and meanings in sound. Because of neurotypical authority, readers engage with the unexpected, disruptive, and digressive rather than questioning its validity. Like Rodas, I question why autistic expression is pathologized as obsessive and unintentional, while similar expressions in the visual arts and literature are celebrated as high art. And, like Rodas, I suggest that autistic expression is not only valid but also a necessary aspect of culture.

Before meeting Klar and Wolfond, my interest in what is distinctive about the autistic "self" led me to question the neurotypical absoluteness of "I" and its fixed boundaries that belie the innumerable influences that make up an identity (Wexler, 2016). Neurotypicals cling to the notion of "self" as a way of solidifying the illusion of identity as uninterrupted, linear, and meaningful. As such, neurotypicals unconsciously Other the neurodivergent autistic to preserve their experience of identity. As Rodas (2018) suggests, autistic language disturbs and disrupts the linearity and order of conventional neoliberal thinking and communication. Almost categorically, autistic writing is absent the "I," which suggests a qualitatively different, possibly deeper, connection with the world. Therefore, I reinterpret the negative diagnostic notion of the absence of self (Frith, 2003) in autism as a positive one. I suspect that autistic artforms express a different story about the world, possibly because artists are not guided by the persistent narration that is interpreted as self.

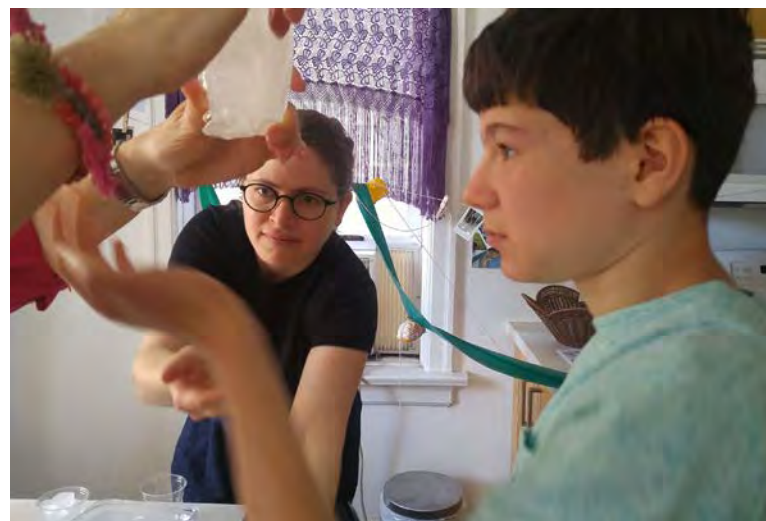


Figure 1: Adam working with Ellen Bleiwas.

At *dis assembly*, Klar and Wolfond collaborate with poet Chris Martin, visual artist Ellen Bleiwas, and Assistant Director/Educator Jessamyn Polson on studio projects that become art exhibitions (see Figure 2). I was introduced to Martin, Bleiwas, and Polson at our first conversation on Zoom, which helped illuminate how each of us who come from different and related fields, engage in collaborative processes. As the "outsider" researcher, I abandoned my prepared questions as more important discussions emerged. This abandonment became a metaphor for the methodology to which the art collaborative is committed: discarding pre-conceived notions of outcomes artists and researchers expect to find. Martin opened our conversation by acknowledging the multiple voices that have influenced his work. It is effectively this philosophy of relationship that has made *dis assembly* a model in radical collaboration. In the following, I share excerpts from our conversation.



Figure 2: *dis assembly* exhibition, 2021.

Our Conversation

Estée: Some of the core questions we have, have to do with independence and agency that even in the facilitated communication community are still rampant: the “we must teach independence.” I find myself feeding into that sometimes because there’s so much pressure: that folks need to prove their intelligence, prove their agency, and I want to dive into that deeper as a parent and as a facilitator to that space that no one wants to talk about. Adam wants to write his own book and there’s the constant erasure of the facilitator, or support, in the world, be it if you’re disabled or not.

Alice: My interests are in language development and how we evolved with language, and who we think we are as independent selves neurologically. We [neurotypicals] have concepts of ourselves that we don’t question on a fundamental level, and autism invites us to question those assumptions about who we are as independent selves. Are we really independent selves, or is it an illusion?

Estée: I’m particularly interested from the proprioception² and aesthetic sense that I can no longer separate these concepts. When we talk about these concepts, we talk about them as separate, and I see them very much enmeshed in the way that Adam is writing.

Alice: And I think that’s why these conversations are important because it’s so easy to fall back into concepts and theories.

Estée: This is the opportunity, when Adam talks about languaging³ and when we’re merging practices with art and learning and collaboration and poetry.

Chris: I’ve been thinking about these same concepts in perhaps a more devotedly amateurish way, but thinking about song as a kind of protolanguage, and song as inherently a shared language practice especially in Indigenous and hominid cultures, and the ways in which I have identified for a number of years as a chorus and a poet, and I love the way we’re practicing that chorus through *dis assembly* in singing together.

Estée: *dis assembly* is about the concept of something emerging, and we capture it at its peak and then we let it disassemble again in the way that processes always work.

Alice: Chris, I’m really curious about your meaning of “chorus.” Did you mean that there’s a chorus within you, or did you mean that you are with others in a chorus?

Chris: When my first book was published, I had a listing in the back where if I was going to be honest about how I was writing I would have to include the voices that were present with me: whether it was the voices I was listening to or the philosophy I was reading and trying to integrate them into the poems themselves. And the poems were catapulted into being by particular phrases as they often are with poets. And as I’ve evolved in my second book, I’ve actually listed it as “the chorus” in the back. So, anyone whose language kind of became enmeshed in the poems that I was presenting became part of the chorus.

Alice: The reason I ask is because in the book I wrote, *Autism in a Decentered World*, I suggest that as individuals we are like a chorus. The idea started when I was in my car listening to a science program

² Proprioception is often called the sixth sense because of its ubiquitous but unconscious bodily awareness of position in space and the motion of our muscles, tendons, and joints. See Oliver Sacks, 1999, “The Disembodied Lady” in *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*.

³ “Languaging” is a word that Wolfond uses to explain how he conceives moving, relating, thinking and feeling in the world. (<https://www.Estéerelation.com/pandemic-work>).

on NPR, and Paul Broks was on, a neuropsychologist whose thinking is hallucinogenic, internalizing all the people who he's worked with, with all their different kinds of brains. His writing merges fiction with non-fiction, and his belief is that we are telling a story about ourselves, that we are writing the fiction. I stopped my car and started writing notes. I thought, this is exactly what I'm looking for.

Chris: I love the research that's coming out now. In *How to Change Your Mind*⁴, by Michael Pollan, he talked about severe untreatable depression, and if you look at brain activity it looks like all the activity is happening in one area. And it turns out that it's in the area of the brain where you tell the story of who you are. And the more you get depressed, the more you can't escape that singular story. And when people take psychedelic mushrooms, their brain activity is allowed to fly around everywhere. The more our stories embrace neurodivergent thinking, and expand past singular narratives, the more we can appreciate how we are not only enmeshed into difference, but also bring that difference into ourselves as perforated thinkers, then the healthier our brains will be.

Estée: The one thing I'm trying to get away from is brain-centrism. Many people refer to autism as brain difference. I think that we can't escape that we are not just entrapped in our bodies, and I think that's what psychedelics enable us to do, is to move outside of our bodies. And then Nick Walker⁵ had clarified somewhere that "neuro," in terms of neurodiversity as I am thinking of, that it's going to be this ever-shifting concept, it's not this monolithic concept. The ideas are going to continually shift as we expand our thinking. But neuro is the nerves of our body, it's not just located in the brain. Because of that concept of the brain, we've had so much difficulty with the attachments to intelligence, cognition, functionality, and so on.

Ellen: It's such a great time to be opening that up and critiquing that. I've definitely seen the shift even in visual arts discourse and the way that people are thinking about it, like the shift from the "I think therefore I am" paradigm to a more haptic one.

Jessamyn: I wanted to pick up on something you were saying Chris, that relates, not necessarily to the visual arts aspect but as a former dancer. It's not that there is a self that has been permeated by difference, but that the self is brought into being through the chorus. I think that's what you were getting at, and if we are thinking of neurology, we need to think about technology and cyborgs. We are not just brought into being by our relationships with each other, but we're also brought into

being by our relationships to technology, to the world, and to objects, and ritual to some extent as well, but this way in which we are, to borrow Marshal McLuhan's image, like an inside-out turtle, brought into being through those relationships with one another and things.

Chris: Adam, your notion that those objects, that you're constantly open to "the beckon," that those objects are going to be calling you. And you know that, that's just a given of walking and moving through the world.

Alice: I think that the self is more fluid, it's not one thing, and I think language is connected to this notion. Chris, you were telling a story about depression. We're always telling ourselves a story, and we connect those independent stories together to make a consistency of self. But that's just a way to survive, by telling ourselves this one continuous story. And what stopped me in my tracks is that I thought, that's what autism must be. That notion that without growing up with verbal language you're not covered in that veil of an imaginary self. And that's why it's hard to relate to the rest of the world because everyone else is living in that fiction.

Adam (typing): I think that the always language thinks through the body and the way pace is rallying the way of relation with the world and the way I learned language is the letters that calmed me and I don't know but I knew I could read in the way I could see colors as language.

Estée: I think Adam was picking up what you were saying [Alice] about language and how people learn language, and Adam learned language on his own before he could walk.

Alice: Adam, when people are talking, what is that like, as far as hearing and seeing?

Adam (typing): I think that the talking sounds paced to the languages people say is like always lucky chance of catching like amazing water that slips through my hands.

Chris: I think the play of chance and the tossing of language, so many times it's just in the transactional language that you see out there in the world, it's just that people don't understand what they're catching, or how much they can catch. And I love that about the way we collaborate. We try to catch as much as we can and throw it back.

Estée: I think that's the concept of *dis assembly*: it crests, we capture something, and then we let it go, and it was kind of like this comment I made about the previous work that preceded what we were trying

4 Chris is referring to Michael Pollan's (2018) book, *How to Change Your Mind*.

5 Nick Walker identifies as a queer, transgender autistic author and educator. He is a professor of psychology at California Institute of Integral Studies. See <https://neuroqueer.com>.

to do, is really important for what we're trying to do. Because Naoki⁶ said once, which really stuck with me, that he needs to shape the words so that neurotypicals can understand him. So, there's this onus on autistic people to be grammatically correct, to shape sentences and experiences that neurotypicals can understand. We need it to be the other way around. And Adam made that comment: "I expect that other people will read towards my way of writing." So, there's this reversal I think is really important, and that's why the arts are super important to experimentation. We're starting to call it "ways."⁷

Chris: I also love the ball of thinking you've been using, Adam, and this is like a game of catch with a ball. Like you catch the ball, and then your hand makes its own kind of imprint on it, shapes it briefly, and then you look at it and say, "Oh, I didn't think about that." So, the ball keeps changing as it gets thrown.

Ellen: It also makes me think a lot about dance, like the dance of relation, maybe not even that one person is coming into another person's language, but like entering into a space of dancing together. I think what I love about the dance analogy is that it's not a clear thing that's trying to be communicated.

Alice: I think about my own ability to take in a constant stream of language. You know, my mind is wanting to go somewhere else, and I have to keep getting it back. I wonder if we're meant to do that with each other. I mean, that's how education is set up, or at least it was: someone in the front of the room and talking for an hour, and you know, how much of that do you catch? I actually have to admit that unless someone is acting out what they're saying, being very animated and emotive, I lose it immediately, almost within the first few minutes.

Chris: And that idea that if this ball of thinking is actually on water on some level, then you catch it, but you have to hold it or it's going to slip through. If you throw it back, you might maintain some of it before it all slips away.

Alice: So, it's a constant dialogue.

Chris: And yet I'm super curious and interested in the way a non-speaker is full of this intense receptivity. And the ways that I've learned from my students is about how they learned about language, like this intensely active receptivity. Any language, or the patterns of it especially.

⁶ Estée Klar is referring to Naoki Higashida, the autistic artist who wrote *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-old Boy with Autism*.

⁷ Wolfond refers to "ways" as "the wanting ways," which is also the title of his book of poems, published by Milkweed, 2022. He also refers to "ways" as answering the atmospheres.

Adam (typing): I think that I am fond of ball thinking and I am loving the idea of unraveling the sometimes pool of water that can disintegrate and open the way that people think about autistics, and I want to say that I offer more ways the language can move.

Chris: In that piece in the image we were using, I think that the metaphor that was kind of missing was that it's also like a ball of yarn, that this yarn water [see Wolfond's poem "Yarn Water" below] is traveling along, and as you throw it the string remains, the string is left behind so it's creating those networks of thought.

Adam (typing): Yes, I think that the way of string is landing but good ways inspire the movement, the presence of atmosphere is a part of the thinking body.

Estée: This reminds me of the experiment we did with string many years ago, it may be on youtube. I was drawing the relationships that Adam and I were playing with Therabands and string in 2016, and Adam was walking around the apartment tethered to the string, but the strings were like tendrils behind him, and the string was then like the map left behind the movement.

Chris: I can't wait for us all to get together in the *dis assembly* space with a huge ball of blue-green yarn and throw it to each other as we dance around, and eventually start to integrate a scissor and start to undo parts of it as we get tangled.

Estée: And what you'd be surprised is, that's the concept of the enabling constraint.⁸ But when we get into that studio what we discovered was that something else emerged that we didn't expect. Remember that Ellen? We had the sticks laying neatly and all of a sudden, I threw them around and a different movement started [see Figure 3]. What was your experience of that?

Ellen: One of my dearest memories from that day was what arose from tension, from things we were going about in our own different ways. Adam, one of my favorite moments that day was when I was into the sticks that you were dropping, and I was following your trail and picking them up. I was wrapping them, and I got the sense that you weren't super into that. I felt there was a tension between what I was called to do and what you were called to do—and I noticed how what we're called to do doesn't necessarily have to be the same. In collaboration we don't have to pretend to always be wanting the same

⁸ "We use 'enabling constraint' as the loose parameters of the beginnings of an idea. So we are, say, exploring 'repetition' in an artistic gestural way, this usually leads to something else that arises during the experiment" (E. Klar, personal communication, December 4, 2021).



Figure 3: Screenshot of the video *S/Pace*, 2019. “I want to think with sticks. Thinking with sticks is like thinking with eager, open space” (Wolfond, *S/Pace*, 2019).

things. There are naturally differences and perhaps we can appreciate that tension.

Estée: In that last scene when we incorporated that poem,⁹ Chris about extending the choreography, I could see the invisible path Adam was making in that room with all of the sticks luring him or calling him. We were talking about calling and answering, flying and landing, and so all I see is a map and I see that movement. And other people who come from a neurotypical perspective would say this is wandering, this is doing nothing, right?

Chris: What would be interesting to think about is, is that a map to the territory itself? What is that a map to?

Alice: I wonder Adam, do you think you see movement where other people don't?

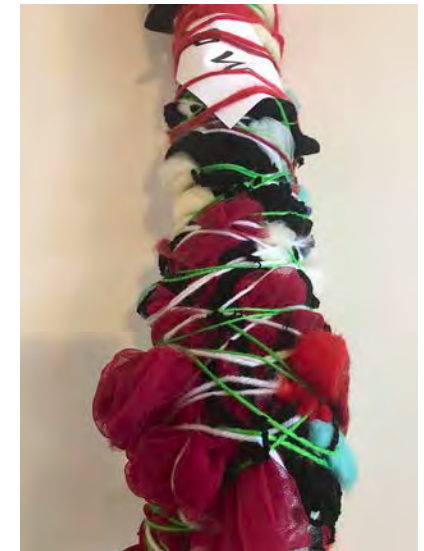
Adam (typing): Yes, I see the objects in the world always moving, so please, in this concept of perception understand that to land my thoughts in typing needs the mom and the Jessa, the important co-pilots in the atmospheres of moving things.

⁹ Klar is referring to the video called *S/Pace* (2019). It can be viewed here: <https://www.Estéerelation.com/media>.

Alice: So, catching thoughts that are always moving, how do you catch them?

Adam: (typing) I carry catching weight of words rallying the conversation heavy in words with the slower time of typing but I can always think fast.

Estée: He carries the log with the wrapping that we did with the sticks. We didn't disassemble this one [see similar wrapped sticks, Figures 4 and 5].



Figures 4 and 5: *Wrapped Sticks*, Adam Wolfond and Estée Klar, 2021.

Conclusion

It is important that we regard movement as expression with just as much regard as we do the writing. We do not privilege the supposed “intellectual” activity of writing over artistic activity and question the entire construction of intelligence as a humanist hierarchy. (Klar & Wolfond, n.d., para. 12)

Movement is one of the several interrelated threads discussed in the conversation above. Other concepts were languaging, relation, ritual, and repetition. Since the conversation was spontaneous, many themes

were bounced like the metaphorical and literal ball that captures Wolfond's attention. Synesthesia is the blending of the senses that many autistics experience. Words have shape, objects have movement, and sound has color. With this experience, it is impossible to separate sensory information into categories. Perhaps movement might serve as a system under which all events in Wolfond's life occur, the constant movement that neurotypicals can't see, but what is actually happening in the world (according to physics).

In the constant movement of Wolfond's world, how might neurotypicals understand the importance of objects? One reason might be that objects, as well as people, have agency and create invitations for dialogue and artmaking. Klar calls their artmaking "a map of movement: the arts supply the landing pad for the constant movement that is felt so deeply by Adam."¹⁰ In the conversation above and the poem below, Wolfond says "I see the objects in the world always moving..." Poet Chris Martin works with Wolfond's use of moving objects, as he described in our Zoom conversation, as beckoning, or in Wolfond's terminology "the beckon" that calls to him as he walks and moves through the world. Wolfond makes language accessible by transforming spoken words into objects he can see: "I learned language is the letters that calmed me...I knew I could read in the way I could see colors as language." Martin talked about "tossing language" back and forth. The concretization of language into a ball that could be received and sent back made poetry, like artmaking, a visual event. Water, the essence of movement, is also an association that Wolfond uses to "catch" words in space: "catching [words] like amazing water that slips through my hands." Then Martin affirms Wolfond by explaining that "people don't understand what they're catching, or how much they can catch." With intentional collaboration and intra-relation, they catch and throw back as much as they can. Martin throws the "ball of language" to Wolfond who imprints and shapes it with his hand (thoughts), and then throws a slightly different ball back to Martin. Wolfond explained in the conversation how he catches the weight of words as he rallies "the conversation heavy in words" with the help of his "co-pilots." In a similar way, Wolfond moving through the world is made visible by mapping his thoughts and movements with string, yarn, and sticks that he drops behind him, creating "networks of thought."

Poetry and art work together: both activate movement and movement is an expression with the environment, other bodies, and materials. Klar says, if everything is movement, then poetry is the language of movement. "The rhythm of poetry of pure movement/pacing, entering into the worlds and rooms, intimacy and the other ways of movement, as art does," (mapping activity as attuned to those movements). Autistic poetry, if that's what it can be called, serves the purpose of turning

10 The quotes from Estée Klar in the Conclusion are from an unpublished paper we are authoring.

the non-visible and abstract world into concrete ritualized objects. Words become pattern, sound, rhythm, and movement that lack syntax and logical sequencing, which is typical of autistic thinking but also the nature of poetry. Poet Ralph Savarese (2015), whose son DJ is an autistic poet, notices that many autistics will crossover from sensory knowing to interpretative knowing and, therefore, the neurotypical and neurodiverse poet can find common ground.

Klar, Bleiwas, and Martin flip the neurotypical perspective of movement and repetition on its head, recasting neurodiverse thought as valid modes of perception and being. They examine the artistic and poetic nature of repetition as a series of invitations to explore materials, objects, and words. Like autistic repetition, artists and poets know that each iteration is new. Something different is discovered in each encounter: The experience of community, relation, movement, and communication that emerges from the object and its repetitive, ritualized use renders the object into more than it is, more than its substance, "less object than stand-in for the unfathomable force of the not-yet" (Manning, 2016, p. 43). The "not-yet" that Manning speaks about is how occupation with the object transforms time into a recurring now, and at the same time, transforms the object from form to immanence.

Yarn Water is from Adam's words that Chris Martin pulled from our conversation.

Yarn Water¹¹ *Adam Wolfond*

Talking sounds paced
to the languages people
say is like always lucky
chance of catching
amazing water that slips
through my hands.

I am ball of packed thinking
and I am loving the idea
of unravelling the ball
in a pool of water that can
disintegrate and open the way
that people think about autistics
and I want to say that I offer more
ways the language can move.

The way of string is landing but
good ways inspire the movement

11 "Yarn Water" will be included in Wolfond's book of poems, *The Wanting Way*, to be published by Milkweed Editions fall 2022.

if the presence of atmosphere is
the part of the thinking body.
I see the objects in the world
always moving so please in this
concept of perception understand
that to land my thoughts in typing
needs the important co-pilots in the
atmospheres of moving things.

I carry catching weight of words
rallying the conversation heavy
in words with the slower time
of typing but I can always think fast.

Martin supported Wolfond in making a provisional "wind" of the poem (winding is Wolfond's term for lineation), which was then subject to further rewinding-by Wolfond and others-at later editorial stages.

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How “I” Shifts When Crossing Borders: Reflections of South Korean Artists Who Study Abroad in the United States

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the distinct journeys of two cross-cultural South Korean artists who each received an MFA degree in the United States. The research examines challenges faced by cross-cultural students, correlating with previous literature on the subject. The analysis provides insights on the experiences of cross-cultural artists, highlighting the educational implications for both artists and art educators, encouraging them to approach students in a manner that fully embraces their abilities.

KEYWORDS: East Asian students in the United States, South Korean artists, cross-cultural artists, international students

Introduction

In the past few decades, there has been an increase in cross-cultural students leaving their home countries to pursue Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016; Rhee, 2013). Crossing borders involves coming to terms with issues of language, race, culture, and nationality as well as the potential shifts in identity that result from finding one’s place in a new academic and professional community (Lee, 2008; Wang, 2015; Yue, 2009; Zhong, 2013). To explore these challenges, art education researchers such as Acuff (2018), Alexander and Sharma (2013), Delacruz (2011), Dervin (2015), and McFee (1996) have sought to understand diverse socio-cultural aspects by examining the academic culture. The role of qualitative research is to gather reflections and experiences about the relationships between individuals and socio-cultural contexts (Clandinin, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) since studying the lived experiences of artists illuminates nuances in cross-cultural environments, specifically, how socio-cultural transitions influence their artwork and professional lives (Kim, 2015; Moen, 2006).

For this mini case study (Clandinin, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), using purposeful sampling (Kim, 2015; Moen, 2006) via the Internet, both a South Korean male and female visual artist were selected based on the completion of a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) and/or a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in South Korea and a two-year MFA in New York. Participants were interviewed at their convenience in a variety of locations in New York for about two hours. Interview recordings were

transcribed in order to provide accurate text to correspond with each participant’s verbal responses based on their lived experiences and narratives. Data for this study were collected predominantly through semi-structured interviews supplemented by images of participants’ completed artwork and a document review of material published by or about the participants.

New Country, New Learning?

Cross-cultural artists often have to adapt to a different language, value system, and set of social expectations to accommodate unfamiliar essentials of daily life when they move to the United States (Park, 2014). Jones (2008) argued that there is a limited understanding in how faculty and programs in higher education currently support the learning and identity development of cross-cultural students. According to Marambe et al. (2012), cross-cultural students display diverse approaches to learning regardless of their cultural background, as education is not universally conducted in the same manner and so teaching and learning in a new culture is not necessarily in line with the educational framework of one’s home culture (Entwistle & McCune, 2004; Ramsden, 1997; Van Rossum & Hamer, 2010).

A new academic environment can present unanticipated challenges for a cross-cultural student. According to Clark and Gieve (2006), Ryan (2011), and Wu (2015), cross-cultural students acquire an awareness of their status as an international student among native students. In other words, the cross-cultural student becomes aware that they are different from native students when teachers or other students treat them like they are a challenge to deal with in the classroom. Cross-cultural students often interpret this as being inherently part of their international status and may shy away from venturing outside of their cultural group, either to socialize or to engage in an educational learning practice other than those they have previously experienced (Ryan, 2011). Zapf (1991) argued that it is important to encourage orientational support for cross-cultural students in a new culture for understanding this “stressful period of adjustment” (p. 105) in new socio-cultural settings.

Examining the “I” in Cross-Cultural Identity

Alba (1990), Phinney et al. (2001), and Yinger (1986) emphasized that finding a balance between preserving cultural practices and adjusting oneself to the new environment is important for cross-cultural students’ identity development. Researchers from a wide range of fields have sought to study identity and the ways in which it may shift depending on its context (Garrido & Ruiz, 2018; Koh, 2018; Shibutani & Kwan, 2005). In the past, ethnographic scholars often focused on people’s cultural identity within the context of their unique community rather than viewing identity as a “discrete variable” or an individual preference

(Kim, 2007). After the 1930s, scholars of social science argued that one's cultural identity can be "adaptive" and evolving, identifying immigrants and cross-cultural students as examples of this process (Kim, 2007). Furthering this concept, Erikson (1968) stated that cultural identity is an individual's main identity, and a conflict between the individual's and the group's identities converge in personal identity when someone finds themselves in a new cultural environment.

Method of Asking Self-Reflection Questions

As a South Korean artist who finished an MFA in the United States, I often reflect on my educational and cultural experiences, and how I was influenced by them. I found myself struggling to understand who I was, where I was, and what I was doing in the United States, confusing my ethnic, cultural, and social identities. Asking self-reflection questions and creating art were similar to ritual processes while concerning my identity, voice, and philosophy as an artist (Gill et al., 2008), and the process was helpful to find my self-direction while bridging gaps between my awareness and socio-cultural understanding. Thus, the list of self-reflective questions is the same list of interview questions I asked of the artists to understand how their conceptions of their identities shifted through their educational careers based on locations and cultural contexts. The open-ended interview protocol included 16 questions (see Table 1) for each participant's own description of cross-cultural learning experiences. The interviews focused on participants' overall experiences studying art and the cultural influences in their artistic practices.

A. Personal stories, ideas, and beliefs as an artist
1. When did you know you wanted to become an artist? How, if at all, did early experiences orient you to pursue art?
2. Which artists and experiences from your home country have influenced you?
3. What does art mean to you? How has this meaning changed as you have developed as an artist?
B. Significant learning experiences in graduate school in the United States
4. What led you to pursue a graduate degree in the United States? What were your expectations and perceptions about your United States graduate program?
5. What are some of the most important things you learned from your graduate school experience? Did the learning experiences meet your expectations?
C. Reflections on interactions with teachers and peers

6. How would you describe your relationship with your teachers across your art education?
How has the nature and quality of your peer-professor relationship differed if at all, between education in your home country and education in the United States?
7. What have teachers talked about in critiques of your work, and how have you responded to these critiques? Have these dynamics differed in your cross-cultural experience?
8. What are some challenges you have experienced in working with fellow classmates? How have you overcome these interpersonal challenges?
9. What have your classmates said to you about your artwork in group studio critiques? What have you found to be similar or different across your international education experiences?
D. Reflections on the impact of graduate school
10. As you reflect specifically on your graduate curriculum, is there an artist, theory, or mentor that has had a lasting influence on your current work, if at all?
11. After experiencing completing an MFA in the U.S., what would you consider to be the advantages or disadvantages of pursuing an international art degree in the United States? Consider these for your artwork, your professional career, and personally.
12. How has your overall experience in the U.S., challenges, and cultural differences that you have identified affected your sense of national and cultural identity and your artwork?
E. Future aspirations
13. What are your short term and long-term career aspirations? How have these aspirations been affected by your studies and residence in the U.S.? What, if any, specific experiences caused these changes?
F. Suggestions based on their reflections
14. How do you evaluate your education in your home country in contrast to the U.S.? If you are going to meet new students coming from your native country, what suggestions and advice would you like to share?
15. Have you expressed the differences of art education between your home country and the United States with others? (Please elaborate)

16. What else might be important to know about international student peers and their work which we haven't discussed yet? What are some other challenges that may arise upon transitioning into the U.S. context as a cross-cultural artist?

Table 1: List of Self-Reflective Questions for Artists who have Cross-Cultural Learning Experiences.

Interview with Bonam Kim (South Korean Female Artist)

Bonam Kim is a South Korean sculptor based in Brooklyn, New York. She completed her BFA (2011) and MFA (2013) in South Korea, majoring in sculpture for both degrees. Upon the recommendation of her previous MFA professors, Bonam decided to pursue a second MFA in sculpture from Pratt Institute in New York in order to develop her own artistic concepts and learn new skill sets in a new academic environment. Influences on Bonam's work developed over time through a variety of classes that she participated in during the beginning of her second MFA. She shared, "Since I'm here as a foreigner in America, right now art is my language. Since I've come here, my work is about my personal experience of displacement and sense of isolation as an outsider." Bonam also creates work to reflect the emotions that came with her transition from one culture to another.

As for her motivation to pursue a degree in the United States, Bonam explained, "When I was in Korea, I made a lot of series. I kept working on the same thing in the same subject (see Figure 1). So, I felt a kind of mannerism. That's why I decided to come to America to study abroad." When asked about the academic structure of her BFA and first MFA program, Bonam discussed what group critiques were like in South Korea:

During my MFA in Korea, seven or eight students were in a class, and we had a lot of assignments. I prefer to have one or two projects per one semester. In Korea, each week we would have a critique, make artwork or something, and then again two weeks later. They prefer to make a lot of sculptures and a lot of works in one semester and then check it, check it, check it. It is more passive in Korea.

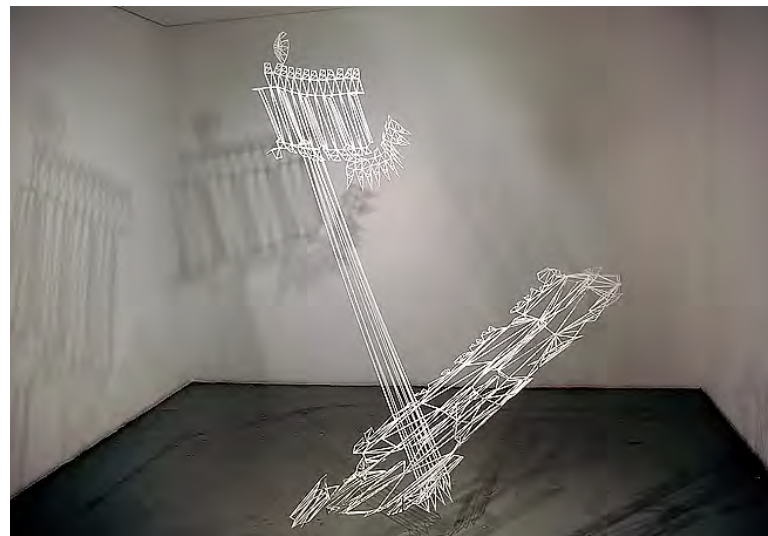


Figure 1: *Modified Forms*, painted stainless steel, 51" x 71" x 30", 2011, Bonam Kim.

When I asked Bonam about her relationships and interactions with her professors and peers in both South Korea and the United States, she briefly compared both countries, but primarily discussed the nature of peer-professor dynamics in South Korea:

In Korea, before I graduated, if you want to do something or have a good chance at something you have to be nice to the professors or you have to help them. The first time they asked me to help them was when I had no plans during one weekend. A professor would text me or call me at 11am, but it's not just offering something, it's asking for a favor.

She indicated that the dynamic between students and professors was different in South Korea and the United States. She also described the dynamics of the classes in her home country as a "hierarchy." Her answer led us to talk about her motivation behind pursuing an MFA degree in the United States, and why she specifically chose to study in New York, Bonam said:

My three professors back home already studied abroad in New York. So, they recommended some art schools here to me. Also, I have visited New York two or three times before coming here. The first time, I was a traveler. And the second time I took a class in a university so that I could just kind of experience it before I decided to study abroad... So, this is a melting pot,

like every day, to see the images, or whatever, the street scenes inspire me a lot...

She described her class experiences when she first came to the United States, specifically her critique classes:

Critiques are very intense here so the professors will study the art a lot and give their information in a new way, and they give a lot of good advice during critiques. Even if sometimes it's really intense where they just directly say something, there's no drama. The professors invite people like artists, critics, or juries from outside of the school to class and then they just jump into our critiques to foster a good environment so the students can participate too. So, it's more open and it is not for a specific group.

When discussing the challenges she experienced working with her fellow classmates, Bonam described the nature of her friendships as well as significant cultural barriers. She felt it was difficult being away from her home country but also saw advantages in the art scene in the United States. As for cultural challenges and overall experiences in the United States, Bonam said that she specialized in three-dimensional installations (see Figures 2, 3, and 4) and conceptual work as part of a ritual (see Figure 5), creating pieces that reflect her transition from one country to another.

Right now my sculpture is a sculpture but at the same time it's a device. My work is about my personal experience of displacement and the struggles with cultural identity, so I made my own private space for whenever I want to hide somewhere but at the same time go outside as well.



Figure 2: *The Story of a Stranger*¹, 27" x 24" x 19.5", 2018, Bonam Kim



Figure 3: *The Story of a Stranger (detail)*, 27" x 24" x 19.5", 2018, Bonam Kim.

¹ "I have recreated in miniature the full-scale projects I made since moving here from Seoul, I put them into a trunk. I have moved many times from one place to another since I came to New York, keeping my work as a miniature allows me to hold on to it. This work represents my time and history here." (Bonam Kim's artist statement)



Figure 4: *World's Passports², Silkscreen on paper, Vending machine, Each 4" x 5" size of passport, 2016, Bonam Kim.*

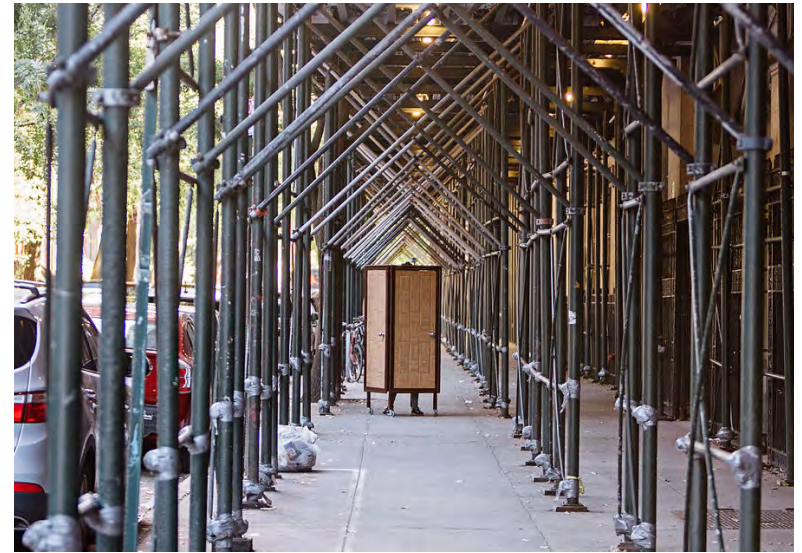


Figure 5: *Through the Crack³, Wood, hinge, wheel, floor sheet, insulated foam, 35" x 35" x 77", 2015, Bonam Kim.*

Bonam shared, "As a foreigner, I had to put in more effort, probably more than twice, every single day to prepare my work. But sometimes I misunderstand what they [said]." When reflecting on how her work will change in the future, Bonam said:

Right now the question is, how can I make my artwork not just about my personal experience but also how can I go further and engage my artwork more? It's not about the answer, but it's about my thoughts as an artist these days.

The interview with Bonam concluded with a final question regarding her insight on things she felt she would want international students to know, like possible challenges that may come up when transitioning to another country as a cross-cultural artist.

Interview with Jaewook Lee (South Korean Male Artist)

Jaewook Lee is a South Korean artist, curator, and writer based in New

³ "This performance expresses a collision between a sense of displacement and feelings of fear that I feel as a cultural outsider. I made four doors scaled to my body size. They are hinged together to create a prop for my performance. After adding wheels to the bottom, I enclosed myself in the doors and journeyed out into the city, I was only able to find my way by peering through a crack between the doors." (Bonam Kim's artist statement)

² "I made passports from 100 countries and installed them randomly in 5 vending machines in Brooklyn. The passports were sold at USD \$1.50 each." (Bonam Kim's artist statement)

York. He started forming an interest in art as a child, participating in drawing and painting classes up until college, where he learned about conceptual art and started forming his stylistic preferences. During his BFA program in South Korea, he decided to study abroad in the United States for a semester where he was exposed to other facets of conceptual art. After that semester, Jaewook decided to pursue an MFA in the United States. While completing his MFA at Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania, he pursued a second MFA at the School of Visual Arts in New York during his summer breaks to develop his technical skills. Upon the completion of his MFA degrees, Jaewook now works as a professor in a few BFA programs in New York, instructing his students about the artwork of minority populations and artistic movements in other countries: "I feel it is important to teach my students to have different perspectives and to understand people of color" (Interview with Jaewook Lee).

Jaewook articulated the differences between different professors he encountered in both South Korea and the United States. He started by mentioning that his professors in South Korea were like "CEOs," as he described:

In Korea I thought that there was a big hierarchy between students and the faculty members... they are a lot older than you and we have to respect them a lot. I guess here we respect them in the United States, but in a different way. You have to think of them as CEOs of companies and you're just an intern in Korea.

He explained that it was not until he studied abroad at Carnegie Mellon University as an undergraduate student that he decided to pursue an MFA:

They taught me a completely new concept of art like art [see Figures 6 and 7] in context which is nowadays what people call socialized art...in Korea, there are no classes like that. So, for me, Carnegie Mellon University was like a leading institution, which I had never experienced before, so that's one of the reasons I wanted to go back to the United States to study for my master's degree.

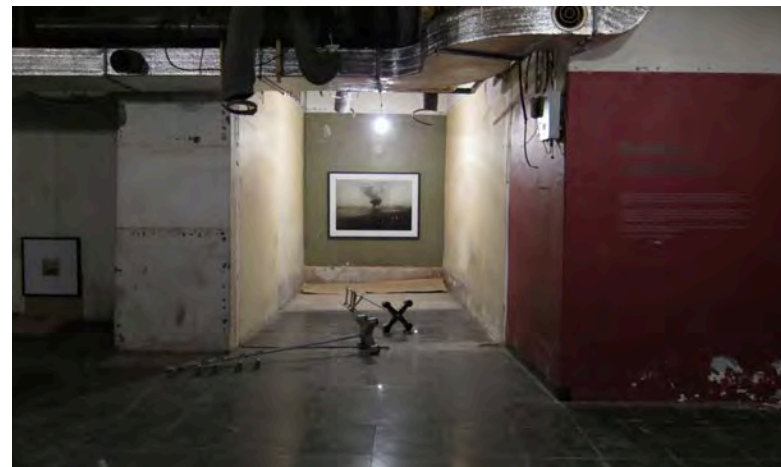


Figure 6: *Building/Unbuilding*⁴ #1, Mixed Media, 2102, Jaewook Lee.



Figure 7: *Building/Unbuilding* #2, Mixed Media, 2102, Jaewook Lee.

Jaewook enjoyed his study abroad experience but also elaborated upon the difficulties he faced in the beginning of the MFA program. With regard to his interactions with professors and peers during the begin-

4 "Building/Unbuilding examines the relationship between art, architecture, and the self/city; here the self is both singular/personal and an expanded consciousness shaped by a group, nation, and even beyond boundaries." (Jaewook Lee's artist statement)

ning of his MFA, he said that “at that time, I had a really nice teacher there who really cared for exchange students like boarding students, so I didn’t feel like a foreigner at the time.” However, his perceptions of the faculty as a whole were not consistent. Jaewook recognized racial stereotypes occurring in his program, stating:

At that time, I didn’t know that it was about racist things or stereotypes. From my point of view now I think it was about racial stereotypes because they kicked out a Chinese girl because she couldn’t speak English too much.... I thought it was about the language barrier and they just didn’t give her a second chance. It was kind of really stressful because I’m not from China, but I’m from a similar country.

When asked about what teachers have said about his work in classes, Jaewook focused on his desire to develop a theoretical framework. He stated that his art was focusing on “deep philosophical ideas about objects or speculated realism.” Specifically, he created art that reflected the socio-political issues occurring within his home country:

I make things about the Korean war and about empathy, and how to get the Korean people with an empathic point of view. I intentionally make work about what war means for Koreans... it’s about real experiences of real people in the real horror of war. I wanted to have a sense of empathy for those who live in Korea from the American people.

When reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing an MFA internationally in the United States, Jaewook felt disconnected from his home country and discussed struggles he faced trying to pursue residency in the United States as he developed his career. Upon graduating with his MFA, his work became socio-political, focusing on the experiences of ethnic minorities in the United States (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: *All Men Are Created Equal*⁵, Single-channel video with sound, 6 min., 2018, Jaewook Lee.

Jaewook became a full-time instructor of undergraduate sculpture and media skills at art schools in New York and Chicago and has put on a variety of symposiums surrounding Asian artists and art movements. In his classroom, Jaewook focuses on socio-political movements occurring in the United States. He shared:

It is a very important part of my class to give examples of artists from different parts of the world like from Korea, Africa, Latin America, and even people of color in the United States and how their identity affects their making processes and about the storytelling about their experiences as foreign artists from Third World countries. I feel it’s kind of like a responsibility for me to teach my students to have global perspectives and different perspectives than just teaching “Western” art history.

Does the Academic Environment Impact the Self?

Research participants shared that advice and practical knowledge exchanged among them and their professors made them feel that they were equals in their interactions. As Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) suggest, the guidance and emotional support given to participants on behalf of their teachers provided them with the ability to develop

⁵ “I created a condition ‘Struggle’ for this action by taping myself up. The laborious action appears absurd in light of New York City’s skyline, emblematic of the overdeveloped city in contrast to the potent struggle of Asian-Americans against racism.” (Jaewook Lee’s artist statement)

their perceptions and thoughts regarding their art without feeling they would be judged or criticized harshly. A cultural difficulty that international art students face is finding their place as artists from another country living in a new environment (Burnett & Gardner, 2006; Ghosh & Wang, 2003; Kegan, 1980). Bonam expressed that art critiques in the United States were more engaging and participatory, which made them feel more comfortable expressing their opinions. She felt that this more engaging style of critique encouraged students to think more deeply and critically about their art and “pushed [them] to a new body of work.” Eisner (2008), Flora (2007), and Renter (2014) explained that art calls on individuals to reflect upon their identity within the context of a particular setting. One example of this kind of reflection is Bonam’s artwork from her MFA program in the United States. She navigated New York City as a small room made of doors (see Figure 9), and the purpose of the doors was to allow herself to enter and withdraw from the surrounding culture whenever she wanted. She also created a series of miniature passports to sell in vending machines, allowing other people to explore another culture as well (see Figure 10). Bonam’s art served as a physical representation of her feelings of being within two distinct cultures and created rituals for navigating various cultures via her work.

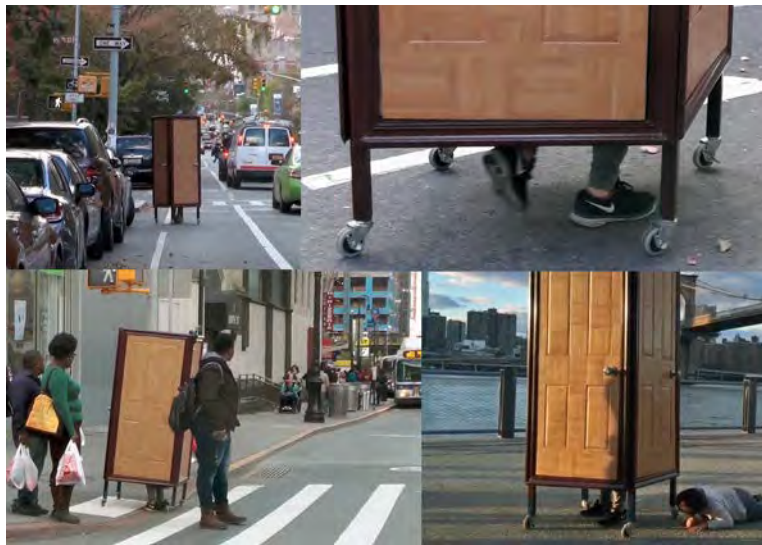


Figure 9: *Through the Crack*, Video, 4 min. 58 sec., 2015, Bonam Kim.



Figure 10: *World’s Passports*, Silkscreen on paper, Vending machine, Each 4” x 5” size of passport, 2016, Bonam Kim.

When participants think of culture and their cultural surroundings while adapting to new surroundings, their thoughts about their role in society may be reflected within their own art. The participants were not only in the process of transitioning their art, but they also needed to transition out of and relearn who they were as artists in a new country. Finding a balance between preserving their cultural identity and implementing a new culture is a process that needs support, as it can become challenging for an individual to go through the process of re-evaluation alone (Alba, 1990; Kim, 2007; Phinney et al., 2001; Yinger, 1986).

Conclusion

According to both Kegan (1982) and Kim (2005), if an individual feels they are lost in between the culture of their home country and the culture of their new environment, they are left to evaluate the emotions involved in their cultural identity transition. For South Korean participants, moving to the United States for their MFAs meant feeling distant from their home countries the longer they stayed abroad. The negative effects of these feelings of alienation and isolation can lead to emotional hardships and stress (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Andrade, 2006; Kegan, 1980). The challenges of moving from one country to another, adapting to a new cultural and academic framework, and developing a new identity (Kegan, 1982), pushed the interview participants to identify their needs in order to succeed and thrive in their new environments.

They all shared an understanding of their identities through self-reflection questions presented in the interviews, which served as important learning tools to highlight their own unique perspectives.

An educational implication for art educators from this case study would be to share the list of self-reflective questions with cross-cultural students to aid their understanding of how they see themselves and behave in relation to others (Hofstede, 1980; Koh, 2016; McFee, 1986; Shin & Yang, 2021). The role of an educator is to foster an environment that encourages students to expand their creativity and exploration, as well as encourage them to ask questions and actively participate in art activities (Coats, 2014; Hofstede, 1984; Koh, 2020; Shin, 2019). There is an incentive to learn from these participants' helpful insights so that art educators across cultures may collaborate with one another and share their own experiences and practices in order to help their cross-cultural students grow in their artistic journey.

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A Transition of Visual Ritual: Making Medicine, George Flett, and the Historical Emergence of Native American Ledger Art¹

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ABSTRACT

How do Native Americans have a voice through art practice, especially since they have been silenced for centuries? And how does one convey an understanding that Native American people and their cultures are still here, alive and present in the United States today? This historical inquiry (Bolin, 1995) into ritual and memory pedagogy (Powell, 2017) focuses on a small part of Native American history through the ledger drawing of Making Medicine and George Flett. Reflecting on history and my own memories of George Flett, we can see their voice, both past and present, within their art practice. Through a connected history that expands on the original ritual of Plains Indian buffalo hide painting into a transitional place for Native American ledger drawing, we can see beyond Native Americans' artistic characteristics associated solely with craft or utility to engage their past and contemporary artists. Their history, culture, challenges, and issues are made visible through their art practice, while bringing awareness that Native Americans are still here!

KEYWORDS: ledger art, Making Medicine, George Flett, historical memory, Chicken Dance, Memory Pedagogy, Plains Indian

NATURAL

[It's]

We Don't Want Indians
Just Their
Names
Mascots
Machines
Cities
Products
Buildings
Living People [?]²

¹ *In this paper QR codes are links that direct the reader to images. This is an interactive component to engage the reader and provide links to artworks in order to foster personal inquiry and educational use.

² Edgar Heap of Birds, 1989, words from his artwork, *Telling Many Magpies, Telling Black Wolf, Telling Hachivi, serigraph*

In this poem of resistance, ЛАЯУТАИ, found in the artwork of Edgar Heap of Birds (1989) (see Figure 1), each line builds to tell a story of the struggle of the Native American plight to be recognized and acknowledged as living people—a people still in existence today. As we teach through different contemporary methodologies such as Visual Culture (Duncum, 2002), Multicultural Education (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001), and Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2018), we can also focus on the idea of cultural ritual in art making. Seeking representations of cultural continuity through the ritual of art practice and memory pedagogy (Powell, 2017) can teach us how others have adapted ritual through the challenges of change over time and maintained their cultural voice through art making.

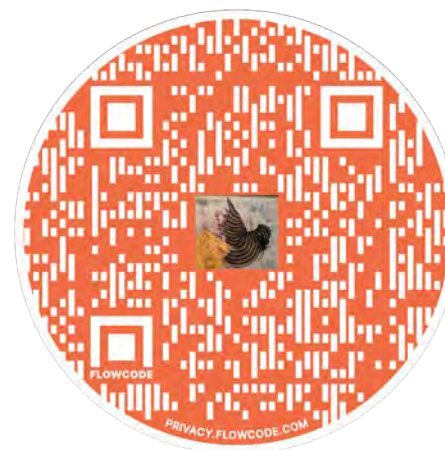


Figure 1: QR Code for Edgar Heap of birds, 1989, *Telling Many Magpies, Telling Black Wolf, Telling Hachivi, serigraph*.

The art of Native Americans and Native communities, from the historic past until now, shows us how ritual through arts practice keeps identity and historical memory alive. This historical identity, especially as intergenerational learning, remains deeply embedded, yet often silent, in the fabric of North American history. Although Indian, or American Indian, are terms often associated with the historical American West, they are meant to specifically reference an individual Indigenous person—who is often unnamed in Native art—especially when no Tribal affiliation is identified. Today, the Indigenous populations of the United States are usually referred to as Tribal nations, tribes, Alaskan Natives, First Nations, native nations, Indigenous nations, indigenous peoples, and Native Americans. Identity for contemporary Native people is not a neutral issue and is rooted in cultural ritual and practice as the place where art making is grounded. Current Native identity has

evolved from the distant past and is socially constructed through contact, groupings, and living out Tribal values and understandings. Holms, Pearson, and Chavis (2003) described this as peoplehood where “language, sacred history, religion, and land—were interwoven and dependent on one another” (p. 12). Here, the past has been reinvented in new ways that redefine life as Indian/Native in a post-colonial, yet colonized culture, often re-reading Indian/Native histories and redefining identity for groups in which those doing the telling are not a part. So, how can we teach about Native Americans and Indigenous culture authentically in art education? And how does ritual in art making convey an understanding that Native American people and their cultures are still here?

This topic, when framed in historical research methods (Špiláčková, 2012)—with an understanding that historical research responds to contemporary trends (Bolin, 1995) and is affected by a post-structuralist narrative turn (Howell & Prevenier, 2001)—becomes a search for past happenings and their relationship to the present (Berg & Lune, 2017), thus explaining evolving histories. Not only can we learn from the past through historical research, but as a result, we can illuminate or make visible previously invisible understandings of U.S. history, and the presence of Native Americans in it through their creative practice.

In this case, we can honor Native Americans that have inhabited the United States for millennia by making historical moments of cultural continuity visible through ritual art making practices, where teaching and learning about Native American creativity makes visible a living culture. When people look, they rarely see a living people; they see objects mostly in museums. If we are to delve deeper through art education, perhaps we can see them and what they want/ed to tell us.

The Rituals of the Past: The Painted Buffalo Hide

For centuries, the art of Native Americans has been a form of cultural preservation through ritual practices. For example, the Plains Indians followed a nomadic lifestyle, specifically the seasonal migration patterns of the American Bison from which they obtained unlimited sustenance and made many utilitarian and ceremonial items like ornamental robes. These robes often depicted geometric designs, pictographs that represented daily life, and winter counts—pictorial calendars and historical records of a tribe or specific warrior’s heroism. This long tradition preserved oral histories pictorially. According to the Smithsonian (2009), these visual histories, winter counts, were added to each year, sometimes recopied by successors, and in tandem with narrative retellings as a historical record. These painted buffalo hides were the expression of ritual, a ritual which would take on new meaning as Native Americans began to lose their homeland, families, and ways of life. Colonization shifted the visual recording—from the ritual of art on

buffalo hides, created while freely living on the plains, to art on White men’s ledgers during incarceration as prisoners of war. These visual recordings serve as a means of cultural survival.

Ledger Art

Ledger art first emerged just a few decades after the Indian Removal Act of 1830, as Native warriors were taken as prisoners of war. This Act, signed by President Andrew Jackson, forcibly removed Native Americans from their homes and land. The subsequent tensions saw some Native American tribes fight back against the U.S. military, which led to their incarceration in U.S. military forts. These forts were where Native Americans first began creating ledger art to continue retelling their stories as a visual narrative, maintaining the ritual of drawing their histories. This tradition of ledger art, which evolved from paintings on Buffalo hides, is known as Plains figurative art on paper. The Plains figurative art ritual shifted visual recordings to paper, ledgers, and lighter, more accessible materials. This was not only because of incarceration but also due to the scarcity of buffalo that followed the US federal government-supported eradication programs. Native Americans were thus denied a food source, a way to communicate their histories through buffalo painting, and in general, their very way of life.

Ledger art became a transitional ritual practice that captured Native American stories, memories, and experiences mainly from the 1860s through the 1920s. The more well-known ledger artists were prisoners of war at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. Those who had lost their land and homes continued to speak of their histories through the ritual of drawing on paper. At the turn of the 19th century, ledger books became increasingly available from Europe, along with colorful drawing and painting materials. The ledger books were often already used, having recorded information that was later discarded by White settlers or the US military. The ledgers were then given to Native people to paint or draw their stories on, usually while incarcerated. The ledger art of Native Americans served to represent something much bigger—the transition from their way of life to the reservation life. According to Hail (Pearce, 2013), “the bittersweet nature of ledger art is clear” (p. xvii). They were the record of commercial transactions, such as land transactions, some documenting the loss of Native lands and people. Thus, in many ways, they were a record of Native trauma. Hail (Pearce, 2013) also notes that ledger art was a place of transformation where “the white man’s documents” (p. xvii) were used by Native people to create drawings, which then became a middle ground to contest conflicting views of history. To add to the trauma of stolen land and a way of living, much of the ledger art created by incarcerated Native Americans, especially the art created at Fort Marion, was sold to visitors becoming “commodities” (Szabo, 2007, p.172). These creative commodities then supported the very place that held them captive. The

White dominant culture, namely the US government, tried to create a place of forced appropriation of white culture. The Native American response was to do all it could to tell their stories, share their memories, and hold on to the value and ritual of tribal traditions. Ledger art can be seen as the evidence of stolen culture.

Making Medicine: Connecting Ritual to the Learning Landscapes of the Past

While Europe made sure to name their artists throughout the centuries, the ones we most study in Art History courses today, by contrast, Native American artistry was rarely attributed to an individual in historical contexts before the 19th Century. There are many reasons for this, but in contemporary Native American art, we can finally truly grasp the voices of Native Americans and what they wish to tell us through their work, reemphasizing the need to make the invisible visible giving voice to those whose culture was stolen. It was easy to see how ritual among the collective ledger artists of the past paved the way for contemporary ledger artists such as George Flett. We can now recognize that culture, history, ritual, and creativity are living things that are passed down over time, shifting in form and function, but resilient in presence. A predecessor of contemporary ledger artists, Making Medicine (1844-1931) was a Cheyenne warrior, imprisoned at Ft. Marion, who became a well-known ledger artist. He was taken into captivity as a result of being a part of the Red River uprising of 1874-1875, where battles took place between several southern Great Plains Native American tribes and the U.S. Army (Massachusetts Historical Society's Focus On: Indian Ledger Art, n.d.). This is important to note, as it is an example of how Native Americans could no longer exist within their own cultural structures and historical freedoms.

At Fort Marion, the U.S. Army imprisoned many Indians who were considered the most dangerous (Glancy, 2014), and Making Medicine was among them (see Figure 2). The prison commander, Capt. Richard H. Pratt, was a supporter of their art. He was a proponent of Native American education and assimilation and encouraged the inmates—mostly Cheyenne and Kiowa—to depict their camp life, hunts, and battles (Massachusetts Historical Society, Object of the month: Indian Ledger Art, n. d., para 2). One anecdote to note is that Capt. Pratt was also mentioned in the late 1800s in the Art Education Association Journal published by the J. C. Witter Company, where he was lauded for giving Indian Warriors educational opportunities. This ledger art, created by Indians at Fort Marion under Capt. Pratt, hoped to foster artistic entrepreneurship and encourage assimilation (Pearce, 2013), an attempt to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man" (Dickinson College, n.d., para.1). However, even more importantly, this drawing ritual helped keep cultural identity alive as a living testimony of adaptation and survival among the incarcerated warriors from stolen lands.



Figure 2: QR Code for *by Making Medicine (Cheyenne), US Cavalry and Native Americans Ink, watercolor, colored pencil on woven lined paper. Image: 17.5 cm x 33.3; two facing pages: 20.5 cm x 33.3 cm. Pages 18-19, Book of sketches made at Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida, 1877.*

Ritual Relived in the Memory of George Flett

In my own experiences with ledger drawing—or, the ritual of drawing lives lived—I turn to memory; specifically, my memories of George Flett (1946-2013). A 20th century revival of ledger art emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. Native American artists created contemporary work using 19th century documents. George Flett became a part of this revivalist movement, having been influenced by those that went before him. Flett, a member of the Spokane tribe, was born in 1946 and recently passed in 2013. He was a skilled artist and most known for his ledger art. Flett lived on the Spokane Reservation, graduated from the Institute for American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico in the mid 1960s, attended the University of Colorado, served in the US military, was a professional bull rider, and then began working as a full time artist at the age of 37 until his death. Each ledger work he created told a story from Spokane Indian history or from a legend or cultural event (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: QR code for the work of George Flett, *Prairie Chicken Dancers Grand Entry Song-White Lodge Manderee, North Dakota*. Gouache and on 1891 ledger paper, 9 ½ x 16 ½ inches.

I met George Flett in 2007 while working at a university near Spokane, Washington, where he painted as performance in a local auditorium. Surrounded by chicken dancers (see Figures 4 & 5) and a drum circle, Flett would create his ledger art with beautiful colors and expressive iconography reflective of his Spokane tribe.

Flett had his own revivalist style of the ritual of representing Native living through drawing. He not only created ledger art that told stories about his experiences, culture, and the history of the Spokane, but he also wanted those around him to experience the fullness of Native ritual, a place where generational memories culminated in his ledger art, dance, and music. His holistic approach, intertwined with performance, became historical autobiography. When I was around Flett in an academic setting, he was a man of few words, but his passion for telling the stories of his culture through color, line, image, and symbol was monumental in the telling. As a revivalist of ledger art, Flett created amidst the chicken dancers and drumming; I was mesmerized by how he chose to share his creative process as immersed in ritual forms of the Spokane. The drumming, the singing, the dancing, the painting/drawing—all worked together to produce these ledger paintings as storied works of art that spoke of his own journey and that of his ancestors. Through his work, he also brought attention to the chicken dance and dancers, as they helped Flett bring to life more than just art making but performing ritual through memory. Flett, the dancers, and the drummers all presented a new way to understand the creative voice by bringing attention to indigenous communities and once again transitioning pictorial storied practice to communicate contemporary contexts. The remaining artifact embodied more than just ledger artwork—it possessed cultural memories through performative and artistic knowledge placed on paper, as evidence of sharing the past in the present, realizing the past as part of present-day performance and art making.

The Present from the Past

Flett’s ledger art began with rituals of the past and ledger paper infused with and influenced by the Native spiritual practices of drums and dance. What I had the privilege of observing was the spiritual manifestation in the creation of the artwork itself, seeing glimpses of the ritual of a sacred world that is still alive. The context of the work prompted me to explore ledger art further and find out how it intersected with my own Native American identity and heritage as well as gave others a glimpse into an ancient practice that is still alive in Native culture. I learned that the culture and patterns of life expressed through language, oral traditions, music, ceremony, and arts hopes to preserve Native American heritage today. This doesn’t mean that Native people are “frozen in the nostalgic past, but rather that they revere and honor the accomplishments of their elders and those who came before them, living as vital members of their own communities” (Hansen, 2007, p. 253), celebrating tribal heritage, history, and traditions that provide a sense of identity, especially for future generations.

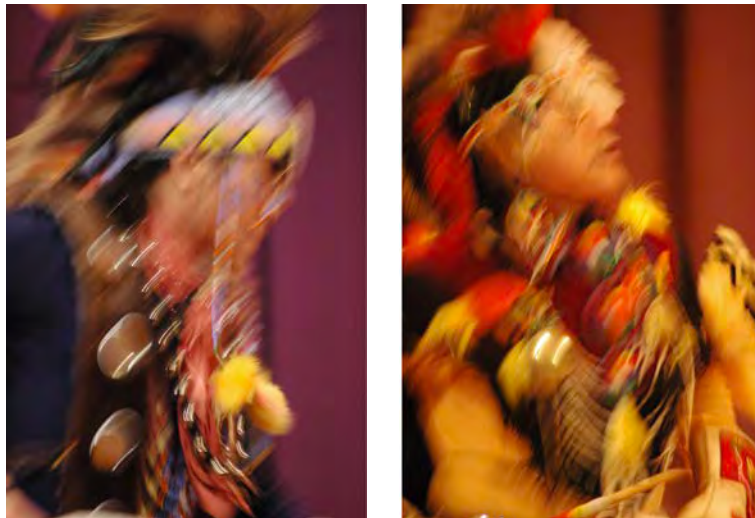


Figure 4 & 5: Powell, 2007, *Chicken Dancers in Motion*, from a performance with George Flett, Cheney, Washington.

Conclusion

In thinking about the impact of my experiences with George Flett, and the history of ledger art, I realize that looking at Native American art needs to go beyond seeing and teaching about it as historical memorabilia. When thinking about other cultures and memory as art educators we must consider asking how ritual fits into the narrative turn, while looking through a contemporary lens. We must continue to endeavor to ask ourselves:

1. How do cultural memory and ritual over time serve to change and teach us?
2. How can we explore and share the stories that show Native Americans are still here?
3. How can we learn about America's past through Native American artists?

We need to go beyond the idea of collected historical objects that seem to substitute for collecting of a people—a living people and their attempted vanquishment and assimilation—to acknowledgment and recognition. Native Americans today have had to perform identity reform as cultural practice, often through adapted ritual—a way of merging old culture with new without betraying where they have come from and who they are. Today's Native American artists are transcultural, sharing their cultural practices and how they have been shaped over time in a way that echoes the past in the present through presence. Teaching about Native American art is important because it recognizes people who still exist. Art education should explore Native art as a place of cultural exchange rather than as a past culture, born from uncountable experiences and thousands of years on this continent. Native art is not created as mere metaphor but with a logic and rationale that governs their entry into history and culture—a history that has been stolen and a culture that has been trampled. We must recognize that while there are many shared cultural perspectives in today's society, the perplexing circumstances of forced assimilation versus extinction is one Native Americans still face today. However, if you are willing to look and listen to the voices of artists of Native American lineage and the rituals they still share, you will hear the symphony of voices that want you to know WE ARE STILL HERE!

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Co-Creating with a Messy Kitchen Floor

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ABSTRACT

An arts-based exploration framed as an Anzaldúan autohistoria-teoría, explores material and social constructs of the author's dirty kitchen floor. Focusing on materiality and the remnants of white colonial norms as aspects of her everyday lived experience, the author engages in collaborative art making with her messy kitchen to reimagine a dysfunctional relationship that is bound up in maintaining social norms. The autohistoria-teoría functions as a ritual practice that makes space for both sociocultural and materialist considerations of domestic space. The project serves as a model for how art educators might engage theory-making via ritual making practice.

KEYWORDS: Autohistoria-teoría, ritual ecology, materiality, race and gender, arts-based research

Gloria Anzaldúa's (2015) concept of autohistoria-teoría is an interdisciplinary arts-based mode of inquiry that makes considerations for both sociocultural and material aspects of lived experience. In this article, I utilize autohistoria-teoría as a research practice that functions as creative ritual. Through material-focused ritual making, I reimagine myself and the materials in my messy kitchen while simultaneously considering sociocultural colonialist constructs that inform my identity and my interpretation of the space in which I live.

Sociocultural Considerations of a Messy Kitchen Floor

When I first began working on this research project, there was a disconnect between my relationship to the interior space of my home and my interest in material interconnectivity and material ecologies. Even though I was part of the ecology of my home, I saw myself as something different from it—it was this static, yet powerful thing and I had the privilege of moving in and out, joining other ecologies as I pleased. It was a mess, particularly my kitchen floor, and I felt the mess was something I should hide, something I should be ashamed of, something that brought my worth as a human, as a mother, and as a professional into question.

My disconnect, and the shame I felt as I observed my messy kitchen floor, was related to my social location as a white woman. This sense of shame can be traced to colonial practices, for example the cult of domesticity, where homemaking and mothering became key factors

of identity for white women of the middle class (Keister & Southgate, 2012). Cleanliness, order, and nurturing within the private space of the home were important markers of nineteenth century white women's social status. Notions of cleanliness were also used to construct racialized others, for example Black women who were enslaved were not seen as women at all, but rather treated as non-human and something unrelated to the white gender binary of "male" and "female" (Lugones, 2007; Mendez, 2015). Women and gender studies scholar, Xhercis Mendez (2015) utilizes Maria Lugones's (2007) framework that categorizes the entanglement of race and gender through a history of colonialist thought, recognizing gender as having both "light" and "dark" sides. Lugones writes, "The 'light side' is comprised of 'white' bourgeois heterosexual males and females, where white bourgeois heterosexual males (a.k.a. 'Man') represent the body and being that matters and has the greatest amount of authority and power within this system" (p. 44). In this system, white women have held a subordinated place of privilege, where, for example, they were defined as valuable and worthy of protection, but only in relation to the superiority of white males. White women maintained that privilege via systems of colonization, enslavement, and other forms of oppression. Through this system, white women are complicit in maintaining their own oppression in exchange for a higher social standing, while simultaneously oppressing the "dark side," those who are colonized and enslaved. The binaries of light/dark and clean/dirty were systematically taken up to define a white supremacist hierarchy.

There are cultural remnants of the cult of domesticity, colonialism, and practices of chattel slavery that I carry in the material of my body. For example, my domestic space can serve as a material signifier of my worthiness as a human being. My ability to "keep" the space marks my being and my material space as belonging to a normalized white middle class identity where the space is kept clean and organized. Thus, domestic spaces and domestic labor are signifiers of the entanglements of gender, race, and class, both historically and in this contemporary moment.

With this in mind, I take up a decolonial feminist methodology to "identify the colonial relations of power and modes of relating that serve to undergird contemporary capitalism and draw [me] into a multiplicity of oppressive relations" (Mendez, 2015, p. 50). An artistic engagement with my messy kitchen floor is one pathway for exploring this inquiry. To do this, I engaged with the following questions through this project in alignment with the above aim: (1) How might ritualized making produce new knowledge of domestic space, which has been the historical context for rigid and oppressive systems of gender, race, and class? (2) How might ritualized making assist in redefining the ways in which I name my identity and the ways in which I relate to materials within my domestic space?

Theory

Autohistoria-teoría

The work I present in this article can be identified as arts-based research. However, because I use Anzaldúa (2015) theory in conjunction with new materialist theory, I frame it as a work of material autohistoria-teoría (Hood, 2018), with the aim of interjecting Anzaldúa's work into discourses of arts-based research (Acuff & López, 2021; Bhattacharya & Payne, 2016; Wilson, 2020). Anzaldúa was doing creative scholarship that I identify as a form of arts-based research in her groundbreaking book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). One of her most well-known works, the book uses autobiography, history, revisionist mythmaking, code-switching, and poetry to develop theory from the author's everyday life. Anzaldúa (2015) investigates the body and domestic contexts as sites of knowledge production, among other things. Autohistoria-teoría is simultaneously a reflection, healing, and reimagining of the self, situated within a relational or social context. It is a narrative self-story, employing various artistic forms woven together, that grapples with deeply personal knowledge, exposing that which has remained hidden to investigate wounds and imagine new narratives that might re-imagine worlds. An autohistoria-teoría starts with the self, but in considering one's own story, an ecology of material bodies emerges. Through reflection and the crafting of the narrative, theory comes into being. The investigation and transformation of inner worlds effects change in outer worlds.

Following Bhattacharya and Keating (2017), I utilize autohistoria-teoría as a form of spiritual activism that calls the activist to blend personal and public worlds for personal and collective "transformation-without-final-resolution" (p. 8). Thus, healing, restoration, and justice are ongoing projects that invite transformation, but not in the sense that a utopia is attainable. The tale I tell here is not a claim of radical collective social transformation, but instead it is a mundane shift of the everyday sort hidden behind the walls of my home. Nevertheless, it is a forward movement, a tiptoe towards a world I hope to see one day—a world where material bodies are not trapped by colonialist social constructions of race and gender. And where things once deemed as "problems" or "dirty" might come to be known as catalysts for engagement, and invitations to relate to messes in unexpected ways.

An autohistoria-teoría involves shadow work, meaning it requires deep vulnerability, honesty, leaning into parts of my lived experience that I might prefer to ignore or hide (Anzaldúa, 2009; Bhattacharya & Payne, 2016). As Anzaldúa (2015) describes:

In shadow work, the problem is part of the cure--you do not heal the wound; the wound heals you. First, you must recognize and acknowledge la herida. Second, you must 'intend' to heal. Then you must fall headlong into that wound--attending

to what the body is feeling, be its dismemberment and disintegration. Rupture and psychic fragmentation lead to dialogue with the wound. This dialogue, in turn, opens imaginings, and images awaken and awareness of something greater than our individual wounds, enabling us to imagine ways of going through Nepantla's¹ disorientations to achieve wholeness and interconnect to others on the planet. (pp. 89-90)

In Anzaldúan theory, the wound, the problem, has agency. Wounds can be emotional, psychological, and physiological. A wound might be an inner conflict or false beliefs about one's self or self-worth. In the case of my messy kitchen, which I will discuss in further detail later, I was at odds with the space. It was as though the dirty kitchen floor was an enemy that was impossible to overcome. I was deeply affected by the material appearance of the kitchen. The problem seemed to be emanating from materials outside my body, but the problem was inside of me, too. I had to move toward the wound, toward that which I found repulsive and shameful, so that I could learn from it. The potential that autohistoria-teoría offers is bound up in the sharing of the story. One must do the shadow work and share the process of the struggle, even if it involves shame and acknowledgment of ways that fall outside of societal norms. Non-normative narratives hold the potential to open up collective consciousness to new ways of knowing and being. Thus, an individual wound becomes a catalyst for the healing of other individual and collective wounds. In the case of autohistoria-teoría, the development of a private pedagogy is the first step to building a transformative public pedagogy (Carpenter, 2010).

Here, I present a *materially focused* experimentation of autohistoria-teoría. However, in its original iteration, this theory/method focused specifically on sociocultural phenomena in the context of women of colors' lived experiences (Anzaldúa, 2009; Bhattacharya & Keating, 2017; Keating, 2015). Anzaldúa's project shifted thematically over time, autohistoria-teoría and a focus on transforming inner worlds to transform outer worlds was a constant theme throughout. In her later work, there was a shift from focusing on established identity categories, to a more queer space with a focus on moving beyond social binaries such as race and gender (Keating, 2009). I see materials as a participant in the co-creation of the social and the cultural, and additional layer of storytelling that is not separate from the work of social transformation but rather intimately entangled. My sociocultural standpoint is, as pointed out previously, that of a white cisgender, middle-class female. I am highly privileged by these categories but also privileged via access to education and employment within academia. In choosing to engage

1 Nepantla is a Nahuatl word meaning "in the middle of" or "middle." Anzaldúa (2015) utilized this term extensively to describe and theorize the conflicts and inner struggles she experienced as an artist related to her identity, sociocultural constructs, and social injustice.

Anzaldúa theory, I take on what Wilson calls “desirable difficulties” (Wilson et al., 2016, p. 119). I have to grapple with race and racism because they are part of my daily life. Choosing to use theory written by a woman of color, a self-identified Chicana, does not overshadow my white woman’s standpoint, and does not absolve me of internalized racism or the maintenance work that I unknowingly do to sustain white supremacy. At the same time, I take seriously the call to shadow work as a self-transformation method for the sake of collective socio-cultural and material transformation. Thus, I follow Anzaldúa’s (2015) lead and focus on my daily lived experiences, sinking into my materiality and looking within to expose feelings, thoughts, and orientations that manifest out of colonial ideology.

New Materialist Considerations

New materialist concepts are useful for fleshing out my definition of material autohistoria-teoría. Material vibrancy (Bennett, 2010) is a political invitation to consider how non-human objects participate, often in ways undetected by humans, in the creation of social and cultural worlds. My perception of the world shifts when I begin to think of all material bodies, not just the human, sentient, or animate (Chen, 2012), as participants or contributors to the development of what I perceive as my reality. Bennett discusses material vibrancy, as an innate quality of things, a call, a power that is detectable by human senses but not fully understood. It is a hidden world within a world almost always in plain sight but not easily accessible via traditional empirical inquiry.

Along with vibrancy, materials always appear along with other things. For example, in my daily life, I, as a thing, am not floating in a vacuum. There are always other materials with me, some I can perceive, some I cannot. For example, at this moment I type on a computer that is connected to the Internet while cool air blows from a floor vent and wafts off the blades of the ceiling fan. As Bennett (2010) puts it, things appear in assemblages. These assemblages are not static but always in flux, transforming with and among each other. As such, notions of agency can resituate from residing in an individual body to something far more complex that also moves in and among assemblages. Bennett (2010) calls this phenomenon “distributive agency” (p. ix). Her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* is a focused impersonal look at the beingness of non-human matter. She is not interested in human materiality. My project diverges from Bennett’s in favor of personalized materiality, or relational materiality that attempts to consider all beings, as evidenced in Anzaldúa’s (2015) work:

Las napanteras know that each of us is linked with everyone and everything in the universe and fight actively in both the material world and the spiritual realm. Las napanteras are spiritual activists engaged in the struggle for social, economic,

and political justice, while working on spiritual transformations of selfhoods. (p. 83)

Ultimately, I mobilize new materialist theory as a call to intimate relationality with all material beings in the world. Materiality is common among us; we are material; we sense and interact with materiality as a constant. I do not point this out to erase differences among material bodies, but rather to open the possibility for a deeper awareness of the inherent interconnectivity of all bodies. The concepts of materials-as-assemblages and distributive agency identify the physical world as a network of power. Things, material beings, are interconnected and interdependent. Anzaldúa (2015) suggests that the transformation of my inner world (which is intimately interconnected with my external world) is the first step in transforming the material world at the social level. From a Womanist perspective, Maparyan (2012) suggests one must, “Recognize your own sacredness, Recognize the sacredness of everyone, Recognize the sacredness of all created things. And act accordingly—inwardly and outwardly” (p. 8). Thus, in the case of this material autohistoria-teoría project, I focus on an artistic process in which I engage with materials in our shared domestic space to reimagine the agency and sacredness of that space.

As a mother and caregiver of five young children, the materiality of my world can be altogether overwhelming. I was commuting, working as a high school art teacher, finishing my doctoral work, mothering, and caring for my partner. These are all choices that I have made, and I felt the social pressure to play each of these roles perfectly. My desire for perfection caused division. I forgot about the sacredness of materiality. I built up an intense resentment towards my home, the mess that met me every day in my exhausted state. The dishes, laundry, toys, and messes, in the context of my home, become a kind of assemblage that overwhelms. In this space, materiality and human-driven social constructs collide to create the perfect storm of personal depression and inadequacy. The mess and its visual chaos close in on me, which is another indication of the power of materiality (Hood, 2018). The shame of a messy home haunts me, calls me to hide my reality from the outside world, inducing fear, and a feeling of separation from the friends and neighbors I desire to be a part of this space. There is immediate social shame involved with this, and there is also failure to adhere to the tradition of the cult of domesticity. The norms developed for white middle class women in the colonial era run deep in the social fabric of which I am part. Perhaps I will not be able to maintain my social standing as a “good white woman.” And while being identified as a “good white woman” is not my objective, this cultural norm is so deeply embedded in my world, I still struggle to get away from it. The power of social norms becomes evident through this work, specifically for women, and the nuances that race and class bring to the topic of domestic labor become strikingly evident through this material exploration.

Ritual Ecology (Methodology) of Mess

In academia, domestic space is not usually acknowledged as a site of knowledge production. Anzaldúan and new materialist theories claim otherwise. The shadow work I present here is a sharing of knowledge that emerged from what I understand to be a generatively dysfunctional domestic assemblage. Autohistoria-teoría embraces paradox. It allows me to think about the complex nature of lived experiences which includes but is not limited to materials, gender, and race. Everyday problems and familiar spaces become sites for deep thinking and dynamic making through this mode of scholarly work.

I consider autohistori-teoría to be both theory and methodology, and also ritualistic in practice. The creative practice I engaged with prioritizes the mess and includes dwelling in the space, photographing, and viewing the photographs to see what might emerge through the mediation of the non-human materiality of my iPhone camera. To confront the problem of my messy kitchen floor, I chose to approach it from a completely different angle than I had up to that point. I sought to abandon the sociocultural demands of my white womanhood, to deconstruct my identity as homemaker and instead embrace a ritual ecology of the space. I looked to the vibrancy of the materials in the space, to see what they were doing that perhaps my social and cultural conditioning as a good white woman caused me to miss. I looked directly at the dirt on the kitchen floor, and then mediated my gaze through the camera of my cell phone. All these materials were part of the standard rituals I assigned to this space via my identity as a mother and keeper of the home. To attend to new possibilities for my own identity and subjectivity and those of the space as well, I took up a different ritual, one that was process-oriented, rather than outcome-oriented. Through this ritual ecology (methodology) of mess, the following material autohistoria-teoría emerged. The next section is a multimodal work of art that is my material autohistoria-teoría.

Material Autohistoria-Teoría: The Story of My Messy Kitchen Floor

I was keenly aware of the power of the assemblage of things, or mess, in my home to overwhelm my being. I felt it inside my flesh. The sensation sits on the surface of my skin but also vibrates through my interior.

Scratching deep within
That moves through tissues bones
Debilitating
Breakdown
An attack from
within
Incited by external bodies

A multitude
A cloud
Appearing to be static
And moving with energy
Into myself
Their energy envelopes me
I am overcome
In the opposition to
Runaway from
mess



Figure 1: *Kitchen Floor No. 1, 2018, digital photograph*

But there's another mess. The mess that my white womanhood upholds, through maintaining a mirage of perfection. The mess of maintaining the lie that domestic work is women's work. It maintains the lie that middle class interiority is dependent on the color of your skin and a cleanly appearance.

The kitchen is cluttered with stuff. Books, backpacks, spiral notebooks, mail, pots, and pans, bags of cereal, dishes in the drying rack, knick-knacks, laundry, toys, shoes, books, dog hair, and dirt are some of the things that often sprinkle the kitchen floor. The backyard, leading right to the backdoor that opens into the kitchen, is a dirt or mud pool, depending on the weather. Five little sets of feet and four paws march resolutely in and out through the day. The dirt and mud come in too. Standing in high contrast as it rests on the gridded white tile floor. The grid is like the rigid colonial social structure holding bodies in



Figure 2: *Kitchen Floor No. 2, 2018, digital photograph*

their place, me a white woman bound to keep this place in order, or Prudence the Mexican American woman employed as a domestic laborer in my childhood home. Or maybe it's more like the plane of existence that is beyond human perception, the stuff at the base of life, like an Agnes Martin painting. Maybe I am the mess.

There must be something more I can do. I will make a plan. A schedule. A routine. I will make mopping the floor my religion. Practice scrubbing down on hands and knees every night. Keep it sanitary. Keep it presentable. If the floor is right, I will be right.



Figure 3: *Kitchen Floor No. 3, 2018, digital photograph*

If someone comes in and sees this... it is disgusting. We live like slobs. It makes me less-than, gross, lazy, incompetent. The grid on the floor is calling me. The chunks of dirt smears, and sprinklings, have their aesthetic. The contrast of chaos on the orderly horizontal and vertical lines, the dirt has made something here.



Figure 4: *Kitchen Floor No. 4, 2018, digital photograph*

That one smashed pea, an anomaly. Brave and bold in its difference among the lines, white, dirt.



Figure 5: *Kitchen Floor No. 5, 2018, digital photograph*

The messy cabinet doors join in the making. The old house, hidden foundation, cracks running through, reveal themselves in tiny lines, disruptions in the one-foot by one-foot whiteness. Even if the floor were clean, they would hold their ground.

The light and the shadows dance with the dirt. I can dance on a messy kitchen floor just as I can dance on a clean kitchen floor. I learn from the assemblage.

Even when I find something evocative and beautiful in its chaos and filth, I am still overwhelmed. It will come back. I can clean, and clean, photograph, clean. The dirt wins. So, I sit in sadness. I sit in dirt.

There are kitchen floors made of dirt, and they are not dirty. The floor is not dirty. It is painted with dirt.

The white tile belongs, it gets to
Stay
It is made filthy by this darker matter of
The earth
That has come to symbolize the uncivilized
The inanimate dirt mars
The purity of the white
Tile
But really, it's a life force

The floor is an expanse of ocean. It is the water—a river running through my kitchen. The dirt will be here long after I am gone.

Reflecting on the Co-Creative Artmaking Process

The act of engaging with the assemblage that is my messy kitchen to create art opened new ways of being and knowing with and through materials. My materiality was drawn into a space that I was previously repulsed by, the mere sight of which caused anxiety deep within the tissues of my body. The making was an invitation to reorient myself to the materials there and become curious about that which troubled, disturbed, and repulsed me. The process allowed me to realize my entanglement with lingering colonialist ideology, to identify the shame and failure associated with my messy kitchen as part of a sexist, racist, and classist ideology. Looking through the screen of my iPhone to see the messy kitchen floor from a different perspective opened up space for a new relationship between myself and the messy floor. The nature of our material connectivity shifted and also allowed me, through reading and writing, to consider cultural constructs that influenced my perception of the space. Prior to this project (and even still today) I desire to be accepted as a good white middle class woman, and in order to attain and maintain this status, my kitchen should be spotless, organized, and sanitized. However, this desire limits who and what I can be in the world, and perpetuates the sexist, racist, and classist social constructs I ultimately hope to deconstruct.

Through my Enlightenment heritage, I am encouraged to order my worlds. To categorize, sanitize, define, and dissect, present, and perfect. In my home, I feel the social pressure to impose order, which allows me to be perceived as a good white woman. But doing so maintains and reinforces colonialist ideologies. Ritual making practices often take place in the kitchen, however, the rituals I was attempting to adhere to prior to this project were rigid and reductive—requiring particular outcomes. The material autohistoria-teoría provided a new relational engagement. My focus shifted to collaborative making, inquiry, and curiosity, which offer spaces for imagining new worlds and recognizing the complexity of my materially interconnected state. Order is useful in a home, but it does not define the quality of the rela-

tional practices in that or any other given space. Order and cleanliness hold no bearing over the sacredness of any given material body. This is particularly important for white art educators, as we must constantly work to deconstruct colonialist ideologies that rise in our consciousness through pervasive sociocultural conditioning. Binaries such as light/dark, clean/dirty, white/black, that have been used in the past to categorize human bodies, dehumanizing dark bodies as a method of oppression and enslavement. Even in my own home I have been complacent in maintaining remnants of such colonialist thought.

Material bodies (non-human and human) are as always co-creating. Prior to the photographic process with the dirty kitchen floor, my mind was full of negative narratives about that assemblage and what existed in that space. The potential for transformation in such narratives is bound up in and among materials themselves. The opportunity to play and experiment via the power of materiality gave me the chance to learn to operate outside of the status quo narrative that only perfect, pristine, orderly, clean things are worthy and admirable.

Taking these images, and writing about them allowed me to hook up to this assemblage in a different way. This is a new ritual to enact within this space that deviates from sociocultural norms that define kitchen space as useful in terms of cooking and consuming food. There has been no rational, orderly solution found to the problem of my messy kitchen. It is still messy most days. But I see different kinds of possibility for who I am and what I can do as a part of this ecology. I am reminded that dirt is stuff of which the surface of the planet is made. It is the stuff that sustains my living. It is lively with microbes and potential.

Through co-creating work with my messy kitchen floor, there was a shift in my identity and subjectivity, from an individual to something far more expansive. Through the collaboration, I see the space, the dirt, the cell phone I used to photograph, the cabinets, myself as one: an expanded self. For example, I liken the grid on the floor to an Agnes Martin painting. Her subtle large scale grid paintings are said to reference a kind of formlessness where all things, beings, materials in the world fuse to one existence (Barrett, 2017). Anzaldúa (2015) calls for this kind of reimagining of self to construct new realities where individual human bodies are not defined by physical attributes, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and so on. Through this work, I can deconstruct social norms and expectations for myself. Here, an expanded subjectivity that moves beyond my human perception of individual material bodies is imagined, focusing on the human body as part of a larger interdependent material assemblage. This is a radical reorientation, especially within art education's and education's humanistic lineage (Hood, 2018; Hood & Lewis, 2021; Snaza, Sonu, Truman, & Zaliwska, 2016; Snaza & Weaver, 2015).

This materialist autohistoria-teoría clarifies that engagement in an artistic process focused on the inherently collaborative, or co-creative, materials-centric nature of artmaking holds potential for slight shifts in human perception. This ritual, or similar rituals of making, can be activated in a multitude of spaces where social and cultural constructs are entangled and encoded in the material world. Such inquiries remind artists, teachers, and researchers of the material connections that make up worlds, and invite a curiosity that moves beyond rigid and oppressive social structures. This project reminded me that non-human materials like dirt pre-date human existence and will most likely post-date humanity as well. It implicated me, my perceptions, and my behavior within a historic lineage of oppressive colonialist thought. The process of creating digital photographs, writing, and thinking through materiality and decolonial feminist theory to create the autohistoria-teoría invited to consider my ecological entanglements. Art-making in and of itself can be a messy process, and such messes hold the potential for breaking oppressive social norms. Messy kitchen floors, messy classroom floors, messy street corners, from such ecologies emerge new possibilities for who and what I might be in the world.

Acknowledgements

This manuscript is dedicated to Gloria Anzaldúa, AnaLouise Keating, and Terry Barrett, who, in different ways, taught me that personal vulnerability in writing is critical for individual and collective transformation. Thank you to Sarah Travis for comments on this manuscript, and the anonymous reviewers who gave constructive feedback on earlier versions of this paper.

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Confessing Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the author presents visual and written documentation of engagement in a socially engaged work of art, *Flashpoints: Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education*. This work was enacted through a mobile art gallery, *The Confessional*, as part of a series of performances at an academic art history symposium entitled *Fictions and Frictions: The Power and Politics of Narrative*. Through confessions of critical frictions, this artistic and pedagogical intervention gestures towards reconciliation around the power dynamics of aspects of identity.

KEYWORDS: arts education, arts-based research, phenomenology, critical pedagogy, critical theory, reflective practice, flashpoints

Flashpoints
Critical Frictions
You became aware of an aspect of your identity.
What did this experience feel like as it unfolded?
[Write. Sketch. Share.]

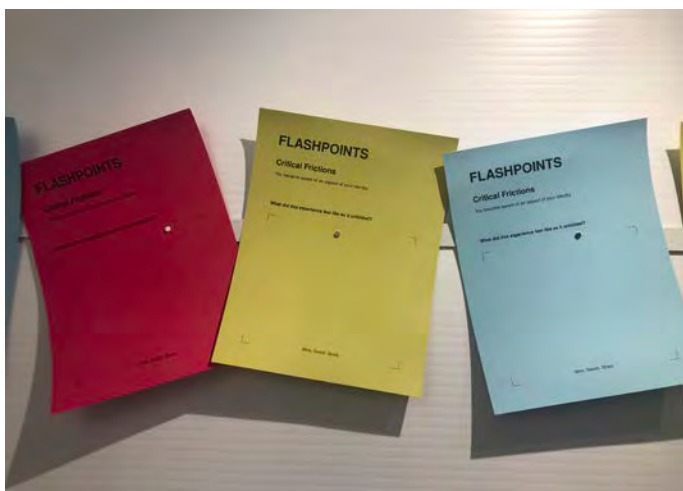


Figure 1: *Flashpoints: Critical Frictions*, 2019, Photograph by Sarah Travis

This is a provocation that I offered as an artistic and pedagogical performance entitled *Flashpoints: Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education* (see Figure 1) as part of a collaborative performance through a mobile art gallery, *The Confessional*. This gallery was created by Angela Baldus and activated several times in 2018-2019 as part of research for her master's thesis, *Considering the Confessional: Spaces of Learning and Objects to Move With* (2019). *The Confessional* references the sacred rituals of the Catholic confessional booth while also connoting the hallowed space of an art gallery (see Figure 2). Through this dynamic, *The Confessional* becomes a site for acts of socially engaged art that references the spiritual aspects of creating and sharing art. In this paper, I document and reflect upon confessing critical frictions in the arts and education through this work, while also considering broader implications for the field of art education.

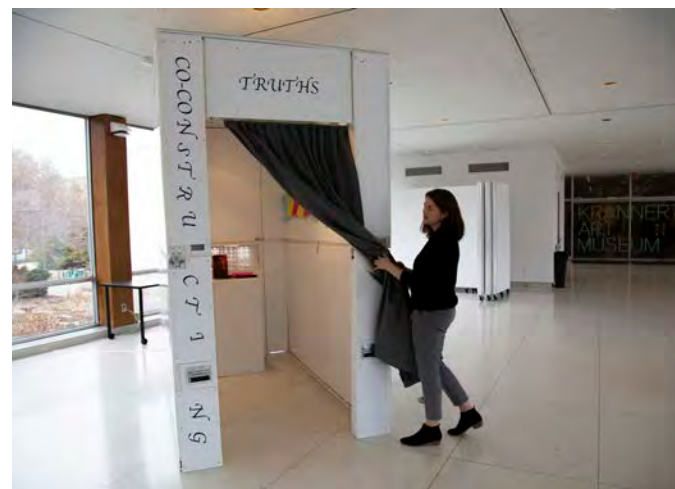


Figure 2: *Pulling Back the Curtain to The Confessional*, 2019, Photograph by Angela Baldus

Co-Constructing Truths in The Confessional

This activation of *The Confessional* was part of *Co-Constructing Truths*, a series of performances during an academic art history symposium, with about 50 attendees on March 1-2, 2019, in the Link Gallery of the School of Art and Design at the of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, entitled *Fictions and Frictions: The Power and Politics of Narrative*. The performers for *Co-Constructing Truths* included: Paulina Camacho Valencia who shared a video essay, *De Esas Cosas No Se Habla*; Catalina Hernández-Cabal and Lila Ann Dodge, who performed an improvisational

dance to live music by Adrian Wong, *A Counter Intuitive Trio*; Alicia de León, who did a theatrical performance, *Exo*; and me, who enacted the artistic intervention *Flashpoints: Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education*. To promote *Co-Constructing Truths, The Confessional* curator Angela Baldus created a series of risograph posters and affixed them to the walls of the school to invite participation in the event (Figure 3). Most of the *Co-Constructing Truths* performers were graduate students in the Art Education program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where I am faculty, with each of us activating aspects of our art education scholarship through our performances.



Figure 3: *Co-Constructing Truths*, 2019, Poster by Angela Baldus, Photograph by Sarah Travis.

An Arts-Based Research Methodological and Pedagogical Framework

This work took the form of a socially engaged art installation that was also a part of my ongoing pedagogical practice as well as my research into the development of critical consciousness within art education. This work takes up Arts-Based Research as a methodological and pedagogical framework. Arts-Based Research is broadly defined by the foundational tenet of employing art as an avenue for research inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2014; Mulvihill, & Swaminathan, 2020; Rolling, 2013). Because art takes many forms, Arts-Based Research is a methodology that also manifests in a variety of ways—from musical performance to written narrative to painted portraits—and in this case, a participatory performance. With all of this in mind, I am inspired by Jorge Lucero (2014), who discusses how conceptual art processes can act “as permissions for new ways-of-being by the artist/teacher in the classroom, the museum, the studio, the exhibition, the performance, or the presentation” (p. 24). Other artist scholars have discussed “the pedagogical function of art” (Camnitzer, 2014, p. 95) and “the pedagogical process as the literal core of the artwork” (Helguera, 2009, p. 100). The lines between art, teaching, and research are intertwined within this work just as they are in much of my practice as an art education scholar, and even as I write about this now, the connections are ever unfolding.

A Critical Theoretical and Pedagogical Framework

Flashpoints: Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education is shaped by a critical theoretical and pedagogical framework. With a key focus on the development of critical consciousness for educators, this work is informed by scholars of critical theory and critical pedagogy, including Paulo Freire (1970), bell hooks (1994), and Gloria E. Anzaldúa (2002). Additionally, this work is inspired by several art education scholars who have documented the importance of recognizing how aspects of identity like race and gender shape art teaching and learning (Desai, 2020; Kraehe, 2015; Spillane, 2015; Wilson, 2017; Wolfgang, 2019). Further, this work is informed by art education scholars who have delineated the particular importance of critical consciousness-building around race within art teacher development (Acuff, 2018; Lewis, 2018; Kraehe & Brown, 2011; Sions, 2022; Yoon, 2019).

Within the arts and education, several scholars draw upon phenomenology (Vagle, 2018; Van Manen, 2018) to account for embodied experiences around aspects of social and cultural identity (Travis et al., 2018; Lewis, 2015; Tam, 2010) and I share in this interest in employing phenomenology to describe deeply embedded phenomena. Regarding phenomenology, Samuel D. Rocha (2018) writes: “What I have called *folk phenomenology* (Rocha, 2015) is the attempt to imagine the real, to describe what appears within consciousness as faithfully as possi-

ble.... The path that folk phenomenology takes is the way of art" (p. 61). Through this work, I have found that critical consciousness is not only a cognitive process, but an embodied practice that approaches the spiritual. As Rocha (2018) writes: "Prayer is perhaps the most ancient practice of all time" (p. 74).

Over the years, in collaboration with friends and fellow scholars, I have developed my own critical reflective practice (Hood & Travis, in press). This involves self-observation and my written documentation of moments of embodied friction that transpire within my life and my teaching. I consider these "flashpoints"—visceral manifestations of friction that call attention to asymmetries of power within lived experiences (Travis et al., 2018). *Flashpoints: Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education* is an embodied, performative iteration of this ongoing work within my pedagogy and my daily life.

Confessing Critical Frictions in The Confessional

The invitation to participate in this work is tied to ongoing scholarship where I use phenomenological narrative methods as a means of provoking reflection upon aspects of identity such as race, class, and gender within art education contexts and particularly focused on a book that I co-edited on the topic of flashpoints with Amelia M. Kraehe, Emily J. Hood, and Tyson E. Lewis, *Pedagogies in the Flesh: Case Studies on the Embodiment of Sociocultural Differences in Education* (Travis et al., 2018). This performance was a way to enact this scholarship in the form of socially engaged art for a pedagogical purpose (Helguera, 2011).



Figure 4: *Inside The Confessional*, 2019, Photograph by Sarah Travis.



Figure 5: *Confessing Flashpoints, 2019, Photograph by Sarah Travis.*

To set the stage for participation, I placed a copy of the book, *Pedagogies in the Flesh: Case Studies on the Embodiment of Sociocultural Differences in Education* (Travis et al., 2018), on a white podium within the stark white walls of *The Confessional* just below a small window screen like those within Catholic confessional booths (see Figures 4 and 5). I also placed pens and paper printed with my provocation entreating participants to write “confessions” of critical identity frictions from their experiences. During the designated time for the performance, the lunch break for the symposium, the participants of the symposium sat casually in the gallery on an arrangement of sofas, chairs, and tables while eating and chatting. Although I had set up *The Confessional* to encourage people to enter and engage during this time, about halfway through the lunch period, no one had entered the space or responded to my prompt. So, I decided to call the participants to attention and give a statement directly inviting them to write responses to the provocation.

I was shaking with nervousness as I read a statement that I had written to explain what I was asking them to do. I wanted to give them some further explanation, to motivate them to participate in something that I knew was asking a lot of them, that they might feel reluctant to do. I wanted to justify my reasons for asking them to be so vulnerable within this space, to write down a phenomenological narrative description of something they had experienced. Despite my hesitation, I proceeded to read the prompt that I had prepared: *Flashpoints: Critical Frictions. You became aware of an aspect of your identity. What did this experience feel like as it unfolded? Write. Sketch. Share.* I then quickly passed around some of the blank paper templates, printed with black ink on brightly colored A4 copy paper. After this more direct verbal invitation, about fifteen people responded to the prompting of the provocation.

Although I did not complete my own response, as participants wrote, I conversed with them. I discussed the concept of the “flashpoint” with them to contextualize how I have explored this phenomenon within my pedagogical practice as a catalyst for critical reflection. Because some of the participants were my own students and had responded to similar provocations before, they were comfortable engaging in ways that others might not have been. With them, I had already built a sense of trust, an important element in this critical pedagogical practice, that I had not yet built with others who were in attendance.

Once they had completed writing their “confessions,” I asked the participants to pin their pages to *The Confessional* wall with magnets. One participant wrote about “Language” and described “Panic: My words did not make sense to the authority figure” (see Figure 6), another wrote “on my Latina Identity” (see Figure 7) and another wrote: “I realized I am a woman of color” (see Figure 8). These images document some of the responses that reflected experiences of oppression in relation to some aspect of their identity such as language, race, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. Through this work we, embodied beings, intersected with the paper we held, the pens we used to make marks, the gallery walls, the confessional space, the university, the world.

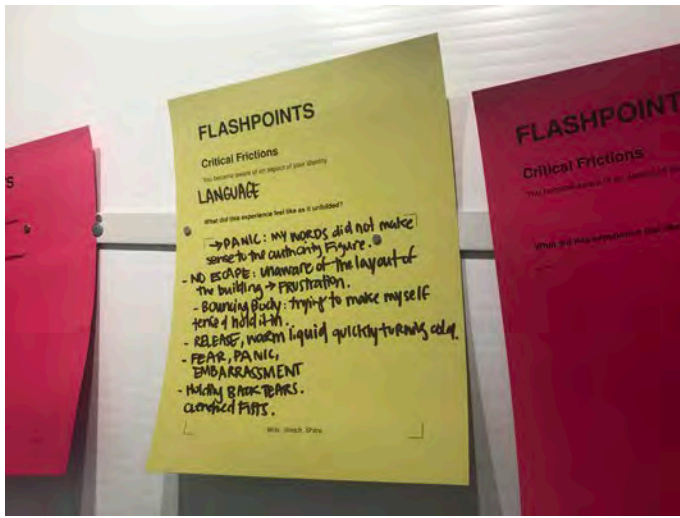


Figure 6: Flashpoints in *The Confessional*, 2019, Photograph by Sarah Travis

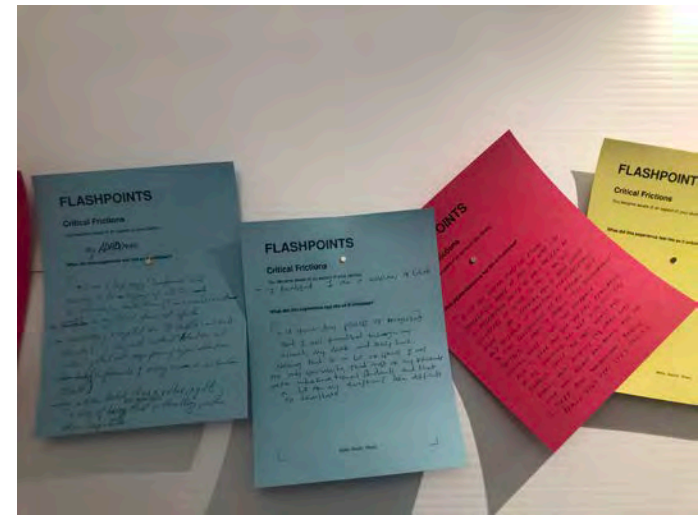


Figure 8: Flashpoints in *The Confessional*, 2019, Photograph by Sarah Travis

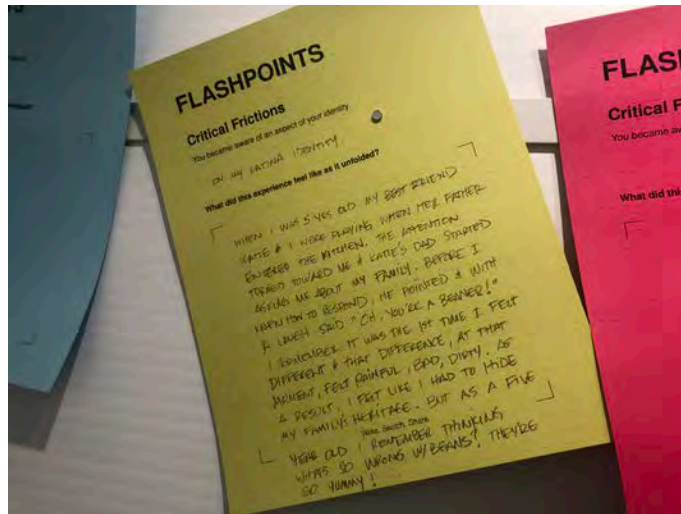


Figure 7: Flashpoints in *The Confessional*, 2019, Photograph by Sarah Travis

Reflecting on Flashpoints: Power, Confession, and Reconciliation

Flashpoints are critical frictions—openings, breakings, ruptures that call our attention to underlying phenomena within our experience. Phenomenological descriptions of flashpoints are narratives that require direct observation of visceral, embodied experience—akin to confession. Depending upon the power of the person who is engaging in this “confession,” the outcomes are different. For one who is confessing from a position of relative power, this confession might be an admission of guilt, an acknowledgement of something harmful that was done.

Within this engagement, most of the responses to the provocation of *The Confessional* came from those who were in some ways reporting on those who had enacted some form of oppression upon them in relation to their identities (for example, the feeling of panic around language, as described in Figure 6). This documentation became a way to counter the usual ways in which a confessional is situated, where a priest administers absolution. In the Catholic church, the sacrament of reconciliation involves confession and repentance. Thus, to reconcile is “to restore” to “harmony” yet it is also “to account for” (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Reconciliation requires observation, admittance, and the making of amends—co-constructing truths while also taking action towards transformation of ourselves and of our world.

There is an anonymity built into a confessional space. The idea is that you go to the priest and confess your sins behind the shroud of the booth, and you do not have to show your face. Your body is shielded from view. This protects your vulnerability and helps you to feel as if you can be honest in what you disclose. I find the notion of a “safe space” to be complicated by the fact that a safe space to some is not a safe space to others. This work thus acted as an extension of my goals as a teacher as I strive to create a classroom environment where there is a sense of trust, a sense that you can speak honestly as you go through a process of learning and growing.



Figure 9: Performers of *Co-Constructing Truths*, 2019, Photograph by Jennifer Bergmark

Concluding Thoughts and Implications for Art Education

Flashpoints: Critical Frictions in the Arts and Education was a fleeting intervention where there was little time or opportunity for sustained consideration of the possibilities for individual or collective transformation. Nonetheless, the work had ritual connotations that were intended to move participants out of a state of complacency and to provoke further contemplation. In taking a moment to pause, to reflect, and to confess, the participants, in writing their stories on paper and posting them on the walls of *The Confessional*, were perhaps moved towards some momentary awareness of themselves as situated with others. In-

deed, I am moved by the possibility that a work of art involving the participation of others, even if the act itself is fleeting, has the potential to provoke sustained inner transformation.

Within my work as an art teacher educator, I personally engage in ongoing critical reflection upon my practice, and I encourage my students to consider how aspects of sociocultural identity such as race, class, and gender inform art education. Although I placed this entreaty to engage with flashpoints within the sanctified space of *The Confessional*, as an artistic ritual apart from daily life, acknowledging the flashpoints of daily life is a habitual ritual that I consistently engage in. I have called this work “critical reflective practice” (Hood & Travis, in press). I have called this “narrative.” I have called this “writing.” I have called this “reflection.” It is all these things, but it is also “ritual,” a practice that I undertake as part of my personal and pedagogical development.

As a teacher, I often find myself mediating conversations between students that are charged with emotion around aspects of their racialized, classed, and gendered identities. While I welcome these moments, they are also sometimes difficult moments for my students and for me as an educator. Yet, difficulty punctuates the importance of bringing these feelings and experiences into the open. While not completely public, the art performance, the classroom, the university, the school, the art gallery, are shared spaces for such conversations to be had, for learning to happen that prompts art education students to consider how aspects of their own positional identities inform art teaching and learning.

I recently enacted this same provocation with a new group of graduate students, and I was impressed by their willingness to participate with deep vulnerability and openness. This is possible because I now intentionally create space within my classroom for this and I strive to model a willingness to be critically reflective within myself. As bell hooks (1994) wrote:

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. (p. 21)

I also acknowledge the difficulty of this, and I am the first to admit that

I do not share everything. I have long considered the limitations of narrative pedagogical and methodological approaches because of what is left unsaid (Kraehe, Hood, & Travis, 2015; Travis & Hood, 2016), even as I also find them to be so valuable to the development of critical consciousness within educators (Hood & Travis, in press). To counter the limitations of narratives, I turn to phenomenology as a guide in consideration of that which is not yet articulated into words but instead that which is embodied, unspoken, and unwritten. Thus, in the search for reconciliation of critical identity frictions, I entreat artists and arts educators to consider: what are the unwritten flashpoints of your experience (see Figure 10)?

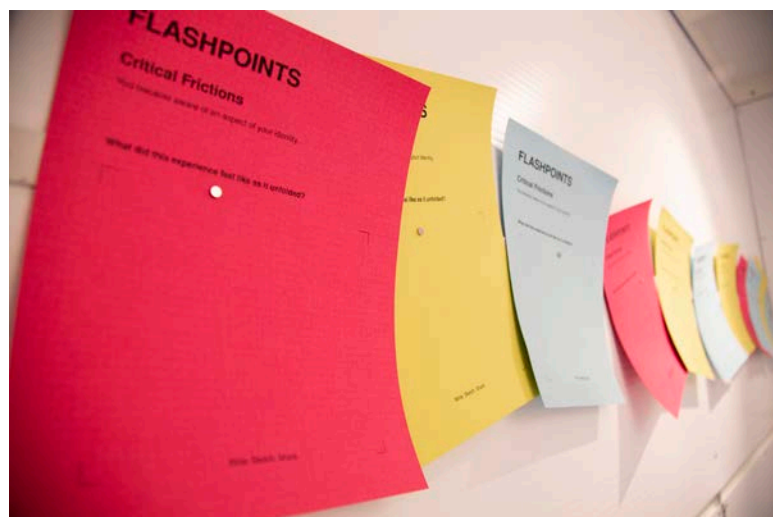


Figure 10: *Unwritten Flashpoints*, 2019, Photograph by Angela Baldus.

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Showing Up: A Creative Reflection on Ritualization for Art Educators

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ABSTRACT

This creative reflection looks thoughtfully at the act of ritualization as a potential pedagogical tool towards letting go of more outcome-based processes and releasing predetermined expectations. Stemming from the authors repeated actions of showing up to the canvas daily, this visual essay explores the possibility that ritualization may resituate the self and allow for new understandings to present themselves in an emergent way. Using personal experience as the starting point, the essay asks how ritualizing the act of art-making without predetermined outcomes, may impact art educators and their practice.

KEYWORDS: Ritualization, art education, pedagogy, emergence, repetition

Ritualization, as a repeated act that informs one's understanding of the world and a fluid process of structuring a world of meaning for oneself, is continuous—it is dynamic and informative, educational and reflective (Grimes, 2000). For the artist and arguably art educator, ritualization is the act of showing up; it is the 'coming to' of your own creative and learning spaces again and again, not to produce a product but to hold oneself accountable to the emergent possibilities presented through this form of structuring. Specifically, this visual essay points to the importance of ritualizing the act of art-making for art educators, not as a process of sacred and well-defined actions or rituals, but as a means toward letting go of outcome-based practices. As Grimes (2013) writes "Ritualizing action, though it may have as a goal the production of a stable rite, must at the same time let go of goal-orientedness, pronounced intentionalities" (p. 57). As both an art educator and artist, this is an important distinction. Coming to a space with the intention of releasing intentions, as strange as that may sound, holds the potential to engage in not-yet-anticipated ways of knowing and not-yet-determined encounters with self and other. In this way, ritualization becomes a structuring element for engaging in active and often performative inquiry and learning that has the potential to resituate the self or understanding of self within a larger context of people, materials, and practices (Bickel, 2020). Through my own work, I have found this to be true—the ritualization of the art making created a structured container, allowing me to both turn inward and expand at the same time, to rethink the intra-relations between the self and other as well as consider the pedagogical impact of moving and making in this way.

The images and text below are a result of daily engagements with the canvas for limited periods of time along with daily written reflections on the creative process. During this designated time and space, I engaged in art-making with very few pre-formed parameters or expectations except to show up, engage in the creative process, document changes, and reflect. This way of entering into the creative space, in an open-ended manner, allowed me to greet the unexpected and be open to what presented itself through repeated material engagements. The work was not pre-determined, but rather arose through the process of meandering about or what I call muddling in a very embodied manner.

As time went on, and I continued to show up, there was a ritualization that began to occur. The practice of getting the body, mind, and materials ready as I entered the creative space became ritualized itself—changing clothes, removing all jewelry, taking off my shoes, feeling the cold floor on my feet, stepping onto the tarp, getting quiet, standing in silence with materials before I began—the ritualization of these actions created a structure that allowed me to let go, to be present, to face the potentials that were unknown. As such, questions also began to form. I started to inquire about the repetitive act and why this dedicated time and space might be important for art educators. I wondered how this embodied sort of coming to, showing up again and again, without ‘knowing’ in advance, might affect pedagogical encounters or ways of being. I started to ask how might the ritualization of this making/creative practice be related to pedagogical approaches, and how might these relations further express themselves through teaching? All of these large and very deeply entangled lines of inquiry began to present themselves as the painting seen here (Figures 1 through Figure 6) was created and the words were written on the page.

I take off my shoes and remove my earrings.
I place my wedding ring in my desk drawer and pull back my hair.
Stripped of everything extra, barefoot, and in simple clothes,
I come to the canvas once more.
Feeling my own trepidations while standing before it
I face myself, as I look outward toward another.
Again and again, I face myself.
Again and again, I face the ‘other.’
I am ripped open, soothed, unsettled, and settled once more.
We (you and I/other) exist in our co-vulnerability.
In love and compassion, we journey together.
Where will this journey take me, take us?
What will be its ripples, pushing outward, expanding in unexpected ways?



Figure 1: *Untitled. Acrylic on canvas. 4ft x 4ft*



Figure 2: *Untitled detail. Acrylic on canvas.*

In this practice of showing up, I lean upon a secular understanding of the term ritual and consider the ritualization of art-making as an ongoing practice where one repeatedly embodies and embraces the participatory nature of making-thinking-doing but does not cling to established traditions and outcomes. In other words, the ritual and ritualization are formed in relation to one’s lived experience. This perspective on ritual as dynamic and responsive, as Bickel (2020) points out, is part of emergent or nascent rituals that do not have previous attachments but might offer adaptable structures, or “structurings,”

for the self and students to work within (p. 25). From this perspective, rather than being associated with ceremonial procedures and rites, the rituals and the ritualization become emergent and responsive themselves (Grimes, 2000). Viewing rituals and ritualization in this manner, as emergent and responsive, frees them from a more traditional anthropological perspective where something is culturally and historically rooted in signs and symbols (Geertz, 1983), and instead creates a more malleable framework. This idea, that ritualizing processes might be emergent and unrelated to religious practices, is not unprecedented and lends itself well to art-making. Ritual theorist Ronald Grimes (1992, 2000, 2013) identifies the natural invention of rites in society, or what he refers to as self-creating ceremony, emerging ritual, and ritualization. Additionally, scholar, artist, and educator, Barbara Bickel (2020) speaks about ritual as being in the in-between spaces, one finds the “sacred space of ritual” in the margins and through the work of art-making (or what Bickel identifies from artist, philosopher, and scholar Bracha L. Ettinger as *artworking*) (p. 5). For me and this work, the ritualization of the creative process was not a pre-formed goal. Rather, it became a noticeable practice that took shape along the way and formed through the repeated acts of coming to, of showing up and stepping into the art-making process; it became a structuring within which I could greet myself, materials, and the world at large without knowing the outcome in advance.

I return again and again to the canvas.
I return again and again to you.
You expect me to say something to you in this moment.
I pause. Breathe. Take a moment to center myself.
I return to you.
I return to me.
There is a false separation of self and other.
We meet at the junction of our shared experiences
with an open mind and permeable heart,
not knowing where we will land.



Figure 3: *Untitled detail. Acrylic on canvas.*

Ritualizing the creative process was not something I anticipated doing, but through its occurrence, I have begun to question how the ritualization of both art-making and art-teaching might free us from more outcome-based practices. Generally speaking, ritualization is thought to be about engaging in a special experience outside of one’s daily activities (Bell, 1997). However, religious studies scholar Catherine Bell (1997) asks us to rethink and reconsider how ritualization might shift from a special activity to a “flexible and strategic way of acting” (p. 139). As someone who identifies as an artist and art teacher, I interpret this description, a “flexible and strategic way of acting,” to mean engaging in an act repeatedly, while still recognizing that the outcome is not always predictable. This is not unlike the creative process, particularly painting for me. Each time I run my hands over the blank canvas, dip the paint brush into the color, feel the paint on my fingertips, and move with the canvas in certain ways, nuanced and varied experiences are being generated. Similarly, like this ‘coming to’ of my body to the canvas repeatedly, I come to the classroom space with a framework for engagement and a loose grip on predetermined outcomes. As a ritualized practice, this is not always easy to do or embody on a consistent basis, and yet that difficulty might be the primary justification or reason for continuing to pursue this line of inquiry. To think about the ritualization of teaching art, in the same way as one might consider the ritualization of the creative process, is to examine how we might move within a stable, even repeatable structure and remain open to the fluid nature of learning, making, and teaching. Yet both art-making and art-teaching, in this more fluid and responsive way, are not without their own trepidations and forms of hesitations or concerns. As both an

educator and an artist, when I face the canvas and students, both never a blank slate, already filled with their own sense of wonder and figuration, I experience joy mixed with a bit of fear. A sense of nervousness and excitement about the unknown is constantly present. However, I am comforted by these ritualized acts—repeated gestures in my body and mind that provide touchpoints of reliability and reassurance as I move through teaching and creating.

I look in the mirror every day,
the mirror looks back at me
for over forty years.
Change is in the cracks, in the spaces between time.
Difference—the accumulated evidence of its existence rests in
my reflection.
I've been teaching in this space,
this space has been teaching in me
for over forty years.
We never quite look the same.
We face each other in our unknown.
Yet we still come back, again and again.
Hand in hand, artist and teacher, teacher and student, desk
and body, space and sound, self and other.
We are relational.

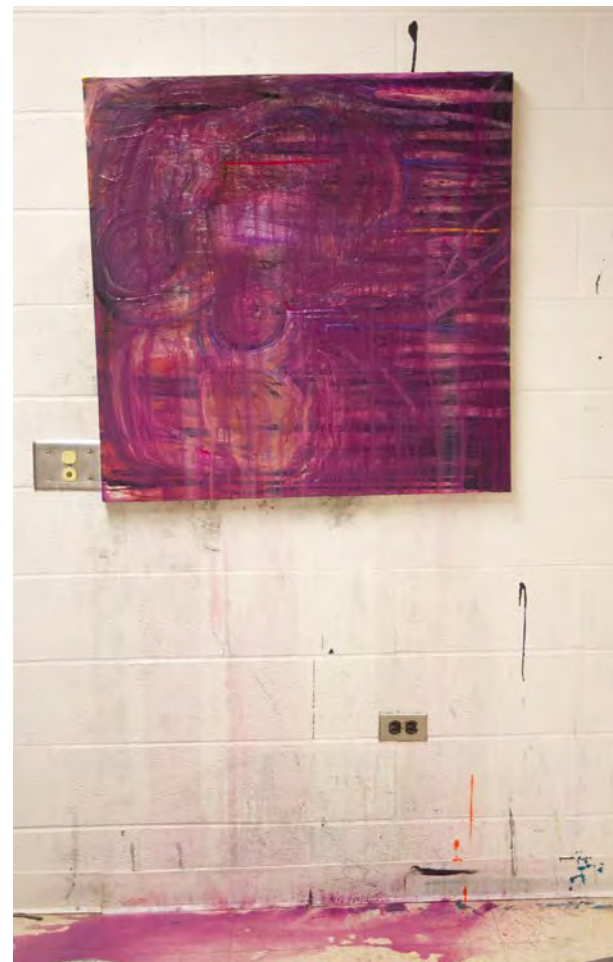


Figure 4: *Untitled. Acrylic on canvas. 4ft x 4ft.*

Drips on the floor, splashes on the wall.
The run off stays with me, never really cast aside.
Diluted by water, cold pink runs under my toes.
I am startled by the sensation in my feet.
Splashing around before I wipe you with a rag.
Yet, there is no wiping of the wall.
As much as I try, the color stays, traces absorbed in the cracks.
It feels heavy, almost sad.
Reminding me to come back.
Reminding me to not give up.
Reminding me to show up daily and from a place of allowance.

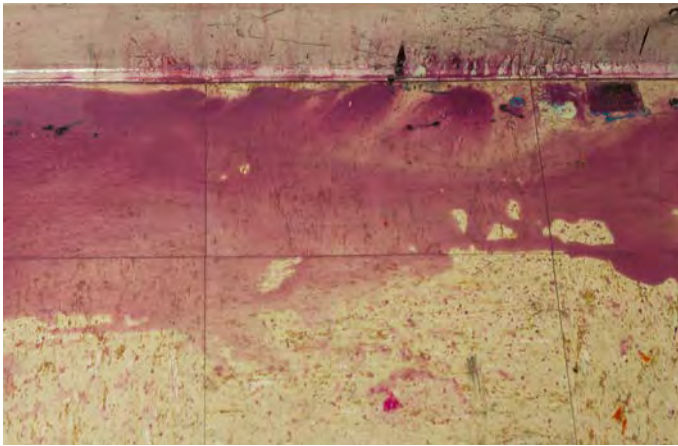


Figure 5: *Untitled. Acrylic on the floor.*

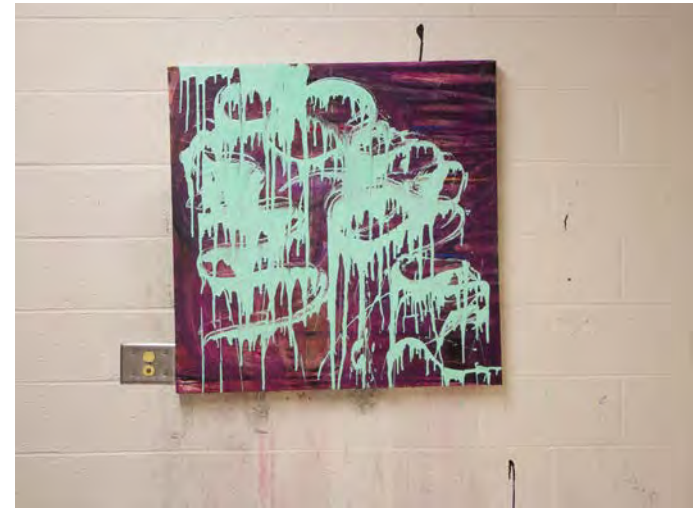


Figure 6: *Untitled. Acrylic on canvas. 4ft x 4ft*

In the end, I believe the work is in showing up, coming to a space and/or practice in a way that allows the ritualization of processes to emerge. In art-making this may look like removing your shoes, entering into a quiet space for yourself, engaging with materials in a particular way, etc. In teaching, this may appear as ritualizing how you prepare for your day, how you enter your classroom space, structure your teaching, or move through your day. For each person, the ritualization of these processes will be individual and self-determined. Yet, perhaps, the connecting thread is that the act of ritualizing holds the potential to prepare us for the unknown, providing a flexible framework for that which is to be on the canvas, on the wall, on the floor, in the classroom, or through one's teaching.

We met our temporary end.
Questions still hung in the air, but there was nowhere to go.
So, we wait.
We show up, we persist, we commit.
We get quiet.
And we actively wait for what's to come.

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Warming-Up with Playful Routines

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ABSTRACT

Art educators commonly incorporate warm-up exercises into their classroom routine. This illustrated text presents how incorporating play and humor into the warm-up ritual can reduce students' anxiety and support creative thinking. In addition to sharing practical examples that she has used in K-12 and higher education settings, the author also provides research on the connection between playful cognitive activity and innovative problem solving. She highlights scholars who suggest that appreciating metaphorical humor and creative thinking both involve discovering unanticipated connections between seemingly unrelated things.

KEYWORDS: warm-up exercises, humor, play, creativity

Warming-Up with **PLAYFUL** Routines

Rebecca Shipe

Art educators commonly incorporate warm-up exercises into their classroom routine. This illustrated text presents how incorporating play and humor into the warm-up ritual can reduce students' anxiety and support creative thinking.

I typically associate the word "ritual" with terms such as routine, repetitive, predictable, and familiar. Creativity, on the other hand, requires disruption of established patterns and understandings in order to generate something new. When viewed in this way, rituals and creativity appear to be at odds. However, artists often employ specific rituals to support their creative pursuits. This might involve playing or listening to music, drinking coffee, dancing, meditating, or lighting candles prior to or during their visual art-making activities.

Art educators aim to facilitate lessons that provide an appropriate balance of structure and freedom. This careful balance resembles the relationship between predictable routines and spontaneous play. In this visual narrative, I will highlight how employing playful warm-up activities at the beginning of art class can support creativity while establishing a healthy, safe, learning environment.

Several years ago, while researching and implementing strategies to promote creative thinking in my elementary art classroom, I discovered that engaging students in short activities that involved humor and spontaneity quickly activated their creative problem-solving skills and established a more congenial learning environment.

As shown on the left, warm-up exercises included "seeing into" or finding recognizable pictures within nonrepresentational imagery and collaborative art-making that builds upon someone else's existing drawing.

Throughout my elementary art teaching career, I discovered that implementing similar activities with an element of time-sensitive pressure encouraged students to fully engage in a playful way. To me, these fast-paced exercises resembled visual brainstorming. I designed them to liberate my students' minds from the restrictions that could stifle their imaginations.

Although I did not incorporate these activities routinely as warm-up exercises at that time, I have since revisited this concept with my current students at the beginning of each class.

Warm-up exercises serve a variety of purposes in the art classroom. For example, secondary level art teachers implement bellwork activities to ensure that students are engaged in productive activities while they are waiting for other class members to arrive. This activity could be directly related to the day's lesson objectives, or it could be an independent exercise intended to simply activate students' imaginations, provide an outlet for personal expression, or practice art-making skills.

Aside from the informal exercises that students complete prior to the beginning of class, art teachers often start their lessons with some form of guided introductory exercise in order to help students refocus after transitioning from previous activities. The structure of most art lesson plan templates includes an introduction or anticipatory set, which aims to activate students' existing knowledge on the topic or skill which will be addressed in the lesson's objectives. These specific warm-up activities prepare students cognitively, physically, and psychologically for the more complex learning that will occur later in the lesson. Educators of all disciplines recognize the importance of warming-up; whether this is practicing musical scales, stretching your muscles, retrieving simple facts, or reviewing concepts before applying them to higher-level thinking exercises.



The Value of Playful Warm-Up Exercises

Art education scholars have emphasized the connection between play, humor, and creativity while providing both theoretical evidence to support their claims as well as practical ways to use humor and play to promote creative thinking (Gillespie, 2016; Gude, 2004, 2007, 2010; Klein, 2013; Macintyre Latta, 2013; Marshall et al., 2021; Tornera & Kan, 2017; Walker, 2022). They often highlight that members of the Surrealist movement participated in parlor games to activate their creativity (Brotchie & Gooding, 1995) and describe specific ways that these ritual activities can be adapted to suit students in art classrooms today.

A recent publication by Sydney Walker, *Artmaking, Play, and Meaning Making* (2022) showcases how specific artists over time have used play in their creative practice. Walker draws upon theories suggesting that conformity and conventional thought can stifle creativity, and she points out how some artists intentionally pursue nonsensical ways of thinking in order to stimulate their imagination. She explains that engaging art students in playful activities can serve as an intellectual tool that triggers new thinking and supports their ability to generate imaginative solutions to visual art-making challenges. Walker emphasizes that students should not aim to resolve contradictions, but rather allow paradoxical tensions to inspire unanticipated questions and curiosity. Although playful cognitive activity often disrupts logic and reason, Walker explains that the degree of disruption must sustain the artist's and/or the viewer's interest. Achieving the appropriate balance of absurdity and recognition allows the producer and/or receiver to experience a meaningful connection with the content. I will later reinforce this concept with additional research that highlights how "getting" a joke is similar to "getting" art.

After witnessing my previous elementary students' positive responses to engaging in brief, creative problem-solving exercises during art class, I decided to incorporate this ritual into my college-level teaching practice as well. I began this ritual in the spring of 2020 when our course format abruptly shifted to online learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I recognized that my students needed to feel more personally connected to one another. In addition, I knew that regularly adding humor and play to our weekly zoom meetings would help counteract the feelings of anxiety and confusion that many of my students expressed at that time. I decided to resurrect the playful games that I had facilitated with my elementary students in order to model a successful way to generate an environment that is conducive to creativity as well as meet my students' present circumstantial needs.

Revisiting my appreciation for playful warm-up exercises in the art classroom inspired me to continue researching the relationship between humor and creativity, and how teachers use playful warm-up activities in both virtual and in-person educational settings. I learned that education scholars have recognized the importance of creating a healthy, online learning environment by incorporating humor, ice-breakers, and other warm-up exercises aimed to relieve anxiety, promote a sense of community among classmates, and allow students to shift their attention from previous activities to the on-line classroom (Sajjani et al., 2020).

While acknowledging the social and biological correlation between creativity and humor, education and psychology scholars (Beghetto, 2019; Hatcher et al., 2019; Kudrowitz, 2006; Root-Bernstein & Root-Bernstein, 1999; Stevens, 2014) highlight how similar brain activity occurs during an "ah ha!" and a "ha ha!" moment. In addition to artists, designers working in research and development and other professionals have been using humor and improvisation exercises to stimulate and enhance innovative thinking (Kudrowitz, 2006).

Researchers recognize that appreciating metaphorical humor and creative thinking both involve discovering unanticipated connections between seemingly unrelated things. When these unexpected connections are too obvious, the output is not considered creative or funny. However, if a connection cannot be made, then the output is considered confusing (Kudrowitz, 2006). Successful humor and creativity both result when the producer and/or the receiver experiences an exceptional balance of unanticipated congruity between dissimilar things.



As I continue to teach art education courses both remotely and in-person, I've enjoyed maintaining this ritual and have increased my collection of activities that promote both "ah ha" and "ha ha" moments that require participants to spontaneously generate metaphorical solutions. These playful games often stimulate multiple human senses and learning modalities while calling upon physical, verbal, and visual responses. Successful games include exercises commonly used by improv comedians as well as creative problem-solving drawing activities that stimulate students' divergent thinking abilities (Cook, 1999; Marshall & Donahue, 2014). As shown below, one of my personal favorite drawing games involved illustrating a silly joke.

My students have repeatedly expressed interest and appreciation for these weekly rituals. When participating remotely, even students who opted to leave their camera off decided to turn it on in order to fully engage with our group activities. After witnessing this take place on several occasions, I was convinced that beginning each class with a playful warm-up exercise was worth continuing. Practicing this ritual has consistently promoted a sense of connectedness and community within my remote and in-person classroom settings.

I would like to say thank you to my current students who agreed to share these warm-up exercise drawings that involved generating metaphors for how they felt at the beginning and the end of their student teaching semester.



At the beginning of student teaching, I was as nervous as a cat about to take a bath.



At the beginning of student teaching, I was as scared as a lady bug who sees a spider.



At the end of student teaching, I was as proud as a tree that has weathered the storm.



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Pentimento and Palimpsest: Blurring Rituals in the Studio

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ABSTRACT

While the benefits of curated environments and provocations in emergent curriculum for young learners have been documented, less is known about the effects of emergent curriculum for adult learners and instructors in a studio art context. This work investigates what happens when art education foregrounds and follows students' interests and questions, using arts-based tools, processes, and approaches to explore the creation and interpretation of 2D artwork. The author reexamines rituals in studio teaching practices and engages narrative inquiry to reflect on the effects emergent curriculum and contract grading have on both students and the instructor. The curated environments of the classroom, campus art museum, city streets, and students' homes influenced questions, materials, research, conversations, and artistic possibilities while blurring studio traditions. The resulting emergent curriculum forged new connections among the students, the instructor, and their community while shifting learning toward dispersed, collective power rather than concentrated, individual power.

KEYWORDS: Emergent curriculum, studio art, student engagement, scholar-artist, artist research, conceptual art

What happens when autonomy replaces authority? When curiosity replaces control? These questions fueled a critical reexamination of my teaching practices in fall 2021 following my relocation to Richmond, Virginia amidst the circumstances of a global pandemic and recent civil unrest in the wake of George Floyd's murder. The reexamination of my teaching practices echoes frictions between art education teaching methods and theories I noticed at the beginning of my career. When I began teaching middle school art in the early 21st century, my approach to curriculum was deeply rooted in Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE). Despite an ideological shift from teacher-centered to student-centered curriculum and teaching supported by art education research in the early 2000s, highly routinized and formulaic art education approaches persisted. This routinization of curriculum development, instructional processes and methods, and assessments is ritualistic in nature, and is often immediately overwhelming to new teachers. While certain artmaking processes require strict adherence to repetitive sequences, understanding the complexity of visual art production and reception requires openness and variability in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Nearly two decades after I became an art teacher, high-stakes standardized testing—with its emphasis on con-

trolling students, curricular content, pacing, and outcomes—permeates art education. This desire for formulaic art education runs counter to what many art education scholars (Barney, 2019; Chapman, 1985; Eisner, 2001; Hegeman, Sanders-Bustle, Hanawalt, 2020; Jebe & Hetrick, 2020; Powell & Lajevic, 2011) consider the strengths of art education, including complexity, nuance, and emergence. Emergence in art education curriculum (May & Baker, 2011) draws on descriptions of emergence theory where individual components of a large system work together to give rise to more complex forms. Osberg, Biesta, and Cilliers (2008) state emergent curriculum does not seek "...more accurate understandings of a finished reality, as it is. Rather, the question for knowledge is about finding more and more complex and creative ways of interacting with our reality" (p. 215). Emergence, complexity, and nuance in art education curriculum resist the tendency towards reduction and certainty underlying approaches such as DBAE that are fueled by standardization. In critically reexamining my teaching, I hoped to depart from some of the rituals and reductionist approaches that formed some of my teaching foundations.

Rituals of Critical Emergence

In planning "Two Dimensional Art Experiences," an undergraduate studio course for art education majors, I wanted to explore what happens when a class collaboratively uses a framework for research, teaching, and learning that questions and disrupts current ritualistic adherence to an outdated, unproductive banking model of education (Freire, 1993). What happens when art education foregrounds and follows students' interests and questions, using arts-based tools, processes, and approaches to explore 2D artwork? What happens when autonomy replaces authority? When curiosity replaces control? When boundaries blur, outsiders becoming insiders (Wang, Coemans, Siegesmund, & Hannes, 2017) and artist/educator/researchers become *scholartists*¹ (Hofsess, 2018; see also Knowles, Promislow, Cole, 2008)? When we embrace indeterminacy and emergence, opening ourselves to wonder (Emme, 2007) what new, more inclusive rituals can we create?

Teaching prior art education undergraduate courses involved sneaking studio practices into methods/practicum courses as supplemental readings or suggested activities; "Two Dimensional Art Experiences" was my first undergraduate studio art course exclusively for art education majors. Shifts in my own scholartist practices influenced my desire to create a less teacher-dictated, more student-centered course centering inclusion, responsiveness, and connection. The research that follows is an autobiographical narrative inquiry into this course

¹ A scholartist engages in qualitative research where art serves as the framework for research inspiration, conceptualization, process, and representation. This artist researcher identity intentionally intermingles the art as research, artist research, and research as art.

(Broome, 2014; Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000). My study data includes field notes, memos, and teaching artifacts with analytic memos addressing each course theme.

This study examines using emergent curriculum and contract grading in a blended online/face-to-face undergraduate studio course during a global pandemic. I am attentive to the unique place 2D studio courses occupy in undergraduate art education programs. This research was impacted by the prior year's civil unrest after George Floyd's murder. Historical and contemporary racial inequalities and tensions are particularly publicly and politically visibly salient in Richmond, Virginia where this study occurred. These inequalities and tensions moved between the background and foreground of our work together in the course.

Another major course design intention was to facilitate a co-created and emergent curriculum sufficiently open for critical discourse (Rhoades, Davenport, Wolfgang, Cosier, Sanders, 2013). My desire to facilitate the class this way is supported by research demonstrating emergent curriculum as beneficial to P-12 students (Kaplan, 2020; Sunday & Conley 2020; Yu, 2021). Teacher candidates learn how to enact emergent curriculum in their future classrooms when they personally experience it, and faculty simultaneously model these kinds of pedagogical approaches in their undergraduate courses. After explicitly informing students about these aspirations for incorporating emergent curriculum and infusing student-led research, I shared a generic syllabus and four course themes on our first day together. We began the co-creation of the course with a few questions:

1. Which studio practice traditions are essential for a studio course?
2. What should we prioritize in reframing our two-dimensional studio course: technical skill, conceptual development, media mastery, composition, combinations of these or something else?
3. How can we reconsider habits of using sketchbooks for individual and group planning/research processes?
4. How can we reconsider the role of research about art and engage in art as research?
5. What can we learn about cultivating artist/educator/researcher identities through disrupting customary approaches to studio teaching?

This framed our critical re-examination of traditional media-centric approaches to artistic production and visual reception as a springboard for research about art/art as research. Our emergent curriculum/pedagogical approach engaged four central processes throughout the curriculum: research about art, art as research, reconsideration of traditional media-centric curriculum/pedagogy, and intentional blurring

of boundaries between artist and educator identities. We iteratively examined these processes across four guiding themes in the course: Curriculum as 2D Work, 2D Works That Are Curricular, Historical and Contemporary 2D Works as Product, and Historical and Contemporary 2D Works as Process.

For Wang, Coemans, Siegesmund, and Hannes (2017), research about art “investigates art-related topics without artistically shaping the object or installation under study, or without necessarily (re)creating a material or bodily reality to understand the process of art making itself” (p.14). Our research about art occurred informally as preparatory research for art-making processes and as formal assignments for Look Books². We also engaged in art as research, where art making was research inquiry. Through making we—as *scholartists*—developed “a better understanding of the potential of [artmaking] to introduce a change, either in terms of personal experiences or environmental circumstances,” acknowledging that “research facilitates the study of the artistic process” (Wang, et al., 2017, p.15). Our art-as-research stimulated us to reevaluate prior notions of artist and educator identities, when/how those identities blur in generative ways, and to critically reexamine the colonizing history and present problematics of Western aesthetics. In the following sections, I demonstrate how these four processes surfaced and receded within each of the four course themes.

Searching for Unknowns

In the course's first weeks, the students and I positioned ourselves as conducting research about art using two related sketchbook prompts intended to reveal prior perceptions about what constitutes 2D art:

- Using the media of your choice, use images and or words to respond to the following question: what do you know (without doing additional research) about 2D works of art?
- Using the media of your choice, use images and or words to respond to the following question: what is NOT a 2D work of art?

Along with these prompts, I loaned each student a college-level drawing, 2D foundations, or design textbook. Students critically evaluated the textbooks' images and writing. Students also considered the kind, quantity, and quality of images. They then evaluated the organization, number, length of chapters, and writing tone. Their resulting research drawings and informal presentations of their textbook analyses pro-

2 Look Books are typically collections of images compiled to quickly convey an artist or designer's recent product work. In the context of this course, we adapted the form of Look Books. Our Look Books were student compilations of preparatory and reflective research on works of art and artists that demonstrated the students' range of understanding of course themes. For an example of traditional Look Books in a fashion design course, see Zhang (2022).

vided a rich substrate for accumulating drawing experiments and art as research, research about art, reevaluations of artist and educator identities, and reconsiderations of how 2D art making has been taught.

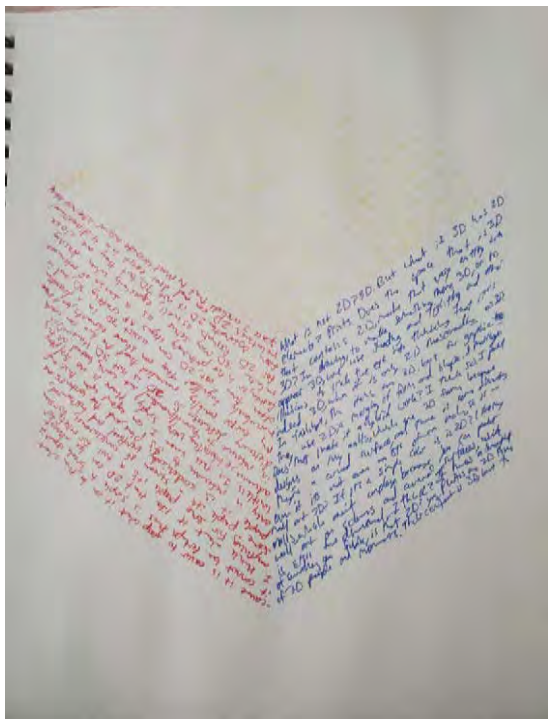


Figure 1: Lilly's "What is 2D" sketchbook work

This enabled envisioning alternative possibilities of teaching 2D art reframed to respond to contemporary methods for artist research and to support continuing development of students' scholar-artist identities. We also reflected on how media-centric presentations of 2D art making obscures the prioritization of Western aesthetics through positioning example images, discussions of composition, subject matter, style, and instructional content as innate to 2D art making. Conversely, students noted, few textbooks actively question Western aesthetics, instead tokenistically incorporating non-Western images.

We began exploring the first course theme, Curriculum as 2D Work, by reviewing video excerpts from Jorge Lucero's (2020) Zoomposium "What Happens at the Intersection of Conceptual Art and Teaching?" and reading Lucero's interview (Medina, 2018). Next, students engaged in research to identify at least three examples of curriculum as art. Be-

fore doing independent research, we discussed historical examples of formal 2D curricula, including Arthur Wesley Dow's (1899) "Composition," noting how his education in painting and printmaking, and study of Japanese art at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts influenced the contents and style of Dow's textbook and teaching. I intentionally contextualized Dow as an artist instead of an art educator to build a bridge between thinking of his artistic practice broadly and "Composition" as a work of art specifically. I also presented research in curriculum reconceptualization as another field concerned with the creative potential of curriculum. We read and discussed Pinar's (1994) essay, "The Method of Currere," to complete a bridge that begins with curriculum as a performative text artifact of schooling understood as a set of instructions and arrives at a recognition of curriculum's potential to be understood as a work of art.

Subsequent to this conceptual bridging, we engaged in more research about art. Students conducted research to identify at least three examples of curriculum as a work of art. Most examples they submitted were conceptual and neo-conceptual, such as artworks by Mark Weiner and Lenka Clayton. We analyzed the works' curricular form and function, eventually recognizing that mundane artifacts of schooling and education might be reconsidered as works of art, given the similarities between planning and executing written conceptual art and curriculum in the art room. With this revelation in mind, I introduced a range of Sol Lewitt's works, including his letters to Eva Hesse, urging students similarly to "just DO!" and to quickly imagine a 2D artwork they would like to see in the world. Students considered the limitations and possibilities of curriculum as a work of art as they recalled Lewitt's drawing instructions and other conceptual works. Next, they decided what information another artist would need to precisely execute their imagined 2D works, then they wrote a curriculum using text alone for another student to execute. Students shared their curriculum documents with their classmates, each selecting at least one curriculum to follow and bring completed 2D works back for a critique.



Figure 2: Lilly's digital artwork interpreting Rae's curriculum

The critique was a surprise twist for students focused on critiquing the curriculum as a work of art rather than critiquing the completed 2D works created using a classmate's curriculum. This critique helped reframe curriculum as a work of art. Although we referenced the completed 2D works as one tool to assess the curriculum as a work of art, the bulk of our critique focused on determining the clarity of artistic concept and expression conveyed within the parameters of the assignment. This created several generative moments, including a curriculum written by a student to convey their sensorial entanglements of sitting and experiencing a busy public space on campus. The student—concerned it would be impossible to convey their experience of synesthesia using traditional curriculum writing styles—opted to write a poem. The resulting curriculum artwork vividly conveyed a sensory map that another student was able to follow, producing a drawing that clearly represented a space our class recognized. The first course theme, Curriculum as 2D Work, facilitated opportunities for students to recognize their preconceived notions about artist and educator identities—where they converge, diverge, and blur. This established a range of possibilities for reconsidering their previous conceptions/creations of 2D artworks.

Rewriting Stories

The second theme, 2D Works That Are Curricular, followed the critique week. We began by reading and annotating Wallace Stephens' (1954) poem, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," and Thomas McEvilley's (1991) essay about content in art, "On The Manner of Addressing

Clouds." We discussed the poem and essay in relation to each other and McEvilley's assertion that, "If there is no such thing as neutral description, then all statements about art works involve attributions of content, whether acknowledged or not" (p.70). Taking this statement into account, the class turned its attention to discussing how we might identify examples of intentionally curricular 2D artworks, which we defined to be when the work's subject matter, composition, media, relationship with history, context, or verbal supplements supplied by the artist emphasized specific, narrative content that is both clearly understood and informative or persuasive in nature. Following our collective development of this working definition, the class discussed works of art we could easily recall that fit our definition. Some of the artists that students mentioned were Kara Walker, Catherine Opie, and Carrie Mae Weems. Students recalled predominantly contemporary artists whose narrative subject matter was drawn from recent history or social conditions that the students could directly identify.

In our next class meeting, I shared a presentation about the genre of history painting and the impact of the French Royal Academy and other European artist academies on Western art. We discussed the emergence of the term "high art" in relation to history painting and reviewed key artists associated with the genre spanning nearly three centuries, with students surprised that a painting genre could dominate Western art for so long. Students raised questions about the sociopolitical aims of maintaining tight control on who could enter art academies, how artists were trained, and why subject matter in painting was largely restricted to allegorical, religious, and mythological scenes. As this class day concluded, I asked students to continue considering these questions for our next class meeting at the university art museum.

At the museum, we dove into research about art through a slow looking and gallery sketching exercise in the Ibrahim Ahmed (2021) *It Will Always Come Back to You and Dineo Seshee Bopape* (2021) *Ile aye, moya, là, ndokh...harmonic conversions...mm* exhibitions. The title of Bopape's show signified the four elements (earth, wind, fire, and water) conveyed in various languages from West and Southern Africa. The exhibition features video, sculpture, installation, and animation. The installation reflects on the transcontinental slave trade, paying homage to people taken, those who struggled, those who fled, and those who still seek sanctuary in spaces between captivity and an illegal freedom. Ahmed explores powerful mythic narratives in his first U.S. institutional exhibition. A Kuwaiti-born, Giza-based artist, Ahmed utilizes photo collage, sculpture, video, and large-scale installation to examine cultural forces that prevail in Giza and within his family. I encouraged notetaking and sketching in the exhibitions as critical comparative analysis based on prior discussions on the history painting genre. We then spent two hours in the galleries. Afterwards, we convened in the outside garden seating area to discuss their analyses.

Students shared thumbnail sketches of whole works, detail sketches of some works, notes, and digital photographs on their mobile devices to illustrate our discussion. One contrasted Bopape's work with Titian's (1556-9) "Diana and Actaeon," a work we discussed in the prior class on history painting, noting Titian's reliance on representational depictions of figures to constitute the curricular, or narrative, content of the painting. The student commented on Diana's subordinate position to Actaeon in Titian's composition, as well as the radically different style used to depict the clothed Black female figure at the lower right side attempting to shield Diana from Actaeon's view.

In contrast, students noted that Bopape utilized indirect references to the body, including numerous clay sculptures made by living relatives of former slaves. The sculptures were created by firmly clenching a ball of clay, resulting in a record of the shape and details of each hand that squeezed the clay. The student noted that viewing dozens of these absent hands presented an open-ended, complex representation of the people who constitute Bopape's curriculum as opposed to the curriculum of Titian's portrayal of Diana and her nymphs as passive objects. Other students offered similarly incisive analyses from their in-depth visual research. We concluded by reflecting on the numerous socio-cultural shifts necessary for the content of 2D artworks to drastically change since the end of the history painting genre. Students analyzed evidence of shifts by juxtaposing history paintings and the ICA exhibitions which included: differences between strict medium adherence to large-scale oil paintings in history paintings versus identifying the media best suited to convey a concept in contemporary works; Western, colonizing themes and contrived representations of sitters in history paintings versus the global, decolonizing³ themes and dynamically represented models in contemporary works among other juxtapositions. Arising from our analysis, several students discussed ways the current exhibitions provided personal, emotional connections for them in making sense of their own experiences of racism and other forms of bigotry. Specifically, students said Bopape's work lent greater context to their anger with the use and abuse of Black bodies including George Floyd's murder, and subsequent local and national protests following his death. By contrast, one student said, "I never had much to say about history paintings. I can talk about them formally, but they aren't meant to mean anything to me." Following this powerful discussion, I previewed the exploration of campus for our next class meeting.

3 Beginning in the latter half of the 20th century, postcolonial studies and critical race studies scholars critically examined Western art's role in colonizing the global majority, promoting, and maintaining white Western cultural values. Over the past two decades art historians, critics, curators, collectors, artists, and audiences have been increasingly reevaluating the academy and cultural institutions such as art museums for their roles in colonization. This reevaluation has caused some institutions to undertake changes to decolonize practices. For numerous discussions on decolonizing art history, see Grant and Price (2020).

The next week, we met outside our building to escape the confinement of pandemic anxiety and to deepen connections with the rich visual and material cultures of campus. I asked students to work individually or in groups to explore the nearby built environment, taking digital photographs to document any vernacular or street art such as graffiti, wheatpastes, stickers, or other works students felt were curricular in nature for their second Look Book titled "Word on the Street." We reconvened after two hours to share.

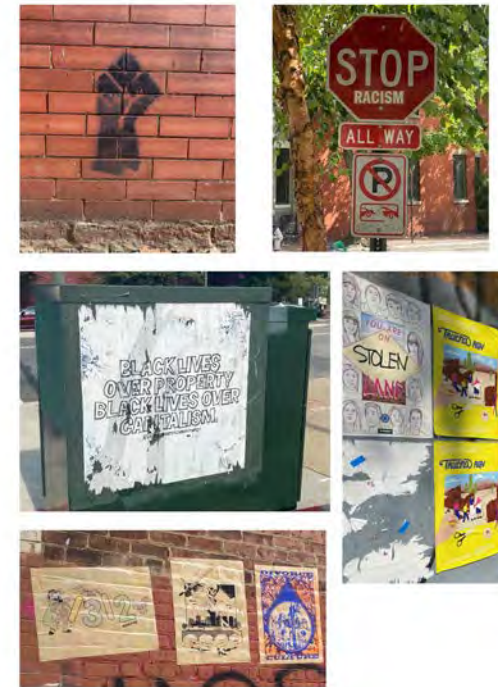


Figure 3: Ren's photo collage from "Word on the Street"

A few students were critical of the conspicuous absence of artifacts and artwork on campus from the 2020 protests after George Floyd's murder versus how plentiful these artworks were just outside the campus perimeter. Students raised thoughtful questions, including trying to discern the differences between street art and functional visual communication (e.g., advertising and wayfinding signage) regarding their purposes and visual qualities. We considered how such subtle differences relate to larger aesthetic arguments regarding boundaries between art and design. We concluded by discussing expanded understandings

of the roles of media, subject matter, and context in an artwork's ability to communicate an instructive message. Students developed a series of sketches for possible artworks that would convey specific stories or instructive messages to viewers for our next class meeting.

Their completed artworks resulting from historical, museum, and vernacular explorations were deeply thoughtful narrative pieces reflecting each student's individual understandings of how visual works are integral to culture as colonizing and decolonizing tools. Students created digital and traditional 2D artworks reflecting themes of colorism in the Black community; self-sabotage versus self-love; gentrification; physically and emotionally navigating foreign cities represented as psychological mapping; student learning as colonizing experiences represented through mixed-media quilted notes, drawings, essays, and assignments stitched together with red and black thread; body dysmorphia and gender identity; and more. We approached critique for this from a generative, open-read position.



Figure 4: Rae's Triptych for Theme 2

Students and instructor were able to view documentation of the works on a shared electronic drive prior to critique and all participants were asked to identify strengths and areas for improvement prior to meeting. Students reported this approach to the critique process increased overall engagement in the discussion of artworks, as well as increased interest in accepting suggestions or applying advice to subsequent projects compared with traditional studio critiques. Secondly, several students reported realizing critiques can be valuable formative processes rather than anxiety-producing summative evaluations. As one student noted, "I've been able to give classmates feedback that they're able to apply it to edits. I'm giving my peers a lot to read and go off on, and they do the same for me." This was a significant realization for students as they began the third theme of the course.

Blurring Boundaries

We began investigating the third course theme, Historical and Contemporary 2D Works as Product, after the semester's midway point and for a shorter time than the prior two. This theme was loosely intended to prompt students to recognize and interrogate mainstream, market-driven, capitalist/anti-capitalist approaches to creating 2D artworks for commercial and fine art consumers. We began with an open class discussion about art economies, relationships and tensions between commercial art and fine art, and whether it was possible to create anti-capitalist art today. Following our discussion, we watched two videos from the PBS Art21 (2018) "Consumption Revisited" playlist. Students then chose another video to watch outside class to report back on ways that artist's work connected to our initial discussion of art commodification and artists' efforts to resist or reverse it. While students expressed skepticism reversal was possible, they willingly began investigations for their third Look Book.

Students expressed interest in extending their research about art as a product for these Look Books, so we co-developed the assignment as preparatory research for their third studio assignment. They identified 2D artworks that explore consumer products, mass production, mass media/advertising, and anti-consumerist or anti-capitalist themes. They chose to identify artists who use media or visual language of consumer culture or anti-consumer aesthetics to embrace or critique consumer culture. Through research, we learned about the rise of Pop Art and subsequent related art styles, as well as designers who incorporated visual elements of Pop Art into their commercial products. They identified contemporary artists incorporating commercial styles into fine art illustration to critique consumer culture.

Our class Look Book discussion led students to start taking notes and making sketches for this theme's largely student-defined/student-led artwork assignment. Students adopted fashion icon Tim Gunn's phrase "Make it work" as the assignment title. They wanted their Look Book research to inform three to four concept sketches for sharing and class feedback for help choosing their most conceptually robust ideas for their finished artworks. Students discussed project parameters and agreed to leave media choice open but limited works to A4 paper size or smaller. I was unsure how this project would work without me leading, but I leaned into trusting students' decisions about parameters and their collective process. Most students produced digital artworks emphasizing strong anti-consumption sentiments, such as the work here depicting a person attempting to acquire items to meet their basic needs from a claw machine.



Figure 5: Rae's digital work entitled "Everything You Could Ever Want"

This student-led assignment successfully energized participation and increased work completion; final works reflected connections to prior art research, preparation sketching, and the robust feedback session. The final works did not reflect themes or media I would have prescribed for the project, and as a result, I learned more about my students' thinking about themes and media. The collective energy that resulted from our shared learning in this project helped propel us into the fourth and final course theme.

Altered Fellowship

A zine served as provocation for our fourth theme, Historical and Contemporary 2D Works as Process. For final works, students had to incorporate a zine template and demonstrate the role of process in art-making but were free to choose any research and making processes to meet their collaboratively-developed parameters and outcomes. Students were initially frustrated with the limitations of the zine. They discussed making one zine together, a few zines by groups, or one zine by each student. They discussed ideas as I typed in a live document

during class. The document had four zine themes students developed: losing touch with nature, experiencing music, identity and intersectionality, food access and production. They decided everyone would make their own zine. The document also outlined four classroom work sessions, zine section completion schedule, and links to student-identified resources. Students decided the zine could be created digitally or analogically, provided it fit the template.

Students then decided their Look Book would include images of process-oriented artworks, processes they planned to use for the zine, or examples of artwork by one or more artists they planned to feature. After students expressed interest, we visited the university library's special zine collections. Our next work session was highly productive, and the library visit inspired several students. At its beginning and end, students shared their progress and new ideas emerging from this library visit. They were highly engaged in providing each person targeted formative critique during the third and fourth sessions.

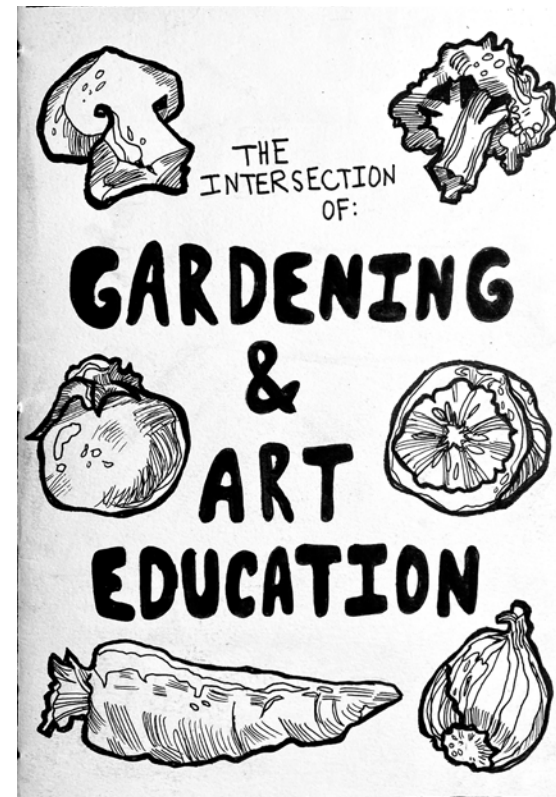


Figure 6: Cover for Ren's Zine

In our final class meeting, students shared and discussed their completed zines. As conversation ended, we shifted to reflect on ways our course addressed the initial questions about studio teaching and scholar-artist identity. We reviewed the questions verbally, and I incorporated them into prompts for students' written self-evaluations. In lieu of a final exam, I met one-on-one with students to discuss their written self-evaluations, sketchbooks, Look Book assignments, and the artworks completed for each course theme. These meetings provided students a degree of privacy to discuss any concerns about their work or the course, as well as a safe space to talk about their efforts across assignments. Some students confidently embraced this meeting, comfortably discussing their self-assessments. A few were skeptical about whether I would honor their self-assessments—wondering if I would disregard them in favor of “objective” assessments or comparisons to their peers. These conversations with skeptical/self-doubting students were thought-provoking for considering the outcomes of reconceptualizing this studio course. In the following sections, I reflect on the comforts and harms that are produced by ritualistic approaches to teaching studio art classes then consider potential future directions.

A Call to Reflect, Revise, and Reinvent

My analysis of this course revealed many moments when we navigated the process of emergent, co-developed curriculum; a range of instructional approaches; and student-centered assessments. In some instances, we found common paths of understanding when we encountered blurriness in creative practices, research about art, art as research, and moments of teaching and learning. Often, though, each student's paths through themes differed from their classmates'. This variability produced new kinds of anxieties for the students and me. In reviewing field notes and students' midterm and final self-evaluations, some shared anxieties stem from discomfort with learning that unfolds gradually in a course and responds to student needs and interests. While students displayed a high level of engagement and reported feeling empowered by the transparency of student-led learning and emergent curriculum, they also expressed personal doubts about their course performance. This finding indicates a need to help students better understand their contributions in a labor contract graded course such as this one. Despite modeling formative feedback processes, providing guidelines for students to evaluate each other in critique, and to evaluate their own efforts on each of the four components of the course (sketchbook, Look Book assignments, one artwork for each of the four themes, and class participation) some students still expressed uncertainty about summative self-assessment. These self-evaluations were submitted at midterm and at the end of the course. I spoke with each student individually at both points, and we agreed on a letter grade each time. Nonetheless, a few students expressed skepticism about whether they could assess their labor. In a review of research on contract grading, Carillo (2022)

found labor-based contracts can be problematic because they assume for a normative body and thus a uniform conception of labor as the foundation of assessment. This disadvantages students with disabilities, those struggling with mental health or illness, or students who work long hours outside class. It is possible that students were skeptical about their performance because they felt their labor was not uniform with traditional labor conceptions.

An important related finding from this research was the recognition that breaking from art education teaching rituals is necessarily uncomfortable. Institutional transformation is usually very gradual, and often in universities, it is too slow to be responsive to students' needs in their relatively short time there. Changing curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and shifting the underlying philosophy of a course can be unsettling for both students and the instructor. Sometimes this kind of unsettling is critical when an institution cannot meet the needs of students within a large system not prone to rapid change. The deeply engaged research about art, generous and generative discourse of critiques, and the critical observations students made about historical, contemporary, and local vernacular art were possible through our mutual willingness to blur the boundaries of teacher/student/artist/educator to become critical viewers/responsive makers/change agents. This willingness to forgo the comfort of being attentive passive participants in rituals of art education did not remove us from the experience of being art educators, rather, we created a mutual space of becoming scholar-artists. We cultivated this mutual space through the emergent curriculum of the course.

In contrast to the carefully curated environments and provocations of emergent curriculum for young learners, our emergent curriculum was less discreetly tied to specific learning spaces and our emergent approaches were scaled and adapted for adult learners. The students and I co-curated environments in our classroom, the campus art museum, city streets, and our homes by bringing questions, materials, research, conversations, and recognition of the possibilities of academic and domestic assemblage in situ. We created and shared provocations from the art world and our lived histories, our bodies, our university, our city, and the cross-hatching overlaps between them. Our emergent curriculum forged new connections among us and with our community, and shifted our learning toward dispersed, collective power rather than concentrated, individual power. This mirrors what Cosier (2021) describes as the Symbiocene: a hopeful but yet-to-be future era that moves humanity “away from the reckless pursuit of profit and concentrated power and toward collectivism and a sense of a shared purpose and fate” (p. 316). We found that smudging or erasing rituals that reinscribe Western aesthetics and White supremacist assessments of learning in art education can be uncomfortable but are imperative. The path through emergent curriculum may not be linear, but it is navigable.

The possibilities these experiences hold for fundamentally changing our philosophy and practice of art education is a necessary endeavor.

Acknowledgement

The author is very grateful to Rae Fernandes, Lilly Howard, and Ren Newport for their willingness to trace new connections, erase tired studio habits, and share examples of the amazing work that they created as a result.

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A Review of Visual and Cultural Identity Constructs of Global Youth and Young Adults: Situated, Embodied and Performed Ways of Being, Engaging, and Belonging

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Blaikie, F. (Ed.). (2021). *Visual and Cultural Identity Constructs of Global Youth and Young Adults: Situated, Embodied and Performed Ways of Being, Engaging and Belonging*. London: Routledge. 276 pp. ISBN: 978-0-367519490

The Routledge book series on Research in Cultural and Media Studies now includes the title, *Visual and Cultural Identity Constructs of Global Youth and Young Adults: Situated and Performed Ways of Being, Engaging, and Belonging*,¹ edited by art education scholar and professor Fiona Blaikie. This 276-page volume features thirteen chapters by a range of established and emerging researchers and scholars from across the globe, offering new ways of understanding how the shifting identities of young people are constructed through visual and cultural markers. The transdisciplinary collection is inspired in part by a symposium that Professor Blaikie organized at Brock University in February 2019, “Impression Management: Construction of Visual and Cultural Identities in North American Adolescents.” The chapters represent scholars from art education, anthropology, sociology, child and youth studies, gender studies, literacy studies, and educational studies exploring questions of youth and young adults’ strategies for interacting with society and finding their place within it. The contributors to this edited volume seek not only to illuminate their multi-layered understandings of research participants’ identity constructs, but also to engage with critical and experimental methodological approaches.

Visual and Cultural Identity Constructs of Global Youth and Young Adults embraces a ground-breaking and participatory, less autocratic means of constructing knowledge, drawing on, among others, posthumanism, new materialism, affect, worlding, weak theory, as well as gender and queer theory. The authors avoid invoking “grand narratives” (Blaikie, 2021, p. 1) to explain the results of their inquiries. Blaikie presents fellow authors and thinkers who self-reflexively explore the in-between moments in their data gathering, those hard to categorize or capture, and maybe even undesirable, but that leave a lasting impression. The

1 For the sake of transparency, it should be noted that although this reviewer was not involved in any aspect of the edited volume under discussion, Fiona Blaikie serves as the reviewer’s doctoral supervisor.

approach is in line with anthropologist Kathleen Stewart's (2007) rejection of "[t]he notion of a totalized system, of which everything is always already somehow a part" (p. 1). Stewart (2007) notes the following about such affect-laden instances: "Unwanted intensities simmer up at the least provocation" (p. 47). Long after concluding each chapter, the reader, not unlike the researchers, is left thinking about what makes these intensities stand out and what they might mean. To this end, in the opening chapter, art education scholar Dónal O'Donoghue (2021) explains the reason for deliberately omitting interpretive analysis when sharing narrative accounts of the experiences of his research participants, who were boys in single-sex schools in Canada. In his chapter, O'Donoghue suggested that the schoolboys could create artistic photographs, short films, and sound recordings. By eschewing a traditional analysis, the author creates a space for readers themselves to be free to think and experience the resulting accounts in their own way, without a prescribed interpretation. The effect is one of immediacy and a sense of direct witnessing.

The collection, which begins with a preface by Professor of Equity and Social Justice Education Wayne Martino, is organized in three sections. The first section, "Contextualizing Embodiments in Space and Place," contains, among others, a chapter by sociologist Kevin Gosine. "Reconciling divergent realms in the lives of marginalized students" discusses Gosine's humble roots in Toronto's Regent Park, a socially and economically marginalized public housing community that is Canada's oldest and largest. Raised by his mother and grandmother, Gosine, like many others in the neighbourhood, experienced racial and class-based oppression along with stigmatization, a "demonization and othering" (Gosine, 2021, p. 78), by the wider society. In response, a strong neighbourhood bond ensued and Gosine contrasted the resulting intensely collectivist spirit with the neoliberal, individualistic mindset of middle-class environments and professionals whose ranks he joined when he became an academic. The chapter argues for a third space within standard schooling; one where it is possible to embrace disenfranchised youth's lived experience, their strengths and sense of collective identity to foster improved academic engagement, thus supporting the potential for higher educational results and socioeconomic status.

The next section, "Making and Engaging," includes a chapter by Child and Youth Studies scholar Shauna Pomerantz and her then-11-year-old co-researching daughter, Miriam Field. In their chapter, "A TikTok assemblage: Girlhood, radical media engagement, and parent-child generativity," they model a "[r]adical media engagement [that] led us to ask different questions of each other because an unstructured space for inquiry was opened" (Pomerantz & Field, 2021, p. 152). Their chapter explores their process of making dance videos together that they post on TikTok, addressing St. Pierre's (2021) call for researchers to create new ways of approaching scholarly inquiry. In effect, they help to de-

viser a post qualitative inquiry based on "relationality, and not individuation" (Pomerantz & Field, 2021, p. 153), which may more appropriately tackle the problems that are particular to the 21st century. The third section, "Becoming and Belonging," features the final four chapters, among which an autoethnographic chapter by Giang Nguyen Hoang Le. "Living a queer life in Vietnam" is at times startling for its ability to draw the reader in as a complicit bystander to the emotional violence that the author suffered in a heteronormative family and society, both as a boy and a young man. The complexity of oppression defies hard boundaries and one of the moments in Le's first-person storytelling vignettes reminds the reader that the seeming line between victim and victimizer can be crossed. Under pressure as a male and secretly gay teacher at a traditional college in Vietnam and worried for his job, Le (2021) recalls performing masculinity so as to hide any traces of queerness:

I tried very hard to look strict and tough. I believed toughness represented the masculinity of a straight male teacher. Hence, I became very strict with my students, making them scared of me and, at the same time, I felt safe. I learned that making people afraid of you is a good way to hide your vulnerability. (p. 224)

The above excerpt demonstrates how Le disciplined himself in Vietnam to conform to gendered expectations. Using queer theory now as a doctoral researcher in Canada, he contests heterosexist hegemony and oppression as he looks back on his lived experience within the context of Vietnamese Confucianism and Buddhism. He also explores the struggle against alienation through performativity of gender and the sense of fitting in and acceptance of oneself, by oneself and by others. The chapter is illustrative of the volume's focus on the effort expended by young people on identity construction, transformation, being and belonging.

Moreover, the issue of how far to take performance to conform or to stage an intervention is taken up in anthropologist Colin McLaughlin-Alcock's chapter about the social difference experienced by young public artists in Amman, Jordan, against a backdrop of Ammani conservative society. Largely based on McLaughlin-Alcock's (2021) ethnographic fieldwork, which included conversations with artists in a progressive, graduate level fine arts program, the author notes that the different artists had a variety of approaches with which to address the "profound boundary separating Amman's art world from general society" (p. 243). Some artists wanted to confront and challenge, while others preferred a more gradual engagement. Yet, they always regarded "the artist as a socially dynamic site, a performative effective entity, through which wider constructions of difference can be reimagined" (McLaughlin-Alcock, 2021, p. 244). The role of the artist as a poten-

tial catalyst for change, perhaps a countercultural figure, however, is not guaranteed or necessarily supportive of social justice aims. While McLaughlin-Alcock observes that Foucault (2011) and Bourdieu (1993) see artists as standing apart from societal norms, giving them a certain autonomy that enables artists to be truth sayers, he also notes the work of researchers that find that artists and their cultural capital can be associated with gentrification, along with a neoliberal ethos, as well as with fostering cultural stereotypes, and an alignment with state power. The need to attend to the specific and to avoid generalizing comes through here, as human experience is subjective, and McLaughlin-Alcock (2021) situates his work as such, investigating “a particular kind of difference” (p. 232), which is situated in a particular historical time and a specific local site. This fits with the overall approach of the collection where unlike in modernist grand narratives, “meanings are contingent on multiple interpretations” (Blaikie, 2021, p. 1).

While identity construction of youth through visual arts and culture is the unifying theme of this volume, each chapter in this collection engages with the question of how knowledge is produced and what the role is of the researcher in the process. The authors practice various forms of self-reflexivity. Professors teaching graduate qualitative method courses will be particularly interested in this scholarly collection that showcases an array of innovative approaches to researching the lives of young people in and around schools. Doctoral students in the field of educational studies who are engaged in qualitative inquiry will find the collection helpful, too, as it models how to think with theory when analyzing qualitative research data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

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