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Cover

Pictured: 15-year-old Korean American youth, Girl, 2022. Courtesy of the student artist. For more information, please refer to the article by Ryan Shin, Oksun Lee, Ahran Koo, Kevin Hsieh, and Min Gu.

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Editorial: Evolving and Expanding our Impact: Realizing the Current Climate of Art Education from Voices in the Field

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We are in a moment of critical evolution with unprecedented access to modes of communication, expression, and information; providing opportunities and imperatives to expand and evolve established practices and policies. The voices of communities and populations that have previously been silenced and marginalized now have new tools and strategies along with institutional and cultural support to impact significant changes in school and society.

Educators are at the forefront of many of these changes—feeling the impacts of censorship in schools and universities; addressing needs for diversity, equity and inclusion; and questioning how teaching is best practiced so all students have the ability and agency to participate and contribute equally in the classroom. We did not identify a theme for this issue of *jCRAE* in advance because we hoped that we might get a sense of pressing issues across the field through the submissions. As we hoped, important themes emerged, which are an indication of the current temperature in the field of art education. Most notably, a few examples include: how art education and artistic engagement encourages intercultural connection; how we address complex cultural questions and narratives around race and ethnicity; how we magnify policy and technological advances for disability access; and how we expand concepts of affect and aesthetic perception. It was obvious to us that the authors in this issue were contemplating and implementing ideas around ongoing changes regarding voices in the field and the classroom. This issue's authors provide us with many practical implementations and resources, a plethora of artists that one could use in theory discussions and curricula, well-thought-out research in a variety of spaces, and first-hand experiences from students, teachers, and faculty that all revolve around the ongoing evolution of socio-cultural dynamics felt and experienced every day. Our hope is that readers find useful aspects of this issue that they can directly connect with to expand their theoretical frameworks, implement in the classroom, and develop new knowledge from research.

In “Crippling Online Learning Space Designs for Collective Access,” **Eunkyung Hwang** speaks to crippling as a mode of resistance against often encoded ableist assumptions about students and learning in virtual spaces. Hwang uses the lens of *crip technoscience* from critical access studies to re-imagine accessible learning space designs and advocate for extensive collaboration with students with disabilities. Hwang sets the stage for *jCRAE* issue 40 with an extensive literature review around Universal Design that intersects with **Albert Stabler's** article, “Art Evading Confinement: Abolition as Universal Design.” Stabler approaches Universal Design as a framework in conjunction with contemporary abolitionism, which is a grassroots movement to make prisons and jails obsolete, due to the discourse around urban public schools as institutions of policing and punishment. Stabler argues for a more expansive understanding of access in education using art to illuminate conflicts and incongruities; reconceptualize Universal Design theories and concepts as justice for criminalized and confined bodies; and how the classroom is a site to question these ideas.

In “Visualizing Digital Communities of Practice,” **Veronica Soria-Martinez, Brad Olson, Ann Ossey, Jennifer Fitzpatrick, and Chris Grodoski** provide first-hand experiences of forty art, media, and design teachers who, during Covid-19, decided to critically examine their lessons through the lens of social-emotional learning, standards-based assessment, research, and culturally responsive instruction with a professional learning community. They created a presentation-as-art-installation, which appears as a split-screen dialogue of their recorded reflections. The presentation-as-art-installation highlights how practicing teachers have transformative experiences, reflecting on their successes and vulnerabilities, especially around their perspectives, fears, uncertainties, and discomforts of implementing certain topics in their classrooms. They conclude that dialogic self-reflection impacts their professional practice and encourages sharing with communities of educators. This article pairs nicely as an example of how practicing teachers are contemplating and implementing some of the theory that is set forth in Hwang and Stabler's articles.

Thinking more about critical reflection and how becoming a reflective researcher or practitioner can support the evolution of ideas, push past notions of the status quo as in Hwang and Stabler's articles, or change the strategies and methods of teaching as in Soria-Martinez et al.'s video, **Christina Donaldson and Tyson E. Lewis** use a philosophical approach to critical consciousness in “Critical Phenomenology as Research-Creation: A Theoretical Framework.” They present a theoretical framework justifying the articulation of activated forms of critical phenomenology through experimental and poetic forms of research-creation for imagining new modes of writing that are equal parts vivid description and poetical re-stylization of how bodies interact and perceive. Merleau-Ponty is used to define embodiment not in terms of es-

sence so much as in terms of stylization, and Gloria Anzaldúa's work serves as a foundation for research creation grounded in a critical phenomenology of bodily stylistics.

While Donaldson and Lewis' philosophical article uses a critical phenomenological frame to expand research methods through expressive connections to embodiment, **Heather Kaplan's** research explores the use of visual journals to convey the difficulties and lived experiences of herself and her students during Covid-19. In her article, "Education as Affective: Making Visual Journals during the Covid-19 Pandemic," Kaplan employs affect theory to analyze how students expressed their emotional experiences beyond words through visual journaling, when approaching classes as usual was the emotional capacity of both she and her students during that traumatic period of time. She evolved and changed her classroom content to focus more on questions about how students were feeling for which they would include in their journals. Like Donaldson and Lewis, Kaplan describes how affect registers in the mind and body through experiences or situations and visual journaling provides a more complex mode and process of reflection.

In art education, we have evolved from a multicultural to a decolonial approach where inclusivity in the classroom is more than teaching about artists from different parts of the world. More than ever, researchers and practitioners are advocating for direct voices and a re-thinking of systems of colonization. The next two articles both speak to the benefit of direct voices of Indigenous artists and rethinking our status quo systems of pedagogy. In **Christine Ballengee Morris and Kryssi Staikidis'** article, "From a Native Worldview: The Concept of the Traditional in Contemporary Native American Art Practices," they examine traditional meanings for Native Americans in contemporary art through reflection and dialogue. Research components in this article include a historical overview and an examination of literature, interviews, and oral histories. The article highlights many Native American artist voices and reconsiders traditions in Native American art to promote new outcomes in visual arts research and pedagogy informed by Indigenous epistemologies. In "Teaching Art through Engaging Decolonizing Viewpoints: Privileging an Indigenous Lens," **Mara Pierce and Lori Santos** share a collaborative project that engaged two art-based research/pre-service art teacher-student groups toward approaching art learning from an anti-racist perspective using an Indigenous pedagogical lens with the goal of removing biased narratives from mainstream art education by inserting first-person Indigenous artists' voices into the classroom conversation. Like other authors in this issue, Pierce & Santos provide a practitioner perspective—through a research project—and apply in-class examples of how to evolve pedagogy to include voices and resources with Indigenous perspectives and work to build cultural competence.

Similar to Pierce and Santos in exploring intercultural understanding and also to Kaplan in relationship building through direct student exchange, **Christine Liao and Moe Iezaki** ask: What intercultural communication experiences emerge through a communication process mediated by spatial, artistic production? In their article, "Building Intercultural Spaces through Co-Creation: Insideness in Shared Living Spaces," Liao and Iezaki explore intercultural communication through a project in which undergraduate students from the United States and Japan co-create a digital collage of shared living spaces. Through the creation of dioramas and collages, students shared stories and objects that were meaningful to their identity formation. Through this exchange, Liao & Iezaki learned that art-making was an effective way of evoking a sense of insideness with a place and bridge cultural differences.

In line with Ballengee-Morris and Staikidis; Pierce and Santos; and Liao and Iezaki's articles, **Ryan Shin, Oksun Lee, Ahran Koo, Kevin Hsieh, and Min Gu** provide useful approaches for practitioners in any teaching environment with a broad conceptual context in "Art and Visual Intervention Strategies to Resist Racism and Racial Stereotypes." Authors offer artistic and visual intervention strategies designed for art classrooms and community settings. These strategies include visual intervention, anti-racist gaze, counter-narrative and storytelling, cultural and ethnic identity celebration, and coalition building. These strategies advance dialogues in schools providing students of color with opportunities and tools for their stories to be heard. Additionally, these strategies, which are grounded in artistic intervention and activism, offer valuable tools to engage students with the practice of anti-racism.

At the same time, **Jeanne Nemeth and Libba Wilcox's** article, "Untold Narratives and Reimagined Histories: The Work of Dawoud Bey and Titus Kaphar," provides high school art room activities that instigate difficult but necessary conversations about America's racial past and present. Nemeth and Wilcox introduce two contemporary artists, Dawoud Bey and Titus Kaphar, whose work embraces the idea of untold narratives. Nemeth and Wilcox's article echoes Soria-Martinez et al.'s article in thinking through tough, discomfiting conversations in the classroom as well as Pierce and Santos in advocating the importance of artists of color in their classroom conversations and learning. All of these authors encourage students to learn from our histories to reimagine a new present.

With an open call for a journal, editor(s) never know how the articles will pair, connect, and/or what will be revealed. With *JCRAE* issue 40, much was discovered and disclosed regarding the field of art education. The continuous and evolving themes around Covid experiences and responses; classroom lesson potential; intercultural exchange and

dialogue; art as a tool for connection beyond language; and art as a vehicle to invite diverse modes of expressing, perceiving, relating, and unsettling all interact in this issue. With our constantly changing world, our field is ever-evolving to re-think, re-conceptualize, and re-evaluate what is important for teaching and learning in the classroom. This issue illuminates our evolving and expanding voices and highlights the current climate of what narratives and approaches matter at this moment.

Crippling Online Learning Space Designs for Collective Access

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growth of remote learning, many online art education space designs still overlook the learning experiences of students with disabilities, merely offering baseline assistive technologies. Drawing upon crip technoscience from critical access studies, this article defines current online learning spaces as virtually-built environments embedded with compliance-centered logics and ableist assumptions about access. I suggest that art educators challenge such preconceptions by engaging students in crippling, which entails (1) disrupting ableist designs and (2) crafting alternative designs for online learning spaces. Introducing projects by artists Elisa Giardina Papa, Shannon Finnegan, and Bojana Coklyat as exemplary practices of such disruption and reconstruction, I emphasize collaborative crippling as an anti-ableist practice informed by crip technoscience. This practice empowers students to counter the pervasive assimilation of people with disabilities into ableist online learning environments. In its conclusion, this article advocates for constructing collective access in online learning spaces toward disability justice.

KEYWORDS: Disability Justice, Collective Access, Crip Technoscience, Critical Disability Studies, Critical Access Studies, Anti-Ableist Art Education

The rapid adoption of digital learning and the growth of the remote-hybrid learning community in art education during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased forms of accessibility for students with certain disabilities. Yet, online learning spaces and institutional websites have only partially bridged the disability divide through assistive technologies and universal design (Meleo-Erwin et al., 2021; Smith, 2020). While accessible features do exist in online learning spaces, website designers often place these assistive tools to the side of the screen, thus obscuring them from view. Namely, many forms of universal design merely serve to meet legal requirements and do little for equitable learning in online learning spaces (Kent, 2015). As a result, just like their offline counterparts, online learning spaces fail to center the diverse needs and learning experiences of students with disabilities (Ellis et al., 2020; Quinn et al., 2019). Inevitably, students with disabilities cannot fully satisfy their educational needs in an online environment, since they had previously relied on various in-person accommodations, such as in-person assistance and support services (Ellis et al., 2020).

This paper presents issues of accessibility in online art education spaces as observed from my position as a teaching assistant at a U.S.-based university. Although I self-identify as a woman with illness, including several congenital heart defects, I acknowledge that I have a relatively great amount of privilege, since I have encountered very few obstacles in accessing education (whether in physical or digital spaces). Distinct from the experiences of some students with disabilities discussed in this paper, the shift to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic provided me with more accessibility. As I have residual intercostal neuralgia that arose from cardiac surgery, the online instructional spaces benefitted me, as I was better able to manage my pain and personal fatigue at home.

However, my experiences diverge substantially from those of students with other types of disabilities. Throughout my work in the university museum and class settings, I have engaged with students who, due to visual or learning disabilities, grapple with significant obstacles in navigating various online learning spaces. These students struggled due to the university's underdeveloped accessibility accommodations and its lack of effort to sufficiently prioritize the learning experiences of students with disabilities. As a result, the educational landscape continues to marginalize these students. In fact, the online museum education programs and learning spaces that I developed are no exception to this pervasive issue. I often used images without detailed alt text¹ and marked several links with generic phrases such as *click here*, which does not provide screen readers with any meaningful context or additional information about the destination of the link. Spurring from such realizations, my investigation into the accessibility features and ableist assumptions of online education spaces reveals how these options and designs are undertaken merely to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)². As such, enhancing robust access in online learning spaces is imperative.

In this paper, I propose that art educators and researchers should actively critique the spatial designs of online art education using crip technoscience from critical access studies as guiding frameworks for their interventions (Hamraie, 2015). I argue that art educators should consider online learning space structures and designs as virtually-built environments that often implicitly convey ableist assumptions, thereby prioritizing able-bodied students over those with disabilities.

1 Alt text is a written description attached to an image or media, providing context for people who use assistive technologies, such as screen readers. It ensures accessibility of visual content for individuals with low vision, visual disabilities, or neurodiversity. (Coklyat & Finnegan, 2022; Strantz, 2021).

2 The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law in the United States that passed in 1990 based on the disability rights movement. The ADA requires all private and public entities, including educational institutions, to offer reasonable accommodations and ensure access for people with disabilities (Brown et al., 2021).

Accordingly, art educators in higher education should critically examine the academic ableism ingrained in such spatial designs, while also proposing ways to challenge the conventional ADA compliance-centered design. To confront ableism in online learning space designs, I recommend employing an act of *cripping*. My use of *cripping*, in this context, indicates a radical act of disrupting the compliance-centered online learning space designs or crafting alternative designs centering on the experiences of students with disabilities. I will introduce artist-activists Shannon Finnegan and Bojana Coklyat's *Alt Text as Poetry* project and Elisa Giardina Papa's *Labor of Sleep: Have you been able to change your habits??* in the Whitney Museum's Sunrise/Sunset project as significant examples that can inspire students' act of *cripping*. By encouraging students to re-imagine and recreate truly accessible online learning space designs, art educators can increase students' critical awareness of ongoing ableism in their practice. In hopes of bridging the disability divide in online learning, this paper ultimately aims to build new anti-ableist pedagogies in art education that will help move the field toward greater collective access.

Neutralization of Universal Design in Higher Education

In modern design history, disability was a marginal issue until the 1950s; indeed, only in recent years has it become a common talking point (Guffey, 2017; Williamson, 2019). The barrier-free design movement, beginning in the 1960s, established the foundation for the concept of universal design (Hamraie, 2017).³ In 1985, Ronald Mace, an architect with a disability, finally coined the concept of universal design as an intentional design approach recommending "all products, buildings and exterior spaces to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible" (Mace et al., 1991, p. 30). Using this concept, Mace ultimately pursued a disability alliance that would transcend the medical model of disability (Hamraie, 2017).⁴ After the passage of the ADA in 1990 and the expansion of the disability justice movement, universal design has gradually become influential in U.S. society over the years (Hamraie, 2017). Designers and scholars have started to widely recognize the needs of people with disabilities in various built environments (Ellcessor, 2016).

Although the increased recognition of universal design has extended general accessibility, it has not led to true equality. Institutions,

3 The barrier-free design movement was a dominant paradigm of accessible design until universal design emerged. Although the barrier-free design movement initially aimed to construct wide-ranging accessibility, it often emphasized White middle-class disabled users and was merely compliant with legal enforcement (Hamraie, 2017).

4 The medical model of disability considers disability as an undesirable human condition or impairment that should be cured through medical interventions (Garland-Thomson, 2017; Kallio-Tavin, 2020).

including those in higher education, have started to consider universal design as a shorthand for “magic solutions to accessibility,” all within the vague framework of legal compliance with the ADA (Seale, 2013, p. 18). They have merely incorporated limited accessibility features, such as poorly designed ramps, and have overlooked the qualitative dimensions of access (Dolmage, 2017; Sheppard, 2019). Instead, their goal is merely to ensure compliance with ADA-related regulations. Such reliance on compliance-centered logics, coupled with a misguided emphasis on neutrality for “all users,” results in the dilution of the original intent of universal design (Hamraie, 2017, p. 13). Consequently, these institutions, influenced by neoliberal ideologies, appropriate universal design as a marketing tool for showcasing diversity. This neutralization of universal design not only promises a false future for all people, but also erases the unique values and experiences of people with disabilities, fabricating a veneer of inclusion without addressing the true needs of the disabled (Hamraie, 2017).

Similarly, in the realm of online education, the discourse of universal design has often intertwined with U.S. legal regulations and compliance requirements (Ellcessor, 2016). Legal regulations around website design did lead to the creation of accessible web environments, yet these are often based on a narrow interpretation of accessibility and disregard the fact that no single design can meet every individual’s needs (Ellcessor, 2016).⁵ Due to the limitations of such an approach, many higher education institutions have, in recent decades, adopted international open web standards such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.⁶ However, these standards still mainly center on the needs of people with visual impairments or restricted motor movements, while rarely addressing the needs of those with learning disabilities or neurodiversity (Giannoumi et al., 2017; Kurt, 2019).⁷ Hence, universal design and accessibility are often considered mere technological phenomena, reinforcing the existing emphasis on assistive technologies without establishing the necessary philosophical foundations for valuing a broad range of experiences with disability (Ellcessor, 2016; Foley & Ferri, 2012).

5 The amendment of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in 1998 led to a major change in web content accessibility. This legislation mandated that the U.S. government and its organizations build accessible web-based content and information technology for people with disabilities (Ellcessor, 2016).

6 The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international community that establishes open web standards, developed WCAG 2.1. These guidelines provide a framework for crafting accessible web content for individuals with disabilities (Abou-Zahra & Brewer, 2019).

7 Neurodiversity is a concept that refers to neurological differences of the human brain or neurological systems. Challenging ableist assumptions about normative human brains and mental disabilities, this term promotes an inclusive, equitable view of diverse states of mind (Owren & Stenhammer, 2013; Richardson, 2018).

This narrow interpretation of universal design and accessibility is evident in Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas and Blackboard, widely used in U.S. higher education.⁸ These corporate-driven LMS often fail to meet the needs of many students with disabilities, relying heavily on external assistive technology tools and falling short in incorporating accessible configurations (Brito & Dias, 2021; Kent, 2015). Even Canvas, renowned for its disability-friendliness, provides limited functions for students with cognitive and learning disabilities (Paynter & Barnes, 2021). Such accessibility functions typically reside in the corner of the learning space, diminished to a small button, hidden within the default user interface. Moreover, many LMS largely fail to assist instructors in constructing accessible course content, offering limited guidance regarding accessible content-building (Brito & Dias, 2020; Oswal, 2019). Rather than fostering inclusivity, these LMS reinforce the normative narratives of able-bodied student users, thus putting the burden of accommodation onto disabled individuals and endorsing neoliberal paradigms of ability (Ellcessor, 2021; Gabel et al., 2016; Quinn et al., 2019). Such practices help to sustain an ableist structure in higher education, potentially hindering disabled students’ learning (Ellcessor, 2021; Seale, 2013; Stone, 2019).

Thus, art educators should scrutinize the misinterpretation of universal design in online art education and develop strategies to effectively critique these accessibility shortcomings within our educational practice. By doing so, we can better uphold disability justice in online learning environments. With this enhanced critical awareness, art educators might reinterpret universal design in online education as a “value-explicit design” that consciously articulates the value of disability knowledge and experiences (Hamraie, 2013, para. 21). This style of design will encourage students to interrogate the “false value-neutrality” of current online environments, in which putatively “neutral” platforms of information-sharing silently prioritize the experiences of normative, able-bodied student users (Hamraie, 2013, para. 21).

Students as Preferred Able-bodied Users in Online Learning Spaces

When we consider online education space designs as virtually-built environments, who are the assumed users? Current online learning spaces in higher education tend to universally assume that the very meaning of “student” connotes being able-bodied, and thus the “preferred users” (Ellcessor, 2016, p. 63). The normative definition of student often conjures images of neurotypical, physically non-disabled, and financially stable students who have easy access to

8 Learning Management Systems are web-based systems that allow instructors to design and deliver courses to students through online communication and sharing (Green & Chewning, 2020; Paynter & Barnes, 2021).

technology (Quinn et al., 2019). By exclusively prioritizing such students' experiences, hegemonic arrangements in online learning spaces fail to include students with disabilities (Kent, 2015). Even during the forced shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education continued to default to the assumption that non-disabled students are the normative users (Ellis et al., 2020).

Indeed, such ableist assumptions about student users stem from the longstanding history of ableism in the U.S. education system, particularly its binary notion of normality and abnormality. The modern U.S. education system has invented the ableist notion of "normal" students, who are judged non-disabled by medical and legal authorities, and "not normal" students, identified as those with disabilities (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018, p. 268). The U.S. K-12 education system segregates students with disabilities into special education, leading to a mere 19% of students with disabilities in the U.S. attending two-year and four-year colleges in 2015–16 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). However, the landscape is changing, as more students with disabilities participate in higher education. Despite the increase, accessibility within higher education remains underdeveloped and under-diversified, since institutions continue to assume students are able-bodied (Gabel et al., 2016; Kent, 2015). Institutions rarely address their own ableist presumptions or actively promote the accessibility of virtual learning, which could attract more students with disabilities and sustain their profits in a competitive student market (Ellis et al., 2020). Consequently, such neglect perpetuates ableist assumptions within LMS designs, normalizing the experiences of non-disabled students while imposing silence on the experiences of disabled students (Gabel et al., 2016).

While most higher education institutions offer support for students with disabilities through disability resource centers, obtaining assistance for online learning remains a challenge. To access these resources, students must receive a "biocertification" (Samuels, 2014, p. 9), requiring them to prove their disability with medical diagnosis documentation. Such a process puts the onus of accommodation on the individual student, who must self-identify and convince the institution of their need for accommodation. Critical disability studies scholars have long criticized the way in which universities perpetuate the culture of labeling and segregation through ADA-compliant policies, rather than fostering an inclusive learning environment and culture (Brown et al., 2021; Dolmage, 2017; Hamraie, 2017). The current structure causes students to endure "access fatigue," a state of exhaustion stemming from the constant need to perform their disability to access necessary accommodations (Konrad, 2021, p. 180). Consequently, some students with disabilities choose to hide their disability, often to avoid contacting the disability resources offices (Miskovic & Gabel, 2012).

Regarding these challenges, we, as art educators, should find ways to center the experiences of students with disabilities in online learning spaces and dismantle ableist understandings of accessibility. Thus, in the following sections, I suggest combining crip technoscience with art education practices inspired by

contemporary digital artworks, and I further envision pedagogical methods that develop collective access in online learning spaces.

Crippling and Crip Technoscience: Rethinking Accessibility in Online Art Education Designs

In the field of art education, researchers have historically emphasized the critical understanding of inclusivity and disability, drawing from critical disability studies (Kallio-Tavin, 2020; Keifer-Boyd et al., 2019; Penketh, 2014; Wexler, 2016). Among such research, Galloway et al. (2007) underscore the significance of accessibility and accommodation for people with disabilities in theatre performance and its education, advocating for an ethic of accommodation. Also, Richardson and Kletchka's (2022) recent article explicitly highlights the potential for critical access studies in museum education to challenge ableism and transform the spatial relationship between museums and disabled visitors. Despite the valid focus these researchers place on access and accommodation, the field of art education has rarely taken into consideration such issues in online learning.

To account for this deficiency, I suggest art educators challenge the normative assumption that users are students without disabilities, and strive to understand identities, experiences, and access needs of students with disabilities in online learning spaces through the concept of *cripping* and *crip technoscience*. As the shortened form of the pejorative term *cripple*, "crip" is a reclaimed term referring to people with disabilities, used to resist "compulsory able-bodiedness" of contemporary society (McRuer, 2006, p. 1).⁹ Critical disability studies scholar Robert McRuer (2006) uses this term in building crip theory, which highlights the value of disabled people's ways of knowing and embodied experiences as social knowledge (Kafai, 2021; McRuer & Johnson, 2014). By transforming "crip" from crip theory into an active verb, I propose that criping online space designs challenges ableist assumptions within accessible designs, which perceive disability merely as an "imposition" or "interference" to the "accepted norm and standards of the built environment" (Williamson, 2019, p. 190). Thus, criping online learning space design is an active refusal to comply with ableist futures in art education practices (Hamraie, 2015; Penketh, 2020; Williamson, 2019).

Furthermore, I suggest connecting the act of criping to the concept of *crip technoscience*, a term coined by Amie Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch

⁹ "Compulsory able-bodiedness" refers to the social and cultural belief that everyone should be able-bodied, as well as the idea that disability is a personal tragedy or defect rather than a socially-constructed category. McRuer (2006) argues that compulsory able-bodiedness includes an assumed hierarchical relationship between able-bodied and disabled people, justifying the exclusion and marginalization of people with disabilities.

(2019). Crip technoscience is a form of design activism aiming to disrupt systemic ableism and to advocate for the “transformative power of crip knowing-making” (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 20). By incorporating the term “crip” into “technoscience,” a term that encompasses the intertwined nature of science, technology, and political context, the authors highlight that designing access is a form of “attack” that creates political friction and contests the ableist built environment (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 10). Crip technoscience demonstrates the power of disabled people’s political acts of non-conformity as a means to build access, thus serving as a catalyst for social transformation. Additionally, these scholars’ application of crippling to technoscience asserts that people with disabilities are active agents who produce crip knowledge rather than merely cultural consumers or objects of assimilationist technologies (Fritsch, 2016; Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019). Based on such perceptions, crip technoscience should prioritize a commitment to the interdependence of people with disabilities. Since neoliberal, ableist society has posited that disability is an individual issue and that each disabled person is solely responsible for their access, Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) emphasize that we should rebuild interdependent disability culture and community through intimacy and collaboration, to better combat the burden of neoliberal individualism.

A compelling example of the radical potential of crip technoscience emerges in the work of artist-activists Shannon Finnegan and Bojana Coklyat. Their ongoing project, *Alt Text as Poetry* (2019-present), is a workshop-based art project that demonstrates how a blend of alt text technology and creative approaches can construct enhanced access for people with disabilities (Finnegan & Coklyat, 2019).¹⁰ These two artists critique the ways people and institutions frequently consider alt texts as technologically formulated simple information and create them in a perfunctory manner—merely to meet web accessibility requirements (Coklyat & Finnegan, 2022). By reframing alt text as a creative poetry of image description, their workshops help participants collaboratively write alt text, building substantial communication between images and disabled users. These workshops prompt participants to understand that alt text should provide more pleasurable experiences, offering a “sense of belonging” to people with disabilities (Coklyat & Finnegan, 2022, p. 279). To extend such practices, the artists distribute their self-published workbooks online for free, allowing anyone to practice alt text writing with poetic language through technology (see Figure 1). This project shows the enormous potential of crip technoscience to enhance disabled users’ online experiences, while emphasizing the importance of interdependence and collaboration in achieving disability justice.

Drawing upon the intersection of theory, practice, and activism in crip technoscience, scholars argue that we should define a culture of access as a culture of “transformation” that dismantles the underpinning logic of ableist culture through spatial change (Brewer et al., 2014, p. 152). This radical engagement underscores the significant contribution of disability experiences to our knowledge-building. As one example of such transformation, we can further include an alternative accessibility model known as “cultural accessibility” in the context of digital space (Ellcessor, 2016, p. 179). Cultural accessibility challenges hegemonic narratives of abled bodies and technologies through disabled people’s coalitional practice in digital platforms (Ellcessor, 2016). Within cultural accessibility, the participatory process of access and its educational impact on bridging the disability divide will eventually help art educators critique the current neoliberal consumption of access as assimilation or rehabilitation (Brewer et al., 2014; Foley & Ferri, 2012). Based on these concepts, educators will eventually be able to set the goal of crippling online learning spaces in art education as the construction of “collective access”—that is, a flexible and creative engagement with the built environment that fosters disability solidarity (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 28).

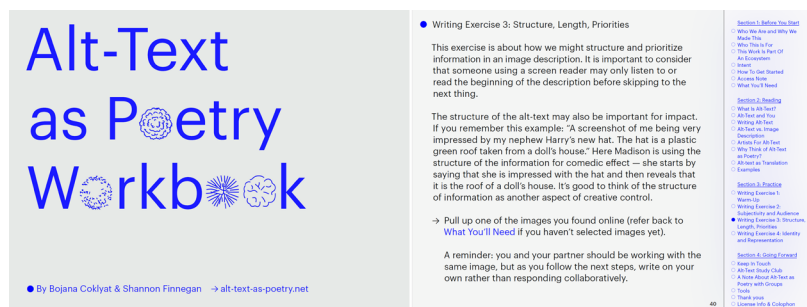


Figure 1. Screenshot of “Alt-Text as Poetry Workbook”, Shannon Finnegan and Bojana Coklyat, 2019-present, Designed by Companion–Platform. Courtesy of the Artists.

¹⁰ Shannon Finnegan and Bojana Coklyat run the website “Alt Text as Poetry” (<https://alt-text-as-poetry.net/>), a platform providing information about alt text and sharing their ongoing project and workshops that explore alt text and its potential in advancing accessibility and disability justice.

Embracing Disability Experiences through Crippling Online Learning Space Designs

In pursuit of collective access within online art education, how should art educators incorporate crippling into art education practices as an active refusal of ableist online learning space designs? I suggest two methods of crippling that can challenge compliance-centered universal designs in online learning spaces: (a) disrupting the ableist designs of current online learning spaces, or (b) crafting alternative online learning space designs. Regardless of how this crippling happens, I argue that art educators should first privilege students with disabilities as core “knowers and makers” who analyze the ableist assumptions ingrained in online learning spaces and develop design practices through their own lived experiences (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 7). Thus, I strongly suggest first building a collaborative relationship with students with disabilities, in which educators listen to students’ experiences with online learning accessibility and the ableist assumptions embedded in spatial designs. It is critical to give these students a central role in collaborative art-making. If there are no students with disabilities in the class, educators may seek to collaborate with disability resource teams or student disability rights groups at the institution. Art educators should remember, of course, that no single student with a disability can represent all people with disabilities or understand all accessibility needs. Our practice can never be liberatory without considering students’ actual lived experiences of disabilities. Thus, centering the perspective of students with disabilities when planning online learning spaces is the first step towards building collective access through our practice.

Based on the aforementioned substantial collaboration, art educators should offer an opportunity for students to thoroughly analyze the design of targeted online learning spaces and plan their own creation or disruption of the design. Their guidance should facilitate students’ detailed examination of the design as a whole, as well as its smaller elements, such as pervasive use of images, font size and colors, lack of screen-reader-friendly content and the location of each assistive technology. To further connect their design analysis to a critical awareness of ingrained ableism within such designs, I recommend focusing on these core questions:

1. Who are the assumed users, and who are the marginalized users, within this online learning space design?
2. What narratives or forms of knowledge are absent, and what ableist logics are embedded within this online learning space design?
3. How should we further prioritize the experiences and knowledge of students with disabilities in our art and design creations?

4. How might we effectively address and challenge ableism by attacking the design of online learning spaces, and subsequently improve accessibility through our redesign efforts?

These questions will prompt students to look beyond the surface, identifying and addressing the unnoticed ableism often entrenched within online learning space designs. Through comprehensive explorations, students will develop enhanced critical perspectives, interrogating ableist assumptions and identifying where changes for inclusivity should be made. Armed with such critical awareness, students will be able to further plan their own redesign or reconstruction of inclusive online learning spaces.

Disrupting Ableist Designs in Online Learning Spaces

Having established the foundation of analysis, students can implement their own crippling practices. Students may start transforming typical LMS designs by disrupting each design element or interweaving their own resistive artworks. Admittedly, various design elements and assistive technologies in a given LMS are already built-in, and there is not much room for students to transform the whole website structure. However, students can at least transform some spaces and enhance accessibility by creating new visible buttons for assistive technology and adding various visual/spoken/written descriptions regarding contents in LMS pages. More actively, students can create their own artworks that include disability experiences or knowledge and place them on the landing page of the LMS. Taking the current ableist LMS design and fracturing it with students’ creative representations of disability justice will effectively showcase the resistive potential of art in website designs. Although such partial transformations are, of course, not fully disability-friendly or inclusive, the practice itself can create subversive meaning and actively “attack” ableist landscapes in online education (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019, p. 10).



Figure 2. Screenshot of “*Labor of Sleep: Have you been able to change your habits??*”, Elisa Giardina Papa, 2017. Still frame from video. Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Courtesy of the Artist.

As an example of these partial disruptions, Elisa Giardina Papa’s *Labor of Sleep: Have you been able to change your habits??* (2017) in the Whitney Museum’s Sunrise/Sunset project offers a compelling model for students’ understanding (see Figure 2).¹¹ By taking over the Whitney Museum’s website and blocking the main webpage with her video art, Giardina Papa emphasizes how people use technology to control their sleep patterns in accordance with the cycles of a larger societal system (Giardina Papa, n.d.). Her work critiques the irrational aspects of technology-based self-optimization, which transforms even sleep into labor (Whitney Museum, n.d.). Her critique becomes more impactful as her work blocks the museum’s website design. This act of redaction invites visitors to contemplate museum websites as technology-infused built environments of their own, to which individuals must often adapt.

Admittedly, Giardina Papa’s project does not directly tackle the issues of disability or accessibility in institutional website designs, but we can still extend her criticism of the standardization of bodily habits. Through the lens of critical disability studies, viewers can connect Papa’s critique to the issue of bodily normativity in online institutional spaces, as well as the interplay of body, time, and technology. Accordingly, her

¹¹ The Whitney Museum’s Sunrise/Sunset project is an ongoing collaborative internet art project that disrupts and replaces the official museum website with unfolding various artworks during the sunset and sunrise in New York City since 2009 (Whitney Museum, n.d.). Although the theme and focal point of each artwork changes, the project offers visitors an opportunity to reflect on intertwined relationships between museum, website, technology, and culture in contemporary society.

disruption of the Whitney’s website provides students with an effective model of how to temporarily disrupt an institution’s official design and resist ingrained, hegemonic relationships with technology, the body, and society. As one of a series commissioned by the Whitney Museum, Giardina Papa’s work also reveals the potential for collaboration between an institution and a contemporary artist to dismantle dominant narratives in institutional website structures and designs. Introducing her work as a significant example of collaboration can encourage students to enact their crippling. Such a process will involve challenging compliance-centered designs and transforming these online spaces into more inclusive built environments. Furthermore, students might potentially seek out extensive collaborations with their institution or LMS, aiming to enhance the accessibility of their designs and structures.

Crafting Alternative Online Learning Space Designs

Another practice to incorporate crippling into our art education lies in designing and constructing alternative website designs that center on disability experiences. Based on students’ shared experiences of disability and their analyses of targeted online learning space designs, students can create a mockup of a new website design to enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities. When possible, students can construct alternative online learning spaces using HTML or other web tools, such as WordPress or Adobe XD. However, art educators should bear in mind that familiarizing oneself with such languages and tools requires substantial time and effort for students. Therefore, educators should plan the whole construction as a long-term project that may require further collaboration with a technology assistance center or other departments in the institution. Moreover, this re-imagination and reconstruction practice does not always need to result in a fully completed website. Students who do not have technological proficiency can participate in crippling by drawing or crafting new website designs using analog materials and various art mediums. Art educators should remind students that the most significant objective in this practice is to engage in a critique of current ableist logics and compliance-centered designs, thereby re-imagining inclusive online learning space designs.

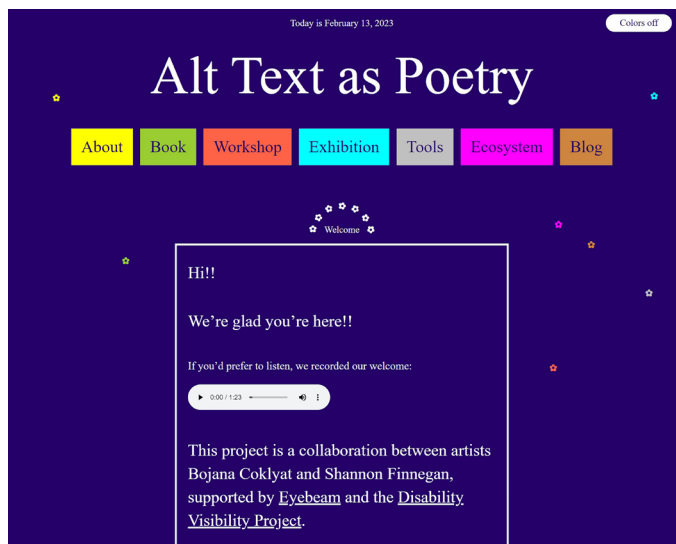


Figure 3. Screenshot of “Alt Text as Poetry” Project Website, Shannon Finnegan and Bojana

For example, the aforementioned *Alt Text as Poetry* project demonstrates an exemplary website that can increase students’ awareness of accessibility in website designs (see Figure 3). The artists developed a text-centered website using HTML to be more accessible and inviting, working in collaboration with web designers and programmers, Laurel Schwulst and Taichi Wi. To increase accessibility, their website offers voice descriptions and appropriate contrast for those with vision variances or non-standard color perception. Rather than using icons or images, which can be challenging for text-to-speech tools to interpret, the artists construct the design with box-shaped texts and flower symbol Unicode texts. This project website questions the prevailing U.S. web design trends, which rely heavily on images and low-contrast text. In doing so, Finnegan and Coklyat prove that text-based websites can successfully meld aesthetics with cultural accessibility. Introducing their project website will effectively allow students to analyze various disability-friendly design elements. It will also encourage students to construct their own versions of online learning space designs, with a focus on disability justice and broader accessibility.

In summary, while I suggest two distinct ways of crippling in art education (disrupting and crafting), the act of crippling can vary significantly depending on each educator’s vision. By introducing the aforementioned artists’ examples, art educators can employ various creative mediums and actively share crip knowledge with students

with disabilities. Students’ interpretations of crippling, as well as the outcomes they achieve from it, may also vary depending on their sociocultural backgrounds and collaborations with other students with disabilities. Amidst such variety, art educators should ultimately address an essential question at the end of the practice: What is the meaning of collective access in online learning space design, and how should we achieve collective access in our society? Exploring this question through hands-on learning allows students to reflect on the true value of collective access in online learning space designs and to envision more inclusive online learning spaces. This transformative process will not only foster students’ critical awareness about ableism, but also equip them with the necessary understanding of crip knowledge to reshape more accessible, equitable, and inclusive online learning spaces.

Conclusion

Higher education has historically colluded in the construction of academic ableism (Dolmage, 2017). Such ableism extends to online learning spaces, which, in their spatial design, have normalized non-disabled students and have often failed to fully consider a range of students with disabilities (Kent, 2015; Quinn et al., 2019). These entrenched ableist structures in neoliberal higher education and the broader society have consistently silenced students with disabilities’ aspirations for collective access (Dolmage, 2017). To combat such oppressive structures, I suggest crippling online learning space designs based on critical access studies and the conceptualization of crip technoscience (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019). As part of a disability justice art education praxis, students’ crippling practices should focus on challenging and disrupting compliance-centered online learning space designs. Shannon Finnegan and Bojana Coklyat’s *Alt Text as Poetry* project and Elisa Giardina Papa’s *Labor of Sleep: Have you been able to change your habits??* are key examples that inform students how to disrupt ableist spatial designs and further reconstruct inclusive online learning environments. The disruption of standard institutional website designs exposes how they perpetuate dominant narratives of online learning space designs and the exclusion of disabled students. Accordingly, this writing argues that art education praxis should ultimately reclaim the value of disability experiences and access, working to liberate students with disabilities in higher education. To construct much broader collective and transformative access in art education, art educators must constantly facilitate students’ understandings and re-evaluations of disabled experiences as ways of knowing.

I acknowledge that it is challenging to completely fulfill each disabled student’s access needs through one alternative design for online learning spaces. However, as Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) assert, access involves a continuous, frictional, collective, and generative effort to re-imagine

spatial relationships. Such a principle remains true in virtual spaces. While the issue of the disability divide in online learning spaces is still centered in a bureaucratic understanding of access, interweaving crip technoscience with our art education practice can help to materialize art educators' visions of collective access. By consistently valuing the interdependence of crip individuals through crip technoscience, art educators can further dismantle ableist structures in online spaces and build new anti-ableist pedagogies in art education.

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Art Evading Confinement: Abolition as Universal Design

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ABSTRACT

Universal Design, initially an approach to designing barrier-free architectural spaces for disabled people, has primarily been adapted to schooling through the Universal Design for Learning framework. Contemporary abolitionism is a visionary grassroots movement to make prisons and jails obsolete, which has been brought into education discourse primarily through considering urban public schools as institutions of policing and punishment. By considering these strategies for reforming and ending confinement, respectively, this essay argues for a more expansive understanding of access in education. The argument for their compatibility in arts education is articulated first through reviewing shared aspects of these two approaches, then surveying examples drawn from artists' practices, and lastly through a pedagogical approach framing the school as a complex and contradictory setting for making art.

KEYWORDS: Abolitionism; Universal Design; Universal Design for Learning; Anti-Racist Art Education; Enclosure; Ableism; School-to-Prison Pipeline

Space is the place

Minoritized groups have historically been spatially confined through projecting hierarchal distinctions, naturalized through embodied phenotypes, into forms of physical separation and constraint (Ben-Moshe et al., 2014; Ben-Moshe, 2020; Cunningham, 2009; Gilmore, 2002; Mbembe, 2003; Pitzer, 2017; Price, 2010; Rothstein, 2018; Schweik, 2009; Weizman, 2002). Just as Indigenous groups survived and persisted in the gaps created by European settler colonists' territorial expropriation (Byrd, 2011; Kimmerer 2013; Marin, 2020; Nelson & Wilson, 2021; Pewewardy et al., 2022), Black survival in the New World has been defined by resisting and refusing the constriction of physical space and the restriction of access to land (Anderson & Wilson, 2021). Black, Indigenous, disabled and queer scholars have identified long-standing legacies of creatively claiming space and offering mutual support in their respective and overlapping communities (Barclay, 2021; Harney & Moten, 2013; hooks, 1994, 1995; Kaba, 2021; Kimmerer, 2013; Marty, 2016; May, 1999; Moten, 2016; Nelson & Wilson, 2021; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Rickford, 2016; Rose et al., 2021; Watson, 2019; Wolcott, 2020). Such counter-dominant strategies of solidaristic refusal, subterfuge, and evasion have been discussed, following Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2013), under the heading of "fugitivity." Defying hierarchies

of race and ability, communal practices of survival, care, celebration, sustainability, and resistance infiltrate and circumvent ever-evolving modern institutions, which continually erase old boundaries and barriers while simultaneously generating new ones.

Insofar as schools are places where stratification and enclosure are perpetually updated and reinforced (Sojoyner, 2016), legacies of subaltern creativity offer promising models of subversion (Givens, 2021), even as these creative strategies, by necessity, remain incompletely assimilable by institutional authorities (Stabler, 2020a). Schools serving low-income areas in the U.S. are often detached from local community oversight and face encroaching privatization, centralized austerity, and metrics of quantified achievement that deny opportunities to a majority of students while granting autonomy to the children of wealthy families (Mayes, 2022; Meyerhoff, 2019; Price et al., 2013; Ravitch, 2013; Saltman, 2014). Particularly in majority-BIPOC U.S. cities, school privatization has become a key means by which students and communities with the greatest needs are shut off from education and other essential resources (Mommandi & Welner, 2021). Meanwhile, all historically marginalized communities other than White cis women, meaning BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and disabled people, remain dramatically overrepresented in American prisons, jails, and youth and immigrant detention facilities (Crowe & Drew, 2021; Duxbury, 2021; Nanda, 2019; Rovner, 2023; Ryo et al., 2018; Maruschak et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022), trends that have been vociferously opposed by those involved in contemporary campaigns for police and prison abolition. In response to these movements, art educators might emulate "minor" approaches to flourishing (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986): counterintuitive and circuitous "creative lines of escape" (p. 26) from conventional institutional hierarchies through fugitive forms of communal self-preservation. And importantly, "(f)ugitivity is not only escape," as Jack Halberstam (2013) notes in his preface to Moten and Harney's *The Undercommons*, "...fugitivity is being separate from settling" (p. 11). Such peripatetic, drifting, nomadic approaches might expand autonomy within classrooms, as well as within a wider curriculum and policy horizon, through invoking existing efforts that refuse both closure and enclosure, and connect to expanded models of creativity.

I myself am a cis, white, middle-class, invisibly disabled man. I worked in Chicago with Black and Latinx students as an art teacher in a range of settings, including a decade at a public high school in a low-income neighborhood, and I worked for four years with a group of incarcerated adult Black and Latinx college students who established a program for social and emotional learning in order to support fellow incarcerated men. One thing that makes my lived experience so different from many of the BIPOC people whom I've met and worked with, or even those whom I encountered through their creative work, has been a matter of both access and mobility. As a child my disability was respected even

when not accommodated, and as an adult I have navigated the world on my own terms, even or especially in majority-BIPOC spaces.

Many students I've worked with, both youth and adults, had not traveled far within the city beyond their home neighborhoods often, if at all (though many had made trips down South), and some had spent decades inside a prison. Such differences in voluntary mobility have become a major topic of conversation in the field of geography (Cook, 2018; Kwan & Schwanen, 2016; Shabazz, 2015), and they are at the heart of understanding how abolition relates to accessibility, and how both can be applied meaningfully to art education. Below, and throughout the essay, I will be sharing a variety of images that I believe uniquely convey an unfettered sense of and response to living and thriving in conditions of immobility. The first two images (see Figures 1 and 2) were made by high school students I worked with in Chicago.



Figure 1. *Individual student work, Stop Police Brutality, 2010. Stencil and block print on paper. 18 x 12 in.*



Figure 2. *Collaborative student work. School Surveillance Robot. 2008. Cardboard and mixed media. Approx. 36 x 24 x 120 in.*

In this essay I advocate for a consideration of abolition in arts education as an anti-carceral, anti-racist, anti-ableist struggle that seeks the democratization of access to space, extending work begun by the founders of Universal Design. Universal Design denotes a paradigm for the full inclusion of disabled people in relation to buildings, and all designed objects. In doing so, I maintain a focus on space and aesthetics, since the origins of Universal Design are in accessible architecture, and movements for abolition have long resisted physical and legal structures of power, particularly the plantation and later the prison (McKittrick, 2011). Speaking of his mentor Masao Miyoshi, Fred Moten (2016) describes how, “(o)perating at the intersection of performance and architecture, ... Professor Miyoshi is concerned with the rupture of restricted economies, those privatized sites of public exclusions,” in order to “pierce naturalized economic exclusion, envelopment, and exploitation, thereby initiating the work of abolition and reconstruction” (p. 164). For Miyoshi and thus Moten, these zones of exclusion beg a question about beauty, which “assumes the necessity of the aesthetic dimension of anticoloniality” (p. 165).

It can be upsetting to imagine the expressive space of an art classroom as part of an infrastructure that sustains and manages difference (hooks, 1995). But any effort toward changing art teaching should take seriously the institutional settings we function within as teachers, as

well as wider historical and social contexts. I want to suggest that we consider the horizon of carceral abolition as an extension of Universal Design, advocates of which have sought to make all spaces navigable by all bodies and minds (Hamraie, 2017). Emerging from the work of anti-racist activists in the 1970s and 1980s, who in turn took inspiration from campaigns to abolish slavery, today's abolition movement maintains that human captivity is morally and ethically intolerable, and it pursues projects opposing institutions of confinement. For contemporary abolitionists, these can include not only prisons and jails, but police forces, nation-states, surveillance apparatuses, and the global capitalist economic order (Davis, 2003; Gilmore, 2007, 2022; James, 2005; Kaba, 2021; Kilgore, 2022; Schenwar & Law, 2020).

As sites of pacification and punishment, as well as redistribution and collaboration, schools have become sites for dialogue around abolitionism (Meiners & Winn, 2012; Meyerhoff, 2019; Nocella et al., 2018; Reddy, 2018). Meanwhile, even modest efforts at accessibility have presented a challenge to the standardization that produces academic hierarchies, and the so-called "achievement gap." Also known as "normal distribution," the "bell curve" in the title of Charles Murray's infamously racist book derives from intelligence tests rooted in eugenic race science (Newby & Newby, 1995), a legacy which established standardized tests and academic tracking as features of American public education (Hunter-Doniger, 2017). Standardization and normalization are demanded by the physical and curricular design of many schools and school systems, as well as the mandates of educational authorities.

Such sorting has long been manifested in spatial arrangements. Much like the design of many public schools, the design of 20th-century prisons aimed to distribute those within its walls according to specific classifications and roles (Jewkes, 2013; Johnston, 2013; McGowen, 1995; Niedbala, 2020), a taxonomic approach that has also been applied to asylums for those considered mentally ill (Topp, 2004, 2017). A classroom pursuing principles of Universal Design would embrace heterogeneity, while an abolitionist classroom would refuse constraint (Kaba, 2021). As its name implies, Universal Design focuses beyond the individual to consider exclusion in relation to "disablement" (Oliver & Barnes, 2012), the social process of situating and identifying someone as disabled. This understanding has come to be known as the social model of disability (Shakespeare, 2006).

This social model can be rearticulated as an "institutional model" (Stabler, 2020b), naming the spaces of enclosure (Sojoyner, 2016) that have undertaken the management of disability difference as well as racial and economic difference (Ben-Moshe et al., 2014; Ben-Moshe, 2020; Gilmore, 2022; Schalk, 2022): jails, prisons, detention centers, slums, reservations, and refugee camps, as well as schools, hospitals,

and asylums, some of which have become abstracted from physical space through mobile digital technologies (Kilgore, 2022; Schenwar & Law, 2020). An institutional model of disability thus extends to racialization, the process of situating people as members of a race, differentiated from other races. The impact of racialization extends beyond personal prejudices, into physical, economic, legal, and spatial structures that produce and perpetuate differentiation. As Universal Design arises from the practice of designing accessible spaces, it offers possibilities for thinking spatially about liberatory education.

The ideal of eliminating barriers in schools based on bodies, minds, and life circumstances is necessary to consider if projects opposing racism and ableism are to move beyond efforts around representation and prejudice. In what follows, I will sketch out ways that Universal Design has yet to fully address the abolitionist potential of education, in order to suggest how these approaches complement one another. I go on to outline how confinement has been addressed artistically through a carceral aesthetic, a relational aesthetic, and a disability aesthetic. My conclusion takes up these aesthetic frames to suggest ways in which teachers and students might study, plan, and make through appreciating the constraints and affordances of institutions.

Special needs and surplus populations

Universal Design is a broad approach rooted in architecture and product design, distinct from Universal Design for Learning, or UDL.¹ UDL can be summarized as a three-part pedagogical approach promoting multiple means of representation, engagement, and action and expression (CAST, n.d.). Numerous books for educators describe the benefits of UDL, promoting its value beyond a supplemental approach for special education classes. Like arts programming generally, however, UDL can be perceived as a way to increase engagement, rather than a means to address unmet student and community needs. The description for a 2018 book on UDL by Thomas J. Tobin and Kirsten Behling states that, "although it is often associated with students with disabilities, UDL can be profitably broadened toward a larger ease-of-use and general diversity framework" (para. 2). Despite the merits of the claim that a flexible approach to learning benefits everyone,

1 I want to clarify at the outset that the term Universal Design for Learning (UDL) doesn't merely describe a pedagogical approach or framework. Unlike Universal Design more generally, it is associated with a specific organization, an educational nonprofit known as the Center for Applied Special Technology, or CAST, founded in 1984. Their website states, "CAST created the Universal Design for Learning framework, and it remains one of our core levers of change to help make learning inclusive and transformative for everyone" (n.d.). UDL is their primary intellectual product, and they have worked with multiple Federal and state government entities, as well as private funders such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and corporations including Google and Pearson.

ignoring forms of ongoing confinement risks leaving disabled and other minoritized students in the margins.

In their 2021 book *Equity by Design*, Mirko Chardin and Katie Novak extend UDL into a register that seems compatible with the disability justice aims of some Universal Design advocates (Hamraie, 2017). Chardin and Novak assert that “one curriculum, without embedded flexible options using the principles of UDL, cannot possibly build equity within the classroom” (p. 9). The authors consider issues of implicit bias in arguing that educational access, a term often denoting disabled access, should be extended to all students who may be marginalized or excluded because of their culture or identity. They speak of minoritized students “who have been disabled by the system and our practices” (p. 10), echoing the social model of disability, in which a person’s inability to meet social expectations for functionality are attributed to those expectations, rather than to the physical, sensory, or mental impairments of the individual.

Equity by Design offers a salutary approach to using the lens of disability to enhance antiracist curriculum by addressing personal feelings and interactions. Similarly, attempts have been made to link UDL pedagogy with a “culturally sustaining” approach to education, putting both under the heading of “asset pedagogies” (King Thorius & Waitoller, 2016) and seeing them as a shared basis for coalitions that question existing practices of “inclusion” (Clare, 2009; King Thorius & Waitoller, 2017). But the shortcomings of these approaches, along with overlooking ways in which race and disability can intersect and interact, lie in a lack of discussion around deeper inequities undergirding the social model of disability, including vectors of colonial and racial exclusion (Puar, 2017). As in most treatments of UDL, there is no mention of the economic and legal circumstances that have historically rendered BIPOC, disabled, and sexually minoritized groups as surplus populations (Marx, 1867/1967), groups disproportionately excluded from economic participation and full membership in civil society (Charlton, 2010; Taylor, 2021; Wilderson, 2003), who were and remain targets of eugenicist policies (Hansen & King, 2013; Leonard, 2017; Mitchell & Snyder, 2003; Ordovery, 2003).

In “Universal Design: places to start” (2015), Jay Dolmage (2015) calls Universal Design “a way to move,” and cites Aimi Hamraie calling it “a form of activism” (n.p.). Along with listing anti-ableist pedagogical approaches, Dolmage’s purpose in this piece is to productively criticize how UDL, a framework that originated in working with disabled learners, has been taken up as shorthand for the notion of “learning styles” and becoming a tool to activate areas of the brain, while erasing the centrality of disability. In their use of what he calls “neurorhetorics,” Dolmage critiques an instrumental tendency among education experts to reduce socially inclusive projects that require cultural shifts and

emotional effort to a checklist of activities and practices. In this spirit, Hamraie (2017) contends that, “The consumer-centric post-ADA narrative that dominates much of Universal Design marketing tells us little about the sociopolitical economy of design or what purpose profitability serves, who benefits, and toward what ends” (p. 257).

A more holistic understanding of how groups marked by difference interface with carceral authorities via punitive schools can be found in the work of Subini Ancy Annamma (Annamma, 2014, 2018; Annamma et al., 2020; Annamma & Hardy, 2021). Through an intersectional concept she names “DisCrit,” Annamma fuses critical disability and critical race scholarship, teaching, and activism. Annamma and Tamara Hardy (2021) speak of Dis/Crit as a recognition “that race and dis/ability are mutually constitutive social constructions with material realities” (p. 42), and they summarize overlapping regimes of marginalization in education:

Historically marginalized students—students of color, disabled students, LGBTQ students, and students at the junctures of multiple oppressions (e.g., disabled students of color, LGBTQ students of color)—lag in most measures of success (e.g., grades, test scores, graduation) and are overrepresented in spaces seeking to remedy differences (e.g., special education, discipline, incarceration). (p. 41)

In her writing Annamma opposes the integration of spaces and mechanisms of education, punishment, and medicalization, and questions the presumption of benevolence in coercive child custody settings. Her focus is neither on art nor UDL, but centers on a vision of educational justice that delegitimizes discipline and highlights the need to address trauma through consensual forms of mutual learning and support.

As critical pedagogues have long maintained, there is no apolitical form of teaching. But insofar as art is a subject area where teachers enjoy curricular autonomy (Stabler & Lucero, 2019), and where students can engage in uncoerced expression within the often coercive space of the school, the way in which art content is taught and the way in which the art classroom is managed both reflect a political attitude. Thus, both the form and content of art projects reflecting on incarceration may be a place to start in considering what an accessible abolitionist art curriculum might entail. Art reflecting fugitive forms of mobility within and against what theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) call “the apparatus of capture” can be a source of creative research. In the following section I outline three aesthetic frames, artistic approaches that reflect the exile of punishment, the exclusion of abnormality, and efforts, however imperfect, to provide confined groups with representation.

Institutional aesthetics

Art made by people in jails and prisons mostly circulates within those institutions, or between incarcerated people and their home communities. Incarcerated artists often cater to a demanding incarcerated clientele, but their work is rarely discussed outside of the aforementioned circuits. *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, a confinement-themed exhibition that opened in 2020 at the Museum of Modern Art, P.S. 1, featured work by currently and formerly incarcerated artists, as well as non-incarcerated artists. Curator, scholar, and activist Nicole Fleetwood, who organized *Marking Time*, coins the term “carceral aesthetics” in her book of the same title: “Carceral aesthetics is the production of art under the conditions of unfreedom; it involves the creative use of penal space, time, and matter” (2020, p. 25). She continues:

Immobility, invisibility, stigmatization, lack of access, and premature death govern the lives of the imprisoned and their expressive capacity. Such deprivation becomes raw material and subject material for prison art. The creative practices of incarcerated people fundamentally challenge aesthetic traditions that link art and discernment to the free, mobile, white, Western man. Indeed, carceral aesthetics often involves... being forcibly rendered out of sight, to imagine and then clandestinely construct other worlds, ones that speak to and through captivity. (p. 25)

Referencing Immanuel Kant’s ideas of beauty and racial hierarchy, Fleetwood succinctly elaborates ways in which the history of Western art and aesthetics is bound up with punishment via practices of social visibility, epitomized in the image of the “panopticon,” a model of prison surveillance introduced in the eighteenth century by British utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, and later popularized by Michel Foucault. Apropos of this point, when I led a reading group on political conceptual art in the summer of 2012 at the prison where I volunteered, an incarcerated student observed that a prison is set up like an art exhibition, with the inmates on display like objects in a museum or gallery.

In keeping with Fleetwood’s comments, much of the work by incarcerated artists featured in *Marking Time* is unlike work in contemporary art galleries and fairs; incarcerated artists often use pilfered, smuggled, fabricated, hidden, and stockpiled materials to create painstakingly handcrafted pieces that engage traditional forms like portraits, dioramas, and lettering; an exquisite example is provided below (see Figure 3) with one of Dean Gillispie’s assemblage pieces, featured in *Marking Time*. Carceral artworks shown to outsiders usually make straightforward statements, if any statements at all, and avoid

sensational content. I spent most of a year working in a prison-based art program in the South before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and this was consistent with the work I saw from the experienced artists in this program, as well as with the artists I met through the Midwestern college-in-prison program.



Figure 3. Dean Gillispie, *Spiz’s Diner*, 1998. Tablet backs, stick pins, popsicle sticks, cigarette foil. 16 x 8 x 5 in.

Though often made in the absence of arts programming, it could be said that these rigorous works exemplify what Arthur Efland (1976) called “the school art style.” Recognizing continuity among artworks produced by institutionally confined artists in different settings is intriguing to consider, without diminishing the skill, ingenuity, and labor shown by artists like Dean Gillispie. Rather, in the incarcerated artists’ works, the artist’s dignity is asserted through masterful precision and creative control that defiantly mirrors the presumed mastery of the institutional gaze, both declaring autonomy and avoiding censure.

As Fleetwood argues, the prison seeks to erase individuals as social subjects as it makes them visible objects, an objectification that is privately subverted by artists like Gillispie. But some incarcerated artists have become visible public figures through collaborations with non-incarcerated artists. One well-known example was a long-running touring art exhibition which was adapted into a 2012 documentary, *Herman’s House*, as well as a 2015 book, *The House that Herman Built*. Based on imagining and planning a dream home for Herman Wallace, a Black

Panther who spent over four decades in solitary confinement on highly questionable grounds, the project evolved through correspondence between Wallace and Jackie Sumell, a non-incarcerated artist. Introduced to the artist Marc Fischer through mail correspondence in the early 1990s (Stabler & Fischer, 2022, p. 59), an incarcerated creator known simply as Angelo eventually contributed artwork to *Prisoners' Inventions*, both a 2003 exhibition and a publication curated by Fischer's artist collective Temporary Services. In his drawings, Angelo illustrates and describes an array of devices improvised by himself and by fellow incarcerated people. Artists interred at Illinois' Stateville Prison have created a series of hand-drawn animations in collaboration with artists in the Prison + Neighborhood Arts/Education Project, one of which, *Freedom/Time* (2014), was publicly projected in 2015 on the wall of the Cook County Jail, in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood, shown in Figure 4. This was in collaboration with the arts education group 96 Acres, which explores the relationship between the jail and the surrounding community.



Figure 4. *96 Acres, Stories from the Inside/Outside, 2015, featuring Freedom/Time, animation by artists involved with the Prison + Neighborhood Arts/Education Project projected on the wall of the Cook County Jail. Dimensions variable.*

In describing work such as this, Fleetwood (2020) turns to the term, “relational aesthetics,” coined by Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) to talk about artwork that developed in the wake of the Institutional Critique movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Works of relational aesthetics directly engage an audience, often in a non-art setting. Terms such as social practice, socially-engaged art, and new genre public performance have

also been used to describe such collaborative work. These terms also encompass the anticarceral legislative lobbying project Tamms Year Ten, led by artist Laurie Jo Reynolds, Cameron Rowland's gallery exhibitions of products fabricated by incarcerated people, and the recent interactive online abolitionist exhibition “Re: Action,” organized by the group Envisioning Justice. Fleetwood reflects on the ethics of collaborations between non-incarcerated and incarcerated artists, stating that:

We must attend to how the structures of nonprofit arts and service organizations and carceral institutions work in tandem to define what collaboration means, who is being served, and how art projects can be instrumentalized to reproduce both institutions as sites of containment where social, cultural, and political value are unequally distributed . . . While we need forms of public engagement that do not separate incarcerated people from the nonincarcerated, we also need to be careful that prison art collaborations do not rely on a notion of art as intrinsically transformative or on a relationship to prisons that reinforces their power and function to dictate who is captive and who is free. (p. 159)

Both carceral and relational works tend to be readable as resistance and an assertion of the intellectual agency and moral autonomy of incarcerated people, although relational art tends to emphasize pedagogy and advocacy over form and technique.

Meanwhile, there is an institutional artistic archive that differs from much work produced in or about jails, prisons, or K-12 schools. This is the work of neurodivergent artists who would once have been readily found in psychiatric institutions. In 1922 German psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn published a landmark study collection of such work, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (1922 / 1972), which had a major impact on avant-garde artists at the time (Dolbear, 2019). In the twentieth century, individual labels like “visionary,” “outsider,” and “self-taught” artists in the U.S., or the collective term “Art Brut” in Europe, became euphemisms for work by artists whom we might now understand as neurodivergent, possibly classifiable as having schizophrenia, autism, PTSD, bipolar disorder, and/or an intellectual or developmental disability.

For incarcerated and non-incarcerated disabled artists alike, reflection on internal states is often a significant expressive component. This is of course not an exclusively European phenomenon; I would propose that the transdisciplinary orientation of Afrofuturism (Boyd Acuff, 2020) owes its existence to the contributions of neurodivergent artists,

authors, and musicians (Isaacs, 2020; Pickens, 2019),² with Rammellzee, Pedro Bell, and Lonnie Holley as signal exponents in the visual arts. Rammellzee, whose work appears in Figure 5, was an influential artist and musician in the early days of New York hip-hop who propounded a mystical revolutionary philosophy of mathematics and language (Hsu, 2018).



Figure 5. *Rammellzee, Ignighter the Master Alphabiter, 1994–2001*
Headpiece and costume (found objects, paint and resin with garment elements). Dimensions variable/ Photo by Joshua White. Courtesy of the Estate of Rammellzee and Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles.

Borrowing the title of a 2010 volume by Tobin Siebers, much of this wide catalogue of work by neurodivergent artists can be said to embody “disability aesthetics.” Siebers describes a modern art legacy indebted to anti-ideals of imperfection, strangeness, and excess that oppose the symmetrical, healthy, and harmonious virtues of European classicism. A renowned intellectually disabled assemblage sculptor, Judith

² I should note here that very few of the thousands of neurodivergent BIPOC people now incarcerated in the U.S. (Maruschak et al., 2016) may be able to summon the necessary stamina and other resources to both create artwork and make it visible to a wider audience.

Scott, whose work Siebers chronicles in his first chapter, developed a compelling style in an institutional environment. Scott spent 35 years warehoused in a state asylum in Ohio before her sister transferred her to a residential creative arts program in Oakland. Siebers writes,

Although materials were made available to her, Scott behaved as if she were pilfering them, and each one of her sculptures takes the form of a cocoon at the center of which is secreted some acquired object... Commentators have made the habit of associating her methods with acts of theft and a kind of criminal sensibility, acquired during thirty-five years in a mental institution. (pp. 16-17)

Siebers does not offer this “criminal sensibility” as a definitive reading of Scott’s formal approach, but there is no reason to diminish the influence of her traumatic environment on Scott’s fugitive artistic output, while her sculptures’ lush tangibility uncannily evokes a haptic sensibility that Moten and Harney (2013) identify as ubiquitous in subaltern social life.

Constraints define much disability-themed artwork. For contemporary disabled Black artists Panteha Abareshi and Carolyn Lazard, institutions represent constraints that must be simultaneously withstood and undermined. Lazard’s work in Figure 6, *A Conspiracy* (2017), is a collection of white noise machines that are installed on the ceiling of a museum in order to constrain hearing and permit private, possibly subversive conversations (Damman, 2020). Constraints are a central fact of life for disabled artists, whether embodied, medical, interpersonal, carceral, or bureaucratic, and perhaps the most ubiquitous constraint is time. Particularly as disabled people are incarcerated at far higher rates than non-disabled people (Rembris, 2014), the “crip time” theorized by critical disability thinkers as a slowed, nonlinear, inconsistent, flexible experience of chronology based on the individual needs and obstacles faced by disabled people (Samuels, 2017) can be productively linked with the traumatic but stubbornly contentious relationships to time articulated both by incarcerated people and by the wider Black community (Fleetwood, 2020; Guenther, 2013; Kim et al., 2018; Sojoyner, 2016).



Figure 6. *Carolyn Lazard, A Conspiracy, 2017. Dohm white noise machines. Dimensions variable.*

Through art, institutions can be meaningfully described, symbolically neutralized, or imaginatively transcended, but at the same time, following warnings by Fleetwood and others, art can also give those institutions validity and authority, or hide their power as structures of repression. In conceiving of a future without these structures, it can be useful to see how individual artists make artwork that can go places and do things that the artists themselves are unable to go or do. These fugitive aesthetics of the “carceral,” the “disabled,” and the “relational” describe differing but compatible perspectives on enclosure, from the respective and sometimes overlapping positions of those being punished, those being excluded, and those endeavoring to facilitate others’ creative refusal of institutional constraints. These headings may be useful in determining how teachers can engage with work by artists working in spaces of enclosure.

Acknowledge the frame

As mentioned earlier, the above examples provided by artists and other cultural workers are intended to provide three connected “aesthetic frames:” carceral, relational, and disabled. I intend these frames as reference points that can help to create, not a unidirectional teleological guide, but a field of possible routes, aligned in spirit with the multidirectional strategies employed by advocates of abolition and practitioners of Universal Design. In my usage, a frame can act as a border or boundary, but it also can call attention to something important that would otherwise be overlooked.

A frame acts as a container in a traditional figurative painting, the archetypal Western artwork, but so does the collection space, not to mention the commercial and critical entities that determine and sustain the value of the work. While acknowledging the context of the museum or gallery (framing the framework, as it were) was the central concern of artists involved in the Institutional Critique movement, artworks throughout time have pointed to their respective contexts. The flexibility of parameters that UDL inherits from Universal Design can allow artists to push and test the limits of the institutional setting (Lucero, 2013). Including an abolitionist critique of punitive control and a disabled critique of singular mastery can make the art classroom a space where parameters are negotiable, and students’ knowledge can be fostered and displayed.

Accessible art lessons in an abolitionist classroom can be a meditation on school as a frame for making art and for relating to others. Accessibility in this context should hopefully now connote not only respectful flexibility with regard to communication, media, and outcomes, but also with regard to individual and collaborative creative processes, and to relevant institutional parameters. Insofar as American public school teachers are an overwhelmingly white, cis, able-bodied population, their role, as described above, aligns with the non-institutionalized partners in relational art collaborations, while many of their students, particularly in non-elite schools, may be able to apprehend some aspects of the immobilized experiences of incarcerated and/or disabled artists. Teachers working with students can reflect on, describe, and depict explicit and implicit elements of their institutional roles, while also thinking about how roles can be productively transgressed in the service of students and communities.

By considering as wide a range of bodies, minds, and constraints as possible, and proposing and imagining the abolition of coerced confinement, we can create art classrooms that engage prefigurative politics (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). By learning from artists commenting on incarceration, hospitalization, and other forms of enclosure, conversations in the art room can prompt reflection by students and teachers on unstated parameters of educational settings. Emulating incarcerated artists, unexpected uses can be found for familiar and abundant materials, whether physical or metaphorical. Emulating disabled makers, speculative personal projects can be undertaken that disregard and displace the schedules and metrics of the school. Emulating relational partnerships, students can be part of public interventions that call attention to how the school serves its community. Art projects can encourage research on both enclosure and its subterfuge; borrowing from the radical psychiatric practices of postwar France or learning from Indigenous traditions of wayfinding, students can be encouraged to meander, creating based on affective inclinations rather than rules and roles (Marin, 2020; Nelson & Wilson,

2021). Starting in the classroom and moving out into shared worlds within and between communities, students can enact fugitive mobility. Classroom projects can involve planning and making art, but can also institute forms of communication that allow every student to feel respected, symbolically opposing youth criminalization (Morgan, 2021). While successful efforts at implementing restorative or transformative justice practices require administrative commitment (Meiners & Kaba, 2016), art classes have flexibility to patiently engage speculative practices. Teachers can look at the history of freedom schools (Hale, 2016) and other experimental efforts at bottom-up transformative learning among enclosed populations (hooks, 1994, 1995; Marin, 2020; May, 1999; Pewewardy et al., 2022; Rickford, 2016; Watson, 2019), as well as public and online spaces of free information exchange; these examples can also be intriguing points of departure for student discussion and research.

Disability scholars Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey (2014), borrowing from Michel Foucault's concept of the "carceral archipelago," offer the expanded idea of the "institutional archipelago" (p. 14), denoting an historically interconnected web of coercive and confining spaces. When presenting an abolitionist approach, it is important to not simply focus on the school as the one and only frame. Similarly, when discussing jails and prisons, it is important to not see the school in isolation from other enclosures, but also to acknowledge its unique assets and potentials, in distinction from more restrictive settings, as well as to acknowledge the ways in which many schools can and do enhance the mobility and access of their students. Those connections can be challenging to present to K-12 students,³ but collaborative community-focused art projects emphasizing process and participation can allow students, whether in educational environments that tend toward mobility or enclosure, to produce "minor" gestures challenging confinement and offering imaginative and evasive possibilities. As Deleuze & Guattari (1986) phrase it, "it isn't a question of liberty as against submission, but only a question of a line of escape or, rather, of a simple *way out*, 'right, left or in any direction'" (p. 7, italics original).

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³ Along these lines, Mariame Kaba's poignant children's books on parental incarceration, *Missing Daddy* (2018) and *See You Soon* (2022) are very much worth checking out.

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Visualizing Digital Communities of Practice

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ABSTRACT

In 2021, forty art, design, and media educators throughout a midwestern state in the United States critically examined their lessons through the lenses of social-emotional learning (SEL), standards-based assessment, research-informed practice, and culturally responsive instruction. During the program, teacher-learners recorded their reflections, which are condensed in a presentation-as-art-installation, highlighting dialogic self-reflection in a community of practice. In the video, originally conceived as a 2-channel installation, teachers discuss SEL; equity, diversity, and inclusion; research-informed practice; and standards-based grading, looking at the camera by themselves and reflecting on their daily practice as they incorporate new learning into their teaching. The text discusses how these transformative conversations took place, the necessary conditions for dialogic self-reflection in a community of practice, their impact on their professional practice, and sharing classroom experiences.

KEYWORDS: Social-Emotional Learning, Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Communities of Practice, Professional Development, Reflective Practitioner



Link to 2-channel installation video

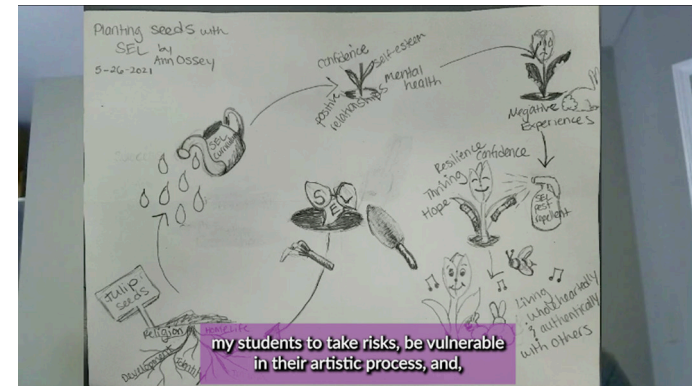


Figure 1. Screenshot of the video where teacher Ann Ossey explains what SEL looks like in the art classroom.

Introduction

As the 2020 lockdown affected schools, the Illinois Art Educators Association (IAEA) with the support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Illinois Arts Council Agency, asked teachers to collaborate in creating lessons grounded on research-based practices. These sessions were named Collaborating for Excellence (CFE). The program consisted of four modules: Incorporating Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into the Arts Curriculum; Standard-based Assessment Practices; Research-informed practice; and Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the Art Room. An additional working module encouraged participants to create a new lesson or redesign an old one incorporating the new learning and to share this lesson in an online repository on the IAEA website (ilaea.org).

A research team, with co-author Brad Olson as Principal Investigator, collected the data produced by participants. During the process, participant Verónica Soria-Martínez was invited to the research team to produce a series of visual artifacts using arts-based research methods, which were later presented at state and national conferences with participants, Jennifer Fitzpatrick and Ann Ossey. The result is a video installation with two channels facing each other, as in an actual conversation, representing teachers as they widen the discussion to improve their teaching. The clips used in the video are participants' responses produced during the learning modules, and they primarily focus on contributions for the first module (SEL), although learning from the other modules is intertwined. A side-by-side version of the two-channel installation is presented here in a video format. This paper discusses the theoretical frameworks and the contexts that contributed to the making of the video.

Theoretical Frameworks

To guide this project, we drew upon theoretical frameworks that explore the concept of *communities of practice* (CoP). Wenger-Trayner (2015) describes a community of practice as a group of people engaged in collective learning within a shared domain of human endeavor. A CoP may take a variety of shapes, but is primarily organized around the successful completion of a shared learning task. This might take the form of a group of engineers working to solve similar problems; artists exploring shared issues or media; doctors, scientists, and researchers hoping to understand a particular illness; or in our case, teachers hoping to improve their practice.

Studies of CoPs have been useful in understanding social learning in a wide variety of fields. Some scholars have explored writing retreats composed of academics across disciplines (Wiebe et al., 2023). In marketing, others have studied how “foodie” influencers on social media connect in CoPs (Miguel et al., 2022). Within the field of education in general, studies have investigated how teachers come together in collaborative learning situations in service of professional development (Brown et al., 2021). In the field of art education, CoPs have framed how art teachers may learn among each other and improve their practice as artists and educators. Gates (2010) explains that many art teachers feel like “islands,” disconnected in practice from others in their field. Gates studies the tensions between isolation and collaboration regarding art educators’ professional development, arguing that learner-directed approaches can connect art teachers. In this process, isolated “islands” of teachers may coalesce into a more connective network or “archipelago” (p. 7).

Within any CoP, Wenger (2000) notes the pedagogical role of *boundary encounters*. Wenger theorizes that certain boundaries are formed in a CoP, mainly through the dimensions of competence and experience. Tensions occur at these boundaries as dominant ideas within the in-group are challenged by new ones from outside perspectives. Wenger argues that “competence and experience tend to diverge: a boundary interaction is usually an experience of being exposed to a foreign competence” (p. 233). In this regard, Wenger refers consistently to learning occurring “at the boundaries” of the group and recognizes that learning “across” them may be more difficult (pp. 232-238). This distinction is illustrated by picturing yourself sitting at a table of particle physicists. You might not learn much simply because “the distance between your own experience and the competence you are confronting is just too great” (p. 233).

When competence and experience are too close, a CoP may risk becoming insular, losing its dynamism, or becoming stale in its practice. Conversely, learning may not likely occur if competency and experience

are too disconnected (Wenger, 2000). However, this encounter with new ideas at the boundary of a CoP is also where misunderstandings and tensions between CoP members may occur. For CFE, one of the organizational goals was to facilitate these connections between art educators of varying competencies and experiences to encourage deeper learning about teaching through this tension.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, Ellsworth (2004) argues that conflict and tension may be crucial to a person’s learning experience. Ellsworth has long studied various places where learning occurs, including schools, public memorials, and other community sites. She argues that any site might become pedagogical when they provide a “hinge” (or impetus) for a person to reconsider meanings they may have of “inside and outside, self and other, personal and social” (p. 45). For Ellsworth, the pedagogical hinge relies on conflict and tension between old and new ideas. In certain situations, conflict might lead one to learn when it asks them to “redraw the boundaries of who you think we are and who you think they are” (pp. 95-97).

In the case of the CFE program studied here, teachers from various contexts across our state were allowed to expand their community of practice beyond their local, immediate environments and be challenged by ideas from others outside their usual realms of influence. In CFE, veteran teachers co-mingled with teachers in their first few years of service; painters interfaced with sculptors; rural teachers conversed with urban/suburban teachers, and so on. This diversity of competence and experience led to rich debates regarding topics like social-emotional learning, one of CFEs core modules.

Digital Storytelling (DST) as Research

As an evaluation team, our goal was to measure CFEs efficacy in various ways and employed mixed-methods research models to do so. In other reports of the CFE program, attention was paid to analyzing quantitative and demographic data gleaned from pre- and post-program surveys, engagement within each module, and assessing growth and development in targeted lesson plans selected by participants.

However, several qualitative artifacts and data points were also generated during CFE that we found rich for analysis in new ways. During the CFE program, participants responded reflectively to several prompts in the form of drawings, diagrams, short written discussion posts, and videos posted to the video-based teaching platform Flipgrid. Each of these components together helps to tell the story of the CFE program from the experience and perspectives of the participating art educators.

Due to the rich audio-visual qualities of these types of data and the digital, asynchronous learning space of the CFE program itself, we looked to arts-based research methods to analyze participants' experiences in CFE. We were drawn to models of using digital storytelling as a research method. For Lambert (2009, 2013), *digital storytelling* (DST) was originally defined as a 2–5-minute audio-visual product that combines photographs with voice-over narration to facilitate story sharing. DST has been employed in many different domains, including health research about the COVID-19 pandemic (Durant & Kortés-Miller, 2023; West et al., 2022), as an inquiry tool within the field of education in general (Özkaya, 2022) and in Art Education in particular (Chung, 2007). In contexts like these, DST has been argued to provide counter-narratives, encourage participatory research, provide therapeutic benefits, aid in knowledge translation, develop communities, and provide pathways for professional development (de Jager et al., 2017).

However, most relevant to us was the use of DST as a research tool to analyze and understand the phenomenon at hand. It is suggested that DST as a research tool allows participants to engage in “deep listening,” provides more depth than traditional interviews, and encourages greater collaboration between subjects (de Jager et al, 2017, p. 2572). In the process of engaging in video reflections, participants in CFE utilized DST to share their experiences and perspectives on many topics at the center of the program modules and collaborate and create dialogue with others. As researchers, DST helped us understand the CFE program in a more holistic, qualitative way. Although the video responses and other visual data generated by CFE participants may not take the direct form of DST as defined by Lambert, we suggest that their digital, multi-modal responses signify new forms in which DST might take shape. This is particularly useful in providing a picture of the CFE program as a community of practice and in exploring where boundary encounters and tensions on module topics like social-emotional learning occurred. In our review of the video responses generated by participants, we examined transcripts and videos for dialogues across boundaries of geography, experience, and competency, highlighting these conversations in the finished compilation.

Collaborating for Excellence Overview

The sessions started during the spring of 2021, when most teachers were still teaching in a combination of remote, hybrid, or hybrid instruction, with in-person and online students simultaneously. It was a new space for teachers to navigate, regardless of experience. Collaborating online allowed us to reflectively use that in-between space to start rethinking what art education can be and make it a reality in our classrooms. In the first module, facilitator Jennifer Wargin provided examples of using SEL in the art classroom. It has been previously researched how SEL improves students' mental health and well-being, increasing

engagement and establishing the foundations for applying cognition, and how the arts can have an important role in developing SEL (Eddy et al., 2021). Wargin proposed a curriculum that connected the five competencies established by the Collaborative of Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to the four artistic processes encompassed by the National Core Art Standards (create, present, respond, connect). The CASEL competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). The art processes in the studio classroom elicit them regularly. For instance, working on self-expression requires students to develop their self-awareness, which in turn promotes their self-management. Likewise, connecting (ideas and artists with cultures and diverse socioeconomic groups) has an impact on students' social awareness. Students develop their relationship skills when they respond to other artwork, such as during critiques. And lastly, when making choices to present, they exert their responsible decision-making.

Additionally, participants were introduced to how trauma or adverse events may have an impact on learning by temporarily suspending brain function, which has been documented by Hammond (2014). Similarly, attention to self-awareness may improve student agency and help reverse that negative effect, as does maintaining a culturally responsive community for learning where a growth mindset is promoted (Hammond, 2014). For instance, naming feelings has been found to have a regulating effect on the brain (Torre & Lieberman, 2018). Along these lines, participants worked in activities to name feelings to increase awareness of emotions and learned how to unpack this work for students with the goal of promoting self-regulation. Some participants featured in the video had previous experience implementing SEL mini-lessons separated from the art instruction. The difference was that now we were learning to incorporate it into our lessons by prompting students to think about their lives, identities, and relationships and encouraging them to create art about it.

Some voices have critiqued SEL for overlooking the socioeconomic inequalities that students confront. Camangian and Cariaga (2021) argue that its lack of historical analysis is hegemonistic and propose humanization instead. Additionally, participants in the CFE discussed ways to implement SEL components in a “well thought out curriculum without taking away from the art itself” (05:41). However, others have claimed the transformative power of SEL as a lever for equity (Jagers et al., 2019; Schlund et al., 2020). The video includes teacher responses showing ways in which SEL has direct implications in working toward more just communities and how maintaining an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment results in a place where individuals feel respected, safe, and accounted for.

In the video, teachers' honesty and vulnerability tie SEL with Culturally Responsive Teaching practices. For instance, learning the effects of chronic stress and trauma on the brain and gaining awareness of how cortisol hijacks the brain and prevents it from learning (Hammond, 2014) made a participant reflect on how their cognitive function was blocked growing up and relate to his students in a new way (00:48). Another teacher notes how a growth mindset was encouraged (10:30) by helping students with their self-talk. Teachers put themselves in the place of their students, observing things from their perspective, thus minimizing the power differential.

The video promotes empowerment for art educators by highlighting art class as a space where SEL most naturally happens, as students work on creative self-expression and other studio structures. Several teachers emphasize throughout the video the need for safe environments where students can express themselves, collaborate, and be listened to. Similarly, teachers incorporate SEL competencies into the way they teach by surveying the class climate and collecting student input. This emphasis on implementing democratic processes is evident in (07:15, 08:18, and 12:20) when different teachers explain structures they have in place to allow their students to give them feedback about the class and their teaching.

As a CoP, we modeled such a space for art teachers/learners. One of the teachers proposes that art teachers "can be leaders" (05:06) and can show other teachers how to do this kind of work. Another reflects on how art classes are "a recruiting tool...but at the same time, we're not included in a lot of the decision-making process" (05:53). Teachers saw their existing separation as specialists in their buildings/districts exacerbated by a global pandemic. During this time, this collaboration created equitable opportunities by promoting exchange among teachers from affluent districts and teachers who barely had materials or whose students could not afford them. This exchange sparked recognition of cognitive dissonances and stopped perceiving certain abuses of power as normal.

As part of our study of CFE, pre- and post-intervention surveys yielded some valuable data regarding the efficacy of the program and its impact on participating teachers. Nearly all participants noted some improvement in their targeted lesson plans, and 44% noted a major difference. In written reflections, many described a valuable and positive learning experience facilitated by their encounters with new ideas. One such participant stated:

(It's) the power and knowledge that can be found when you collaborate with other educators to make yourself a better educator... I have been amazed by the amount of things that I did not know or had not given proper consideration to until

hearing other educators share their experiences utilizing the skills and knowledge we have covered.

Other participants have highlighted how the CFE experience provided them with a diverse toolbox of resources to support EDI and SEL in their classrooms to meet the needs of their students. One of them emphasized how the collaborative aspect supported this learning:

Oftentimes, art teachers are the only ones in their content area in a building or school district. The inability to collaborate with others in the same content area is isolating. CFE bridged that gap and met this need for art teachers across the state of Illinois. It also inspired me to pursue teacher leadership at the national level through Connected Arts Network to promote the same types of connections and bridge gaps for isolated art teachers across the United States. The professional relationships I gained from being a part of CFE continue to be a part of my professional world.

Exposure to new ideas, a range of diverse approaches, and collaboration with other teachers were important themes throughout.

When we shared the video at art educator conferences, we offered an open dialog at the end, which tended to focus on the SEL aspect. Teachers in the audience showed curiosity about how SEL would benefit their practices; however, some expressed concern that this could mean a new burden at the margins of their competencies. However, at a moment where political polarization and a national teen mental health crisis converge (US Surgeon General's Advisory, 2023), adopting SEL may allow teachers to help their students' well-being without being accused of politicization or indoctrination. In this sense, the CoP allowed us to experience SEL, EDI, and other equity-related practices (such as standard-based grading and research-informed teaching) with other colleagues and try them on ourselves in a safe environment before putting them into practice. The role of CFE as a community of practice empowered teachers to cross boundaries of geography, experience, and competence to discuss these challenging issues in our field.

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Critical Phenomenology as Research-Creation: A Theoretical Framework

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a theoretical framework justifying the articulation of descriptive forms of critical phenomenology with experimental and poetic forms of research-creation. Through an engagement with Merleau-Ponty, the article argues that aesthetic concerns are ontological concerns. In particular, Merleau-Ponty defines embodiment not in terms of essences so much as in terms of stylizations. The focus on style opens the phenomenological description of embodiment up for research-creation through poetic experimentation. While critical phenomenology has greatly expanded the understanding of the politics of bodily stylization, this discourse has yet to fully explore the possibilities for imagining new modes of writing that are equal parts vivid description and poetical re-stylization of how bodies interact and perceive. Emphasizing the need for creative, transformative, and collective forms of writing, Gloria Anzaldúa's work serves as a foundation for research-creation grounded in a critical phenomenology of bodily stylistics.

KEYWORDS: Critical Phenomenology, Flashpoint Methodology, Autohistoria-Teoría, Anzaldúa, Research-Creation, Critical Reflection

Critical Phenomenology as Research-Creation: A Theoretical Framework

Although phenomenology is accepted as a well-established research method in education (Friesen et al., 2012; van Manen, 2015), there are very few examples of research-creation that explicitly employ phenomenological themes and/or theoretical frameworks (Blumenfeld-Jones 2015; Lee et al., 2019; Tam, 2010) and the existing literature on phenomenology and research-creation is lacking in two respects. First, it does not engage in the critical phenomenological tradition (Magri & McQueen, 2023; Weiss, Murphy, & Salamon, 2019), which articulates phenomenology with feminism, critical race theory, queer theory, postcolonialism, and Marxism. Second, it fails to make a *phenomenological* case for why the articulation between phenomenology and research-creation is even possible to begin with. This article attempts to address these oversights. To do so, we focus

on the aesthetic dimension of experience, and in particular, the theme of "style." For Merleau-Ponty (2013) in particular, the body is less an essence or fixed structure than it is a moving, living, and expressive style. Because the body and its perceptual grasp of itself and the world are always already stylized, aesthetic concerns are an *essential feature* of the phenomenology of embodiment, opening phenomenology up to various forms of research-creation, which we define broadly in this paper as any creative practice that generates new understandings and interpretations such as performative writing, visual texts, and so forth and does not insist on hierarchical relationships between scholarship and poetic/descriptive processes (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012; Loveless, 2019). We then pivot to Gloria Anzaldúa's work whose method is offered as an example of an articulation point between critical phenomenological description and more poetic, visionary, and experimental modes of writing. In conclusion, we offer a brief example of how a critical phenomenological practice of research-creation can expand the current calls in teacher education for phenomenological "flashpoint" writing (Hood & Travis, 2023; Lewis, 2018; Lewis & Kraehe, 2020; Travis et al., 2018). In particular, flashpoint writing as an aesthetic exercise that comes out of the lived stylistics of phenomenological embodiment which can be conceptualized as a descriptive-creative act that is collective in nature, and aids in the shift from embodied styles of ease to embodied styles of struggle and transformation.

Critical Phenomenology and the Politics of Embodiment

In this section, we briefly introduce critical phenomenology, what separates it from the classical tradition, and in turn, flashpoint methodology as one way in which critical phenomenological research is enacted. The overview will highlight strengths in this approach to phenomenological research, while also pointing to a particular oversight: the lack of sustained engagement with questions concerning the politics of stylization of bodies. Simply put, critical phenomenology is a practice that reflects on "the quasi-transcendental social structures that make our experience of the world possible and meaningful, and also by engaging in a material practice of 'restructuring the world' in order to generate new and liberatory possibilities for meaningful experience and existence" (Guenther, 2020, p. 5). Let us unpack this definition. First, classical phenomenology is a transcendental project, meaning that it searches for the necessary and universal conditions that make possible lived experience (Husserl, 2002). These conditions are found in a transcendental ego that is directed at the world but somehow outside the world and unaffected by the world and thus maximally generalizable (i.e., not limited by historical circumstances/conditions).

From the critical perspective, this classical approach to lived experience fails to take into account the historical and contextual structures that fundamentally inform the nature of experience, possibilities for meaning making, and comportment of bodies. Stated differently, transcendental conditions of possibility are not outside of the world but are fundamentally conditioned by factors such as social identity, power relations, and social, economic, and political contexts. These complex and variable conditions take on a “quasi-transcendental” appearance. On the one hand, “quasi-transcendental” structures are *more than* merely subjective beliefs, and on the other hand, they are *less than* the presumed a priori (permanent and invariant, hence generalizable) structures of consciousness or embodiment that are the gold standard of classical phenomenology (Husserl, 2002). Whatever generalizability is described in critical phenomenology, this generalizability is neither necessary nor universal but rather contingently consistent and only relatively stable. For this very reason, any description of such quasi-transcendental structures is never absolute.

The quasi-transcendental structures that concern critical phenomenology are structures of constraint such as patriarchy, white supremacy, class alienation, and so forth. These structures of constraint differentially shape the fundamental forms of consciousness, intentionality, and perception that are possible. The purpose of critical descriptions is to understand how structures of constraint provide exclusive privileges to certain forms of embodied subjectivity at the expense of other forms of embodied subjectivity (such as the connections between white privilege and the oppression of non-white populations).

Critical phenomenological descriptions can then act as a starting point for interrupting the operativity of quasi-transcendental structures of constraint in order to live otherwise than what is prescribed by and normalized through these very same structures. An important example of this is critical phenomenology of colonized experience provided by Frantz Fanon. Part of Fanon’s project in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) is to place Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s description of the body schema within a colonial context to see if the structures Merleau-Ponty describes are indeed universal, necessary, and a priori. For Merleau-Ponty (2013), the body schema is the “principle unity” (p. 102) that lends an organic holism to bodies, and in turn, enables the body to mesh with the world, or achieve a sense of balance, ease, or “equilibrium” (p. 155) between what a body can do and what the world affords. The sense of ease and familiarity that result from embodied equilibrium is the presumed structural norm, where breakdowns in the flow of body-in-world are occasional deviations. Yet, growing up Black in the French colony of Martinique, Fanon experienced average, everyday life of body-in-world as painful and conflictual. These were not occasional incidents but were the baseline norm preventing Black bodies from achieving flow and equilibrium. Therefore, the nonreflective, nonthematic

possibility for achieving ease was not an option for Black bodies in a colonial context.

As Fanon’s (2008) experience demonstrates, there is a need to reframe Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the body schema as a “historical-racial schema” (pp. 91-92) in order to reveal the specificity of the experience of living in a Black body in a racialized world which is non-transferable (or non-generalizable) to other kinds of experiences. Whereas Merleau-Ponty describes the average-everyday body as an organic whole that can effortlessly flow into an equilibrium with its lived environment, Black bodies do not have this privilege and constantly feel “amputated by the world” (p. 119). Amputation in this sense indicates both (a) fragmenting of the body schema and (b) loss of ability to gear into the world (meaning, there is a breakdown of the invisible arc that unifies bodies with the world). Through Fanon’s critical phenomenology, we can begin to ask a series of new questions such as: Whose bodies are allowed to be integrated into the world? Whose bodily stylistics are empowered, and which are disempowered? Critical phenomenology agrees with Merleau-Ponty’s maxim “I can” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 139) but, in a critical appropriation, turns it into a question: “Who can do what?” or “Who is the ‘I’ that can?” These questions recognize that quasi-transcendental structures of constraint have to be taken seriously as constituting dimensions of experience. In agreement with Fanon regarding the need for situated and historically specific descriptions of how bodies are lived within and against quasi-transcendental structures of constraint, we are interested in a practice of critical phenomenology that will enable us to teach critical self-reflection in order to (a) determine violent and discriminatory body-world dynamics and (b) investigate how such dynamics might be rendered inoperative in our everyday practices, modes of interacting, and so forth. In other words, how might we operationalize critical phenomenology?

One possible answer to this question can be found in the recent conceptualization of a flashpoint methodology. A flashpoint is a moment when the implicit sociocultural knowledge carried in the body suddenly and unavoidably flares up to make itself part of the conscious experience of oneself and one’s context. Stated differently, the flashpoint makes salient how structures of constraint are lived, or how they lodge themselves in our bodily habits and perceptual stylizations. It is our contention that writing descriptions of such flashpoints is a central feature of critical phenomenology separating it from the classical variant that is in need of further elaboration and clarification. Indeed, critical phenomenologists often utilize “flashpoints” in order to examine how structures of constraint become embodied and how embodiment comes to take on the form and comportment abiding by the norms of these structures. This is particularly the case when it comes to phenomenologies of race (Ahmed, 2006; Fanon, 2008; Yancy, 2014), but is also found in literature dealing with sexual orientation (Young,

2005; Ahmed, 2006) and class (Charlesworth, 2000). For instance, Fanon (2008) opens chapter five of *Black Skin, White Masks* with the moment in which he is objectified by the White gaze, “Look! A Negro!” (p. 89). This event, although distant in time (as it happened when Fanon was a child), is nevertheless near in terms of phenomenological and existential relevance (he cannot shake it).

Fanon’s flashpoint creates the occasion for his lengthy examination of the historical-racial schema of colonialism. As with Fanon’s graphic description of the flash of racialization (the precise moment in which he is objectified as black), the vividness of the flashpoint is what makes it educationally salient to any critical project. Indeed, public intellectuals such as George Yancy (2014) understand the pedagogical use of flashpoint vivacity to bring issues of race and racism to life for a broad, non-academic audience. We mean “vivid” in two senses. First, the flashpoint is an eruption in the flow of experience and thus stands out and shows itself in a way that is memorable to the subject of the flashpoint. It leaves a phenomenological imprint on the perception in such a way that there is a “before” and “after” the flashpoint. To use Sara Ahmed’s terminology (2006), the flashpoint disrupts and disorients, but also reorients the subject toward and around new objects, bodies, and actions. Second, the flashpoint is vivid in the sense that it can bring to life the fundamental meaning or significance of a phenomenon not only for the subject but also for others whose experience might resonate with the description.

Helen Ngo (2017) offers one more example of flashpoint writing in the critical phenomenological tradition:

I continue along. The market noise washes over. I walk, but my gait feels hollow...I feel hollow. Fuck this. Fuck it all! This guy today, those kids in Bellville, the men on the park bench at night. The singularity of this event recalls all the past ones...The list grows longer...I grow more agitated, angry, and distracted, until I blink myself into the present moment and place. Enough. This will just put me in a worse mood...The rage that appeared so quickly more or less quiets down, but I am left with a residual feeling of disappointment. This again. (pp. 58-59)

In this passage, Ngo highlights how the involuntary memory of certain affects of a racialized, White gaze on a non-White body is triggered by an event of being looked at while walking through a market. The flashpoint of the market generates a flashback - a repetition of a “this again” experience of her own racialization. The subsequent writing of the flashpoint helps Ngo then transform the pain of the incident (and its reoccurring, cumulative effects) into an educational moment for critical reflection and theorization of the racialization of bodies. As such, Ngo

eloquently demonstrates the importance of flashpoint methodology as constituting an educational opportunity to not simply relive trauma but actually work through it in productive and potentially transformative ways. It is therefore vivid in both senses: it brings the phenomena to life, and in so doing, creates a potential point of resonance with others for thinking through quasi-transcendental structures of constraint.

In sum, flashpoint methodology is a form of writing that thematizes and operationalizes a mode of writing already prevalent in critical phenomenology yet lacking a specific name. It highlights the importance of discrete and powerful images emerging from the flow of everyday life for unpacking the ways in which socio-cultural differences are embodied. They reveal how Merleau-Ponty’s theory of “I can” is conditioned by quasi-transcendental structures of constraint. We agree with the political and educational value of flashpoint methodologies in critical phenomenological literature, and we want to add to this line of inquiry by highlighting the centrality of the aesthetics of flashpoints in relation to stylistics.

Bodily Stylistics, Flashpoint Writing, and the Turn to Research-Creation

To unlock the aesthetic dimension of the flashpoint, we must return to Merleau-Ponty one last time, appropriating him for critical ends. Merleau-Ponty (2013) understood lived embodiment as the “unique manner” or style (p. xxxii) of our body-in-situation, an overall accent on being that is much more than simply how we think about ourselves. Furthermore, style is not reducible to the common-sense notion of style in which the term refers to a distinctive and recognizable form of mark making. Rather, style concerns how we are in the world as a whole. Style, in this phenomenological sense, is not a mere aspect of something, but rather it is how something is in the world. It is the unique accent that bodies acquire through movement, gesture, and behavior. For Merleau-Ponty, an individual is not a fixed essence but is an enigmatic style of being. He writes, the individual “is singular like a tone, a style, or a language” (Merleau-Ponty, 2000, p. 97), which means that a person expresses who they are through the style of their gestures, movements, and manners of speaking. Stated differently, style is the “in” in the phrase “body-in-situation.”

Importantly, Merleau-Ponty argues that “acquisition of a certain style” of perception is the definition of learning (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 155). Thus, the most basic form of education is aesthetic education (meaning sensual, embodied, and perceptual) that teaches through preconceptual sensation how something ought to appear (ought to be) in a world. As Merleau-Ponty (1968) writes:

These two mirror arrangements of the seeing and the visible,

the touching and the touched, form a close bound system that I count on, define a vision in general and a constant style of visibility from which I cannot detach myself, even when a particular vision turns out to be illusory. (p. 46)

Notice that for Merleau-Ponty, through perceptual acts of learning, a certain style of vision is acquired that forms a “close bound system” that can be “counted” on as “constant” and from which subjects “cannot detach” themselves even when a particular vision is proven to be “illusory.” The aesthetic orientation acquired through perceptual learning becomes naturalized, forming a taken-for-granted backdrop that defines how anything or anyone can show up in experience. Aesthetic learning, simply put, goes all the way down to the ontological level of being until it becomes transparent, invisible, and thus completely neutral.

We find Merleau-Ponty’s analysis compelling, but, like his general ontology outlined above, it is also lacking in a key respect. He once again misses how style is always already political - it is political because different bodies have access to different actions, movements, ways of extending into space, different gestures based on how they are positioned within “quasi-transcendental structures of constraint.” In emphasizing a style of ease and equilibrium Merleau-Ponty universalizes particular features of the style of whiteness (how whiteness appears to itself and to the world). This is indeed ironic, as Merleau-Ponty has failed to detach himself from his own style of perceiving and being in the world even if he described how such perceptual learning has a tendency to become invisible! Merleau-Ponty’s own style of whiteness formed a set of perceptual, gestural, and behavioral privileges granting him maximum extension, movement, expression in such a way as to trick him into universalizing white stylistics. This example also demonstrates how style is a constitutive aspect of the aesthetics of quasi-transcendental structures of constraint as they are lived through perceptual grasping and behavioral coping. Stated differently, bodies adhere to particular modes of seeing and being seen in the world, particular modes of extending into space, and particular modes of sensing, all of which are aesthetic manifestations of the effects of quasi-transcendental structures on bodily stylistics.

How might have Merleau-Ponty broken out of this “close bound circle” in which he was bound to his own white stylistics? Appropriating a phrase coined by George Yancy (2012), perhaps we can speculate that Merleau-Ponty never had a flashpoint experience in which someone shouted “Look, a White!” Such a flashpoint might have had the power to make visible the invisible aesthetic style of Merleau-Ponty’s whiteness, opening it up for critical self-reflection as the aesthetics of a historical-racial schema. This oversight exemplifies how certain styles

have the *privilege* of remaining invisible to the embodied subject of such privilege as opposed to the example given earlier of Fanon, whose lack of privilege forced him to be hyper self-aware of his stylistics and how these stylistics were perceived by white colonialists.

If learning is about acquiring a certain style that settles into a body forming a set of habits of appearing, then a flashpoint is an interruption of such habits. Interestingly, Merleau-Ponty (2002) writes:

My relation to a book begins with the easy familiarity of the words of our language, of ideas that are part of our makeup, in the same way that my perception of the other is at first sight perception of the gestures and behavior belonging to ‘the human species.’ But if the book really teaches me something, if the other person is really another, at a certain stage I must be surprised, disoriented. (p. 142)

The general style of the book (and of the other more generally speaking) is, at first, recognizable precisely because of a shared stylistics between body and world. But Merleau-Ponty goes on to describe a moment of surprise and disorientation characteristic of real learning, which offers a moment of stylistic variation opening up to new modes of sensing the self and the world. In this sense, flashpoints are not interruptions of the real into the sphere of appearances but rather are situated on the aesthetic level of perceptual stylization - intervening into the distribution of what can be seen, heard, and felt, composing a new perceptual field. The existence of flashpoints indicates that stylization is far from neutral but is rather the result of certain aesthetic struggles (for who and what can be seen and heard) within and against quasi-transcendental structures of constraint (be they white, settler colonialist, or capitalist structures).

In sum, Fanon’s writing reveals a particular style of struggle versus Merleau-Ponty’s style of ease, freedom, and access. What was a neutral, average, everyday starting point for Merleau-Ponty becomes the sign of ontological privilege granted to some bodies and not to others. But this ontological privilege is also and equally an aesthetic privilege to appear in certain ways (dangerous vs. safe, suspicious vs. familiar, disgusting vs. beautiful).

The vividness of flashpoint writing is dependent on the aesthetic power of the flashpoint event to rupture the ‘close bound system’, which perceptual learning binds a subject to, and in this sense, offers a moment of critical detachment (through surprise and/or disorientation which opens up the close boundedness of the system). This unbinding is important because of the small opportunity it might offer for stylistic shifts in the distribution of appearances. Flashpoint writing can thus be considered a critical methodology into the stylistics of being that

has a decisively educational power. On an ontological level, the flashpoint offers a disorientation and reorientation (Ahmed, 2006), and on an aesthetic level, the flashpoint can potentially change the stylistic manner or accent of being (a destylization and restylization).

In the penultimate section of this paper, we gesture toward Anzaldúa's writing as overly thematizing and fully embodying the aesthetic and collective dimensions of flashpoint writing, making her a central figure for future development of flashpoint methodology as a research-creation approach to dealing with issues of inequality, oppression, subjugation, and marginalization.

Anzaldúa and Autohistoria-teoría

"Este arrebato, the earthquake, jerks you from the familiar... (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 122) ...the upheaval jars you out of the cultural trance and the spell of the collective mindset..." (p. 125).

In this section, we turn to Anzaldúa to give a more holistic and articulated theory of flashpoint methodologies as research-creation, with particular sensitivity toward the politics of style. Indeed, Anzaldúa speaks of bodily style when she notes, "Style brings up the politics of utterance—who says what, how, to whom, and on whose behalf" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 248). Here, Anzaldúa alerts us to the different political dimensions of the aesthetics of flashpoint stylistics. First, she asks us to consider whose voices are heard as legitimate voices and how any partitioning of the sensible within society always includes some and excludes others (as inarticulate, disruptive rabble). Second, the style of an utterance will use certain conventions that may or may not be shared with others, thus conventions are politically contestable (Hood, 2022). In this sense, style is never neutral but rather emerges through histories of contestation (think of the style of struggle vs. the style of ease described above). Third, the politics of style also concerns the question of audience. One must know one's audience in order to understand how certain stylistics will be judged differently given one's location within a certain partitioning of the sensible. Finally, politics concerns ends and how certain styles will either be complacent with (and reinforce) quasi-transcendental structures of constraint or challenge them. In this sense, Anzaldúa's theory of style reveals the multiple dimensions of the politics of vividness outlined above: critical phenomenological writing must bring the phenomena to life in such a way as to make tangible the invisible, taken-for-granted stylistics supporting oppression, discrimination, and marginalization while also being able to resonate with the experiences of others so that a collective struggle can emerge.

According to Pitts (2016), Anzaldúa believed that "the proposal that

writing about oneself provides the theoretical tools for others to critically interrogate their positions and the world. This would also then include the disorienting hails that might compel a reader to critically assess her/his/their own epistemic positionality and responsibility" (p. 174). In other words, the aesthetic stylistics of writing hail insofar as they are vividly compelling, producing epistemological and sensorial flashpoints in the reader that encourage critical consciousness about one's positionality. In this sense, Anzaldúa helps further clarify the aesthetic stakes in flashpoint writing.

We can further unpack the aesthetics of vividness in terms of Anzaldúa's theory of the embodied, intercorporeal, and intersubjective practice of autohistoria-teoría. Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoría is a theory and methodology involving deep critical self-reflection, with intense, intentional, and vast recognition of the non-linear intertwining of body, self, self with multiple selves, others, time, and space, in order to reveal rich aesthetic dimensions of experiences (Arfuso, 2021; Bhattacharya & Keating, 2018; Pitts 2016). Speaking to the collective and collaborative nature of this process, Pitts (2016) frames autohistoria-teoría as referring to the "...explicit task of developing theoretical resources out of descriptions of oneself and one's experiences...speaking for oneself can extend toward others in ways that can be positive and conducive of further actions and forms of meaning-making" (p. 358). Thus, Keating summarizes: "Unlike mainstream Western autobiography, autohistoria is never conceived of, enacted as, or interpreted to be the story of an entirely unique, self-enclosed individual; autohistoria and autohistoria-teoría always intentionally and overtly include communal, collective components" (Keating, 2022, p. 87). In this sense, Anzaldúa's work can be described as tracing the effects of flashpoints that occur at the interface between self and other, individual, and collective. Her work is important for highlighting how flashpoints are never isolated incidents affecting only individuals. Instead, they are social, political, and economic symptoms, or vivid dilations of quasi-transcendental structures of constraint into momentary flashes that are as personal as they are communal.

For Anzaldúa (2015) autohistoria-teoría is in service of the Coyolxauhqui imperative, which is to "re-member" oneself through the act of self-writing. Pulling from Aztec mythology, Anzaldúa evokes Coyolxauhqui (the moon goddess) to symbolize and embody the creative and productive side of fragmentation. In the legend, Coyolxauhqui's brother (Huitzilopochtli) dismembers her body, scatters the pieces, and throws her dismembered head up into the sky where it becomes the moon. Anzaldúa uses this violence done to Coyolxauhqui's body as a way to frame healing as a destructive and creative process. The Coyolxauhqui imperative is one of the stages of *conocimiento*, "a heightened consciousness or awareness" that "stirs the artist to take action, propels her toward the act of making" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 40)

and is illustrated through practices of autohistoria-teoría—as a motive for meaning-making and healing (both on individual and collective levels). Healing thus involves this destructive/creative process of dismembering → re-collecting our scattered pieces → re-remembering in order to remake ourselves and our reality (Anzaldúa, 2015). If quasi-transcendental structures of constraint dis-member (amputate, as Fanon once said) the embodied, then Anzaldúa attempts to deploy creative, poetic, and mythic writing as a strategy for re-remembering the body or reassembling a fragmented body schema in such a way that trauma is not repressed so much as expressed and worked through in order to create a different kind of body stylistics. Hence the centrality of Anzaldúa for further developing the notion of the flashpoint as research-creation.

In Anzaldúa's (1990) terms, (as cited in Keating, 2022, pp. 85-86) the practice of self-writing (or writing the self) in autohistoria-teoría:

...evokes the memory of a trauma retroactively by means of association. It recalls the scene of trauma (an instance of racism, or rape, for example) and releases anger, fear or sexual excitement...often, instead of repressing the recollection, she highlights it, brings it to center stage, replays it, examines it from front to back and scrutinizes it in the act of not only recording it but of writing it with a myriad of choices and poetic license.

There is perhaps no more precise description of flashpoint writing as both a description of trauma held in the fragmented body and aesthetic stylization through “choices and poetic license.” In other words, Anzaldúa combines research and creation through the flashpoint (memory of trauma). While Anzaldúa maintains that the violence of colonization has stripped away the connection to the innate and visceral knowledge the body holds, it is through the disruption of *arrebatos* (earthquakes) that latent, repressed or suppressed embodied knowledge is jolted and shocked into reanimation, creating a flash. This abrupt momentary flash of understanding “sears” us, and in this way, re-remembering serve as “bodily and boundary violation... shocking us into a new way of reading the world” (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 86). The importance here is that this shock of the flashpoint is equal parts description and “poetic” reinvention that offers up a “new way” of reading the world. This new way of reading can be thought of as a different perceptual stylization emerging from within the earthquakes-as-flashpoints.

For Anzaldúa, the creative process of writing is powerfully transformative. Through the practice of autohistoria-teoría, she invites us to critically interrogate our own identities—social and relational:

Through the act of writing you call, like the ancient chamana, the scattered pieces of your soul back to your body. You commence the arduous task of rebuilding yourself, composing a story that more accurately expresses your new identity. You seek out allies and, together, begin building spiritual/political communities that struggle for personal growth and social justice. (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 155)

Importantly, writing the self and its narrative is a “composition” or stylistic synthesis of the parts of experience into a mediated whole. This act of creative invention is not simply personal but also political. Through the writing process, the self extends beyond itself, or as Anzaldúa puts it, the self begins to “seek out allies” with which it can “begin building spiritual/political communities.” To compose a self out of what has been amputated is also and equally a composition of self in relation to others. The flashpoint “expresses” the self and its relationship to quasi-transcendental structures of constraint, but in such a way as to aesthetically experiment with emergent alternatives that not only re-member the self but, more importantly, begin the work of re-remembering the community. The result is an invention of a new stylistics of struggle.

Acknowledging that narratives of vulnerability also include resistance and creativity, Anzaldúa calls us to recognize the profound effect of anxiety and anguish of racialized, fragmented, or wounded bodies while also appreciating their capacities for healing and transformation—flashpoints can be breakdowns, but they can also be breakthroughs of something new. Anzaldúa considers the performative role of mytho-poetic text in constructing this resistant narrative, and she notes that within this framework, writing not only provides individual therapeutic opportunities, but also opportunities for collective healing and transformation as well, “I change myself I change the world” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 71). Just as Harbin (2016) suggests that disorientations do not always result in change, Ahmed (2006) also notes that disorientation work does not guarantee transformation, as “...the forms of politics that proceed from disorientation can be conservative, depending on the ‘aims’ of their gestures, depending on how they seek to (re)ground themselves” (p. 158). As such, modes of “epistemic responsibility” that are brought into action through the practices of writing autohistoria-teorías and flashpoint methodologies should not be treated as a given or response (Pitts, 2016, p. 174). Taken together, what is at stake are flashpoints that interrupt stylistics of being that sustain inequalities or injustices while also opening up to new collective resonances. Bearing this worry in mind, we suggest that flashpoint writing is most transformative when it:

1. Reveals how the quasi-transcendental structures of constraint are only “quasi-transcendental” meaning that their presumed

transcendental quality is an *appearance* of necessity and universality. The transcendental becomes historical and contingent, taking on a radically different appearance within one's experience.

2. Restylizes ways of perceiving the world, producing (a) a breakdown of how a body appears and what appears to a body while also and equally (b) a breakthrough of alternative modes of sensing one's self and the world.
3. Experiments with the aesthetics of descriptively poetic and poetically descriptive writing not only to convey rich descriptions but also to catalyze resonances across experiences in the name of collective re-membrance, opening up new stylistics for who says what, how, to whom, and on whose behalf.

Conclusion: Critically Creative and Creatively Critical Flashpoint Methodologies

In sum, this article has argued for the productive and politically efficacious partnership between critical phenomenology and research-creation. Critical phenomenology, and in particular its flashpoint methodology, can benefit from research-creation in many ways, especially in terms of its poetic inventiveness. And research-creation can benefit from critical phenomenology's emphasis on the body, lived experience, and political analysis. What makes this interface possible is the inherent stylistic and aesthetic dimensions of bodies. The body always already stylizes (a) how it composes its perceptual grip of the world, (b) how it moves and comports itself, and (c) how it links up with the world around it. For these reasons, description must involve an aesthetic dimension, and the aesthetic dimension cannot escape the lived experiences of bodies. Anzaldúa's mytho-poetic writing is an exemplary manifestation of the politics of style. She opens up a space and time for thinking through the politics of style (how styles are produced, how they embody histories of privilege and struggle) through her stylization of politics (her poetic license which is creatively necessary for re-membling as part of a collective act of invention).

It is also our contention that Anzaldúa's project can be extended so as to include nonverbal forms of flashpoints such as paintings, photographs, musical compositions, performances, and so forth. Such experimentation is needed now more than ever. For instance, stylistics of ease can be destabilized as privileges, or lived expressions of quasi-transcendental structures of constraint and stylistics of struggle can be extended into collective projects of healing and transformation. In moments of civil unrest and growing racist, sexist, and homophobic sentiments, styles of struggle need new languages of joy and empowerment for re-membling fractured pasts and envisioning alternative futures (Lewis & Kraehe, 2020).

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Education as Affective: Making Visual Journals during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the pedagogical and research potential of visual journals to uncover the affective in education. Spurred by the sudden instructional shift from in-person learning to asynchronous instruction, visual journals were utilized in order to understand student experience of the pandemic and to consider whether education as usual was possible after significant affective and material societal shifts happening at the early stages of the pandemic. Massumi's (2015) notion of affective threat is utilized along with affect theory in order to uncover the affective realm of education during the pandemic and therefore the latent affective realm of education.

KEYWORDS: Visual Journal, Affect, Covid-19, Affective Threat, Massumi, Art Education

What is, is a refrain. A scoring over a world's repetitions. A scratching on the surface of rhythms, sensory habits, gathering materialities, intervals, and durations. A gangly accrual of slow or sudden accretions. A rutting by scoring over.

Refrains are a worlding. Nascent forms quicken, rinding up like skin of an orange. Pre-personal intensities lodge in bodies. Events, relations, and impacts accumulate as the capacities to affect and be affected. Public feelings world up as lived circuits of action and reaction.

—Kathleen Stewart, Afterword: Worlding Refrains

This paper details research of an affective and curricular shift in a second level university art education class during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the class is open to all upper-level students in the university's College of Liberal arts, the students discussed in the paper are preservice art education students.¹ The research in this paper took place at the beginning of the COVID-19

¹ This research project underwent institutional review prior to beginning the project and informed consent was obtained from the students.

pandemic, when lockdowns preceded the horrific realities of the disease and when many were questioning the real threat (and later the reality itself) of the virus. Locked safely in our homes, we watched remotely as New York and Italy experienced a surge of hospitalizations as infection rates rose and their once-bustling streets turned desolate. Conversely, and probably in large part because of the lockdowns, infection rates remained rather low in our region (six months later, those infection rates would skyrocket and our region would become a hot spot). During the lockdown what we experienced was not as much the effects of the pandemic as its affective threat. In the beginning our region did not experience high rates of infection, yet we acted as though we did, invoking lockdowns, experiencing fear, and exercising caution. When discussing the affective threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) argued by the Bush administration as justification for the second Iraq War, Massumi (2010) describes affective threat as having potential to effect change or exert force in much the same way that an actual or real experience might, but that it need not ever be real. He argues that, despite never finding evidence of WMD's, the Bush administration's threat produced the same affect of actual weapons. Note here the use of affect instead of effect. Although one might argue that the initial threat of WMD's produced similar military and material effects -waging war against Iraq and Afghanistan, affect refers to what is felt or produced through the body's experience of encounters, events, and relations. In other words, the threat of WMD's produced the same sense of anxiety that actual WMD's would have produced. This ontology speaks of an emotion's or feeling's ability to bring into being, to create reality, or affect things and beings.

Specifically, I describe an impromptu curricular shift brought on by the initial stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic during the spring semester of 2020 and how that shift revealed the affective register of both teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the subsequent hidden affective register of so-called normal teaching and learning practices. Thinking with Massumi (2010) and Stewart (2007a, 2007b), I turn to a logic of forces, intensities, impacts, and excesses intent on revealing the hidden or undetected affective register of education. I describe how I utilized visual journals as a way to ask questions of affect during a particularly isolating time of asynchronous online learning. Instead of trying to force the form and structure of online learning to conform to my pre-pandemic conception of art education, I turned to visual journaling and a series of emotion/affective questions to communicate to my students that this was not educational business as usual. I believed that, as students of art education and pedagogy, it was important for them to notice, to experience, and to consider how this affective shift impacted their education. It was equally as important that I allow the space to be vulnerable, to ask questions, and to lead by methodologically drawing attention to the affective register of their experience through the practice of visual journaling.

Background: COVID-19 Staging for Unveiling the Affective Register in Education

At the beginning of COVID-19 lockdowns in March 2020, my university left for spring break and, when we returned, we transitioned to asynchronous online teaching only. This was all done with very little university guidance and a high degree of uncertainty. Untethered and fearful, I was tasked with rewriting my curriculum and steering my students through the remainder of the semester. Doubtful that proceeding as usual was useful or possible, I sought out others that expressed similar feelings and were asking similar questions to mine: "How can students at an open access, research one institution pivot from in-person learning to online asynchronous learning with little institutional support?" This question in particular led me to ask additional questions that developed in response to what I personally knew about our students and what our university was telling us about them at that time. Namely, that because our students are often underprivileged and overscheduled, sometimes juggling families and jobs, we were to assume that they might not have the same (or any) access to the digital world that we, the academic elite, had. This led me to ask, "What is possible given these parameters?" and more importantly, "What is needed by my students?" So, rather than answering the question, "How can we use different instructional formats to deliver the same content?", I began to ask "What kinds of things should be taught, expressed, examined, or understood during a global pandemic?" and "Can and should education proceed as usual without attending to the emotional affective force of things where uncertainty, anxiety, fear, isolation, sickness, and death marked everyday experience?" This shift from questions of methodology and content to questions of use, appropriateness, and purpose reflects an affective change that reveals the force of the pandemic and ultimately works to make plain the affective force of education.

Theorizing Affect: Threat, Excess, and Affective Force

Over fifty years ago, well before the so-called affective turn (Clough, 2008), when historically surveying the field of art education, Arthur Efland (1971) declared yet another major art education transition, the "affective revolution" (p. 13). Citing previous historical shifts in art education from progressive, child-centered, "developmental activity" (p. 15) to a cognitive revolution involving the shoring-up of art education as a rational, distinguishable discipline with "recognized subject matter" (p. 15) unto itself, Efland (1971) describes a second evolution, one involving a consideration of affect in light of the failings of the cognitive revolution in education of the 1960's. Despite Efland's historical tocsin against it, he notes that these conceptions of education seemed to see-saw back and forth between separate notions of the cognitive and the affective. Contemporary affect theory, working from

the ideas of Spinoza (1959), moves beyond this educational practice of mind-body separation. According to Hardt (2007), Spinoza believed “that the mind and body are autonomous but that they ... proceed or develop in parallel” (p. x). Hardt (2007) explains that this creates a consideration for research (and I submit for education and art education) that “each time we consider the mind’s power to think, we must try to recognize how the body’s power to act corresponds to it” (p. x).

Unlike most of cognitive views of (art) education, “affect unfolds in the plane of immanence, where bodies and things are seen in terms of their endless possibilities for the variations that are always underway” (Trafletti, 2021, p. 213). These possible variations describe an excess that is beyond the mere cognitive and discursive and that deals in the comingling of perception and the body (Yıldız-Alanbay, 2020). This excess, therefore, is often undetected or too much for the educational system and, rather than focus on its expressions or forces, we miss or dismiss them.

While speaking specifically about perceived threats manufactured into being during the Bush administration’s war on terror in the early to mid 2000s, Massumi’s (2010) treatise holds much potential for thinking through (the threat and reality of) COVID-19 and its affective force on education. Affective force is something (or a phenomenon) felt, experienced, or undergone, often revealed through an emotional or sensible register that produces, disturbs, or uncovers. It is “the capacity to affect and be affected” (Massumi, 2015, p. ix). Massumi (2010) theorizes threat on the affective register as something that, through feeling, is willed into being (whether it actually comes to be or not):

It [threat] will have been real because it was *felt* to be real. Whether the danger was existent or not, the menace was felt in the form of fear. What is not actually real can be felt into being. Threat does have an actual mode of existence: fear, as foreshadowing. Threat has an impending reality in the present. This actual reality is affective. (p. 54)

Likewise, the practice of art education may also prove useful as a way of being that could make plain approaches or methods that might lay bare these affective phenomena.

Situating Visual Journals in Research, Artistic, and Affective Practice

This study explores how visual journals might help researchers and educators to reveal this affective register. But first, what are visual journals? At first glance they appear similar to traditional artists’ sketchbooks which can be used to explore, to play, to experiment, to

work things out ahead of time; they could be considered to be spaces of planning, or pre-thinking. Despite being “a space for ideas to take shape, imaginations to wander, and drawing skills to be practiced” the problem with sketchbooks is that they are often conceived as “places designed solely for drawing” (Evans-Palmer, 2018, p. 19). Scott (2019) claims that sketchbooks, unlike journals, are not only limited by the kinds of drawing materials often employed in them (pencil, pen, charcoal), but also by the kinds of practices used in them (practicing drawing to hone drawing skills, coming up with or documenting ideas, or planning for artwork) which are often teacher-driven. Here the visual journal not only holds the potential for narrative or diaristic structures possible through the collaging of image and words (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008), but they also have the potential to collage different practices within one literally bounded space. So, while a visual journal and sketchbook may appear similar (both involve artmaking practices within a bound booklet), it is the practice performed within the pages that can differentiate them.

We need only look toward the study of children’s drawings to reveal a broader potential for sketchbooks as part of child-initiated artistic inquiry (Cinquemani & Souza, 2022; Lewis & Rhodes, 2022; Park, 2022; Schulte, 2013; Sunday, 2015; 2018; Sunday & Conley, 2020; Thompson, 1995; 1999; 2009; 2017; Thompson & Bales, 1991) and one that might more closely resemble visual journaling. Here sketchbook practices are not as rigidly defined as artists’ sketchbooks; rather, children’s sketchbooks exhibit possibilities for ethnographic research and children’s research-like inquiry, including lines of flight and flights of fancy. Sunday (2015) explains, “Sketchbook time allows the children opportunities to explore their own self-generated ideas through graphic language, opening up spaces to transgress the boundaries of curriculum and to reveal their interests, experiences and unique perspectives of their worlds” (p. 8). Visual journals, like sketchbooks in early childhood art education, provide makers with possibilities to explore, create, and mold worlds – their residue bound in the pages.

Like traditional sketchbooks, visual journals can be used for teacher-directed purposes in classroom practices. Evans-Palmer (2018) discusses their reflective and curricular potential in university art education classes for elementary generalists. What separates visual journals from artist sketchbooks is not necessarily their possibility for directed practice, but rather what Scott (2019) explains is their diaristic quality or connection to written journals. They are intentionally designed to uncover the affective qualities of the everyday or the ordinary, “to provoke attention to forces that come into view” (Stewart, 2007b, p. 1) or “exercises in following out of the impact of things” (Berlant & Stewart, 2019, p. ix). A visual journal may be an attempt to open out the possibilities of what a bounded (as in collection of bound papers), inquiry-based, affective space can produce. It could serve as what

Thompson (2015) referred to as prosthetic spaces – “territory open to ... exploration, available for recording the everyday or the unfamiliar, for pursuing personal projects, inscribing ... memories of home and school, capturing fragments of cultural experience” (p. 556). The visual journal is a flexible, mutable space of possibility where forms unfold in relation to the practices and purposes of the practitioner.

Furthermore, visual journals are not exclusive to the visual arts or art education; their flexibility has meant that researchers in therapy fields have utilized its diaristic form to uncover affective or emotional states (Gibson, 2018; Mims, 2015; Mercer et al. 2010; Sackett & McKeeman, 2017). Likewise, visual journals have been used as reflective tools in educational or training settings (Deaver & McAuliffe, 2009; Loerts & Belcher, 2019) and in subject specific contexts like math (Kierans, 2011) and media education (Redmond, 2022). Visual journals also have a history of accompanying or weaving in and out of writing and research as a noted form of arts-based research (Messenger, 2016; Shields, 2016). Here the practice is often described as an autoethnographic (self-story) or a reflective practice which works in tandem with other research practices.

This study uses visual journals as both a pedagogical and research practice. The visual journal both acted in the place of university art education curriculum during impromptu curricular restructuring during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and the visual journal was also used as the direct site of research data collection. In other words, this is a study of how my students utilized visual journals during the pandemic to process excesses of education like loss, fear, isolation, timelessness, dread, and even hope or thankfulness, made plain during the pandemic, and how visual journals can be sites of research.

Methods, Practices, Pedagogy

My methodology came from a shift in my approach to curriculum in response to the affective force of the pandemic and my attempts to uncover affective excesses of education during the pandemic, as described by my students in visual journals and felt in my response to them. During the initial lockdown I felt emotionally unfit to perform normalized notions of teacher expertise, including confidence, calmness, and certainty. Because of this, on top of the distance, lack of connection, and confusion created by the remoteness of asynchronous learning, I opted to change direction and ask my students about their experience of the pandemic. I did this with the hope that they would see the opening that this created as a way to think about changes in education brought about by the pandemic which would ultimately reveal the affective force of education and present my students and myself with a deeper understanding of curriculum and pedagogy.

What I Asked My Students to Do

At the beginning of the semester reset, I emailed my students a letter that addressed my concerns about “teaching as usual” during the pandemic. I explained that I was pleased with the work they had already completed and that we should be careful with ourselves, each other, and our educational expectations. I tried to reassure and encourage them, but I was cautious not to lay too much at their feet. It was a balancing act, one that I was aware would be made more difficult through the distance of online learning and forced isolation. At the same time, I directed them to two blog posts that I thought were useful for navigating this changed approach. One by Brene Brown (March 22, 2020), called “Collective Vulnerability, the FFTs of Online Learning, and the Sacredness of Bored Kids”, highlighted the inherent difficulty we all have with first times. The other by Rebecca Barrett-Fox (March 12, 2020), titled “Please do a bad job of putting your courses online”, made room for the argument that maybe, just maybe, teachers (and students) might not need to pour their best into translating the dynamics of an in-person classroom into an online forum. Instead we might consider the online platform and the affective conditions of educating during the pandemic as important areas of educational and art educational study. In addition to these posts, I provided justification or context explaining why I was providing these resources. Namely, that this wasn’t going to be business as usual, and that there was much to be learned from that and that this might be a critical, interstitial space in which we might witness or begin to “conceptualize affect as pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body’s capacity to act” (Clough, 2008, p. 1). I also included a link to Erik Scott’s video² introducing visual journaling, which provided a succinct definition and discussion of the difference between a sketchbook and a visual journal.

After sending these emails, I settled on completing the semester by asking my students to respond to a visual journal prompt once a week and to post their response to a corresponding weekly drop box on our class’s course site. I asked them to upload to the course site because it seemed to be the primary mode of communication available, and I wanted there to be little confusion and frustration which might prevent our communication. The prompts were labeled and assigned to a specific week, and each prompt corresponded to a question of affect that I was experiencing and that I suspected my students were as well. These included: social isolation, online learning, what’s missing (loss), fear, gratitude, and envisioning (the future) (see Table 1 for full question prompts). In all, I asked students to respond to six visual journal responses over the course of six weeks.

2 What is the visual journal? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDQBezh-DUKE>

Week #	Title	Visual Journal Prompt
1	Social Isolation and COVID-19	<p>After watching What is the Visual Journal- Erik Scott on YouTube, please visual journal about your initial thoughts and feelings about what is happening in your life relevant to the present situation we find ourselves in. This could be many things including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How you feel about being home alone or with children and/or a spouse • Issues of employment, productivity, income instability • Issues of health including yourself or those close to you • Feelings of anxiety, fear, boredom, restlessness • Issues of preparedness, information, confusion • Anything not listed that affects you because of corona virus/ social distancing <p><i>Consider using materials that are only available in your home (or that might be available in your future student's homes- will they have paint? Charcoal? Pastels?) Consider working through your ideas using materials that are readily available. Can you use coffee grounds, food coloring, etc.? Consider what you could collage on to the page and how it will make meaning or connections to ideas. Consider drawing and writing as not only visual elements, but as ways to work through ideas, emotions, and thoughts.</i></p>

2	Online Learning	<p>How do you feel about online learning (not just in this class)? What are the differences that you are noticing? What does it feel like to learn this way?</p> <p><i>Consider processing your thoughts using different materials than you used last time. What other household items can you use?</i></p>
3	What's Missing?	<p>What's missing? What do you need? What have you lost? What are you missing out on? What has been canceled, changed, deferred? Who do you miss? Who have you lost?</p> <p><i>Consider how erasure might convey these ideas or how you might obscure or hide things during your process.</i></p>
4	Fear	<p>Fear is quite real in these times. What are you fearful of? How often does fear affect you as a learner or in the other roles you fill in your life (as a parent, an employee, etc.)</p> <p><i>Consider what kind of tone your entry might have when addressing fear. How will you convey this through process, material, content, color, penmanship/ brush strokes, etc?</i></p>
5	Gratitude	<p>What does this pandemic make you grateful for?</p>
6	Envision	<p>Imagine a better world after COVID-19. In what ways can we become better from this pandemic? What good do you envision from all this?</p>

Table 1: Six Assigned Visual Journal Prompts

What I Did

In addition to rewriting the curriculum, composing emails, sharing links, and designing questions to address affective differences in education brought on by the pandemic lockdowns, I also considered

my experience of lockdowns as part of this research project. When students began to upload their responses to the course site, I responded right away by thanking them for their candor and encouraged them. But I was not always prompt with reviewing their submissions, and although I invited my students to email me with concerns and questions, I received almost no communication outside of their submissions. Much of what was being experienced by my students beyond the journal entries was hidden from me. It felt like a black box. I would send out transmissions letting my students know that I was available to support them and I would only hear back about what they were required to respond to as course content. This, coupled with my own difficult (crippling) pandemic emotions (anxiety, isolation, timelessness), created a feedback loop which made it difficult for me to respond to student submissions in a regular (timely and normative) fashion. I would often wait one or two weeks before re-engaging with their submissions – those negative feelings that started in restlessness and timelessness often manifested in dread-based avoidance. This is all to say that while I was questioning student experience of pandemic and educational affect, I was also undergoing it. So, in addition to studying the artifacts and self-reporting my students made during the pandemic, this project also involves autoethnographic elements of self-study- in particular, my response to student responses and my own affective response to the pandemic and our university's procedural dictates.

Shimmer as an Affective Methodology

The data discussed in this study largely consists of student visual journal responses to six assigned prompts that replaced the planned curriculum of my second level art education class. The prompts acted like interview questions in that they posed questions that the students were able to interpret and answer. Although, unlike the in-person interviews that characterize many research practices, the pandemic lockdown prevented an embodied verbal dialogue of question and response between two people in close proximity. Rather, the weekly prompts and visual journal acted as interview questions and responses in visual and written form. Note that this is where the diaristic possibility of the visual journal diverges from the purposes and potential of most traditional sketchbook practices. Here we can assume that students might engage with the bound book as a lively or shimmering prosthetic practice (Thompson, 2015), where visual journal responses could be considered not only an answer to the prompt but also self-exploration of or inquiry into the questions posed. Assuming that students engaged in this way, I then mined their visual journals for content revealing the liveliness and depth of their affective experience, searching for shimmers (Stewart, 2007a), glints, or gleaming points where affects aggregate to become noticeable and reveal themselves against an always already affective background.

The students were asked to create their responses in handbound sketchbooks we had created during in-person classes at the beginning of the semester. They were made of artist quality paper that we hand bound in repurposed, secondhand, hardback book covers. As part of the assignment, they were required to create their response in the visual journal, and they were encouraged to explore the potential, possibilities, and materiality of the sketchbook. They were then required to photograph each entry and to upload their visual responses as digital images to the class blackboard site. In addition to their visual responses, students often wrote small notes or made asides in the comments section provided by the assignment upload page. Others chose to compose additional correspondence in separate text documents. These correspondences were collected as data along with emails specific to the class. Additionally, I made note of my own affective response to my students' work and to my role and experience of teaching them during the early stages of the pandemic.

As a way to begin to organize the data, visual responses were compiled along with any corresponding additional writing. The responses were then sorted by weekly prompt and reviewed. This enabled me to see general themes across each prompt and to note differences. After reviewing the scope of responses for each week and noting an overall general sensibility, I regrouped the work chronologically beginning with week one and ending with week six for each student. I did this in order to build a holistic understanding of each student's work and to be able to consider each in relation to other students' responses and within the broader context of the whole class. While I was doing this, I was noting of the quality of each response (some seemed thinner than others in terms of consideration given to the content or form of the response). As part of this analysis, I tuned-in to my own experience of the pandemic, noting which and whose responses sparked or reverberated intensely against my own experience.

Rather than review their work for recurring themes that might iteratively saturate or aggregate to create a concept, a tactic used to generate themes and to produce a kind of evidentiary saturation in many qualitative research practices, my review of the students' works searched instead for shimmers, nodes, or peaks where an artistic or emotional intensity stood apart from the background flow of the quotidian. Rather than producing rhythms and through them confirming sameness, this research practice is one of attunement to "the flows, rhythms, and intensities" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, as cited by Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010, p. xi).

The two journals discussed below were at once representative and resistant to the sameness of the whole. When viewed with and against the context of their peer's journals and within the context of my own pandemic experience, the works discussed below were selected because

in one way or another their content and form shimmered or gleamed differently, with flashes of wisdom. One's experimental novelty, joie de vivre, and humor shaking me from my own crippling pandemic melancholy and the other reminding me of the real, grave threat of the pandemic and its ability to shape our everyday experience of life and to likewise alter our experience of education.

Visual Journal Responses: Shimmers and Resonances

Many of the journal entries had an emotional or affective tone, meaning that the entries addressed students' feelings about COVID-19 or their feelings about their educational experience during the pandemic. They might also be considered affective in that they are artworks that were being used to "get at" what was experienced, felt (McClure, 2022; Springgay, 2018), or lived beyond the rational or linguistic or what Hickey-Moody (2013) might consider affective or "the capacity of art to effect a movement from invisibility to visibility, to make stories and publics" (p. 120).

Many of the responses were what you'd expect: typical responses to teacher-driven requests for artmaking that followed unexamined or underexamined practices of collage (Garoiian & Gaudelius, 2008), where at best it is uncertain how invested the maker is in the meaning making practices, and at worst is simply performing the requirements of the assignments. Despite this, each response asked for student consideration of their affective experience of education and of COVID-19. In asking the students to tune in, to listen, to engage in "the commonplace, labor-intensive process of sensing modes of living as they come into being" (p. 340), this necessarily changed the affective quality of their everyday experience of education. It provided a space to explore the effects of educational affect. While these responses and the act of attuning or tuning in was a collective act, or a what Stewart (2007a) refers to as "a gathering place of accumulative dispositions... the gathering of experience beyond subjectivities", there were "shimmers" or affective responses that provided a "sharpening of attention to the expressivity of something coming into existence (or out of)" (p. 340) that would tug at me and, in the resonance they produced, reveal an affective layer. Despite the fact that there were few submissions and the limited correspondence we had surrounding them, the two visual journals discussed below were such shimmers, and they would take on "a new regime of sensation" and "threshold to the real" (Stewart, 2007a, p. 340) that resonated through my mind and body, revealing an affective politic of fear like those described by Massumi (2015), but also with possible implications for education.

Affective FEAR, the Body, and Asynchronous Isolation: L's Responses

Initially, L's journal entries did not stand out as all that different from her peers. Like them, she employed collage as her primary mode of engaging with the prompts and visual journal entries. She seemed to understand the practice of visual journaling using both visual and written means to explore and experience feelings on the page. Like her peers, she moved easily from utilizing one side of the journal to employing the full spread of two inside sheets, but used or discovered no unique, inventive possibilities of the journal beyond this. While her tactics and approach were typical, what was unusual was that she began to email me around the second week when the entries were due asking if she could submit them late. Because I was struggling myself to perform my own duties, I was happy to extend the deadline and didn't think much about the possible causes for why she might need an extension. L also asked for an extension for the third entry, and by the fourth, her last but not the class's, she had sent me a distressing email that she was in the hospital and would need some more time. In hindsight, her request for more time screams at me like a warning bell. However, at that time I did not really understand nor realize the poetics of her pleas.

Her sudden hospitalization was quite alarming, especially given her young age and seeming health. All she had said in her email was that she was in for tests. The lack of information I had then became the impetus to comb through her journal entries (as well as the emails) for signs of how long she had been struggling and for any indication of what she might be experiencing and suffering from. Of course, I feared the severities of COVID-19.

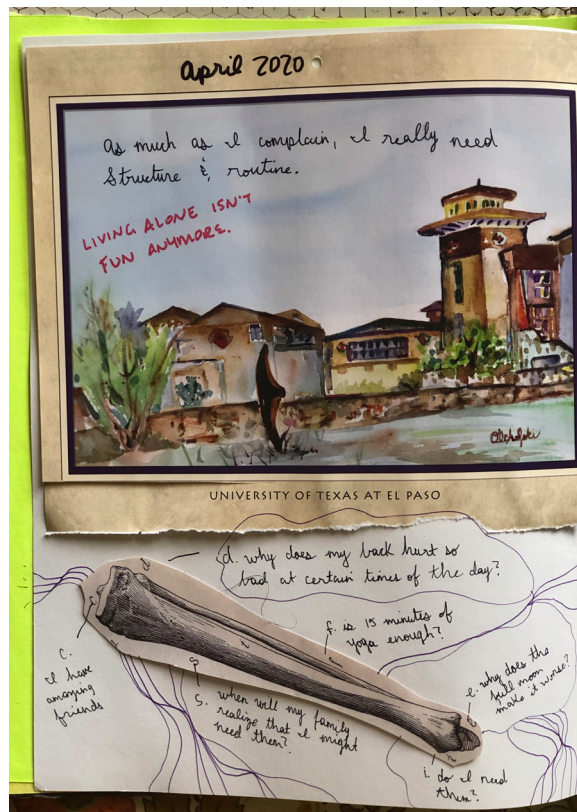


Figure 1. L's visual journal response to "social isolation". Collaged anatomical bone against campus watercolor with anatomical labels replaced with questions.

L's response to the first and second prompts (*social isolation* and *online learning*, respectively) offered little initial insight into her experience. Her social isolation response (see Figure 1) included a collaged watercolor of the college campus and an anatomical drawing of a tibia and fibula (both artist's works made by someone else). Radiating off the anatomical drawing was writing that looked like anatomical labels corresponding to letters on the drawing but on closer look were actually questions she posed to herself (and to me) regarding her own isolation such as: "c. I have annoying friends." "d. Why does my back hurt so bad at certain times of the day?" "e. Why does the full moon make it worse?" "f. Is 15 minutes of yoga enough?" "s. When will my family realize that I might need them?" "i. do I need them?" Initially I thought nothing of out of the (new) ordinary about these questions as they seemed on par with things that I was feeling and that others

indicated in their responses. Likewise, this entry was placed next to her second entry about online learning -something that the in lightness of her response indicated that she wasn't struggling with. Looking back the starkness of the black and white anatomical drawing set against the warm tones of the watercolor and the reference to anatomy and medicine made it seem significant – a harbinger of things to come.



Figure 2. Left hand side of L's visual journal response to "What's Missing (loss)?". Collaged calendar, dog-like or large cat-like creatures with foreboding figure holding a cage and a web of words.

Her third entry (see Figure 2) relating to the prompt, "What's missing (loss)?" was more telling. It consisted of a full spread of two internal pages that, despite addressing the same topic, seemed more like individual entries. On the left-hand side was a cut out section of a brown paper calendar that seemed to make up a foreground and built a kind of horizon line across the center of the page. Collaged on top of it were three figures. Two of a dog or large cat-like creature each with a word written across its torso: touch and freedom respectively. The third was a humanoid figure cloaked in robes and carrying a bird cage with an eye at the bottom. The gesture drawing of the hand holding the cage is repeated at the bottom of the figure and the figure's face seems to be

replaced with a row of teeth that creates a gaping hole with a smaller head or six-legged spider inside. On the white upper portion of the page L created a network-like diagram drawing in which she had written words relating to her symptoms and discomfort including: “cough”, “total loss of appetite”, “heart palpitations”, “depression”, “sweating and (in bright red pen and uppercase) DIGESTIVE PROBLEMS”. Each word was given its own space or bubble which seemed to billow over top of the next like storm cloud or a frothy pot of pasta water boiling over.

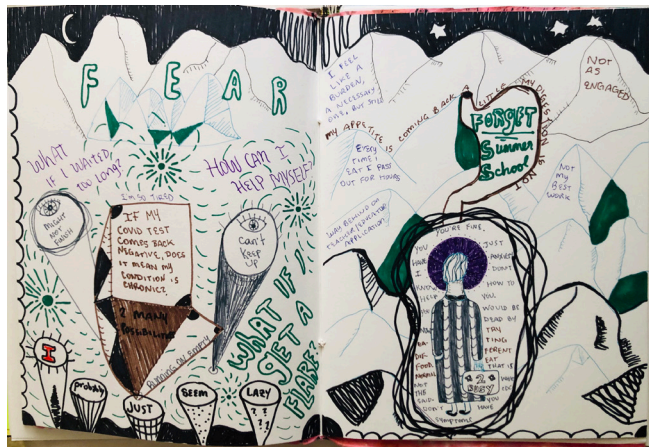


Figure 3. L's visual journal response to “fear”. Marker drawing of an anthropomorphic mountain and figure with its back to us, halo, and stomach

L's last journal entry was the fourth, “fear”, (see Figure 3) and in it she again used the full spread of two internal pages and continued the network of lines creating connected spaces with words inside each space. This time the lines also formed a mountain set against a black marker sky with a moon and three stars. Like the star that illuminates the mountains, which are the backdrop to the city where we live, L suspended the bubble letters “F E A R” across one side of the mountain. On the left-hand page, she has drawn eyes projecting out of holes in the mountain that on one hand look like search lights and on the other (because there are only two) appear to anthropomorphize the mountain. Written inside each eye respectively is the following: “might not finish,” “can't keep up.” Other concerns fill the page such as, “What if I waited too long,” “HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?” “I'm so tired,” “I probably just seem lazy,” “WHAT IF I GET A FLARE?” and “IF MY COVID-19 TEST COMES BACK NEGATIVE DOES THAT MEAN MY CONDITION IS CHRONIC?”

The page on the right-hand side contains a figure wearing a striped robe with their back to us. A religious looking halo in black marker surrounds their head and they are holding a bag or case that reads “2 BUSY” with two flowers on either side of the 2. The figure is encircled with thick dark lines and inside the space reads:

YOU'RE FINE. YOU JUST HAVE ANXIETY. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP YOU. YOU WOULD BE DEAD BY NOW. TRY EATING DIFFERENT FOOD EAT NORMAL THAT'S NOT WHAT THE CDC SAID. YOU DON'T HAVE SYMPTOMS.

Branching off of the thick-lined circle is a drawing of a stomach surrounded by the words: “My appetite is coming back a little my digestion is not.” Littered around the page is the following: “Not as engaged,” “not my best work,” “way behind on teacher/educator application,” “every time I eat I pass out for hours,” and “I feel like a burden, a necessary one, but still.”

Looking back on entry three and four (Figures 2 and 3) is especially difficult. I realize how little I understood what L was going through, and yet these works both effectively communicate her conscious (and unconscious) experience and are especially affective. The strange figure holding the cage seems to forebode the symptoms she is just beginning to articulate and of course they appear like a spider's webbing which harken back to the creature inside the figure's mouth. In the fourth response, again I am compelled by the figure. That its back is to us and its stomach is on display is especially heart wrenching when teamed with the words “my appetite is coming back and my digestion is not” and “everytime I eat I pass out for hours.” The fearful mountain with eyes resonates like a surrealist, nightmarish take on the familiar sights of home. Returning to these images with the insight I have now reveals how much I missed, how important the body of the student is, in other words, that education is embodied, contextual, and affective. I see how much was at stake.

During this difficult time when many were experiencing trauma, fear, and other quite real and profound affects, I did not know the extent to which L's complaints would ultimately become grave. Even while using this visual journal practice designed to ask questions about student's affective experiences and to uncover the affective register in education, the asynchronous disembodied experience of education on a screen made it difficult to connect with my struggling students. Furthermore, the decontextualized nature of this research practice made it more difficult to interpret the affective in works of art. What I mean by this is that despite the richness of the examples shared in this paper, the asynchronous nature of this research practice prevented more embodied, shared, or contextual exchanges and understandings from unfolding, leaving me to sift through and connect the works to

sparse communications and to interpret the works alone. This practice is quite different from sketchbook research in early childhood art education (Cinquemani & Souza, 2022; Lewis & Rhodes, 2022; Park, 2022; Schulte, 2013; Sunday, 2015; 2018; Sunday & Conley, 2020; Thompson, 1995; 1999; 2009; 2017; Thompson & Bales, 1991) where sketchbook entries are residues of contextualized, embodied, and lively encounters between participants. While lively, rich, and valuable, in and of themselves, these visual journal entries are not as complete or as lively as the embodied, encounters possible in early childhood art education research.

L was young (an adult student in her early thirties) and my impression of her, formed mostly during the short period of in-person instruction, was that she was enthusiastic and artistic. She expressed a vivacity that projected those qualities into the future and foretold a future self that was palpable. In the end, if her illness had been COVID-19, the prognosis may have been different. Less than three weeks after her initial intake to the hospital, L was dead. She had suddenly and unexpectedly succumbed to breast cancer, and I found myself sending flowers to parents I had never met (and would never meet) and sharing the difficult news to a group of students who had only just begun to know her when the pandemic had separated us. It felt like there was no community and there was little to no protocol (or ritual practice) for how one might grieve a classmate or a student asynchronously. In a digital space of asynchronicity (how) does the body mourn? What does it mean to mourn alone? When there is no virtual body, no real student body, no student's body, what is the meaning of death? For me, her death confirmed not only the isolation and distance of asynchronous learning but also my deepest fear for my students and community during the pandemic; a mere threat had become a horrible reality (like many others').

Beyond the strange grief of the pandemic and of losing a student while in COVID-19 lockdown and learning virtually, and how that challenged the human in the digital space, my interpretation of L's affective fear and of my own might best illustrate the affective force of fear and possibly the affective quality of education. That we both feared that she had contracted COVID-19 and how that fear gripped us in light of another, more sinister (in her case) disease might best illustrate how something that is not material (she was not sick with COVID-19) could consume our fears so much so that it was the first assumption one would make when not feeling well. (To this day if I am not feeling well from flu or allergy symptoms my first assumption is COVID-19 even if it's quickly brushed aside as not a real threat; I am fully vaccinated). Despite never coming to fruition, the affective threat of COVID-19 was so real that, perhaps it subsumed L's ability to name any other threat. Although in her case the affective threat of COVID-19 may have become more of a hope or wishful reprieve from other real threats.

B's Initial Entry

B was at the bottom of my roster alphabetically and, after reviewing all the other responses, his was unexpected. He submitted far more image files than were necessary for the first response. Concerned that he had misunderstood the directions and placed all his journal responses in one file, I opened the files to see what he had done. I found that he did indeed understand the assignment and that he exceeded my expectations. His submission consisted of eight image files that told the story of B's fictional friend, an actual carrot aptly named Sgt. Gerald Quincy Pepper, presumably of the Lonely Hearts Club Band and both a reference to B's love of music and to a pervasive sense of loneliness that the pandemic wrought. I had asked students to utilize materials that they had at home because this would be what they would ask their students to do. B was one of a few students who utilized everyday objects in his entries and he certainly did so in creative and explorative ways- breaking the confines of the page to not only include Sgt. Pepper but other items like an out-of-commission Bic lighter, translucent yellow earplugs, printed photographs of a Red Hot Chili Peppers concert and of his girlfriend, and half of his old driver's license where he altered his photograph with a black Sharpie, darkening his eyebrows and chin line, adding a mustache and wavy lines that looked like dreadlocks and writing "HE IS COMING," effectively transforming his likeness to that of Jesus Christ.

B experimented with image and text and explored how visual journaling can be a process of residue and accretion. B's story of his friend St. Pepper utilized irony, humor, and play to connect the carrot's exploits to zombie movie plots and the Christian story of Easter. B used a real carrot and the other found objects in combination with his expressive drawing and image-making skills to relay his experiences of the pandemic, including his anxiety about leaving the house while simultaneously missing going out to see his favorite bands play. The woe of our homeboundness was told with humor (often through purposefully cheesy puns) and the rawness of his feelings and line work.

The story begins with a stark frontal image of someone wearing a hazmat suit with the words QUARANTINE written at the top like a title (see Figure 4). On the next page B included the full page spread about his girlfriend discussed below. At the top of the third entry (see Figure 5) is "QUARANTINE DAY 1" in large print, and below B created a to-do list with items checked off including: "SEARCH CABINETS FOR SUPPLIES," "TAKE STOCK," "THINK OF STUFF TO DO," and he detailed a sub list of the things to do: "LEARN GUITAR," "MAKE A FRIEND," "MAKE ART." Additionally, he has labeled and taped the following items to the page: carrot, lighter, old ID. At the top of the next page (Figure 6) is "QUARANTINE DAY 2" and B has used

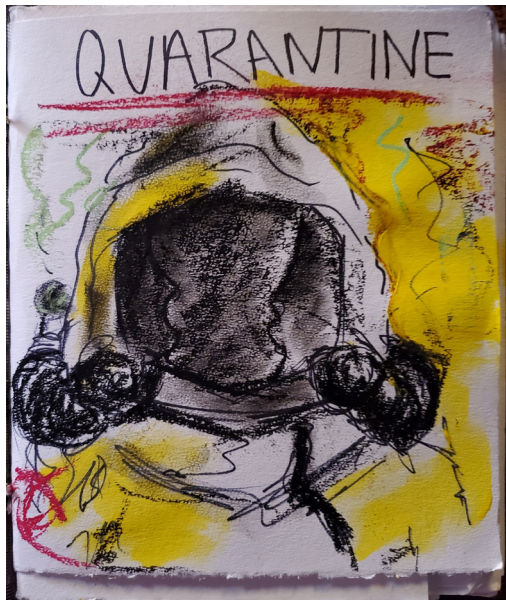


Figure 4. *Quarantine: B's reframing of the visual journal as a quarantine journal. First page showcases an expressive drawing of protective wear.*

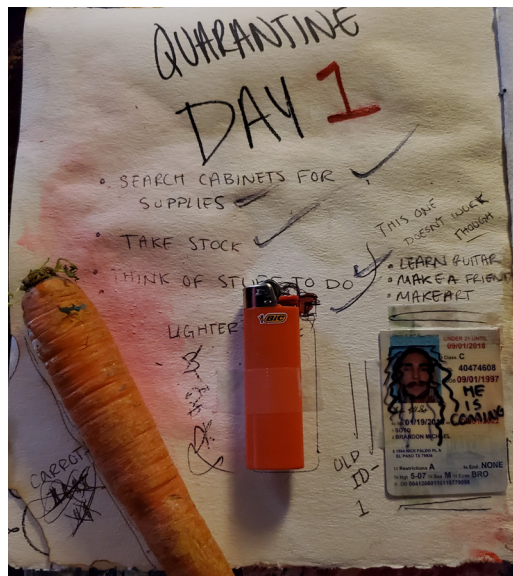


Figure 5. *Quarantine Day 1: Making list and exploring found materials.*

a paint marker to draw a face with gaping open mouthed pink smile, cartoon eyes, and a multicolor bandana painted around its forehead. Stick figure arms with four fingers and a rudimentary speech bubble encompassing the words “HEY THERE!” Here B introduces the reader to SGT. PEPPER stating:

TODAY MY PEN RAN OUT SO I STARTED TO USE THIS PENCIL I FOUND. ALSO I DECIDED I WAS GOING TO MAKE A FRIEND,³ HIS NAME IS SGT. PEPPER... YES LIKE THE BEATLES. PS. I ALSO HAVE A SHARPIE AND SOME PAINT.

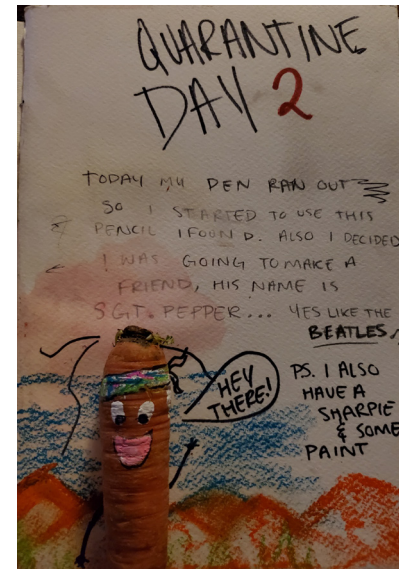


Figure 6. *Quarantine Day 2: Introduces Sgt. Pepper- the COVID-19 carrot.*

Here B’s humor belies the difficulty we all were experiencing and calls to the power of art to frame or reframe not only our thinking but our perspective. The longing for a friend is remedied by the literal making of a friend through this journaling practice, but what is also important to sense here is the shared longing that shimmers beneath this humorous and witty practice.

The next entries begin to skip over days, with many days between entries. “QUARANTINE DAY 3” & “QUARANTINE DAY 14” detail

³ Note the call back to the to do list from the previous entry and the twisting of notion of making a friend.

imaginative musings of communal practices. Day 3 (see Figure 7) we attend a Red Hot Chili Peppers concert with Sgt Pepper who is placed against an actual concert photo and pair of translucent yellow ear plugs and drawn taking a selfie. Day 14 (see Figure 8) we share a meal with Sgt. Pepper, although the words relay a foreboding tone : “IT’S BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE THE LOCKDOWN BEGAN... I CAN’T BELIEVE IT ALL WENT DOWN SO FAST. THEY DROPPED THE BOMBS!!! GETTING HUNGRY...”

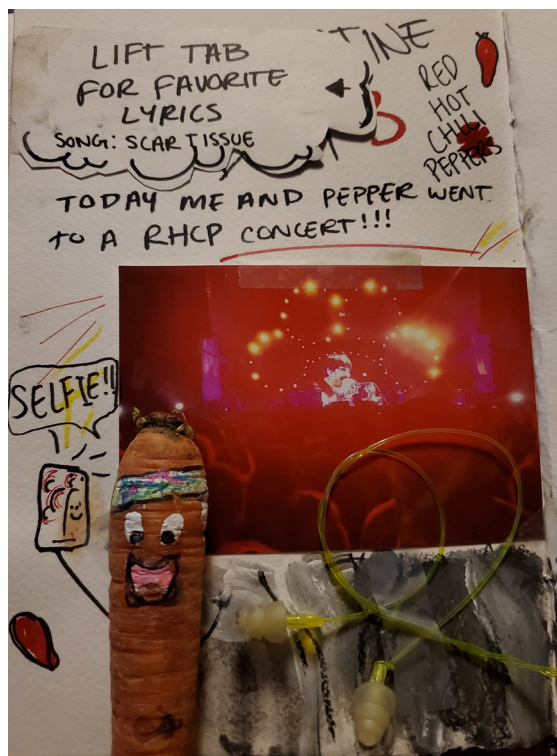


Figure 7. *Attending a concert with Sgt. Pepper.*



Figure 8. *Quarantine Day 14: Two weeks in quarantine and St. Pepper's cracks are beginning to show.*

The following entry, “QUARANTINE DAY 18”, is another full page spread and has less text. On the left-hand side of the page (see Figure 9) are made-up symbols against a red wash of paint and the words “VENTURED OUT TODAY FOUND THESE MARKINGS. SHOULD WAIT A FEW DAYS BEFORE GOING OUT AGAIN” are written in Sharpie at the bottom of the page. Less noticeable in the top right corner of the page are the words “WE ATE PEPPER.” On the right-hand page (see Figure 10) B had drawn what looked like two thought bubbles, one containing a cooking pot with actual cross sections of carrot depicted going into the drawn pot and the other the image of a gravesite under a shade tree. Both were drawn emanating from Sgt. Pepper depicted in a casket who clearly had a bite taken out of his head and shoulder and whose painted eyes and mouth had been replaced with Xs and a line, respectively indicating his death. Included on the page (see Figure 11) was a fold out portion made of lined paper that contained Sgt. Pepper’s eulogy which thanked God for “his bountiful sacrifice.”

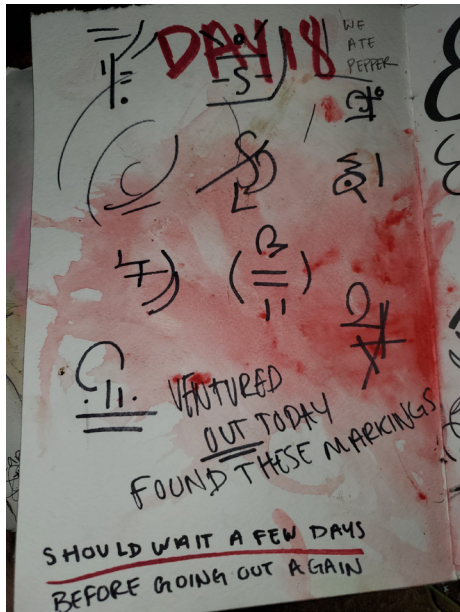


Figure 9. Day 18: Markings found.

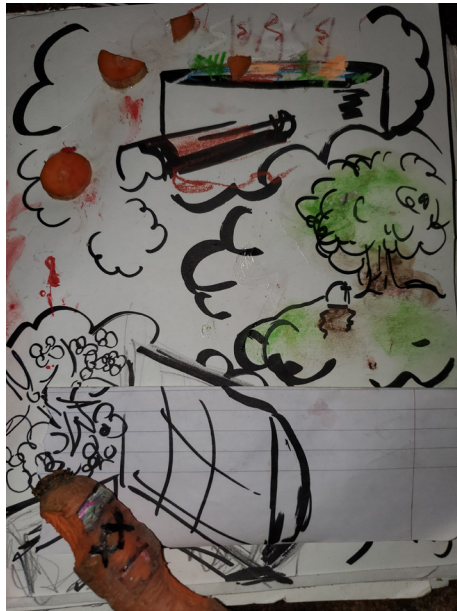


Figure 10. Day 18 (cont.) St. Pepper is dead and is laid to rest in a tasty stew.

Here the story then morphed to reference Easter (which was approaching quickly). As the carrot leaves his house, he is bitten (B takes a literal bite out of his carrot friend) and we are concerned that our companion is lost, we witness his funeral and in "DAY 22's" entry (see Figure 12) B proclaims using a yellow paint marker against the stark banding of black masking tape:

HIS FLESH
HAS
BEGUN
TO
ROT!

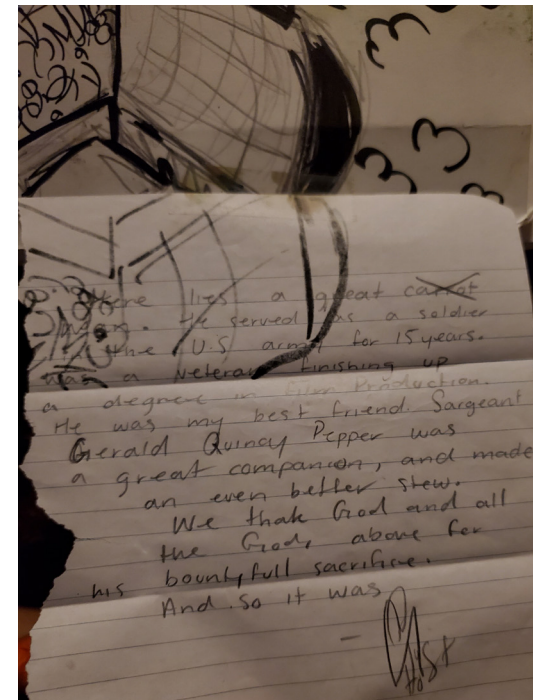


Figure 11. Day 18 (cont.) St. Pepper's eulogy unfolded.

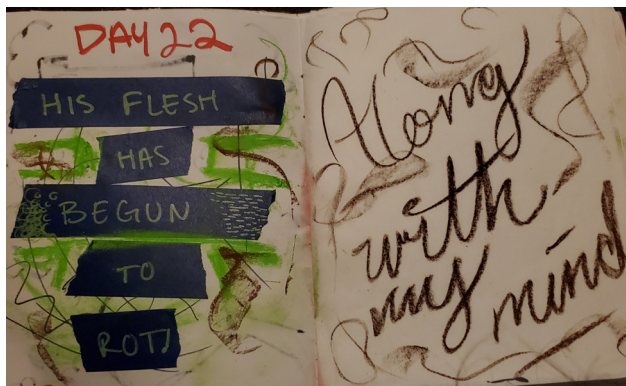


Figure 12. Day 22: Two page spread humorously connecting the zombie plot to B's state of mind.

On the accompanying page, using large cursive writing and dark charcoal that takes up the entire page, B exclaims, "Along with my mind". Here again, B uses humor to explore and express what we collectively experienced – the difficulties of confinement during the pandemic. Miraculously and in a springtime and quasi-religious reference on the next page, "DAY 26" (Figure 13), he is reborn like Jesus, but as a zombie carrot. B uses red marker claiming, "HE HAS RISEN!!!" He has righted the once eternally-horizontal carrot and drawn two stick figure arms grasping for "BRAAIINSSSS!!!" written shakily in a speech bubble protruding from the carrot. "THERE IS ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO DO..." is written at the top of the corresponding page (Figure 14) and in the bottom portion B has drawn a gun and written the onomatopoeia "BANG" surround by a jagged bubble. Sgt Pepper's arms are drawn back against the force of the explosion and chewed pieces of carrot have been glued to the page to illustrate its finality.

In a kind of aside within the story of Sgt. Pepper (see Figure 15), B used a full page spread to explore the additive diaristic qualities of the medium and test the complexity of its storytelling chops. B pasted a picture of his girlfriend on the right-hand page and on the left-hand side he wrote in thick sharpie marker, "The only awful thing about this quarantine is that I can't see my Girlfriend. I Still dream of her face though..." On the right-hand side with a different implement and in the margin between the picture and the edge of the page he continues "OTHER THAN THAT EVERYTHING IS FINE (:)" Below that written with still another pen, this time a disposable ball point, he concludes, "IM PROBABLY GONNA DIE". Despairing, funny, and ironic, his words tickle the range of pandemic experience and bring a little levity. It is not clear if he thinks he will die from the pandemic or



Figure 13. Day 26: Pepper is reborn as a zombie carrot just in time for Easter.



Figure 14. Day 26 (cont.) St. Pepper has been shot.

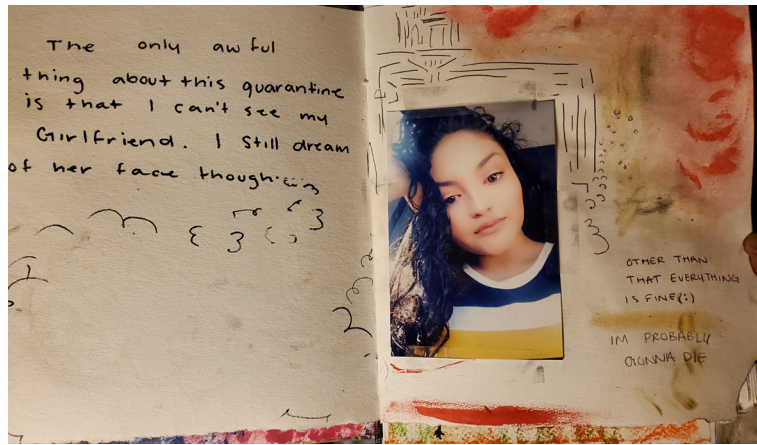


Figure 15. Image of B's Girlfriend.

their separation, but by combining the serious with the silly we are able to gain perspective to see the affective threat and to weigh or mitigate its affects, and through that possibly alter its products.

Both B's expressive playfulness and his inventive exploration of the visual journal medium in the face of the scarcity of pandemic lockdowns went beyond my expectations for the first submissions. He had embraced the visual journal not only as a place to explore how image making, writing, and storytelling could help process affective qualities of the pandemic, but the visual journal became a space in which to communicate the affective qualities of play and artmaking. The examples above illustrate the potential of the visual journal to provide a space to process and to produce differently through making, reimagining, and rethinking. Here, rather than ignore the affects and products of a pandemic education, B explores, tests, and plays with them as material for making art and making new.

Ultimately, what I found so unexpected and compelling about B's entries was not the workload (that he had done more than expected), but that he was able to make me see the unexpected. His work shimmered not because it was excessive but because it helped me to see the excesses that education during a pandemic had asked us to ignore while muddling and struggling through. B had made me laugh and reminded me of my own playfulness and the importance of affective spaces of play, humor, and artmaking for processing and producing anew. Recall that because of my own experience of the excesses of educating during the pandemic (isolation, dread, timelessness, etc.) I had been reluctant to review my student's work, and as a result I had waited longer than necessary to respond to their posts. When I

was struggling with the black box nature of asynchronous teaching, B's response reminded me of the impact of community (even if it is a virtual one) and the way that play, humor, and artmaking can make and remake spaces of conviviality (Sunday, 2015).

Conclusion

The fear associated with the early COVID-19 lockdown functioned much like the threat Massumi (2010) describes of WMDs during the second Gulf War.⁴ Neither was any less real because it had yet to produce what it threatened; rather, they were real because of what their threat produced. L and B's visual journal entries helped me to realize how the threat of COVID-19 produced certain affective educational realities in myself and for my students. It revealed a latent, excessive layer of education not usually attended to as part of everyday (Cartesian) educational practices that are concerned with the development of the mind and cognitive realm. My students' journal entries and my attunement to my own affective responses to them helped me to see how visual journaling can attend to educational excesses in ways that traditional sketchbooks (and art assignments) are not often asked to. Moreover, the process of visual journaling during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a highly uncertain education moment, helped to uncover the latent affective force of education. Despite our attempts to normalize, disguise, anesthetize, or bury it, education's emotional affective content shimmered through and became sensible, embodied, and aesthetic.

When I asked the questions: What kinds of things should be taught, expressed, examined, or understood during a global pandemic?" "Can and should education proceed as usual without attending to the emotional affective force of things where uncertainty, anxiety, fear, isolation, sickness, and death marked everyday experience?" I was really wondering how one might proceed as usual in spite of major material and affective changes in society and if we might finally address the affective in education. This study was in part to confirm the excess and immensity of that change in society and in education. Through considerations of how visual journaling could be used as a pedagogical and research tool to reveal the affective in education I uncovered how fear of COVID-19 constituted what Massumi (2015) described as an affective threat and how the asynchronism of online learning formed a kind of empty, disembodied education, revealing education's, students', and teachers' connection to embodiment and the affective register.

4 The supposed detection of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in Iraq supported President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, beginning the second Gulf War. It would be revealed later there were no WMDs (Cozens, 2004). Massumi (2010) argues that despite their being no actual weapons, the threat manufactured the same affective concern as if there were weapons.

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From a Native Worldview: The Concept of the Traditional in Contemporary Native American Art Practices

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ABSTRACT

This article explores tradition and ceremony in contemporary Native American art. Indigenous scholars and artists use traditional knowledge to navigate contemporary contexts. Shared perspectives challenge binaries, problematic due to Indigenous peoples' relationship to colonization. The study used Indigenous research incorporating critical theory (Grande, 2015), decolonizing and Indigenous Research Methodologies (Tuhivai Smith, 2021), and Indigenous research rooted in relationality (Wilson, 2008). We examined traditional meanings for Native Americans in contemporary art through reflection and dialogue. Research components included a historical overview, an examination of literature, interviews, and oral histories. *Transforming Our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies, and Philosophies* (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017) was consulted, in which Indigenous artists described artmaking as regenerating collective memory. Suggestions were made to reconsider traditions in Native American art to promote new outcomes in visual arts research and pedagogy informed by Indigenous epistemologies.

KEYWORDS: Tradition; Indigenous Research Methodology; Indigenous Ways of Knowing; Relationality; Contemporary Native American Arts

This study used an Indigenous¹ research paradigm incorporating components of critical theory (Grande, 2015) decolonizing and Indigenous Research Methodologies (Tuhivai Smith, 2021), and Indigenous research grounded in relationality (Wilson, 2008). In her book, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (2015), Sande Grande (Quechua) articulates the importance of critical theory as an act of "refusal," which critically "reimagine[s] and rearticulates assimilative logics in all of their (low and high intensity) forms" (p. 7). She urges that Indigenous knowledge becomes a "space of epistemic disobedience that is 'delinked' from Western, liberal, capitalist

¹ In this article, we use many identity terms such as American Indian, Native American, Native, Indigenous, First Nations, and tribal names when appropriate. Different geographic areas use different terms, different tribes or Nations use different terms, and it is our stand to be as inclusive as possible.

understandings,” and in turn an “alternative site” (p. 7). Likewise, in the Introduction to the 3rd edition of *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2021), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) observes that the challenge for researchers of decolonizing methodologies is still that of centering Indigenous concepts of knowledge and epistemic approaches, while simultaneously decentering colonial concepts of knowledge: “Decolonizing methodologies are about forcing us to confront the Western academic canon in its entirety...and the stories it tells to reinforce its hegemony” (p. xii). She adds that decolonizing methodologies necessitate that we decolonize “our minds, our discourses, our practices, and our institutions” (p. xiii). Shawn Wilson (Plains Cree) (2008) advises that Indigenous research must be guided by the three R’s – Respect, Reciprocity, and Responsibility, and grounded in a practical fashion, not in the world of ideas. In *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Wilson explains that Indigenous ontology and epistemology are rooted in relationality which means relationships “do not merely shape reality, they are reality” (p. 7). This means that of primary importance in Indigenous decolonizing methodology is accountability to relationships. Furthermore, the shared aspects of relational accountability are actualized through the choice of research topic, data collection methods, forms that the analysis takes, and the written or spoken presentation. For Wilson, idea development of Indigenous research is felt through the formation of relationships. We made a conscious effort throughout this research study to connect to Grande’s (2015) concepts of criticality, Tuhiwai Smith’s (2021) focus on centering Indigenous perspectives, and Wilson’s (2008) overall idea of relational accountability. For this evolving study, we used a critical decolonizing and Indigenous methodology based on respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. As the cornerstone of this work, we actively searched through the writings of the authors we worked with, the words of the artists and scholars we interviewed, and conducted our own dialogues with contemporary Indigenous scholars and artists built upon our relationships with them, and with each other. Speaking of decolonizing methodology, Tuhiwai Smith (2020) observes, “The right, the space, the voice to ‘tell our own stories from our own perspectives’ has been an important aspect of decolonizing knowledge” (p. xi). It is our hope that through our dialogues with Indigenous scholars and artists, and through our readings and conversations, the reader will also share in the relational research story as we have attempted to bring the life of each dialogue into these pages.

Through a dialogic process, which includes reflection, our study explores concepts and differences among the definitions and meanings of the traditional in contemporary art for Native Americans. We have applied key research components that include both a historical overview and an examination of literature, interviews, oral histories, and recommendations based on reflections. Tuhiwai Smith (2021) presents the core ideas of Indigenous research as breaking up the

story, analyzing and discussing underlying texts, and giving voice to aspects of our lives that are known innately as foundational concepts and processes in Indigenous Research. This study attempts this process and hopefully serves as an example.

The Story Begins

We conceived of our book *Transforming Our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies, and Philosophies* (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017) with a series of conversations that we recorded as we dialogued about the need for a book in art education based upon Indigenous perspectives on Indigenous art, pedagogies, and philosophies. We asked what we could learn from Indigenous perspectives, and how we might help art educators approach Native cultures differently. We presented Native artists as agents of social change with important stories to tell, research as an emancipatory practice rooted in connection, and teaching as holistic and egalitarian.

After publishing our edited book, *Transforming Our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies, and Philosophies* (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017), book authors presented their chapters at multiple venues and conferences. At a National Art Education Conference, after presenting major concepts of our last chapter in which we discussed respectful ways to work and teach with contemporary Native Artists and communities, an audience member stood up and asked a question: “Why do you only focus on the contemporary, instead of the traditional?” This question caused us discomfort as it implied that the traditional and the contemporary in a Native worldview were separate entities, and both of us knew that this was not the case. That a non-Native woman had asked this question gave us pause as we realized we would need to think about how to answer, not from a Western empirical compartmentalizing view, but from a Native worldview.

In *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*, Leanne Simpson (2017) clarifies that to come from a Native worldview means to emerge from a distinct set of intellectual practices from those historically privileged in the academy. She states, “It adheres to a different set of theories on how knowledge is constructed, generated, and communicated. It uses a different set of methodologies to generate those ideas” (p. 29). For this study, much the same as in our book, we ask Indigenous scholars and artists to tell their own stories in their own voices from their perspectives, which is an important framework for decolonizing knowledge.

As with our book, this current research began with dialogue. We started talking about the word *tradition* and how that term was defined differently for American Indians and non-Native people. Christine identifies as a Cherokee descendent through her father but

is not a citizen of tribal nations, while Kryssi labels herself as non-Native. As in our first book, we chose to employ a dialogic approach, which included Christine adhering to Cherokee values. She observes, “There are many Cherokee values, such as *gadugi*, a Cherokee word which means coming together as one and helping one another, and *detsadaligenvdisgesdi*, all must take responsibility for each other’s wellbeing” (Ballengee Morris, 2018). The overarching values are respect and responsibility. The principles of respect and responsibility, like Shawn Wilson’s (2008) description of relationality, are integrated throughout this study. We take responsibility for sharing Indigenous understandings by listening carefully to those Indigenous scholars and artists with and about whom we have written and spoken. Christine observes, “The responsibility of doing research in such a way that you do not shame your relationships is overarching in the ethical stance of an Indigenous researcher” (Ballengee Morris, 2018). Also taking these values into consideration, our book was from a predominantly Native worldview as more than half of the authors were Indigenous, along with those of Brayboy, Wilson, Kovach, and Atalay, whose academic works echo those values as key concepts.

Here, in discussing the concept of *tradition*, we came to think that for non-Natives the term often included time and materials when referring to visual items. The non-Native perspective, filtered through our audience member’s question, reflected a limited understanding of time, which for her could be separated into “long ago” versus “now,” ‘traditional,’ or ‘contemporary,’ without the understanding that an Indigenous perspective of temporality is unique and embodies the integration of past, present, and future. The non-Native audience member’s question revealed the concept she labeled as “tradition” was to be perceived as “either-or,” rather than as part of a continuum belonging to the whole. We therefore decided to examine the multi-layered concept of tradition from Indigenous perspectives through the writings of scholars and pedagogues, and our dialogues with Indigenous researchers, scholars, art curators, and artists.

Our Trajectory

In the introduction of *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education* (Tuhiwai Smith, Tuck, & Yang, 2019), Maori ethnographer Linda Tuhiwai Smith reflects on her work since 1999 stating,

My critique of colonialism was not just about looking at the colonizer but also looking at what colonial hegemony was doing within our own Indigenous minds, spirits, and behaviors. I saw the need for a decolonizing agenda that dealt with the whole of the dialectic of colonizer-colonized and recognized the role of education as a means to transform colonialism at

deep levels of knowledge, pedagogy, the shaping of minds and discourses. (p. 6)

In the same spirit as Tuhiwai Smith et al., we initially published our book *Transforming Our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies, and Philosophies* (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017) in art education as a vehicle to examine and act on the ways that Indigenous epistemologies might both inform and transform the hegemonic settler colonial beliefs that our field centers. We too hoped the book with its twenty-nine authors who looked through the lens of Indigenous Research Methodologies, Indigenous pedagogies, and Indigenous arts practices would help to transform the Eurocentric gaze. But, when this recent question about tradition by an audience member arose, we realized we had more work to do. We decided to read our book again to see if any of the authors addressed the term tradition and what was stated.

We found that in each section of *Transforming Our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies, and Philosophies* (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017) many of the Indigenous authors referred to traditional knowledges and protocols. The authors in the book found that exploring new Indigenous theories of artmaking/teaching/learning invites open engagement with and regeneration of collective memory of traditional knowledges and histories. Judith Thompson (Tahltan Nation) found that traditional ways give a sense of coherence producing knowledge of who we are and who we might become. Charlene Teeters (Spokane) and Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee) are cited as stating how the personal, historical, and contemporary are woven together. In her articles about Hawaiian research and pedagogical projects, Sachi Edwards described traditional ways through learning what it means to see, feel, and understand the world through Indigenous eyes to preserve and protect Indigenous cultures. Mark Graham and Malia Andrus (Kānaka Maoli) continued this idea by intertwining relationships with land, which encourage maintaining traditional practices that nourish spiritual, physical, and educational well-being; authors state that relationships to the land are paramount and that land holds stories of the ancestors, of creation, of being. Courtney Elkin Mohler (Santa Barbara Chumash) explored cultural transformation and endurance through storytelling, artistic practice, and collective creative genesis finding that a Native worldview is holistic, complete, dynamic, and reflective of an interconnectedness of Native traditional and contemporary life – traditions are metaphorical touchstones for Native views of the world that are spatial rather than temporal. Christine Ballengee Morris (Cherokee Descendant) gives the example of earthworks built millennia ago whose shared knowledge reflect the relevance to our world today. Without collective traditional ways, the earthworks would not exist. Their knowledge unfolds in the everyday and the story of the everyday is passed down generation to generation, connecting who we are and who our ancestors are. Paul Chaat Smith (Choctaw) states that Native art is holistic, inseparable

from daily life, or ceremonial life interwoven into life, which keeps art relevant and meaningful in the real world. Shanna Ketchum-Heap of Birds (Diné) states that Native artists retain a deep respect for their heritage and artistic/cultural traditions having departed from the clichés and stereotypes popularly found in traditionalist and revivalist Indian art today. Charlene Teters observed,

The oppressor uses your history to deflate you, and he can do that in the way he tells the story. Our story has been told by the conqueror for so many years. But when you use your history, you can use it in a way that inspires you.... My art, lecturing and teaching [have] centered around achieving a national shift in the perception of Native people. All too often we are still seen as objects or as a people trapped in the past tense. We are twenty-first century people and must be seen as such in order to deal with the serious issues that face us today. (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, pp. 60-61)

Therefore, our preliminary examination of Indigenous scholars, researchers, pedagogues, and artists enabled us to see clearly that Indigenous authors speak about Indigenous research, pedagogy, and arts practices as inseparable from traditional ways. Below we further explore Indigenous philosophies and their relationship with the traditional.

Indigenous Epistemologies

Porsanger (Saami) (2004) iterated that an Indigenous paradigm recognizes knowledge as grounded in Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing in everyday life. Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008, 2013) used an Indigenous paradigm or theory of knowledge to investigate the experience of being an Indigenous academic within a university system. One of his recommendations is Indigenous scholars need to remember relationality, storytelling, and ceremony. Ceremony includes considering cultural components in academic life such as honoring storytelling. Kovach (Cree/Saulteaux) (2021) placed storytelling as central to the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and teachings. Hart (2010) found that Indigenous epistemology is a fluid way of knowing as it is derived from teachings transmitted from generation to generation through storytelling because each story is alive with the nuances of the storyteller. Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) (2008) argued that storytelling and incorporating tribal culture, knowledge, and historical perspectives assist in both defining what Indigeneity is and clarifying the purpose of Indigenous origins in modern thought. Not only the stories coming through to American Indian people from the past, but also the Indian stories being told today, she argued, are bearers of traditional knowledge, history, and myth. Alohalani Brown (Kānaka Maoli) (2019) observed,

It bears saying that everything we consider a tradition was once an innovation. Traditions come into being when the community finds a practice or a process useful or important enough to replicate, teach, and transmit across generations Significantly, innovations are rooted in tradition.... (p. viii)

Here, Alohalani Brown confirms what scholars Wilson (2008), Kovach (2021), and Cook-Lynn (2008) observe, that tradition is rooted in generational transmission, which is important over time as a means to teach what is not only essential, but what is inseparable from the innovation of today.

The Traditional in Indigenous Research Methodologies

Rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, Wilson-Hokowhiti (Kānaka Maoli) and Aluli Meyer (Kānaka Maoli) (2019) noted that Indigenous Research Methodologies hold the capacity to be both “specific and universal, localized and global” (p. 3). Authors stated that the nature of Indigenous thinking embodies wholeness which is a point of continuity. In describing the book, *The Past Before Us: Mo’okū’auhau as Methodology*, Wilson-Hokowhiti (2019) noted that the title actually refers to the importance of “the time in front” (p. 1) in Hawaiian thinking. He observed that Indigenous Research Methodologies demonstrate that “... sailing into the future guided by the past articulates mo’okū’auhau [genealogical lineage]” by using genealogical knowledge from the past to guide research methodologies. Wilson-Hokowhiti noted,

Sailing into the future, guided by the past, represents the way in which we negotiate our traditional and contemporary realities The practice of wayfinding and voyaging are both ancient and transforming, sailing into the future while remaining deeply connected to ancestral vision and guidance. (p. 126)

Therefore, in a Native worldview, Indigenous research embodies Native ways of knowing rooted in Indigenous holistic epistemologies. Tuhiwai Smith et al. (2019) argued that when centered in Indigenous philosophy, decolonizing studies resist narratives that support assumptions about the linearity of history and support images of time and place that go beyond coloniality and conquest.

In her book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (2009, 2021), Margaret Kovach had conversations with six Indigenous scholars, all of whom stated that Indigenous Research Methodologies must integrate Indigenous cultural knowledges as the core of their research frameworks including knowledge from the sacred and ceremonial. Kovach noted that all the conversations she held with Indigenous researchers were of significant scholastic value because they held within them the richness of oral culture. She realized

there was a knowledge source she could not access through written publication given the orality of Indigenous traditions. Like Wilson (2008), Kovach also honors the place of relationality and story in Indigenous knowing and researching. Ethics, positions of reciprocity, community relevance, respect, honoring, and collectivist traditions are acknowledged as integral and necessary aspects of Indigenous research. Like Tuhiwai Smith et al. (2019), Kovach (2009) reinforced a very important point: “Indigenous approaches to seeking knowledge are not of a Western worldview, a matter that colonialism (and its supporters) has long worked to confuse” (p. 21). Kovach (2021) noted that Indigenous methodologies flow from tribal epistemologies which require the embodiment of culturally influenced paradigms incorporating a relational worldview:

The proposition of integrating spiritual knowings and processes, like ceremonies, dreams, or synchronicities, which act as portals for gaining knowledge, makes mainstream academia uncomfortable, especially when brought into the discussion of research. This is because of the outward knowing versus inward knowing dichotomy. (pp. 67-68)

Kovach (2009) continued that tribal epistemologies are esteemed because they emerge from ancestral relationships connected with place. In speaking of her own Plains Cree knowledges, Kovach noted that rather than a linear process, her research “followed more of an in and out, back and forth, and up and down pathway. I see Nêhîyaw knowledges as a nest that holds within it properties full of possibility for approaching research” (p. 45). She reinforced that Plains Cree culture is non-fragmented, holistic, in which segregating values from ceremony, place, language is not possible and therefore inseparable from tradition. Adding to our overview of the literature, which confirms the continuity inherent in a relational worldview, below we focus on the power of dialogue to center concepts of the traditional as they are interwoven with the contemporary.

Dialogues and Discoveries

In the Foreword of Wilma Mankiller’s book *Every Day is a Good Day: Reflections by Contemporary Indigenous Women* (2011), the renowned Indigenous scholar Vine Deloria Jr. stated,

The discussions focus on the continuing role each person sees herself playing, and it would not be amiss to say that without the translation of complex problems into solvable activities we could not go forward. Thus the women provide a different function today than they did in the old days, and we can see that everyone’s favorite word, “traditional,” emerges time and time again in new clothes, is accepted by friends and relatives

as the proper course of action, different from other times yet applicable today. (p. xiii)

In this same spirit of dialogue and discussion, our next section focuses on our conversations with Indigenous scholars, researchers, and artists, in the hopes that the stories of those we spoke with will come through our writing to better illustrate the complex meanings ascribed to the concept of tradition from a Native worldview.

Bryan Brayboy

In preparing for this study, we found we wanted to review an interview that took place between Christine and Professor Bryan Brayboy (Lumbee) who visited The Ohio State University in October 2016. Brayboy is the President’s Professor of Indigenous Education and Justice in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. At ASU, he is senior advisor to the president, director of the Center for Indian Education, associate director of the School of Social Transformation, and co-editor of the *Journal of American Indian Education*. He is the author of more than 90 scholarly documents, including multiple policy briefs for the U.S. Department of Education, National Science Foundation, and the National Academy of Sciences. Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) was developed by Bryan Brayboy to understand the experiences of Indigenous peoples in education. TribalCrit is a powerful tool that exposes the complex positioning of Indigenous peoples in the context of colonialism on the one hand and Indigenous traditions, knowledges, and inherent rights to self-government on the other. Thus, Indigenous communities must be at the heart of any educational endeavor if we are serious about liberation for all peoples. TribalCrit addresses the racialized and political status of Indigenous peoples as members of sovereign nations and is guided by nine tenets:

1. Colonization is endemic to society.
2. U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.
4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty... and self-identification.
5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.
6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.
7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and

- adaptability among individuals and groups.
8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
 9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change. (Brayboy, 2005, pp. 429-430)

The tenets state the needed means to create a path toward autonomy and sovereignty.

It was through this lens that Brayboy observed the earthworks in Newark, Ohio. After the tour, Dr. Brayboy stated that viewing the earthworks was a life altering moment. He expressed that the builders were architectural marvels, and the earthworks illustrate the builders as having ingenuity and craftsmanship based on how well built the earthworks seem to be. He explained that Indigenous Knowledge systems connect four philosophical concepts:

- How we come to know (epistemology; what counts as knowledge)
- How we engage with the world (ontology)
- What our values are (axiologies) spiritual aspect, perpetuation of people
- How we teach people to be Lumbee.... (pedagogy)

Observing events year after year becomes cumulative knowledge that is passed on to the next generation, which is so important. Our relationship to something sets up the responsibility that reassures that connections continue. This is the tradition.

Sonya Atalay

Another scholar we consulted in *Transforming Our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies, and Philosophies* (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017) was Dr. Sonya Atalay. She is Anishinabe-Ojibwe, an anthropologist, archaeologist, and a prominent advocate for community-based and participatory research (CBPR) and arts-based research. Dr. Atalay is one of the first of her people to undertake tertiary studies in archaeology.

Atalay's book, *Community-Based Archaeology* (2012), clearly defined Indigenous research through the lens of archaeology, but Indigenous research applies to many fields. She works in the area of engaged (public) anthropology, particularly in community-university partnerships and utilizes community-based research methods to conduct research in partnership with Indigenous and local communities. Her work crosses multiple disciplines such as cultural anthropology, archaeology, heritage studies, material culture, and Native American and Indigenous

studies. In an earlier article, Atalay commented regarding Indigenous Ways of Knowing:

We, as Native peoples, have many stories to tell. We have a unique way of viewing the world, and it is one that has been severely affected by colonization yet is ever changing and resilient. Bringing Native voices to the foreground to share these experiences and worldviews is a critical part of readjusting the power balance to ensure that Native people control their own heritage, representation, and histories. (p. 615)

In this statement Atalay confirms that Native shared experiences rooted in tradition support resiliency and accurate representation of tribal histories. In October 2020, Atalay gave a virtual presentation at Mount Holyoke College, *Repatriation, Reclaiming and Indigenous Wellbeing: Braiding New Research Worlds*, which explored the use of arts-based research and knowledge mobilization methods as part of Indigenous storywork. Atalay noted that The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act was both defined and gave clarity:

Repatriation is a way of helping with healing and it's a teacher. It teaches us about the importance of relationships for solving the complex problems facing our world, such as the climate crisis.... Indigenous knowledge systems challeng[e] and chang[e] universities. Repatriation is one really good example. We see that bringing Indigenous ways of knowing into the academy challenges and changes things... (Virtual Presentation, Sonia Atalay, Mount Holyoke College, October 2020).

Connecting concepts such as humility, respect, sharing, humor, integrity, wisdom, non-interference, strength, and reciprocity are part of the holistic and cyclical views of Indigenous knowledge systems. Native pedagogy is based on a spiral, the process is a journey.

Paul Chaat Smith

It is also important to discuss spirituality in everyday life, the significance of ceremonies and healing processes, and the emphasis on unity with nature. Such an approach is paramount when reading American Indian scholars such as Paul Chaat Smith and his book *Everything You Know About Indians is Wrong* (2009). Paul Chaat Smith is an Associate Curator at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), as well as an author who writes books and curates exhibitions that focus on issues of Indian space and representation. His projects include the NMAI's permanent history gallery, as well as *Brian Jungen: Strange Comfort* (2010), *Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian* (2009), and

James Luna's *Emendatio* at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005).

One of Chaat Smith's strengths is his ability to scan histories and objects reflecting publicly on them in the presentations or exhibitions he curates. At a talk at the Walker Art Center in 2018, he stated the following:

Despite all the public campaigns and great scholarship, in terms of an average American's knowledge of Indians, it's still almost at zero. What that tells me is, it's not about more information, and it's not about correcting false ideas about history or stereotypes—because we've been doing that forever, and it hasn't moved the needle The radical notion of the "Americans" exhibition is that we're telling visitors, you're part of the Indian experience by virtue of being an American—Indians are so embedded in American national identity, in visual culture, that this really is about you. With this show we're trying to say, you are part of this construct. There is no you without us: everything about this country is entangled with Indian consciousness, identity, history, continuing up to this day—it's in all our heads. That's what I'm trying to get to. A lot of it is helping people feel that it's just kind of cool to think about. Museums are organized around didactics and messaging and all of that—I just think humans are so complicated. I never want to be prescriptive. If I get people with the spectacle, and they're thinking about how Indian experience is part of their own individual life in a different way—that's success.

<https://walkerart.org/magazine/paul-chaat-smith-jimmie-durham-americans-nmai-smithsonian>

Taking what Chaat Smith stated into consideration, he challenges us to begin with what the non-Native knows about Native Americans. In this last exhibition about stereotypes, he brought those items, words, and multiple meanings to the forefront to be explored. This approach encouraged us to explore the histories of these items, the impact that the meanings have, and the need to reform.

Melanie Yazzie

Connected to ideas surrounding an exploration of the impact of meaning, Kryssi also dialogued with Melanie Yazzie (Diné), printmaker, painter, sculptor, and Professor of Printmaking at the University of Colorado, Boulder. According to her professional website, her work "draws upon her rich Diné cultural heritage by following the Diné dictum 'walk in beauty,' literally creating beauty and harmony," (<https://www.colorado.edu/artandarthistory/melanie-yazzie>) and thereby incorporates her traditional life philosophy into all she does. "As an

artist, she serves as an agent of social change by encouraging others to learn about the social, cultural, and political phenomena shaping the contemporary lives of Native peoples in the United States and beyond" (<https://www.colorado.edu/artandarthistory/melanie-yazzie>). Her work incorporates both personal experiences as well as events and symbols from Diné culture. She often collaborates with people from different cultures and places to demonstrate how the collaborative art process can be used to evoke shared meaning.

The evolution of Melanie Yazzie's unique artistic voice began in childhood when her immediate family encouraged Yazzie's artistic individuality. Yazzie observed that her home is the Navajo nation in the little town she grew up in Ganado, Arizona. Her grandmother's traditional weaving practice had a great impact on the young Yazzie. She recollected what it was like to grow up with her maternal grandmother, Thelma Baldwin, a well-known Diné weaver whose work was highly valued in the community: "When I was growing up, she would take a weaving into a car dealership in Gallup, and she could trade a large rug for a vehicle. My grandmother was a breadwinner" (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 162). Her grandmother encouraged Yazzie to be an individual by insisting that she did not have to follow in her footsteps as a traditional weaver but could create her own artistic path.

Because of her parents' and grandparents' support in her childhood, Yazzie became strong in who she was and continued to listen to her own artistic voice. This freedom and respect for young Yazzie's artistic identity seemed to create the space for choices later in life when she also felt pressures as a Diné artist to make certain kinds of art. The expanse of Yazzie's individual and collectively determined artistic voice, her artistic process, content, artistic philosophy, and teaching all reflect her Diné ways of knowing.

Our conversations with Bryan Brayboy, Sonia Atalay, Paul Chaat Smith, and Melanie Yazzie revealed that storytelling, collaboration, cumulative knowledge, and personal and historical narratives are woven together, all becoming factors that contribute to the creation of the contemporary.

Putting It Into Practice: In Their Own Words

The dialogues we have presented here thus far include Indigenous conceptions of research and scholarship rooted in an embodied multilayered concept of tradition ensuring that cumulative knowledge is passed on to the next generation, a responsibility reassuring that connections continue. In this section, we turn to conversations with Indigenous contemporary artists whose work also reflects the interconnectedness of the traditional as it contributes to the creation of the contemporary.

In the concluding chapter of *Transforming Our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies, and Philosophies* (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017) contemporary Indigenous artists discuss key issues and essential questions in their work examining Indigenous ways of knowing, their concerns as Indigenous artists, and their social realities. Honoring Shawn Wilson's (2008) advice that Indigenous research be grounded in a practical fashion, and not just in the world of ideas, we attempted to summarize the artists' reflections below to demonstrate that in their active art studio practice, artists traverse the traditional in the realms of the dialogic, the relational, and in their community-driven approaches, always referring to traditional knowledges and protocols.

Integrating the traditional with the contemporary, Terry Asbury (Cherokee/Sioux) notes that she uses cornhusks in her work because, like the act of making dolls, corn husks are a traditional form of material. The dolls she makes are placed in situations that tell a story, a creation story for example such as the *Three Sisters*. Asbury's work exists within a spiritual space since her content explores creation stories. Like Terry Asbury, Daniel Bigay (Cherokee) also uses different traditional materials which he considers living such as wood, gourds, and shell, all connected to his Native Mississippian designs for his jewelry. He observes, "From the first time I saw those designs, I felt that they spoke to me...what I have come to realize is that the designs are language and living...the water spider for example is a symbol used in Cherokee stories, it tells the Cherokee story about the origin of the first fire" (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 221). Bigay's work exists within a spiritual space, like Asbury's, which means it should be heard and studied, not copied. Both artists include traditional materials as the cumulative knowledge that is passed on through generations.

Much like Terry Asbury and Daniel Bigay, Linda Lomahaftewa (Hopi/Choctaw) is an artist whose work is shaped by her Hopi heritage. Lomahaftewa's abstract paintings and research explore the use of symbolism to demonstrate cultural connection. The petroglyphs, square topped mesas, kachina shapes and colors, and corn maidens of Hopi culture are central to her artwork. Her father encouraged her "to sing and pray because that's what makes your work good" (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 222.) Her works at once express personal and communal identity and the spirituality in everyday life that Paul Chaat Smith discussed.

Likewise, America Meredith (Swedish/Cherokee) shares that her creative expressions come through her cultural understandings and research connected to the past and present. Similar to Kovach (2009; 2021) and Tuhiwai Smith (2020) who speak about the essential centering of Indigenous perspectives, Meredith observes, the Pan-American Indian Humanities Center reveals:

...that all the wisdom is at the tribal level...[is] encased in our own tribal languages, worldview, philosophy, logic, and diplomacy. Our tribes ground us in the free-for-all contemporary art world. Basically, I don't believe we can speak for all Indigenous American artists. We need a common forum so that artists can speak for themselves, and we can then identify common causes and concerns. (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 223)

For example, Meredith notes that in her series of paintings, *Medicinal Formulae*, incantations protect identity and shape events on a practical level. In her work *Awi Unohalidasdi (To Hunt Deer)*, the text is a Natchez deer hunting song that became a part of Cherokee use. Therefore, Meredith's philosophy related to her art work's functions connects the traditional with the contemporary and enables what Atalay (2020) referred to as "a way of helping with healing...teaching us about the importance of relationships for solving the complex problems facing our world" (virtual presentation, October 2020, Mount Holyoke College).

Artists Terry Asbury, Daniel Bigay, Linda Lomahaftewa, and America Meredith connect their own symbolism directly to Contemporary Native arts as well as to earthworks. Thousands of years ago, earthworks were central to the public architecture of many Indigenous cultures in the world. Earthworks closely relate to cultural identity, connecting space and spirituality, which give a conceptual basis for understanding place and space within traditional Native cultures. The earthworks represent the continuance of cultural traditions and provide for the incorporation of the use of some of the signs and symbols in the work of Linda Lomahaftewa and Daniel Bigay. Certain earthwork symbols represent spirituality, which Terry Asbury and America Meredith also investigate in their art. Connecting their own symbolism to earthworks the four contemporary artists uphold the artistry used by the earthwork builders to ensure relevance today; they also remind us that the artist builders of earthworks were communicating their cultural ways.

Another contemporary artist whose artwork and research are rooted in traditional teachings is Dylan Miner (Métis). Focused on Native identity and politics, Miner's artistic work involves socially engaged collaboration with Indigenous communities, both youth and elders. His research is embedded in Indigenous language; traditional teachings, and socialist, anarchist, and working-class struggles. One of his collaborative pieces entitled, "Anishnaabensag Biimskowebshkigewag (Native Kids Ride Bikes)" is a socially engaged art project that uses bicycles as an entry point into thinking about migration stories, traditional modes of transportation, and health for contemporary Indigenous youth. For Miner, the bicycle stands for the "Red River

cart (li michif sharey), [which is] a common and important marker of Métis identity and communal livelihood, [and symbol for] the way that Indigenous communities have commonly migrated from one location to another” (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 225). Miner uses bicycles as a contemporary metaphor for freedom of Indigenous peoples connecting with a past before colonization and national borders. In these ways, his work reflects the traditional in the contemporary.

Like Dylan Miner, Nora Naranjo-Morse (Santa Clara Pueblo) is an artist whose work represents themes of growth and adaptation and represents Indigenous peoples’ unique relationship to the environment. Her sculpture *Always Becoming* is installed at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. She observes, “Native culture and the environment served as the inspiration for my sculpture design” (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 226). Each of the tipi-like forms that comprise this sculpture are created out of non-toxic, organic materials: straw, sand, clay, wood, dirt, and moss. The artist chose organic materials in order that the forms might take on a life of their own. Naranjo-Morse observes, “The sculpture’s metaphor of home and family not only conveys a universal theme to all peoples, but also enhances the visitors’ experience that they have entered a Native place when they step foot on the museum grounds” (p. 226). Like Miner, Naranjo-Morse intermingles traditional cultural knowledge with contemporary universal themes.

Marianne Nicolson (Dzawada’enuxw), Shelley Niro (Mohawk), and Maxx C. Stevens (Seminole/Muscogee) are three women artists whose contemporary perspectives are founded upon traditional knowledge and whose work embodies the knowledge that culture, tradition, and identity are fluid, each incorporating traditional forms in contemporary styles. Marianne Nicolson, an artist whose self-identity has been strongly impacted by community, incorporates Northwest Coast design along with Western imagery because her painting emerges out of her bicultural experience as the Dzawada’enjxw Tribe of the Kwakwaka’wakw First Nations and Scottish descent. She uses traditional forms also incorporating contemporary styles to convey ideas about her Indigenous community (McMaster, 1998). Nicolson has explained that her artworks embody contemporary expressions of traditional Kwakwaka’wakw concepts. Nicolson comments,

In the early 1990s I apprenticed with a master carver in traditional Kwakwaka’wakw design. Since 1992 I have exhibited work locally, nationally, and internationally, mostly in public art galleries and site-specific works. I create both strictly traditional works for ceremonial purposes connected to the Kwakwaka’wakw community, and conceptually based works for public art spaces. (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 227)

She also adds that her work stems from a strong belief in the worth of Indigenous philosophies and ways of being on the land.

Shelley Niro is a multidisciplinary artist from the Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy). She is a member of the Turtle Clan from the Oshwekon, Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada. Her hereditary right to belong to traditional territory overlaps with colonial borders and such a space distinguished by her multi-nationality informs her fluid creative perspectives. Niro states,

My work gets created through cultural identity. I don’t start off saying I’m going to make something with an Iroquois look to it. But those elements impose themselves on my work. In the end it has enormous impact, and my own identity seeps with this cultural construct. In the beginning, I was very aware of my role as an artist, creating work that would reflect a feminine cultural identity. In the past, I wanted to create opposing views of how Indian women were seen. By playing with what was already there, I could deconstruct and invent new personalities. In the end, I came back to what is culturally embedded. I present images that speak loudly of Indian women who happen to be Iroquois. (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 228)

Niro’s practice as sculptor, painter, photographer, and filmmaker reflects her contemporary Indigenous perspective founded on traditional knowledge: “...my sense of community and colonial critique is re-contextualized through matriarchal wisdom, metaphor, masquerade and related expressions of sovereignty” (p. 228).

Maxx C. Stevens is most recognized for her installation work through which she generates conceptual narrations of her life as an artist, a woman, and a Seminole/Muscogee person. At the heart of Stevens’s work is the knowledge that culture, tradition, and identity are fluid and reflect consistently changing circumstances, whether caused by her own volition or informed by political, social, or economic conditions. Stories are at the center of Stevens’s work. Stevens notes, “Tribal history needs to be carried on. If you still have that strength of holding on to who you are, you can do anything” (Ballengee Morris & Staikidis, 2017, p. 229). Stevens intermingles symbols and artifacts that represent her immediate family, her extended tribal family, and the greater pan-Indian community. While her works embody a sense of longing, they do not live in the past. Their focus is on the importance of maintaining family and cultural traditions and of asserting self-identity. In our conversations with Indigenous artists through their works and words, it became clear to us that in their studio practices, Indigenous artists traverse concepts of tradition through temporal dialogues, relationship, and from within their community-centered

positions, constantly embracing traditional knowledges and protocols.

Conclusion

In this study, our research process of dialogue and reflection was based on the suggestions of Grande (2015) and Tuhiwai Smith (2021) who clarified that our study needed to be wholly grounded in Indigenous perspectives. Additionally, we have based this work on Wilson's Research is Ceremony (2008) whose research model of reciprocity, respect, and responsibility is rooted in relationality, enabling us to rely on relationships as the center of reality. This means that of primary importance to us through the ideas we discussed and developed here was a direct accountability to relationships, and representing the ideas presented through the voices of the scholars and artists as told by them, not us. Therefore, we did our best to remain true to the voices of the Indigenous scholars and artists about and with whom we studied and spoke.

Our conversations with each other led us to further explore concepts and distinctions in the definitions and meanings of the concept of the traditional in Native American contemporary art. Examining the idea of tradition specifically, it was clear that the essence of Indigenous knowledge systems is holistic. A Native worldview embodies holism, which is reflective of intimate interconnectedness, and which perceives nature in a continual state of flux, suggestive of a cyclical view of the natural world incorporating balance, harmony, and beauty. Therefore, traditional knowledge unfolds in the everyday, and the present everyday becomes a story passed down from one generation to the next—collective knowledge. Bryan Brayboy (2015) recommended recognizing the importance of origin stories that help us to understand sovereignty, seeing stories as data, collecting stories as essential for sustainability, and hearing stories as essential to applying Native ways of knowing. There are also always present the elements of the relationship to colonization and the dynamics of constant change and adaptation required of contemporary culture. Relying on the Indigenous voices of scholars and artists who spoke about the traditional in the contemporary, we were able to see that the traditional encompasses the dynamics of constant change and adaptation that Brayboy refers to as the requirements of contemporary culture.

We may never know how many generations maintained and accumulated the knowledge required to visualize and design what we see, hear, and experience today through the contemporary American Indian Arts. Heritage is what the elders' share; traditions are the bridge; and contemporary culture works to communicate today for the next generation. And when our children, the next generations, gather or observe these contemporary works, the stories will be told from tribal

histories and informed by specific Indigenous cultural knowledges for them to continue.

Educators who guide their students to make meaning out of this complex and ambiguous world help students to make sense of their place and space. Learning how to make connections and not see subjects or people in isolated, unrelated ways is a lifelong skill, and vitally important for our students to learn.

We leave you with a few ideas about how to consider or reconsider traditions when referring to Native American art. Whether it is a piece from 1880 or 2023, the three R's - Respect, Reciprocity, and Responsibility, grounded in relationality, should be considered. What does that mean when examining an art piece? What is the artist's story as a tribal member and as an artist? Shawn Wilson (2008) defines Indigenous epistemology as "our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities, and our places in the cosmos. Indigenous epistemology is our systems of knowledge in their context, or in relationship" (p. 74). In comparing the practice of ceremonies to conducting research—where ceremonies are meant to forge better relationships—the research we do as researchers is a ceremony that allows an increased consciousness and perspective. Tradition is an act of knowing, remembering, reflecting, and being.

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Teaching Art through Engaging Decolonizing Viewpoints: Privileging an Indigenous Lens

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ABSTRACT

Art teacher educators have obligations to prepare preservice art teachers and researchers to be culturally competent, to understand how to respectfully and knowledgeably include silenced voices into the classroom. Through this paper, we share a collaborative project we engaged with two arts-based researcher student groups toward approaching art learning from an anti-racist perspective using the lens of an Indigenous Pedagogy. We demonstrate an Anti-Racist teaching cycle we applied that begins with cultural competency and leads to cultural relevancy. The project culminated with the development of anti-racist lesson plans toward a museum exhibition that utilized recommendations shared by four contemporary Native American Artists. Our purpose was to explore a method for changing the narrative by inserting multiple Indigenous artists' voices into the classroom conversation.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous Pedagogy, Anti-Racist Framework, Cultural Competency, Cultural Relevancy

Introduction

The normalization of the Western Art Canon holds artists like Van Gogh, Da Vinci, and Picasso as household names—an example of a colonized voice and erasure of Native American history. The living Native does not exist in the daily consciousness of the average U.S. citizen. In the USA, we live and work on stolen Indigenous land, yet much of the public is unaware of Native history, let alone Native artists—save for a select few historical examples. The Reclaiming Native Truth Project in April 2020 reported 90% of schools do not teach about Indigenous peoples beyond the early 1900s. Perhaps we can name the 'Tsa La Ghi' (Cherokee), Ndee (Apache), and Diné (Navajo), those commonly featured as products, and in songs or western movies, but what of the endurance and resilience of Native communities? Within the USA, there are 574 federally recognized tribes, but where are they in our art curriculum? We continue to privilege artists of the western canon in our classes out of comfort and a normalized pedagogy telling us who is worthy of being noted as great artists.

As art teacher educators, we are co-creating knowledge and experiences with the next generations of researchers, pre-service teachers, as well as assisting in-service art educators' understanding/engagement of anti-racist viewpoints. Alongside foundations, it is essential to prepare such groups to be culturally competent, including Indigenous voices in classrooms. In this paper, we share a collaborative project we engaged with two art-based research/pre-service art teacher student (ABR/PSAT) groups toward approaching art learning from an anti-racist perspective using an Indigenous pedagogical lens with the goal of removing biased narratives in mainstream Art Education by inserting Indigenous artists' voices into the classroom conversation.

The process began with our students addressing their cultural competency, then leading them toward culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies via Indigenous perspectives (German, 2021; King, Brass, & Lewis, 2019; Wilson et al, 2019). The project concluded with lesson plans developed incorporating recommendations from four Native American artists shared alongside Indigenous resources, and positionality and cultural competency self-evaluations. Our goal is to inspire educators to enable themselves/their students through a similar process of building resources with Indigenous perspectives for the art classroom.

Our Positionalities and Experiences

Positionality is shaped by privileges/perceptions supported by social and political structures as an insider or outsider. Identifying our challenges and learning to examine possible pedagogical impacts, such as prioritizing cultural contextualization/sustainability, is paramount for educators (German, 2019; Jewell, 2020; Muhammad, 2023). Positionality can be an elusive concept to the inexperienced educator. The emerging teacher will often hold onto dependable personal beliefs while building curricula and implementing pedagogy as professional beliefs correlate heavily with personal cultural experiences (Pohan, 2006; Powell, 2011). I [Mara] remember a student once telling me she did not care what information/truth I shared about Thanksgiving. She would continue to teach about "Indians and Pilgrims" because it was how she was raised. Likewise, I [Lori] regularly experience pre-service students questioning the relevance of studying/including Indigenous artists in the curriculum as they believe they probably will not have any classroom Native students. Additionally, cultural competency seemed of no concern as they believed all children are the same.

The result of this misunderstanding means unfamiliar teachers do/will not recognize their position of power in the art classroom given contemporary education remains euro-centrally based. However, teacher training programs should be safe zones for pre-service experimentation with contextualized cultural discourse (Phelan,

2001). Such conversations could result in recognition of cultural power dynamics that have bearing on best teaching practices (i.e., decolonizing curricula and providing culturally sustainable methods). Classroom environment, students' and teachers' backgrounds, and the external community are all influential factors for teaching and learning. Collecting/manifesting those concepts into a culturally informed and sustaining curriculum is essential for an education that supports the whole K-20 student.

Purpose of the Current Study

The Art Education field today is not culturally neutral, nor is it divisible from white western/European perspectives. Art educators are politically, socio-culturally, and historically situated. Whiteness is pervasive in education according to academic rhetoric and policy (Riffert, 2005; Roper, 2005). It is rigid, test-oriented, and focused upon absolute answers contrary to demands for critical and creative thinking necessary to meet twenty-first-century challenges (NAEA, 2016). Whiteness is what mainstream society accepts as "normal" (i.e., Christian, white, straight, male). Whiteness is a product of social contracts we sign, those who agree and those who say nothing in disagreement (German, 2019; Rodriguez, 1991).

Historically, within the U.S., whiteness is the privilege against which Others are covertly compared on an institutional level (Kendi, 2019). It is a socially constructed myth arranged and claimed by those who would most benefit from the comparison—an act of oppression amidst a hidden curriculum. Through its employment, "...the curriculum of whiteness pursues the systematic exploitation and dehumanization of one race of people by another" (Semali, 1991, p. 184). bell hooks (1992) framed whiteness in education as a form of "terrorism." Such an imposition is a direct threat on our students' positionalities and their individual means to explore or learn to inhabit their own identity through art making.

Artmaking was/is engaged by artists of all backgrounds and experiences. Discovering new techniques leads to alternative ways of seeing and knowing. Despite this fact, Art Education has privileged white perspectives and predominately taught European males as the master artist/designer paradigm toward student aspiration (Smith, 1996), negating Indigenous and other voices of the Global Majority. "White hegemony soon became embedded in systems of privilege and penalty that further legitimized and exacerbated the subordinate position of [Others]" (Howard, 1999, p. 45).

Art educators must shift our collective critical consciousness to critique and transform dominant systems that disempower us (Ballengee-Morris et al, 2010; Chalmers, 1996). Seeking a specific focus on diverse

cultural perspectives, intersectionality of identity, and decolonizing pedagogies (German, 2021; Jewell, 2020) is a necessity to deepen learner/teacher relevancy and strengthen curricula to serve our diverse students. Alternate concerns then arise, such as determining obligatory cultural information, within art teacher preparation programs. The current research project's purpose is an effort to discover/identify such information.

This project sought to: 1) determine the level of understanding and cultural knowledge ABR/PSAT groups held about Indigenous cultures and pedagogical practices in Art Education; 2) introduce tenets of Indigenous Pedagogy as a means to support culturally accurate, authentic, and relevant perspectives in a primarily non-Native art classroom; and 3) investigate the capacity Indigenous Pedagogy has to give voice to silenced Indigenous perspectives and provide means for a culturally sustaining curriculum.

Theoretical Frameworks

Indigenous Research Methods: Where Decolonizing and Culturally Competent/Sustaining Pedagogy Meet

In *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson (2008) an Opaskwayak Cree Scholar educates us that an Indigenous research method is holistic and relational. Knowledge is a way of knowing, informed by our intuition, senses, and experiences together. An Indigenous way of knowing does not separate science and the aesthetic. As a human you are engaged within the research therefore you cannot separate yourself from it. Life is a harmony of spirit, land, and all of creation; we are embedded in this; therefore we are accountable through reciprocity, relevance, respect, and a responsibility.

"Systemic and structural racism are forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, and entrenched practices and beliefs that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment and oppression of people of color, with adverse health consequences" (Braveman, Arkin, Proctor, Kauh, & Holm, 2022, p. 171). Connections between an individual's beliefs and practices, and the color of her/his/their skin, shape of their eyes, or hair texture often results from normalized, socially agreed-upon preconceptions through institutionalized means (German, 2021). In Art Education, countering disempowerment begins with lessons involving underrepresented artists—beyond stereotypical assignments—enabling critical reflections on complexities of cultures. Such a curriculum may engage students in discourse inclusive of individual and community intersectionalities potentially disrupting oppressive systems based on visual and/or cultural qualifiers. Inclusion of diverse cultural philosophies and ways of knowing expands Art

Education into cultural competency/relevancy and sustainability for diversified student populations (Anti-racist Art Teachers, 2021; Gay, 2010, German, 2021, Muhammad, 2023).

Cultural competency is a little bit more slippery given that culture is ever-changing (Creanza, Kolodny, & Feldman, 2017). Being culturally competent in art classrooms means understanding, for example, how colors have diverse meanings across cultures (i.e., the traditional color of a funeral outfit design for a mourner in/from the Philippines or construction paper color that should never be offered to an Apsáalooke child) (R. Charette, personal communication, 2016). Knowing answers to such complex questions connects marginalized perspectives to decolonizing art curricula. Learning diversity in cultural attributes through teaching globally situated art reveals part of that conversation.

A deep dive into cultural competency includes criticality of place. Pinar (1991) wrote, “a place of origin as well as destination, [is] a ground from which intelligence can develop, and a figure for presenting new perceptions and reviewing old ones” (p.186). Correspondingly, it has been our experience that Art Education in the U.S. often disconnects from gravity of place, privileging euro-centric concepts, and artists. Exploring that murky relationship in the pre-service art teacher classroom could challenge colonizing practices student teachers often hold on to (Phelan, 2001); such as, not knowing how little they know about Indigenous history or philosophies and normalized misinformation and why this is problematic. Teaching through a decolonizing lens invites investigation of the invisible and unrepresented in curricula. By using an Indigenous view of place, for example, educators are moved to decolonize the curriculum by acknowledging place histories; often very horrific and sad ones at that. As art educators in what is now the United States of America, we can begin with this awareness and deconstruct our values and beliefs to present a more authentic exploration of cultural visualities of Indigenous peoples of the land we now occupy (Truer, 2021; Deloria, 1988; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019; Author Santos, 2011). Decolonizing Art Education pedagogy fundamentally includes acknowledgment and awareness of how our history has disempowered people of the Global Majority. Such inclusion scrutinizes histories that inform/construct identities, including our biases, supporting first-person narratives and experiences (Lee, Ogunfemi, Neville, & Tettegah, 2023), and transcends our current curriculum toward sustainable change that empowers our communities and students.

In education, a critical consciousness can be achieved through finding awareness of the inequities in this world, critically questioning our understanding including our source of knowledge, and ultimately, transcending and empowering through taking action (Freire, 2021; Author, 2019). The same is true of Art Education.

Critical Anti-Racist Discourse Analysis (CARDA)

Higher education institutions normalize settler colonial ideals and related policies (Masta, 2019). Such policies seep into how/why we discuss what we do, privileging voices of policymakers. However, questions arise regarding repercussions upon pre-service teachers by normalized settler colonial dynamics of such policies and how K-12 students are impacted by new in-service art teachers. Discourse Analysis, more specifically—Critical Anti-Racist Discourse Analysis (CARDA)—was used in this study to target and eliminate this cycle of false narratives and biased policies.

CARDA (Laughter & Hurst, 2022) assisted with framing our study by engaging deep analysis of our young researchers’ discourse on Indigenous content and their resulting documents—lesson plans and visual journaling (Gee, 2009; Laughter & Hurst, 2022). The activities the ABR/PSAT groups engaged and built upon mirrored ideals related to an Indigenous Pedagogical lens (Antoine, Mason, Mason, Palahicky, & Rodriguez de France, 2019) discussed later in this section. Kendi (2019) states there is no middle ground. A decolonizing pedagogy is undoubtedly one of action: we are either confronting racial inequality by engaging it or allowing it to exist as a by-stander.

Art-Based Research

The art-based research (ABR) process is a narrative process with artwork outcomes (visual and/or textual) that evolve into further inquiry (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Jones, 2006). ABR educational inquiry is characterized by seven features (Barone & Eisner, 1997): a) “The creation of a virtual reality” (p. 73); b) “The presence of ambiguity” (p. 74); c) “The use of expressive language” (p. 75); d) “The use of contextualized or vernacular language” (p. 76); e) “The promotion of empathy” (p. 77); f) “Personal signature of researcher/writer” (p. 77); and g) “The presence of aesthetic form” (p. 78). However, not every ABR project needs to adhere to every attribute each time ABR work is engaged.

An overarching definition of ABR is “the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and writing” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 73). The main purpose of ABR is to tear, collapse, challenge, and leak into one another ideas, concepts, preconceptions, or processes. The goal is to simply offer an alternative perspective. To create a piece of art with inquiry at its core is to invoke critical inquiry in the viewer (Barone & Eisner, 2012). As such, the reason for including the ABR component in this study was to elucidate the learners’ own processes of learning through art making, encouraging students to discover their own viewpoints more deeply. We consider it akin to some of our own curriculum planning process: backwards thinking.

By engaging the ABR component of this study, we challenged our own and our students' preconceptions about the significance of first-person Indigenous artist voice through questioning content, alternative perspectives, and perceptions.

Indigenous Pedagogy

At the heart of the project is an Indigenous Pedagogical (IP) perspective developed in Canada (Antoine et al, 2019). We chose this theoretical framework because its tenets support real-world, culturally competent/relevant, student-centered methods. The following IP intentionalities were at the core of the experiences with which we engaged the two groups: 1) personal and holistic; 2) experiential; 3) place-based; and 4) intergenerational (Antoine et al, 2019; Truer, 2021; Wilson et al, 2019).

First, personal and holistic attributes focus teaching/learning on the whole individual: emotional, cognitive, physical, cultural, creative, and spiritual, which is contrary to western Art Education where developmental stages identify markers for skills accomplishment and acquisition of concepts. In our experience here in the U.S., learners are cut into parts where the mind, body, and spirit are separate entities, thus unsupportive of a holistic growth framework.

Second, an IP employs experiential learning as part of its structure. This characteristic focuses on the "doing" aspect of the learning process. For example, the experience of engaging in an artmaking procedure will build foundations for grasping the concept of process itself. In many Native American communities, the cycle of learning has traditionally included the engagement of new knowledge to build on previous experience (i.e., transferability or intentional scaffolding). In this way, all levels of experience are honored and valued throughout the learning process. Furthermore, learning happens in relationship to and under the guidance of another (Truer, 2021; Wilson et al, 2019).

Third, lessons undertaken and environments in which they are engaged are critical to what the learner takes away. The place-based component of an IP approach supports connections learners have between content and place, as well as learners building new connections within and to place. In some circumstances, place-based art activities shed further clarifying perspectives. Place-based aspects endear learners to histories and memories linked to metaphysical and spiritual realms of knowing. Finally, the fourth attribute of an IP identifies criticality of information being presented through an intergenerational lens. In many Native American communities, elders have traditionally played a large role in how, when, and where specific knowledge is shared with young people. Additionally, in many cases, it was at their discretion as to who was the recipient of that knowledge. Contemporarily, many Native populations are opening knowledge to learners with the idea that, if truthful information is shared, misperceptions may be corrected,

and stereotypes extinguished. Recognizing the importance of the life experience of an elder in the classroom builds resources and connects the community.

Methodology

Project Design

We designed this study using a qualitative approach employing an Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008) given that all the pathways and learning was relational. We collected the data using two methods: a pre- and post-assessment qualitative survey and autoethnographic arts-based research. The group meetings were conducted with the two following groups: Native American artists and ABR/PSAT groups. Due to the implementation of an Indigenous research methodology, we included Indigenous artists' first-person voices to help inform and guide our ABR/PSATs' activities/outcomes.

Group Compositions

Between our two universities, we engaged two groups of ABR/PSATs. The twelve learners were not versed in art-based research, nor were they aware of the potential impact decolonized and culturally competent pedagogies could have on learners (Gay, 2010; Muhammad, 2023; German, 2019). Additionally, neither group had been exposed to Indigenous Pedagogy concepts regardless that both groups were in states where Native American history plays an integral role in how and what students are taught in K-12 art classes.

Perhaps the reason we chose these two groups was the timing of the opportunity within social chronology. From our perspectives as educators embedded in Indigenous philosophies, care and concern for Indigenous communities in the United States maintains a low visibility in the mainstream regardless of heightened awareness via the Internet. Statistics (Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2021; Urban Indian Health Institute, 2019) show that violent crimes against Native citizens perpetually threaten entire socio-cultural dynamics and individuals whose heritage identity is a part of that paradigm, yet very little support is provided to rectify the issues. As art teacher educators, we saw an opening for re-education through research and teaching to share information about how misperceptions/misinformation delivered mainstream society to this point and can be re-envisioned. Nearly concurrently, we decided that our two upper-division student groups from Art Education backgrounds, given their locations, access to Native artists, and project funding were a fit for this project.

Learner Activities

The two learner groups engaged the following assignments and activities: a) projects and readings; b) pre- and post-assessments; and c) engagement with Native American artists. We then mined our data from the student outcomes.

Projects and Readings

To meet the first criteria of an Indigenously framed teaching style—personal and holistic—learners identified and incorporated their own identities through mind mapping and visual journaling, which became the artifacts for their art-based research.

The second IP perspective we utilized—experiential—scaffolded on previous knowledge and extended their knowledge base of Native American cultural art pieces through reflective journaling on readings, videos, and direct exploration of Native artwork. The learners' experiences with the content became a method of doing by inviting further actions based on their observations, actions, and reflections.

The inclusion of place-based learning was the third IP approach in our project. Where art lessons are taught/learned is just as critical to the teaching and learning as the lessons or content themselves. The two research groups were in two different places. By applying a place-based perspective, we were aware that both groups needed to be exposed to Native art and artists that were relevant to their two specific places. As such, the artists with whom the research groups held discussions were connected to our Montana and Kansas places: Molly Murphy Adams (Lakota), Norman Akers (Osage), and Sydney Pursel (Ioway). The fourth artist included in the work was Melanie Yazzie (Navajo). While Yazzie did not have a connection to either of the two states, we felt that her work was applicable as a site of comparison and breadth for the two groups.

The final IP attribute is intergenerational. This approach was implied through the various generations of artists presented and the stories they shared. We recognize that the learners may have not been aware that they were being exposed to the concepts of learning from an elders' perspective. However, all the artists steadfastly shared intergenerational stories as this was part of their own education. As part of the narrative, we advocated for an equal platform between teachers/parents/students, and the idea of apprenticeship, the role of the learner to learn, and the parent to pass on knowledge.

Pre- and Post-Assessments

Students were asked to complete two assessments that helped to evaluate their knowledge of American Indigenous cultural assets. Pre- and post-assessment questions were formulated through using the Native Knowledge 360° Essential Understandings resource from the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI, 2022). The post-assessment additionally asked two free-answer questions for further clarification of content acquisition.

Native Artist Engagement and Influence

A key aspect of Indigenous cultural understanding we felt necessary to teaching cultural relevance through decolonized curricula was the inclusion of first-person voice (Antoine et al., 2019; Wilson et al, 2019). To that end, four living Native American artists spoke with our learner groups: Melanie Yazzie, Molly Murphy Adams, Sydney Pursel, and Norman Akers.

In line with the Indigenization of decolonized art curricula, the voice of Native authors was also critical for the study (Antoine et al., 2019; Huaman, 2023; Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2023; Wilson et al, 2029). Student groups read *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Indians but were Afraid to Ask* by Antoine Truer (2021) and a range of literature and webinars found on the website of the National Museum of the American Indian. Additionally, because the story of the Native is largely told through the lens of the Hollywood "Injun," our students watched the Native made film REEL Injun. Learners were astounded at what they did not know. Dr. Truer (2021) (Ojibwe) reminds us that cultures should be understood on the people's terms, not belittled or idealized by outsiders. Cultural ways of knowing from an Indigenous perspective was a learning curve for most of the students. Privileging and embracing the lived experiences of Native peoples was a new and uncomfortable start for some students.

Part of the resources used to engage the two student groups was artwork made by the Native American artists who participated as guest speakers. The art pieces served as a second voice from the primary speakers. Students were asked to explore the works using aspects of the cultural knowledge they learned through the previous materials. During the artist discussions, students asked questions in addition to inquiries we sent to all four artists before their visits. Once each discussion was completed, students engaged in art-based research activities to further analyze their responses to the artwork, artist, and cultural teaching.

Student-created art lesson plans for the local museum featuring Native artwork, and inspired by the Native artists they met, was a final study/

course outcome. Lesson plans utilized a decolonized art lesson plan template framed within a cycle of Awareness, Critical Conversations, Transformation, and Empowerment (ACT-E) model that I, (Author 2), developed during my post dissertation research. We aligned ACT-E with the four National Visual Arts Standards strands. Students engaged in an ACT-E framed lesson experience where: new awarenesses by connecting to artwork, holds critical conversations as they respond to artwork, moves toward transformation as they create artwork, and builds empowerment through presenting their work, whether through artmaking, close looking, or discussion (Author, 2016).

Findings and Discussions

Many common themes from the student group discussions, artwork, and pre-/post-assessments emerged in the findings suggesting the need for opening further discourse regarding the importance of an Indigenous Pedagogy; specifically, as an integral part of decolonizing art teacher preparation. We share the four following points as an opportunity for reflection to strengthen art teacher preparation courses: 1) learner fragility; 2) Indigenous non-artist & Indigenous artist voice as a cultural role model (CRM); 3) varying levels of cultural competence amongst the learners; and 4) the criticality of place-based content in art teaching curriculum.

Learner Fragility

We found learners had a difficult time acknowledging and defining their own culture. As scholars of Indigenous Pedagogy and cultural learning, we firmly believe that one will never understand another's culture until s/he/they understand their own.

Curiously, our ABR/PSAT groups acknowledged cultural appropriation of Native American art and culture as prevalent in the United States but wavered on knowing how to define cultural appropriation. During Zoom discussions of the topic, the ABR/PSATs shared an initial sense of oblivion to the idea that several 'American' cultural practices, foods, and places were appropriated. They initially believed there was an absence of stereotyping throughout mainstream America, at first not knowing how to identify the line where their cultural practices ended in visual representation and where the Native influences began. Inclusion of braids to denote a Native individual or stylized elements of nature is one example. However, once we identified this aspect of their work, they more readily saw their own stereotyping and acts of cultural appropriation. They then shared their new abilities to employ Native American artists as points of reference, as well as speaking out against Native American stereotypes.

Indigenous Non-artist & Indigenous Artist Voice as Cultural Role Model

We recognized the importance of CRMs in art teaching and learning. Via the living artists' Zoom meetings, the learners discovered Native lifeways to be indicative of both historical and contemporary perspectives. Through first-person discussions with the artists regarding cultural attributes, the learners came to understand that pasts are impactful on the present. In Zoom meetings, students described connections between aspects they previously believed were extinct (traditional) and observations of the present, such as metaphorical symbols past and present found in Norman Akers' work. When each artist joined group meetings, they shared Tribal traditional visuals or concepts they use as communication in their artworks. Once the ABR/PSATs began perceiving influences of the artists' cultural backgrounds, they started realizing how traditional elements in Native American works are still important to contemporary/present day and living discourses/investigations.

We considered that decolonization may be addressed by considering counter arguments to historical "best practices." Such qualitative perspectives rely upon "critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities" (Mullet, 2018, p.116). Through this perspective, we believed that the students would be able to deconstruct and then reconstruct applicable knowledge post-discussion with guest Indigenous artists.

In contemporary art teacher preparation contexts, the inclusion of first-person Indigenous voices and Indigenous artists is simpler than in past years. During the engagement of this project, we learned, regardless of the two groups being miles apart, as were our guest artists, they were all able to meet in cyberspace to share those valuable viewpoints and draw their relevant art teaching conclusions about the criticality of Indigenous perspectives. We believe the ABR/PSATs drew strength/inspiration from one another as they were challenged by foreign pedagogical concepts.

Works of art and the makers of those works are cultural narratives holding potential to teach critical aspects about the artists' cultural backgrounds, e.g., Indigenous truths and educational reconciliation. Works of art by Native American artists are small worlds of visual communication influenced by experiential impacts. We found that the inclusion of the first-person Native American narrative is powerful for learners. The act of engaging the voices of the Indigenous artists who spoke with the two groups will, we believe, serve to further counter the cultural erasure in the curriculum. However, unless one knows what to look for as noted above, it is highly unlikely that it will be

readily seen. This perspective points to continued cultural erasure given that the visual language is not normalized, and it is not typical for educators to think of Native cultural attributes as valuable in the learning environment. This is a skill we must present and cultivate in educator preparation courses to counter the making and manifesting of agreed-upon systemic beliefs.

Varying Levels of Cultural Competency

We believe (hope) many contemporary art educators facilitate critical discourse as it is a part of best practices in higher education. However, we also believe it is still uncommon these discussions address points of power and positionality of Indigenous cultures. Some educators have noted that the concept of culture for them is vague, thus authentically understanding an “Other’s” culture may be questionable (Pierce, 2015). To counter that deficit, diving deeply into how culture impacts an individual is key to navigating cultural competency in the art classroom. Cultural differences hold complex potentials to convolute power perceptions (Banks, 1998 & 2001; Desai, 2010; Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2010). Our project findings suggest that by asking the ABR/PSATs to explore their prior cultural knowledge regarding a specific culture, they could experience methods through which they would learn more about their potential to facilitate culturally-based learning in the art classroom. Without distinct inclusion of these concepts into art teacher preparation, it is possible preservice art educators and student researchers will not understand cultural foundations as essential to becoming an effective and holistic educator.

Reflection on the ABR/PSATs work revealed that the four Indigenous Pedagogy components engaged served as support for learning. The ABR/PSATs acknowledged they can and will reference Native artists/artwork authentically and appropriately with their future learners or audiences. The ABSRs made gains in several fundamental knowledge areas about Native American cultures including: fundamental American Tribal Nation understandings; descriptive relevant vocabulary (i.e. sovereignty or treaty); diversities amongst Tribal groups across the U.S. (i.e. language dialects/semantics); recognition of images past and present within Native art as markers of cultural storytelling of place and identity; and the potentials for identifying/countering stereotypes appropriately (i.e. local and national Tribal cultural lifeways and generational skills still practiced today).

A profound finding amongst the two groups was the acknowledgment of Tribal uniqueness (i.e., the distinction between diverse Native Nations). The ABR/PSATs eventually recognized Native people as individuals as opposed to a generalized umbrella group, which we viewed as a movement toward productive advocacy. The ABR/PSATs

determined, when hearing individual Tribal differences from authentic voices, diversity has a greater chance of holding relevance in learning situations. However, neither the learners’ initial cultural competency nor their post-assessments reflected the intersection of Native historical/generational trauma and teaching using decolonizing pedagogical practices. We hope to address this further during a re-iteration of the project.

Upon discussion that “art” is not a ‘traditional’ practice of individuals in Native Nations, we found that the ABR/PSAT groups had a difficult time accepting this concept. We described that what colonizers defined as art or “aesthetic practice” was, from a Native perspective, utilitarian and an integral part of a way of knowing and living life (Author, 2015). Given the invisibility of Native American perspectives regarding their objects in place of privileging colonizer interpretive viewpoints, there is much corrective work to do in this area. Fortunately, the students concluded that Native American artwork belongs in art museums alongside mainstream artists from all movements. When asked the reason they believed this to be an effective action, they determined Indigenous visual narratives as important for all viewers to see, thus in support of equity and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

The Criticality of Place-based Content

A highly impactful finding was ABR/PSAT recognition that all states occupy Indigenous land today. This recurring topic permeated all artists’ discussions, conversations before/during our exhibitions, and was present in readings and videos. Early in the project, few of the learners agreed with this statement. However, by final assessments, the ABR/PSATs’ perspectives had shifted to valuing/respecting diversified ways of knowing, as well as those personal experiences that are culturally contextualized in place revering time.

We observed the two groups becoming comfortable with Native artists representing personal human themes, not just creating beautiful objects. Thus, we determined that first-person perspectives of Indigenous artists and individuals are critical and in line with an Indigenous Pedagogy. Concurrently, there were some findings we did not consider the ABR/PSATs would still believe or take from the project. However, upon reading reflection findings, the following list shows remaining gaps in understanding. We now recognize that, without first-person experiences as per the tenets of Indigenous Pedagogy, learners may erroneously believe that:

- Native American children have been given the same opportunities as other children in schools.
- Native Americans have always had the same rights as others.
- Native American artists’ artwork is just as visible in the art world

as non-Native American artists (conflicts with aspects found in the previous sub-section).

- Native American artists who use euro-western-based aesthetic styles to make art today are no longer making Native American art.

We suggest there is a necessity for a thorough discussion of Indigenous Pedagogy, discourses surrounding what “culture” means for each individual, and deep scaffolding thus an unpacking of cultural appropriation. Additionally, a thorough analysis of educational policies, such as Title IX and Title VI, will shed light on how policy makers prioritize the administrative viewpoint instead of the perspective of the oppressed given continued invisibility/denial of systemic/institutionalized oppression. We found that some of the ABR/PSATs were often perplexed as to why they needed to engage the research resources we presented. We do not believe they recognized connections between the necessity to know IP and the potential for it to be implemented as a culturally sustaining and decolonized teaching method. Occasionally, some even inquired as to why it was necessary to consider alternative viewpoints. This suggests that privilege still strongly impacts the content a teacher educator may include in their coursework.

Future Considerations

As we reflected on the strengths and challenges of the research project, we located further considerations. Students emerging from the covid pandemic have become used to online coursework communications. The use of online resources and Zoom meetings provided an excellent platform since the student groups were remotely located from one another. In addition to having online discussions with Indigenous artists, adding in-person art-making experiences alongside the Indigenous artists could deepen first-person perspectives with Native communities and individual Indigenous artists.

Moving forward, we are currently in the midst of a related research project to document and share Native artist perspectives for art classroom inclusion. We are also hoping to learn how in-service art educators identify and include Indigenous artists and concepts in their classroom. As for the next step of the current project, we hope to stay in contact with the students to see what and how they apply concepts they experienced through this project.

Conclusions

Native American cultures have powerful pasts, presents, and futures in relationship to their land that transcend the legend of the dying Indian and misnomer of the melting pot theory. People are linked to

aesthetic production. Values of such relationships move worlds. A decolonized art pedagogy creates liberated spaces where we become aware, question, and transform, thus empowering our students to see those relationships through a lens of contextualized cultural visibility (Santos, 2016). It is important to remember that art tells all aspects of stories of the human experience: cultural, spiritual, and personal. This intersectionality of meanings is essential when studying art and culture.

This project comes out of great concern for the pervasive lack of teaching Indigenous histories and the disenfranchisement of mainstream understandings to their connection to the lands that we occupy. The field of Art Education has historically focused on euro-western aesthetics and mainstream histories, therefore blinding us from the individual human stories art tells. We collectively focus on objects as “art” compartmentalized from cultural ways of knowing. Eliminating this disconnection between artist and object becomes a means to decolonize the curriculum and re-educate how students think about Native art and cultures.

As art educators, we must not contribute to cultural erasure by including only non-Native artists of the past, and an Indigenous Pedagogy grounded curriculum must begin with living artists of the Americas, especially those of the places where we teach to share contemporary voices. We identified IP as an informative component but given the removal of Indigenous voice from the academic conversation, there will remain a great gap if we continue not teaching cultural ways of knowing, only focusing on the euro-western visual aesthetics framed within elements and principles of design and specific skill based approaches to art making.

Additionally, a student’s cultural responsiveness is an outcome of being critically conscious of a culture other than one’s own. Lacking that level of deep-dive education during art teacher preparation will have consequences on abilities to facilitate authentic education. Teaching preparatory courses steeped in critical consciousness, reflectivity, and social justice education can reveal deeper connections between real world cultural understandings and Art Education (Reese, 1998).

It is our conclusion that the processes and perspectives through which we share methods and pedagogical attributes will lend themselves to a global consciousness and more informed researching/making/teaching force. Therefore, we support the application of decolonizing and culturally competent concepts in relationship to diverse Native American/Indigenous groups here in the United States. Inequities are sustained when people most affected by systemic oppression are forced to live within a mythic condition created by the general population. If we do not seriously look at the historical and present record of cultural

misrepresentations and deconstruct the ways these narratives have exploited and disempowered Native identities, we persist as part of the problem. Therefore, we are advocating for concepts of Indigenous Pedagogy in Art Education.

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Building Intercultural Spaces through Co-Creation: Insiderness in Shared Living Spaces

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ABSTRACT

We explored the role of art in facilitating intercultural communication through a project in which undergraduate students from the United States and Japan co-created a digital collage of shared living spaces. Through the creation of personal dioramas and a collaborative collage, students shared personal stories and objects that were meaningful to their identity formation. Our research found that incorporating personal memories and cultural objects into art-making was an effective way of evoking a sense of insiderness with a place and bridging cultural differences. The collage was a learning space where students negotiated differences and worked together to create a more inclusive place through vicarious insiderness. This study highlights the potential for using art to facilitate intercultural communication and engage a sense of insiderness in unfamiliar places among individuals from different cultures.

KEYWORDS: Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Space, Place, Insiderness, Diorama, Collage

Art education is seen as playing a crucial role in facilitating intercultural understanding, global consciousness, and respect (Bianchi, 2011; Wilson, 2018; Zimmerman, 2002). In line with this, Melanie Davenport's (2003) *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* article underscores the need for an intercultural approach to art education in light of increasing global conflicts. Twenty years later, global polarization and conflict have only increased, with the rise of nationalism fueling xenophobia, racism, and discrimination. This illustrated the need for teaching understanding and tolerance, and promoting and facilitating intercultural education and communication is one of the means for achieving this goal (Zimmerman, 2002). Davenport (2003) emphasized that "intercultural differs from multicultural in its emphasis on understanding the interactions between cultural groups, rather than trying to appreciate any one culture-sharing group in isolation from others" (p. 119). The term intercultural communication is used interdisciplinarily in many fields with diverse definitions, interpretations, and perspectives (Alexander et al., 2014). It can be generally understood as "communication between people with

different mindsets and ways of looking at and perceiving the world that go beyond the differences normally found among people who regard themselves as culturally similar" (Steinfatt & Millette, 2019, p. 308). By recognizing the differences and engaging in effective communication, intercultural communication can lead to greater understanding, knowledge, tolerance, and compassion among individuals from various cultural backgrounds (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2017). In order to confront global challenges, art education should provide students with the opportunity to learn to communicate interculturally and critically examine the value of differences.

With facilitating intercultural communication through art education in mind, we set out to conduct a pilot project bringing together undergraduate students currently living in the U.S. and Japan to share their place identity memories through dioramas and co-create a collage of shared living spaces virtually as a way to engage them in a spatial intercultural communication experience through art-making. We met at a virtual conference during the pandemic, a time of global unrest and travel restrictions. One of us is a U.S. higher education educator with a hybrid identity who grew up in Taiwan and studied in the U.S. Another of us is a Japanese higher education educator at a university in Japan with personal connections to and experience living in the Czech Republic. Both of us embody intercultural communication through our personal experiences of traveling across different continents and negotiating cultural differences and hybridity.

Place and Insiderness

Our project centers on the ideas of place, or *ibasho* (居場所) in Japanese, and insiderness. According to the online Japanese-English dictionary, *Jisho.org*, *ibasho* can be translated into English as "whereabouts; place; location; place where one belongs; where one fits in; place where one can be oneself" (居場所 - *Jisho.org*, n.d.). Lawrence-Zuniga (2017) further illuminates place as referring to "the elaborated cultural meanings people invest in or attach to a specific site or locale" (para. 1). Similarly, Ohta (2015) describes *ibasho* as an "environment with confirmation of identity" (p. 62), denoting a place of acceptance, self-establishment, and active communication (Abe, 2011). These definitions underscore how place or *ibasho* encompasses not just our physical location but also our identity, subjectivity, and social relationships. Building upon these definitions, our project further explores the concept of insiderness—the extent of a person's attachment to a place that impacts their identity (Relph, 1976). The perception and interpretation of *ibasho* and the experience of insiderness are pivotal in shaping our intercultural interactions and personal cultural identity (Janík, 2017).

In order to delve deeper into the concept of *ibasho* and understand the experience of insiderness, we adopt the lens of humanistic geography.

This approach emphasizes the significance of human experience and meaning in shaping how people relate to locations and the settings in which they live (Seamon & Larsen, 2020). Using phenomenology as one of its philosophical foundations, humanistic geography applies phenomenology's emphasis on the subjective experiences of individuals and the ways in which our perceptions and experiences of the world shape our understanding of reality to understand the lived experiences of individuals in living spaces (Cresswell, 2008).

One of the most influential theoretical works in humanistic geography is Edward Relph's (1976) *Place and Placelessness*, in which he proposed the concept of insideness and outsideness. Relph argues that place is not just a physical location but also encompasses a person's emotional, cultural, and historical connections to that location. He states the importance of recognizing and valuing the significance of place in our lives and working towards creating a sense of place rooted in personal and cultural identity. Relph's concept of insideness refers to the subjective experience of being inside or belonging to a particular place. It emphasizes the importance of personal and emotional connections that individuals have with the places they inhabit and how these connections shape their sense of identity and attachment. According to Relph, a person's sense of identity with a certain location will be significantly strengthened the deeper they are inside that place (p. 49). On the contrary, outsideness refers to feeling disconnected from or estranged from a place (Relph, 1976; Seamon & Sowers, 2008). Relph further proposes seven distinctive ways of experiencing places, accentuating the different levels and categories of insideness and outsideness (p. 50). Among them, vicarious insideness resonates profoundly with our project. This mode of experiencing place through indirect methods mirrors the intimate experience of *ibasho*, which allows us to understand and connect with places through literature, art, or media (pp. 52-53). In our project, this vicarious insideness becomes crucial in sharing the experience of place with others.

Many art educators have worked on exploring the idea of place and space in relation to identity, community, and culture (e.g., Gradle, 2007; Gude, 2004; Lai & Ball, 2002; Paatela-Nieminen et al., 2016; Powell, 2008). Though similar to place-based art education (e.g., Bertling, 2018; Graham, 2007; Härkönen, 2018; Neves & Graham, 2018), which emphasizes the connection between people's experiences and place, our project views place/*ibasho* as more intimate and personal. The concept of vicarious insideness through the lens of art offers an avenue for exploring how we connect with others through places that constitute our identities.

The concepts from Relph (1976) are useful in understanding how people perceive and interact with different environments. Our personal experiences with places shape how we can connect with other people

from different cultures. For example, sharing a similar experience with a place can be an important factor in developing relationships between individuals from different backgrounds. This is aligned with the place-based intercultural education approach (Härkönen, 2018; Nagi & Koehn, 2010). By understanding how personal experiences shape perception, we chose place/*ibasho* and insideness as the main concepts of our project, as they facilitate a better understanding of how to connect with others and build bridges between different cultures and communities.

Research Process

Our central research question in this project is: What intercultural communication experiences emerge through a communication process mediated by spatial artistic production? This question arises from our interest in exploring how shared art-making processes could foster intercultural understanding and facilitate dialogue about personal and cultural identities.

We designed two main phases for this engagement. In the first phase, all students are engaged in creating a diorama representing an important living place where they have a profound memory. Students wrote their narratives associated with the space and shared them with each other via Padlet, an online bulletin board. In this way, they can learn more about their peers and the personal and cultural identities associated with their memory and space. In the second phase, the U.S. and Japanese students were grouped together to collaboratively create a collage of shared living space virtually using Jamboard, an online whiteboard. The total duration of the project was eight weeks for the Japanese students and five weeks for the U.S. students. The difference was due to the fact that the Japanese students were in a face-to-face class that only met once a week, so they started making their dioramas three weeks earlier in class. The interaction time was three weeks for phase one and two weeks for phase two. Participating students are 12 U.S. junior-year undergraduate students in an online course in the elementary education program at a U.S. university and 4 Japanese junior-year undergraduate students in a seminar course in either the elementary or early childhood education program at a university in Japan. Each group included one Japanese member and three U.S. members. During the first phase, students interacted three to four times on Padlet. In the second phase, students were encouraged to check their Jamboard and interact every day. However, the interaction frequency differs among students.

We position this project as a pilot study to try out ideas. Our limitations include time differences that make real-time interaction impossible, language barriers and translation time that cause delays in communication, and different course delivery modes that

make instruction a challenge. However, these challenges are also opportunities to help students realize the complexity of intercultural communication.

Data were collected throughout the project from students' online interaction records, reflections, and works. We adopted an interpretative phenomenological qualitative analysis to identify emerging intercultural communication experiences, as the methodology concerns the study of lived experiences and recognizes the researcher's knowledge in interpreting the participants' experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2017). The data were dissected and interpreted based on themes related to students' experiences of places and intercultural communication. In the following, we present our analysis and findings on their emerging intercultural communication experiences.

Phase One: Creating Diorama to Tell Personal Memories of Ibasho

To facilitate students' reflection on memory and experiences with a place/ibasho and to help them learn more about other students from another country, both U.S. and Japanese students are asked to create a diorama representing a place important to their formation of identity and write a narrative about an experience with the place. After creating their diorama, they also recorded a video to introduce it. They posted their videos, photos of dioramas, and narratives on Padlet to interact and communicate with their counterparts.

Creating a diorama has been a popular method for storytelling (Dunmall, 2015; Tzou et al., 2019). Artists such as Karen Collins, Pinkie Strothers, and Curtis Talwst Santiago all use dioramas to tell stories about their communities, histories, and memories. For example, Karen Collins is best known for her African American Miniature Museum, a collection of dioramas that depict events to tell the stories of African American history and culture. Collins uses her dioramas as a way of exploring and communicating the rich history and diverse experiences of African Americans. Similarly, Pinkie Strothers recreated her childhood home, church, and other community places to explore themes of family, community, and Black history (Carver, 2021). Further, Curtis Talwst Santiago creates scenes in jewelry boxes that represent his parents' basement, catastrophic events, and history to explore memories and experiences (Curtis Talwst Santiago, n.d.; Ebert, 2022). Despite being criticized for becoming a tired school project, dioramas are regarded as a valuable arts-integrated learning experience (Marshall, 2006; Reiss & Tunnicliffe, 2011). Additionally, dioramas have been utilized as an artistic medium for examining practices and ideals in education (Hoekstra, 2019). Dioramas have become a popular medium for examining and expressing thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

In our project, dioramas are the anchors for students to tell their identity memory stories relating to a place/ibasho through art-making. They are also materials for students to experience vicarious insideness, which reflects others' identities, stories, and relationships to familiar places. We analyze how students connect with other people through their sharing of dioramas and narratives, and their interactions on the Padlet board.

The experience of making a diorama helped students embody their personal memories and identities. Most students reflected that the process enabled them to recall the details of their memories within the place/ibasho and rebuild them in a creative way. In discussing the process of making the diorama, one student expressed that she could almost hear her family during the process, and another was overwhelmed by all the memories they made in the space when creating hers. As a student said, he puts "fragmented memories of the past into pieces one by one" (M.Y., personal communication, July 2022). They used their memories to construct the insideness of the place in the diorama.

Students were able to make a connection through their dioramas, indicating common experiences from their memories. Relph (2018) identified three components to observe and describe the identity of a place, including physical components (buildings, objects, and landscape), activities, and subjective meanings and cultural interpretations (pp. 9-10). Our personal identity and experiences within a place can also be understood through these components. In analyzing students' interactions, we found students used two of these, activities and physical components, to build their connections.

Connecting through Activities: What is Snow Cream?

Commenting on a Japanese student's work focusing on a room with a window with icicles hanging down (Figure 1), a U.S. student said:

This room makes me feel a sense of nostalgia. When I was younger my brother and I would watch out of the windows looking at the snow. It doesn't rain a lot where I'm from so snow days were special. Similar to you, I would try to take inside icicles and snow to cherish the memories. We would make snow cream a lot which was really fun. (B.M., personal communication, July 2022)



Figure 1. Student diorama, *Winter Window*.

Initially, a place with outsidership—a room from a stranger—turns into what Ralph called vicarious insidership. Through an artistic diorama, the insidership of two students’ memories intersected with each other. Ralph explains that “vicarious insidership happens when we engage with a place in imagination, for instance through works or art or reading about them. It is perhaps most pronounced when the depiction of a place corresponds with our experiences of similar places” (Ralph, 2018, p. 11).

This is important because this vicarious insidership is the bridge for the intercultural communication experience. Through this bridge, students connect, interact, and share memories. In responding to the U.S. student’s comment, the Japanese student said:

I want to know what “snow cream” is. Is it like a dessert with snow? Neither I nor my sister are very tall, but I think the reason I climbed up to chairs, shelves, beds, etc. and got icicles was because they were slanted as if they were piercing the room due to the influence of the wind. When we were little, we longed to touch icicles, and were looking forward to it. ... When I find icicles in winter, I remember the memories with my sister and of icicles being secretly taken into the house. This memory reminds me of many memories with my sister, makes me feel nostalgic, and makes me want to visit my parents’ home. (I.M., personal communication, July 2022)

There opens up the conversation about dessert, snow day, and playing.

The activities students from both the U.S. and Japan shared created a connection for them.

Connecting through Physical Components: Is It a Window?

A Japanese student created a Japanese-style room (Figure 2) at his parent’s house, which he would use to study and rest. A U.S. student commented that

This room looks very open and inviting because of the large window. I think that is a wonderful feature. I would love the sunshine peaking in or watching the rain fall outside if I were in this room. I can relate to this room because my childhood home had a window room and it was one of my favorite rooms in the house. ... I noticed that you said not many homes have traditional Japanese rooms. Why do you think this is and do you wish that would change? (S.O., personal communication, July 2022)



Figure 2. Student diorama, *Japanese-Style Room*.

The connection the U.S. student made was through physical space. The U.S. student shows her appreciation for the room and its open design, expressing her fondness for the large window. The Japanese student replied:

This room is definitely very open. If you leave the window (called fusuma in Japanese) open, passers-by will be able to see inside the room! However, since the fusuma is made of paper instead of glass, there is basically no need to worry

about looking inside the room. Instead, the cats I used to have often broke it. ... [T]raditional Japanese rooms are difficult to maintain and may not be preferred by those seeking practicality. I think it cannot be helped to change, but I don't think it should be weeded out. (S.S., personal communication, July 2022)

What the Japanese student call fusuma, a partition or door, also has the structure of what is called shoji in Japan. The shoji, which is a thin wooden frame with washi paper pasted on it, functions as a window, a partition, and a door. Although the U.S. student did not understand the details of the flexible function of the fusuma/shoji, the Japanese student responded and explained the cultural significance of the fusuma, and the reasons why traditional Japanese rooms are becoming less common. Their interaction focuses on the physical structure of the room. The U.S. student's initial interpretation of the fusuma as a window shows their lack of familiarity with Japanese structures with multiple uses. Making connections through physical structure runs the danger of misinterpreting the cultural significance of a space.

More Commonalities Than Differences

In the process of sharing their dioramas, students surprisingly discovered that they shared more similarities than differences. Both U.S. and Japanese students found common ground in their memories and experiences related to their spaces, thus revealing shared aspects of human experience despite their cultural differences.

For instance, a U.S. student initially held the misconception that the Japanese students' work would be strikingly different from their own. However, upon seeing the Japanese students' dioramas, the student shared:

I was shocked at how familiar their identity house looked. From the way the furniture was positioned to the story of how the student and their family would play with their pets in the room. This all reminded me of my childhood and it was very comforting. (G.J., personal communication, August 2022)

This reflection offered an interesting insight into how individuals from different cultural backgrounds can still find shared commonalities in how they experience the world. Though this observation hinted at cultural, social, or other factors potentially influencing individuals' perception and interpretation of places, the dioramas in this project ultimately highlighted the commonalities of certain human experiences.

Phase Two: Co-Creating a Shared Living Space

The second phase reflects a completely digital endeavor. Students were given the assignment to collaborate and share ideas in order to design a shared living space in which they would feel at ease spending time with other group members. Each group includes a Japanese member and three U.S. members. They used Jamboard as a communication tool (Figure 3) and the canvas to create a collage of their shared living space with the inclusion of each person's selected object.

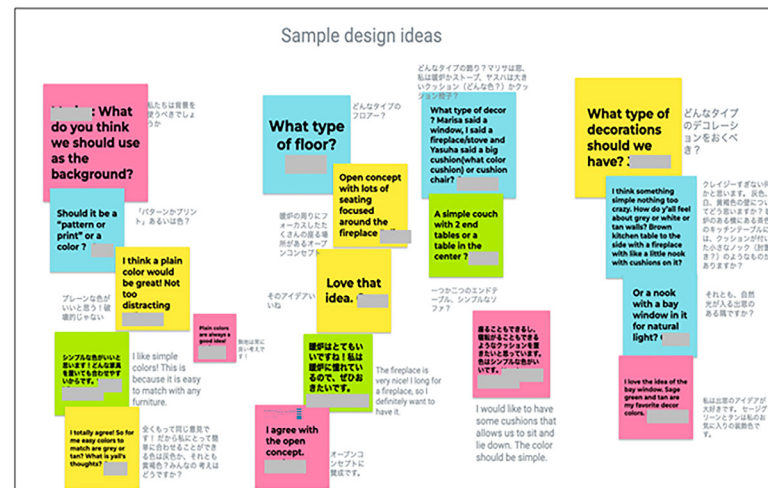


Figure 3. A group's example of their communication on Jamboard.

Bring Your Object to Our Space

At the beginning of phase two, students were asked to select an object from their diorama to be placed in their collaborative virtual living space. Students in groups first shared their objects and the reasons they chose them with other group members. This was a bridge step to help students generate more intense insiderness feelings in the virtual living space they were going to create together (Relph, 1976). Objects are part of the construct of the places one experiences and shares personal histories (Bey, 2012). Sherry Turkle (2007) contends that the objects in our environment play a significant part in determining our thoughts and feelings and that these objects have a special capacity to evoke memories and emotions, functioning as a kind of "external memory" that can be used to reflect on the self and one's relationship to the rest of the world. In this exercise, objects provide the student with an opportunity to access those feelings in an unknown new virtual space

and create a meaningful connection between the yet-to-be-created new space with peers and their personal space and identity.

Some examples of interesting objects that were selected include a Gundam (Japanese anime) helmet by a Japanese student, a French door by a U.S. student, and a fireplace by a U.S. student. Other more common objects, including cushions, pictures, and books, are all connected to each student's place and personal identity. There were mixed feelings about the process of negotiating and placing the objects in the shared living space. Some students found it interesting, while others had difficulties or were anxious, experiencing a juncture of intercultural communication. For example, a U.S. student reflected that seeing Japanese students' objects was intriguing because these objects are not commonly seen in the U.S. (Figure 4). On the other hand, a Japanese student in the same group reflected that:

The members of the group had designated objects that they had feelings for or could get sentimental about, whereas I chose an anime toy, and I was worried that it would be considered unserious. It was as if I was grabbing at the air, as if I were trying to get a laugh. (S.S., personal communication, August 2022)

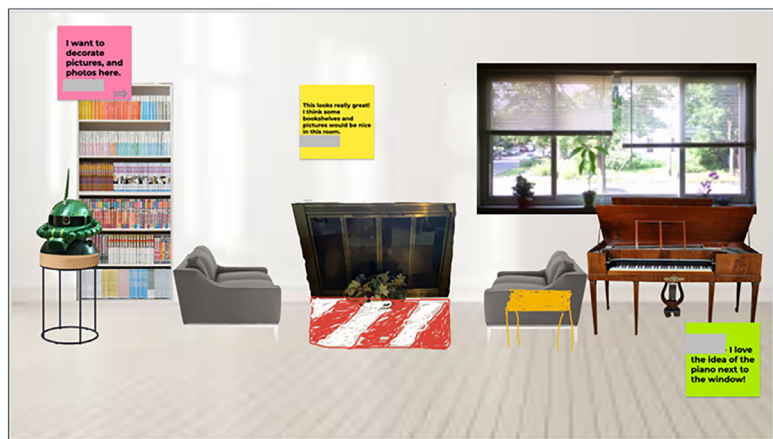


Figure 4. A group's example of placing different objects together.

Regardless of the different cultural perspectives on approaching the differences of objects, this process of object selection and arrangement was seen as a way to build community as it opened up a dialogue between students of different nationalities. Students learned not only

about objects, space, and culture but also about different cultural communication styles. As a Japanese student reflected:

When the idea of incorporating a fireplace came up, I thought to myself, "I would love to have a fireplace myself," but I had never actually seen a room with a fireplace, and I wasn't quite sure how it should be placed in a room. However, when the discussion was led by an American student who was good at organizing the conversation, I felt that she was good at discussing things and was stimulated by the way she spoke to members, asking them questions while expressing her own opinions. (M.Y., personal communication, August 2022)

This quote highlights the project's dual efficacy: it facilitates an understanding of cultural nuances in object selection and arrangement and also cultivates an appreciation for different communication styles. The Japanese student's reflections demonstrate how the collaborative exercise provided valuable insights into American conversational approaches. The process not only promoted the understanding of diverse cultural perspectives but also nurtured intercultural communication skills.

Collaging a Shared Space through Democratic Insideness

According to students' final summative reflection, most students were satisfied with the final space they created. They consider the process smooth. As a student reflected:

I think the process was smooth because everyone in my group picked an item that was unique from the others, but still allowed for the room to make sense. We also worked well together in communicating ideas for what we each thought was important for the room. Luckily, we agreed on the design process of the room, and I think our room equally represented everyone's interests and ideas. (M.R., personal communication, August 2022)

The inclusion of a mix of objects is a challenge for some students, but they learn to tolerate things they do not like. A student said,

If I had to change anything about our project, it would be some of the décor in the room. For example, our Japanese partner chose a decoration that reflected their favorite anime show. I love the idea of personalization to the room, but I am not a huge fan of anime. (J.D., personal communication, August 2022)

However, students tried to make sure everyone was well represented, and it was clear that the process involved them thinking about equal cultural representation. It is worth noting that students were not given directions for creating a space with equal cultural representation. However, this was shown in all of the group's final works, demonstrating their awareness of inclusivity. As another student said, "I tried to be very mindful of what my other group members had said they enjoy and pick pieces that would be appreciated by everyone" (L.O., personal communication, August 2022).

In one of the groups, a student came up with the idea of including everyone's favorite books on the bookcase, and this made them feel the space was more personal and special to them (Figure 5). A member reflected, "I was moved by the room full of everyone's thoughts and feelings. I was delighted and amazed at the ability to share thoughts and ideas with each other, even though we were far apart in location" (I.M., personal communication, August 2022). Her comment shows that a sense of insideness was achieved through the democratic process of co-creation.



Figure 5. A group's example of the final collage of shared living space.

The process was an opportunity for students to engage in vicarious insideness and deeply relate to others' personal memories through their selected objects. As students shared and discussed their objects, they began to perceive others' experiences through the lens of vicarious insideness. This process of creating a shared living space fostered a new insideness we called democratic insideness that demonstrated a shared willingness to accept and incorporate different perspectives. This was a powerful learning experience for the students and helped foster a

sense of connection and understanding despite differences in cultural background and personal interests. The virtual living space became a place of learning (Ellsworth, 2005) that is dynamic and constantly evolving; this can be interpreted as an effort to construct a democratic insideness that embraces differences.

Intercultural Space

The project described in this article was a successful example of intercultural communication and collaboration. It showed how art education could be used as a tool to bring together students from different backgrounds and cultures and to help them understand and appreciate others' experiences even when there are cultural differences. Our findings showed that incorporating personal memories with a place/ibasho is a highly effective method for building a communication bridge between students from different cultural backgrounds. By tapping into their experiences and emotions surrounding a place/ibasho, students were able to create a sense of insideness and belonging in a new environment. In addition, sharing objects that are connected to students' identities proved to be an effective way to engage them in intercultural communication. This allowed students to share their memories and experiences with each other and to learn about different cultural experiences. Finally, the virtual collage became a learning space where students could negotiate differences and work together to create a more inclusive space. Through this process, students gained valuable experience in collaboration, communicating their ideas, accepting others' differences, and problem-solving.

These findings highlight the potential of art education to promote intercultural communication and foster a more inclusive and understanding global society. The process of the project created an intercultural space where students negotiated their different personal identities and the insideness and outsideness of the new shared space. By tapping into students' personal memories and experiences and providing opportunities for students to share their cultures and perspectives, art education can play a vital role in reflecting cultural diversity and changing context in our global landscape, as well as providing students with the tools to interweave space of insideness as a democratic ibasho with personal and emotional connections between different others.

Acknowledgments

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Art and Visual Intervention Strategies to Resist Racism and Racial Stereotypes

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ABSTRACT

In our article, we share five teaching strategies to address and confront racism, racial bias, and stereotypes. Echoing contemporary artists who provide excellent visual interventions against racism and racial violence, we offer artistic and visual intervention strategies designed for art classrooms and community settings. Our strategies include visual intervention, anti-racist gaze, counter-narrative and storytelling, cultural and ethnic identity celebration, and coalition building. We believe that these strategies advance racial dialogues in schools, providing students of color with opportunities and tools for their stories to be heard. Facing unprecedented violence and multi-layered racial problems in our society, our strategies grounded in the power of artistic intervention and activism will offer a valuable tool to engage students with the practice of anti-racism.

KEYWORDS: Racism, Visual Strategies, Coalition Building, Counter-Narrative, Anti-Racist Gaze

Introduction

Recent events, such as COVID-19, globalizing racism, and racial violence, have fueled further racial tensions and conflicts in our society (Bode, 2022; Kraehe, 2022). Students have been affected by racism and the toxic rhetoric of indifference and harassments in schools and on their way to school (Mitchell, 2021; Yam, 2021). The efforts of rejecting and removing Critical Race Theory in schools is one of the movements in many states and the political arena. Facing these racial tensions and violence, artists have publicly conveyed striking statements to

support marginalized groups and communities through various street artworks and social media posts, rejecting racism against any race and ethnic group. Some artist-activists' art or cultural projects, such as Asian American Federation (AAF)'s *I am Really From* posters (2021), Little Mekong art and cultural projects in Saint Paul (Sutton, 2021), Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya's posters (Beete, 2021), and Cerise Lim Jabobs' opera activism (Coons, 2021) have utilized social media to raise awareness and have mobilized to protest and promote solidarity and coalition among community members, activists, and artists. One of their key strategies is to create visual images for visibility utilizing the power of art as a voice for the voiceless (Cooper, Hsieh, & Lu, 2022).

As art educators, we argue that racial messages have infiltrated our lives through powerful popular media and visual culture (Duncum, 2020). For example, there has already been a long but negative history related to racism against marginalized groups through popular and visual culture (Cooper, Hsieh, & Lu, 2022; Bae-Dimitriadis, 2021; Kraehe, 2022). Almost all minority group members have witnessed and/or suffered from distorted and biased depictions of them, labeling and stereotyping, and marginalization. In our article, we offer several teaching strategies applicable to K-12 schools or community settings, developed first among us as strategies to confront anti-Asian racism. We realized that these strategies should be extended to other marginalized groups in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture. The following strategies are a collection of our works for the past couple of years, going through a series of struggles with concepts and approaches to addressing racism and racial issues in the classroom. We applied them to our classroom and will share their responses in this article.

Before we start our story, we disclose our positionality as Asian-American immigrant art educators who teach art and visual culture education in U.S. higher education. Considering our immigrant status from Asia, we extensively worked on pedagogical approaches to reject racism, especially anti-Asian racism. We expand these strategies to support all students of color, as we have successfully applied these strategies to our classes, in which we believe that all students, including white students, can benefit from them. The testimonials and artworks by students were collected and analyzed after we implemented teaching strategies into our classes, such as art education methods and general education courses. After carefully reflecting and reviewing student responses to our teaching, we present our student artworks and anecdotal data as well as our critical reflections in this article in support of our claims and recommendations towards a racially just pedagogy.

Our strategies include visual intervention, anti-racist gaze, counter narrative and storytelling, cultural and ethnic identity celebration, and coalition building. Each of them will be introduced, and we will

share some of our student works as the outcome of our anti-racism pedagogical practices.

Visual Intervention

There are numerous visual perversions of race and culture in our daily lives. We can easily find stereotypical or distorted portrayals of others, especially of minority backgrounds (Lawton, 2018). Visual intervention can be an effective way to challenge this situation (Bae-Dimitriadis, 2021; D'Souza, 2021; Kraehe & Acuff, 2021). We offer an art intervention strategy as one of the most significant ways of both creating art against racism or subverting covert and overt racism. To achieve this goal, we encourage students to take three steps. First, identify how visual images have been used to activate racial stereotypes and bias in popular culture, social media, and their community. Second, by analyzing contemporary artworks, students further reflect on their observations and experiences of how their racial or ethnic identities have been distorted and misrepresented in everyday objects and images. Lastly, by visualizing their counternarratives in their own artworks, students promote a better understanding of others and bring social awareness of our surroundings.

In our art education courses, students discussed the stereotypical representations of minority groups in our surroundings, including Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups. Sharing visual images which lead to racial and cultural misperception, students critically reflect on how our society and popular media portray the images of different races and ethnicities. For example, the racial stereotypes of Native Americans were often discussed from popular culture, sharing numerous examples of stereotypes in sports, films, TV shows, and Disney characters. In one of the author's classes, a student brought the image of a "sleeping Mexican" statue, displayed in many different places, including restaurants or the front yard of individual houses. Other students pointed out that those "Mexican Siesta" statues are "classic" cultural stereotypes, widely utilized as a form of art in our everyday surroundings (CF, Personal Communication, September 19, 2022). A student responded to the conversation, by arguing that "These label Mexicans, or those of Mexican ancestry, as being lazy and doing nothing but sleeping all day. It's incredibly insulting because as we all know, those of Mexican heritage are some of the hardest working people out there" (CF, Personal Communication, September 19, 2022). Another student also criticized that, unlike the original intention of representing Mexicans taking a siesta after a day of hard work, "this statue was used to mock Mexicans during the Great Depression as lazy, drunk, and unemployed" (MC, Personal Communication, September 20, 2022). Echoing those viewpoints, a student further warned that this way of portrayal of an ethnic group could even provoke a misunderstanding that "all Mexican people are

supposed to dress like the statue with a “sombbrero” and the “sarape” (MA, Personal Communication, September 20, 2022). Identifying the visual misrepresentation in our daily lives, and making others conscious of those widespread misstatements can be an effective first step of visual intervention in art education.

Furthermore, by reviewing contemporary artworks, students can critically contemplate racial and cultural biases and expand their understanding by discussing the issues with their peers. For this purpose, first, we guide our students to examine contemporary artists’ counter-narratives toward racial and cultural prejudices. By watching the artists’ interviews and analyzing their responses and visual outcomes, students explore how those artists interpreted social concerns while visualizing them in their artworks. Second, we further ask students to consider whether they had similar experiences or perspectives, and how they also can incorporate any visual cues or sociocultural statements in their artwork. The students with minority backgrounds often address their racialized experiences and struggles by making connections to those contemporary artists’ artworks. For example, one Muslim student shared two images of a young artist whose works portray stereotypes about Muslims and Asians to criticize people’s limited understanding of other racial and ethnic groups. The student highlighted that when people see a Muslim, “the first thing that comes to their mind is ‘terrorist’” (NA, Personal Communication, September 18, 2022). She further emphasized that “After COVID-19 hit, all Asians were seen as the cause of the virus to the point that some Asians were being harassed and even some lost their lives” (NA, Personal Communication, September 18, 2022). She claimed that not everyone, “who has a scarf around their head is a terrorist,” nor “Asians are the virus;” rather, asserting that people should “stop judging every person in a race or religion” (NA, Personal Communication, September 18, 2022). Followed by this powerful statement, her peers agreed and continued the conversation about the topic. One student stated that, “There are so many people in the world that judge just by taking one glance at someone else,” (IM, Personal Communication, September 19, 2022), while another peer highlighted that, “[the artworks] really do scream the message of correcting such stereotypes that have become a huge problem around the world.” She continued stating that, “These images are a voice to the many people that are discriminated [against] on a daily [basis] and sharing them would help spread awareness on the discrimination of such” (AM, Personal Communication, September 19, 2022). These students’ statements provoked critical conversations about the social situations among their classmates. As instructors, we encourage students to freely share their thought processes with their peers while reflecting on their surroundings. Inspired by those contemporary artists’ provocative visual statements, students also reflect on their surroundings and the prejudice against people

from different backgrounds and develop social awareness through meaningful conversations.

Finally, as a visual intervention, students can create their visual artwork to deliver positive images and commonalities among individuals from various cultural and racial backgrounds. Utilizing their cultural symbols, valuable relationships, memories, and/or stories, students can represent their identity in positive ways to break possible connotations of certain cultural biases. As seen in Figure 1, students can include positive cultural components in their artworks, such as religion, food, and cultural heritage. We also noticed that some students had unfamiliar symbols and images in their artwork. In this case, student presentations helped clarify and help to understand the meanings and values of symbols within the student’s culture. These visual representations can help viewers to see the common aspects of human lives regardless of their racial, cultural, or religious differences.



Figure 1. Undergraduate student’s Digital Photo Collage, 2022.
Courtesy of the student artist.

In another photo collage, a student also shared her valuable cultural and ethnic traits and backgrounds, and how they helped shape her identity mediated through various ideas, morals, and behaviors (see Figure 2). As a Hmong American, her physical aspects often signify her racial minority background; however, she rather embraced those racial components as positive aspects while highlighting the constructive quality of how her Hmong background led her to treat others with full respect.



Figure 2. Undergraduate student's Digital Photo Collage, 2020.
Courtesy of the student artist.

Anti-Racist Gazing

The meaning of the gaze, “incorporates many diverse ways of looking and also the physical, social and institutional contexts under which we look” (Duncum, 2020, p. 3). The purpose of anti-racial gazing is to critically examine symbols, images, and popular and visual culture to address and challenge racism in society (Shin et al., 2023). Gaze is an essential concept of how we see and understand visual culture and media. Students ask three questions: who is looked at, who is looking at, and the context in which they look (Duncum, 2020).

Utilizing this strategy, we encourage our students to choose and analyze visual culture, such as films, television programs, graphic novels, 3D virtual worlds, and video games. The goal of this practice is to analyze them to expose and address any racist gaze such as the White gaze, White surveillance gaze, and implicit racial bias. Through an anti-racist gaze, students can expose and resist the biased or stereotyped views of minority groups. For example, students are invited to challenge the White gaze as the default perspective that reinforces White supremacy in popular culture, examining how popular culture or social media are saturated with White master narrative. By analyzing the storyline, camera angle, and portrayal of people of color, students realize how media spread racialized and distorted views on minority groups. Students are often very surprised to realize some of their favorite characters from Hollywood movies or TV shows could be seen as offensive towards minority groups and their cultures. Some students

pointed out how they have consumed American popular culture and media without a critical lens.

Through gaze practice, students can examine the relationship of power in which looking and being looked at takes place, and this is a social understanding through which individuals’ perceptions, emotions, and behaviors are filtered (Kraehe & Acuff, 2021). Students often pointed out that they were not aware that many parts of the U.S. media’s portrayal of minority groups, such as Asians, Mexicans, Native Americans, and Middle Eastern descent, were based on racist perspectives and cultural misappropriation (Acuff, 2013; Kraehe et al., 2015).

Figure 3 presents an example of an anti-racial gaze in a visual illustration by one of the authors. This visualization of anti-Asian gazing exposes the racial stereotypes and discriminations against Hmong in the movie, *Gran Torino* (2008). The movie was directed and produced by Clint Eastwood, a well-known actor. He also starred in the film as Walt Kowalski, a Korean War veteran who performed a heroic action to save a Hmong family by fighting and sacrificing himself also for the Hmong community. Although his action is considered heroic, it resonates a similar White savior rhetoric, as this movie illustrates the Hmong people as a powerless ethnic group who merely waits for help. In the film, Hmong people cannot solve their own community problems, are depicted as gang members, and their cultures are viewed through the eyes of the dominant Western culture. Figure 3 shows how the film includes many racial stereotypes, slurs, and cultural distortions against Hmong and other Asians, although it grossed \$270 million worldwide and was successful commercially as a typical Hollywood movie.

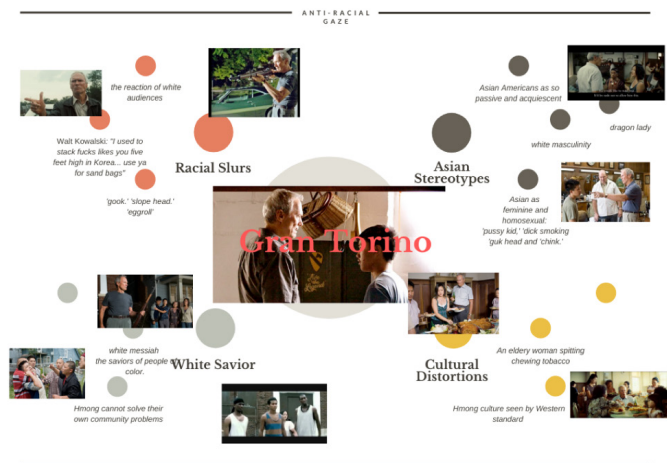


Figure 3. Anti-racist gazing and visual analysis based on *Gran Torino* (2008).

Anti-racist gaze analysis by a student prompted questions about racial representation in popular media and critique that the media lacks racial diversity. She was disappointed by how white people even play real-life people of color in a movie, arguing that, “people of color deserve to see themselves represented in the media, and people of color deserve to have their stories fairly and accurately told” (V. Long, Personal Communication, April 20, 2021).

The film *21* (2008) was a movie inspired by Jeffrey Ma, an Asian American man who was a star member of the MIT Blackjack team in the 1990s. Ma happened to be featured in the film, but not in the role of himself. Ma played an extra, while a white actor, Jim Sturgess, played the role of Jeffrey Ma. Not only that, but the filmmakers went as far as renaming the character to “Ben Campbell,” which ultimately erased any Asian identity from the character. Why would the creators of this film choose to cast a white man to tell the story of an Asian man’s life? Perhaps it is because the media believes that Asian people are not as marketable as white people, or perhaps they are hesitant to tell the success stories of people of color. Regardless of the reason, it is disappointing and disheartening that the media struggles with diversity to this extent. (V. Long, Personal Communication, April 20, 2021)

These two examples show how popular media culture is saturated with racial bias and stereotypes, which require close and critical reading for critical analysis against the racist representation of people of color.

Counter Narrative and Storytelling

Grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), narrative inquiry, life history, and autoethnography, counter-narrative functions as a transformative approach to culturally sensitive pedagogy and teaching for diversity (Miller, Liu, & Ball, 2020). Delgado (1995) explained that counter-story [narrative] is a, “counter-reality that is experienced by subordinate groups, as opposed to those experiences of those in power [dominant narratives]” (p. 194). The approach of counter-narrative and storytelling can be a powerful tool for learners to explore, express, and reflect on their untold but important experiences and stories. Sharing these stories with others could inspire others to do the same and counter the dominant narratives, which marginalize stories of minority groups, especially people of color (Shin et al., 2023).

The counter-narrative also can help learners construct their identities with multi modules or aspects of lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For instance, several authors (2022) shared their own

immigration stories with pre-service art teachers and guided them to re-discover their untold or difficult experiences to map out what factors have been shaping their identities. Another example is to share contemporary artists’ visual narratives [artworks] with learners as a source for activism and making marginalized stories heard. Cooper et al. (2022) showed a high-resolution video projection/sound/installation, *Chinaman’s Chances on Promontory Summit Golden Spike Celebration*, made by a contemporary artist Zhi Lin to their pre-service art teachers, and guided them to confront history and retrieve the memory. Zhi Lin’s installation video revealed the untold story behind the historical celebration and represented the viewpoint of the Chinese workers at the transcontinental railroad completion ceremony.

When implementing a counter-narrative approach in art classrooms, there are various ways to encourage learners to deliver their narratives. For example, Michelle Redwine, a preservice art teacher created a comic strip (see Figure 4) and shared her childhood experiences regarding the races and the comparisons of racial issues. She wrote (2022),

My comic strip drawing expresses the experiences felt when reading on the topic of racial harmony and enjoyment in my childhood. The many skin tones, hairstyles and textures, makeup, and colors in their clothing of the characters with dialogues of encouragement. I grew up in the 1970s and became an adult in 1991 chronologically. During those times the world seemed to be more harmonized-together or getting along in my neck of the woods...I remember my childhood best friend Allison (blonde hair and blue eyes). We went everywhere together. ...I look at the state of the world today and it is very scary. Even within my own race. It is like the mentality of crabs in the barrel-where you will not succeed if I cannot succeed. All that does is cause the race to implode. Graphic novels/comic strips are sometimes mirrors of what is going on today (Personal communication, April 2nd, 2022).

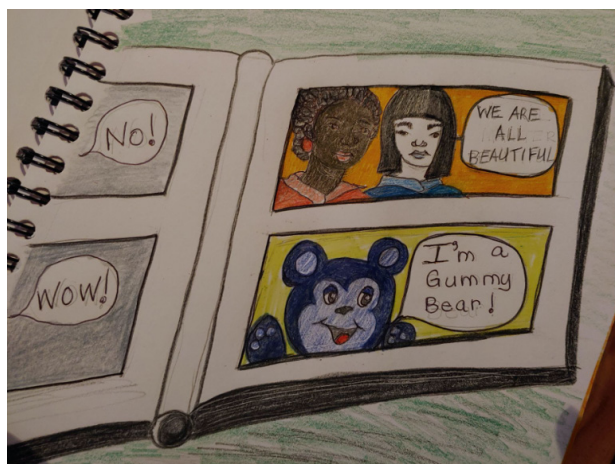


Figure 4. Michelle Redwine, *Comic strip and childhood memory*, 8" X 11", color pencil on paper

Her work demonstrated that counter-narratives are not only helping them to recognize lived experiences from various ethnic groups and nationalities (Shin et al., 2023) but also providing multiple entry points to students of color (Acuff et al., 2012).

Cultural and Ethnic Identity Celebration

Cultural and ethnic identity is considered one's sense of belonging to a self-categorized cultural and ethnic group's heritage, values, beliefs, and traditions (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Milne, 2017; Phinney, 1996; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Many students of color who were born and raised in America experience 'otherness' because of their race and ethnic heritage, struggling with their cultural and ethnic identity. To strengthen their sense of belonging, we encourage art teachers to consider the strategy of celebrating one's cultural and ethnic identity.

In applying the strategy, we invite students to critically examine contemporary artwork that engage with minority communities and their narratives. Place-based pedagogy emphasizes the real-world problems and lived experiences in a community, and it provides students to explore how human experiences are shaped by place (Edelglass, 2009). Applying the place-based pedagogy, students can investigate how artists, especially minorities, explore their ethnic communities and narratives as a way of celebrating cultural and ethnic identity. This strategy encourages students to explore and centralize their own community and its untold stories, transforming their struggles into a celebration of their cultural and ethnic identity.

KP, a Korean American youth who has struggled with his ethnic and cultural identity, was inspired by a local contemporary African American artist, Skip Hill, and his artwork, *Barber Shop (Edge Up!)*. Skip Hill portrays an African American barbershop with iconic symbols of African American community. According to him,

You can imagine white folks didn't cut black folk's hair. So, it was ready-made, customer-based, client-based, so early on, we see barbershops popping up in black communities, particularly in urban places. The beauty of barbershops for black people has always been a safe place where they can be themselves without being under the white gaze and could share a talk on weather, sport, politics, and what's happening on the street...I consider barbershops as an icon of the black community. (108 Contemporary, 2021)

After examining the cultural significance of African American icons, such as hair products and the dynamics of their hairstyles, and of the barbershop space for African Americans in the painting, *Barber Shop (Edge Up!)*, KP began to contemplate his lifetime haircut experiences in Korean barbershops. In his entire 15 years, he never experienced an American barbershop because his Asian hairstyles were different from those of whites or African Americans. For him, a Korean barbershop is a safe place where he can share anything on Korea-related pop cultures, issues, and community events as a Korean American youth, as seen in his drawing (Figure 5), *New Look* (2022).



Figure 5. 15-year-old Korean American youth, *New Look*, 2022. Courtesy of the student artist.

In *New Look*, I took inspiration from a multimedia piece, *Barber Shop (Edge Up!)* by Skip Hill. This piece depicts the cultural significance of a barbershop in African American culture. I took a similar approach in *New Look*, portraying a barbershop that I have been a longtime customer of. The Korean barbershop, reflected in the mirror, is decked with common Korean household objects such as K-drama, K-pop, Korean TV shows, Korean-style coffee, snacks, dolls, hair products, and bible verses in Korean. I used these cultural items to create a cultural atmosphere that expresses the Korean identity. (KP, personal communication, Jan 2, 2023)

By centralizing his Korean community and its untold narratives in this drawing, art became a tool to celebrate his Korean American identity that was rarely disclosed in public.

Another way to apply the strategy of celebrating one's cultural and ethnic identity is to encourage students to research and apply their own cultural symbols and icons into their art to navigate their sense of belonging and identity. In his next painting, Figure 6 *Girl* (2022), KP proudly used traditional Korean cultural symbols and icons, such as *Hanbok*, traditional Korean wear, and *Byeongpung*, a traditional Korean folding screen. The image of a traditionally dressed Korean girl who has slanted Asian eyes represents the stronghold of Korean culture in America. The cultural symbols, icons, and images signify a celebration of his Korean American identity, protecting his cultural and ethnic identity from white assimilation. He said,

The panels behind her shield and protect her from the grasp of white assimilation, which lay beyond her. Through *Girl*, I wish to highlight the importance of maintaining one's own culture, even when the society around us wants to break down our "walls" to attack and whitewash our cultural identity. (KP, personal communication, Jan 2, 2023)



Figure 6. 15-year-old Korean American youth, *Girl*, 2022.
Courtesy of the student artist.

These two artworks show how the strategy of celebrating one's cultural and ethnic identity empowers students to build their ethnic identity, challenging stereotypes against their ethnic heritage.

Coalition Building

Coalition building is an effective way to address anti-Asian racism that Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities face and to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society. As art educators, in order for systematic change to occur, we seek the power of both coalitions among Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities and inter-ethnic or inter-racial coalitions to confront and address racism and racial inequity in the United States. First, coalition building among AANHPI groups to achieve a common goal is essential as it provides a platform for these communities to amplify their voices and increase their visibility. In addition, cross-racial and cross-ethnic solidarity is a shared goal that all minority groups should seek and expect, and we encourage educators and students of color to develop such coalitions (Fujino, 2021). We believe educators must break out of the divided and compartmentalized racial and ethnic walls defined by master narratives and White supremacy (Acuff et al., 2012; Rodriguez & Kim, 2018). Interracial conflict, distrust, and struggle among minority groups, such as Asian Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinx

Americans, and others, have been mischaracterized as inter-racial crises and distorted by biased media representations, supporting the interests of White supremacy. When different racial and ethnic groups of students share and seek mutual understanding for the purposes of solidarity, it facilitates the development of more racially just, inclusive, and responsive classrooms (Lawton, 2018).

In terms of coalition building, an excellent example is AANHPI forming alliances involving community-based organizations and advocacy groups. Artists and organizations from AANHPI communities have actively worked together to provide platforms for each other to amplify their voices. For example, visual artist Audrey Chan, who is Chinese-American, and rapper Jason Chu created a collaborative project called “An American Vocabulary: Words to Action” (Figure 7). The project consists of four themes of multilingual flashcards: voice, ancestor, care, and persistence that portray AANHPI figures, events, and actions (JANM, 2023). Chan, Chu, and the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) collaborated with the Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (AAAJSC) and organized events related to the project featuring musicians and visual artists from the AANHPI communities.



Figure 7. Selection of cards in “An American Vocabulary: Words to Action,” a collaborative project by visual artist Audrey Chan and rapper Jason Chu.



Figure 8. Template for students to create new AANHPI voices flashcards, designed by An American Vocabulary: Words to Action project.

This project is an example of coalition building among AANHPI communities as it is a shared vocabulary of AANHPI, “agency and unity in the fight for justice, healing, and understanding” (JANM, 2023). Chan and Chu consulted AANHPI community members about AANHPI knowledge, figures, and events when designing the four themes of multilingual flashcards. JANM and the AAAJSC provide a platform for artists Audrey Chan and Jason Chu to challenge dominant historical narratives and to bring a social consciousness through the power of visual arts and words (JANM, 2023; Chu, 2023). Chan, Chu, and JANM also provided workshops for teachers to use these multilingual flashcards in their K-12 classrooms to bring social justice awareness. For instance, Chan and Chu designed a template that K-12 students can create new cards (Figure 8) based on their research on AANHPI communities with drawings and descriptions of the stories. This template will also provide students with opportunities to bring their knowledge of AANHPI communities to classrooms.

Artists, such as Audrey Chan and Jason Chu, have been involved in community coalition building among diverse racial and ethnic groups. Their artistic and coalition building practices provide a platform or media for AANHPI communities to amplify their voices, which is crucial in addressing racism and racial bias or stereotypes. As art educators, we introduce those artists and their artworks to our students to increase the visibility of AANHPI artistic and cultural practices. Their artworks, which are rooted in AANHPI knowledge and events, can deepen the understanding of individual cultural specificities through inter-ethnic or inter-racial coalitions. Through the practice of coalition building, we can come together to amplify our voices and help each other better understand our voices through discussions of artistic practices. A deeper understanding of artistic and cultural practices can

help educators and students challenge racial and cultural stereotypes. And coalition building is essential to facilitate such understanding in art educational settings as it addresses the artistic and cultural nuances in each racial and ethnic community.

Conclusion

In our article, we shared several teaching strategies to address and confront racism, racial bias, and stereotypes. Echoing various artists who provide excellent visual interventions against racism and racial violence, we offered five strategies applicable to most art classrooms and community settings, such as visual intervention, anti-racist gazing, counter-narrative and storytelling, cultural and ethnic identity celebration, and coalition-building. We believe that each of these strategies can be used and introduced without any particular order. Art teachers and students choose specific strategies based on their social and cultural background, reflecting on their positionality and artistic interest.

We face unprecedented violence and multi-layered racial problems in our society. As visual art educators, we strongly believe in the power of artistic intervention and activism as agents and advocates for positive social change and transformation. Our visual strategies will support students of underrepresented groups, embracing all races and enmities through coalition, care, and support for all. We hope that these strategies help art educators and their students to raise their voices and stories through artistic and creative visualizations toward transformative and inclusive learning in our schools.

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Untold Narratives and Reimagined Histories: The Work of Dawoud Bey and Titus Kaphar

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ABSTRACT

This article provides high school art room activities that address the past, contemplate the present, and encourage teaching for change. The authors introduce two contemporary artists, Dawoud Bey and Titus Kaphar, whose work embraces the idea of untold narratives and juxtapose their artwork to instigate difficult but necessary conversations about America's racial past and present. Bey's photographic narratives and Kaphar's innovative paintings unveil truths and histories of Black American culture that have long been neglected. Each juxtaposition is accompanied by background information, discussion questions, and ideas designed to engage students in critical dialogue about race and racism. These conversations are followed by creative writing, and artmaking processes encouraging students to learn from our histories to reimagine our present.

KEYWORDS: Untold Narratives, Dawoud Bey, Titus Kaphar, Juxtapositions, Instructional Activities, Racial Injustice

“At that moment, I faced an important choice. I could teach the status quo, or I could teach for a change. I could not see how I could lie to my students, no matter how pure my intentions.... So we closed those texts full of smiling affluent white people and began to talk”
(Collins, 2012, p. 128).

Teaching the status quo perpetuates inequality and social injustice; it is time to teach for change. Collins (2012), a social theorist, advocates for educational reform, urging teachers to start in their own classroom communities. As university educators serving in an urban environment, we seek equity and justice, instigate change, and engage in reflective critique. In our practice, art is a catalyst to promote dialogue about racial disparities in educational systems and society. To accomplish this important work, we recognize and examine our privilege as white, educated, middle-class, women and support the development of critical consciousness in ourselves, our students, and our community. Conversations about race, intersectional identities, and historic oppression are often avoided in schools (Acuff & Kraehe, 2022; Di'Angelo, 2018). Educators must actively work to raise awareness of

the problematic nature of “Whiteness” as the invisible norm in which all structures and behaviors are measured (Acuff, 2019; Buffington, 2019; Kulinski, 2023; Spillane, 2015). Kraehe (2015) advocates disrupting the “racial silence” by questioning who has and has not been represented in the grand narrative of our past histories. Additionally, Rolling (2020) asks,

What if art teachers taught students not only to make the world more beautiful, not only to express their ideas and emotions, not only to ask provocative questions, not only to solve problems creatively- but also to design an anti-racist world? (p. 4)

We embrace these scholars’ invitations to teach for change. To begin the process, it is important to first know how our histories impact current realities, empathize with the most vulnerable, and begin to understand the complexity of racism in America.

This article provides high school art room activities that address the past, contemplate the present, and encourage teaching for change. We begin with a discussion of why these dialogues matter and how teachers may prepare to use these activities in their own classrooms. Then, we introduce two contemporary artists, Dawoud Bey and Titus Kaphar, whose work embraces the idea of untold narratives and juxtapose their artwork to instigate difficult but necessary conversations about America’s racial past and present. Bey’s photographic narratives and Kaphar’s innovative paintings unveil truths and histories of Black American culture that have long been neglected.

Preparing for Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Engaging in dialogues about race and racism is essential in teaching for change. When we presented the activities described below at our state art education conference, many teachers discussed the desire to teach for change and the fear of teaching these “difficult” topics. These teachers were not alone; teachers across the United States continue to voice concern about emotional reactions and pushback from students when centering Whiteness (Di’Angelo, 2016; Matias, 2016), the ambiguity of responses when co-creating new narratives (Collins, 2012; Kraehe, 2015), the high-stakes nature of racial dialogues in our contemporary classrooms (Spillane, 2015); and educational gag orders used to “curtail teaching about race, gender, and American history” (Kantawala, 2022, p. 4). We recognize that “difficulty” here lies in the positionality of the teacher. Acuff and Kraehe (2022) remind us that

The truth is that talking about race and racism is ‘difficult’ only for people who rarely have to think about themselves as racialized beings and whose quality of life is not dependent

on them having to use visual racial literacy on a daily basis.... On the other hand, the general absence of these discussions in White communities is what makes them ‘difficult’ when they suddenly arise. And this is why, we argue, to continue describing discussions about race and racism as ‘difficult’ further centers Whiteness, aids and abets White fragility, and supports willful ignorance. The uncritical designation of race as a ‘difficult’ topic creates and sustains anger around antiracist teaching altogether. (p. 19)

We understand that vulnerability—for teachers and students—is part of explicitly teaching about race and racism in our classrooms. Still, we ask teachers to consider the negative impacts of racial silence.¹ As White teacher educators, we recognize the uneasiness of not knowing where dialogues will go, but we are committed to developing critical consciousness and racial literacy in our classrooms.

We echo Kraehe and Acuff’s (2021) rules of engagement for preparing for these teaching experiences: 1) be curious, 2) be humble, 3) be real, and 4) be vulnerable. Teachers must embrace their curiosity, work through their discomfort, and strive to learn as much as possible when starting this journey. These activities and conversations must begin with a desire to learn, and teachers must be responsive instead of reactive. This means that teachers should have compassion, show humility, and be authentic. They must listen to and with their students, as well as listen for counternarratives and new possibilities. Finally, teachers must be vulnerable with their students. Hooks (1994) reminds us that,

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. (p. 21)

Hooks advocates for engaged pedagogy as a way to teach for change.

1 Kraehe (2015) elaborates that, Racial silence, therefore, does not transcend racialized difference; rather, it imposes a standpoint that disregards and subordinates the worldviews and educational needs of non-Whites. Prospective teachers of color are rendered alien, insignificant, and thus irrelevant to policy decisions and program reforms (Milner, Pearman, & McGee, 2013). Though color-muteness is often enacted by well-meaning individuals and written into antidiscrimination policies, it is, in effect, a key mechanism by which White supremacy is institutionalized. (p. 200)

She illuminates the power of being vulnerable with students. We agree, but recognize that risks are still involved in applying anti-racist methods in the classroom.

When in doubt, we encourage using Bell and Schatz's (2022) "stay in your lane" (pp. 102-103) metaphor and the questions they pose in their antiracist activity book, where they advocate that our lanes are real places of power and influence in which we live our everyday lives. Bell and Schatz ask us to consider what our lane is, note who else is in it, determine our role and skills, and question how White supremacy shows up. Then, they ask us to inquire what is being done about it, consider what we can do about it, and establish our first step. Engaging this in exercise is powerful when feeling vulnerable, overwhelmed, or do not know where to begin; consider answering the questions² in Figure 1 before you use the activities introduced in this article or to support the modification of these activities to best fit your "lane."

Questions	Self Reflection
What's my lane?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are teacher educators and have the opportunity and responsibility to support preservice art teachers in learning to teach for change.
Who else is in it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preservice teachers, teacher educators, K-12 teachers, and our administration
What's my role? What are my skills?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role: Teacher educators Skills: Designing responding to art activities and creating activities to support critical thinking, meaning-making, and transformation
How does White supremacy show up?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial silence permeates many classes in our students' program of study Often underrepresented artists are overlooked in the curriculum.
What's being done about it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEI Trainings offered Websites to help teachers bring underrepresented artists into the curriculum (see Artura.org or The Antiracist Art Teachers Website) NAEA journals have special issues promoting anti-racist pedagogy

² The questions are directly taken from Bell and Schatz's workbook (2022, pp. 104-105).

What can I do about it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and share activities to raise critical consciousness Include diverse contemporary artists Co-create a safe space in my classroom to begin dialogues about systematic racism Include antiracist methodologies of telling counternarratives and using multiple perspectives as the basis of my activities
What's the first step?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find underrepresented artists that speak to my students and design activities to use.

Figure 1. Authors' reflection using Bell and Schatz's (2022) "Get to Know Your Lane" exercise

Exploring Dawoud Bey and Titus Kaphar

In the current political climate, the question of who is represented and who is not in the American story is critical and needs attention. Kantawala (2023) states, "Eliminating Black artists from our curriculum doesn't allow for understanding America's true history" (p. 6). There are several exemplary Black artists working today that teachers can select and incorporate into a high school curriculum. In this article, we concentrate on the work of Bey and Kaphar for several reasons. Both recipients of the MacArthur Fellowship, their work offers a compelling perspective in our understanding of Black culture and history by providing a voice to stories and histories that have long been neglected. Bey talks about the importance of remembering the past in this statement,

History explains how we got to where we are now. We need to be reminded of that history in order to realize that things are not "just happening" and that everything has a history. The continuing abuse of Black bodies in this country has a very long history. (Loria, 2022, para. 9)

Similarly, Kaphar's practice and mission have been to investigate the history of Black people and bring awareness to the lack of representation in the arts curriculum and the art world to others. He produces work to disrupt history from its status as something that happened in the past to expose its current relevance (Davis, 2015).

Both outstanding role models for young people, Bey and Kaphar, have invested in mentoring and working with high school students. Bey traveled across the country photographing and making art alongside high school students empowering them to write about their lives.

Kaphar created NXTHVN, a thriving community organization in his hometown of New Haven, Connecticut offering paid apprenticeships to talented local high school students.

Dawoud Bey



Figure 2. *Bart Harris, 2006, Dawoud Bey, photograph.*
Courtesy of Bart Harris.

Bey (Figure 2), born in 1953, grew up in Queens, New York, and received an MFA in Photography from Yale University School of Art. He became interested in photography when he received his first camera, as a birthday gift at age 15. The camera sparked his curiosity, igniting a lifetime passion, and a 45-year career as a photographer and educator. His obsession with the camera motivated him to enroll in a community Y.M.C.A. photography class and construct a homemade darkroom in the family kitchen (Carleton, 2020). As a high school student in 1969, Bey visited an exhibition entitled, *Harlem on My Mind*, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where he saw photographs of Black people for the first time. The experience was transformational, giving him insights into the power of photography and how he might use his camera (O'Neill, 2020).

Over the past four decades, Bey's work has focused on representing the everyday experiences of Black people, recording many of America's underrepresented communities. His large photographic portraits

encourage viewers to look beyond the physical façade and uncover the complexity of each person. He portrays his subjects with dignity and respect, regardless of their color, marginalized histories, or age. In his own words, Bey states, "For much of my career I've made work that uses the portrait as the vehicle for speaking about Black humanity, to give a sense of the expansive humanity that Black people embody, and to do that by making work that brings a rich sense of interiority to the description of Black people" (Bentley, 2020, para. 5). By creating an empathetic portrait, the work challenges stereotypes of race and socioeconomic stature, and responds to the question of the invisibility of Black people in the narrative of American life (Nelson et al., 2020).

Titus Kaphar



Figure 3. *Titus Kaphar, photograph.*
Used with permission of © Mario Sorrenti.

Kaphar (Figure 3), born in 1976 and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan (Kaphar, n. d.), earned his MFA from the Yale School of Art. He became interested in when he registered for an art history course to impress the woman who later became his wife (Kaphar, 2017). A pivotal moment in his education occurred when his professor skipped the chapter on Black people in painting due to time constraints. Kaphar (2017) lamented, "I knew... if I wanted to understand this history... I was probably going to have to figure that out myself" (6:18). Recognizing the lack of representation for people of color in the art world, he co-founded a new arts model, NXTHVN, that provides studio spaces and opportunities for artists and curators of color (Smith, 2020). The

program provides high school students paid internships with artists, giving access to an artist community.

Kaphar embodies the space between art and activism and uses social engagement as a catalyst for change. His realistic paintings and innovative strategies force viewers to confront historical and current systems of oppression (Urist, 2020); he whitewashes, dips work in tar, shreds the canvas, covers flesh, and cuts figures directly from paintings to raise awareness about what is missing and who is silenced (Kaphar, n.d.). Creating artworks that illustrate untold narratives through juxtaposition, layering, and exploration of negative space, Kaphar invites viewers to reimagine our histories to change our present.

Juxtapositions

Recognizing that racism is a complex social construct perpetuated by teaching the status quo, we provide two juxtapositions to stimulate critical dialogue. We invite others to explore the untold narratives and reimagined histories inspired by the works of Bey and Kaphar to begin conversations about how our histories impact our current context. Each juxtaposition is accompanied with background information, discussion questions, and classroom activities designed for high school students, that are aligned with the standards to engage students in the meaning-making process.

Our pre-service teachers have successfully developed and implemented photography lessons based on Bey’s high school series, *Class Pictures*. Extending this lesson and combining the work of both artists who confront issues of racial injustices and equality and juxtaposing their different methodologies makes this approach unique. The questions and activities we suggest offer the possibility of producing rich and illuminating conversations allowing students to slow down and take a look into Black lives through a historical and contemporary lens. As provocative, productive, and highly regarded contemporary artists, Bey and Kaphar’s work is easily available to classroom teachers through numerous video interviews and websites, allowing students firsthand experience with their practices and ideas (Figure 4).

Artist	Description	Website
Dawoud Bey	What’s Going On: Dawoud Bey’s Blog	https://whatsgoingon-dawoudbeysblog.blogspot.com/?view=timeslide
	Art Begins with an Idea: Dawoud Bey TEDx Metropolitan Museum of Art	https://www.metmuseum.org/events/programs/met-speaks/ticketed-talks/tedxmet/participants/2015/dawoud-bey
Titus Kaphar	Titus Kaphar’s (2017) TED Talk, “Can art amend history?”	https://www.ted.com/talks/titus_kaphar_can_art_amend_history?language=en
	Titus Kaphar’s (2020) TED Talk, “Can beauty open our hearts to difficult conversations?”	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TV841ZtGfj0
	Kaphar Studio	https://kapharstudio.com/

Figure 4. Instructional resources for Dawoud Bey and Titus Kaphar.

Before you introduce the two artists and implement the following classroom activities, investigate and research the artists’ work and engage in critical reflexivity. Ask yourself who am I in this situation? What can I contribute to the conversation and what can I learn from listening to my students? Additionally, students could be assigned background reading about each artist to serve as a knowledge base to start the discussion activities. Both artists have active websites with links to their art we introduce.

When presenting the images, set ground rules by starting with observational questions we suggest that require students to describe what is happening in the works of art before asking questions with deeper analytical meaning. Then proceed to the prompts provided in the response charts. It is important to first give students the opportunity and time to look at the images and respond individually. Sharing responses with a partner or in a small group could be the next step before embarking on a whole group discussion.

Juxtaposition #1



ANTOINE

When I was seven years old my father went to jail, and that left me just with a mother, so she had to play both roles as a mother and father. That only made her stronger. That was kind of a challenge for me, because I had to decide whether or not I wanted to go further than my father. That drove me to become successful. That's when I got into comedy, and I would watch Saturday Night Live. I started watching a lot of movies, and that made me want to get into theater. That's what I want to do now.

Figure 5. Dawoud Bey, *Antoine*, 2006. Chromogenic print, 40 x 30 in. Used with permission of © Dawoud Bey, Courtesy Stephen Daiter Gallery.



Figure 6. Titus Kaphar, *Shifting the Gaze*, 2017. Oil on canvas, 83 × 103 1/4 in. (210.8 × 262.3 cm). Brooklyn Museum, William K. Jacobs Jr., Fund, 2017.34. ©Titus Kaphar. Photo: Christopher Gardner. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian.

Class Pictures

Class Pictures (2001–2006), a series of sixty life-size color portraits of high school students, spotlight a segment of society that Bey felt is often misjudged. He traveled across the country to photograph a broad range of teenagers from diverse ethnic, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds. Working collaboratively with students in classrooms, he asked them to describe the essence of who they are and how that might be different from what others perceive them to be. Bey placed the counternarratives written by each student alongside their portraits (Figure 5). The stories are heartfelt and revealing, challenging the audience to reconsider their perceptions and preconceived stereotypes about race, gender, and age (Raczke, 2012). The autobiographical information establishes a space of self-representation, personal voice, and empowerment for his subjects. The photographs were exhibited at local museums, inviting students to participate in a collaborative conversation about the work (Reynolds, 2007).

Shifting the Gaze

In *Shifting the Gaze* (Figure 6), Kaphar painted a realistic representation based on Frans Hals's *Family Group in a Landscape* (Kaphar, 2017). The original painting is a 17th-century Dutch portrait; it depicts an outdoor scene of parents holding hands, wearing fine clothing, surrounded by their son, daughter, servant, and dog. When Kaphar investigated the history of the painting, all the family members, including the dog, were well documented, but little information could be found about the only person of color. To draw our attention to the servant in the painting, he covers the rest of the family group with large strokes of white paint. He dilutes the white paint with linseed oil, a technique he called "whitewashing," to ensure that the bold white strokes will fade over time. He was not trying to erase history. Instead, Kaphar insisted we must learn from works that marginalize Black people in order to move forward.

Activities

Responding. Allow time for students to observe each artwork before discussing as a class and record responses to the following prompts. Describe what you see? Who is in the image? What materials did the artist use? How does the artist capture your attention? What do you think is important about the artwork? If you could ask the artist a question about the work, what would you ask? How does this image make you feel? After completing the writing responses, use the discussion questions in Figure 7 as a guide for a critical dialogue about the meaning of the work.

Juxtaposition # 1	
Theoretical Orientation	Practical Application
<p>“...counter-narratives are stories told from the vantage point of those who have been subjugated, disparaged, and forgotten. They present opportunities to rethink institutional norms and policies and provide fertile ground in which justice-oriented change can begin to take root” (Kraehe, 2015, p. 202).</p>	<p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA:RE.7.1.Ia. Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences. • VA: Cn. 11.1.Ia. Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art. <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the images similar? How are they different? • What is hidden in each work of art? What is revealed? • Does your understanding of the image change after reading the title or written narrative? If so, how? • How do both artists represent counter-narratives? • What does the title, <i>Shifting the Gaze</i> represent? • What contemporary art making strategies are used to create emphasis? • How do the text and image in Bey’s <i>Class Pictures</i> present a counter-narrative? How do counter-narratives disrupt racial stereotypes and inequities in schools? • How does Kaphar use appropriation and layering in <i>Shifting the Gaze</i> to tell a different story? How does “whitewashing” help the viewer become critically conscious of untold stories in the work?

Figure 7. Juxtaposition number one’s theoretical orientation and practical application

Creating. In *Class Pictures*, Bey asked high school students to identify their innermost essential selves to show who they really are, constructing a counter-narrative to a preconceived stereotype of race, gender, age, or socioeconomic status. Empower students in creating a personal narrative and self-portrait by considering these questions: How would you want to be pictured in your portrait? What would you write about in your statement that others do not know about you? What media and strategies will you use to emphasize your hidden attributes? Conclude by sharing narrative portraits. Discuss what a portrait can and cannot reveal about an individual and encourage students to see beyond stereotypical notions.

Juxtaposition # 2



Figure 8. Dawoud Bey, *Michael-Anthony Allen and George Washington*, 2012. 2 inkjet prints mounted to dibond, 40 x 64 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Collectors Committee. Used with permission of © Dawoud Bey, Courtesy Stephen Daiter Gallery.

The Birmingham Project

Bey created *The Birmingham Project* (2012) as a tribute to the victims of the 1963 Ku Klux Klan bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, an active center for the civil rights movement. Four African American girls were killed in the explosion, and two boys were murdered in racially motivated riots. For the exhibition, Bey took hundreds of photos of children and adults in Birmingham and constructed diptychs. Each diptych displays a portrait of a child the same age as the victims next to an adult portrait the age of the victims

if they had been alive 50 years later. The pair of photographs represent two generations that symbolize and help us reflect on what was lost and imagine what could have been (Nelson, 2020).

The Birmingham Art Museum and the Bethel Baptist Church, the settings for the photographs, serve as reminders of violence committed against Black Americans. At the time of the bombing, they were allowed to visit the museum only one day a week, and the Baptist church had suffered three racist bomb attacks. In Figure 8, a young boy and an older man sit in the same church that witnessed this history (Perry et al., 2020). In this diptych, Bey simultaneously reveals the past and the present, confronting the ongoing nature of racial injustice and its intergenerational legacy. *The Birmingham Project*, with its exposure to a narrative from a Black perspective, acts as a historical document to re-envision the way a particular time, people, or place is viewed (Brown, 2019).

From a Tropical Space



Figure 9. Titus Kaphar, *From a Tropical Space*, 2019. Oil on canvas 92 x 72 in. (233.7 x 182.9 cm). © Titus Kaphar. Photo: Rob McKeever. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian.

In the painting (Figure 9), *From a Tropical Space*, Kaphar’s depicts an everyday scene of Black mothers nurturing their children (Kaphar, n. d.). Kaphar physically cuts the canvas leaving holes where children should be, evoking the anxiety and the anticipated trauma Black mothers feel raising children in America (Kaphar, n. d.; Urist, 2020). The dark pastel colors, tropical foliage, and title of this image references sub-Saharan Africa, a place “from which the ancestors of many American Blacks were torn” (Smith, 2020). Combining the tropical references, jarring colors, grim expressions of the loving mothers, and empty silhouettes of the children, the painting elicits contemplation of absence, loss, and devastation.

By commemorating scenes of trauma and loss and recognizing these untold stories, both artists present narratives and reimagine history from Black perspectives. It is important for students to view alternative narratives about past racial turmoil to engage in critical dialogues; these conversations can help develop an awareness of hegemonic discourses and their impact. The next section offers activities to meet this challenge.

Activities

Responding. Allow time for students to observe and write what they see in each artwork. To begin, consider the previous prompts listed for the first two images we present and use the following questions. How has the artist used color? Describe the background of the image. What does this image make you wonder? Let students share responses with a partner before initiating a looking and talking session with questions provided in Figure 10. These deeper-level discussion questions support teachers and students in uncovering how Bey and Kaphar expose systemic and generational racism using contemporary artmaking strategies.

Juxtaposition # 2	
Theoretical Orientation	Practical Application
<p>“It [Black gaze] is a gaze that is energizing and infusing Black popular culture in striking and unorthodox ways. Neither a depiction of Black folks or Black culture, it is a gaze that forces viewers to</p>	<p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA:RE.7.2.Ia. Analyze how one’s understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery. VA:Pr6.1.Ia. Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.

<p>engage blackness from a different and discomfoting vantage point. ...It is a Black gaze that shifts the optics of 'looking at' to a politics of looking with, through, and alongside another. It is a gaze that requires effort and exertion..." (Campt, 2023, p. 8, emphasis in original).</p>	<p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you imagine what story is being told in each image? • What has been lost in each story? • What visual strategies do the artists use to help you understand the loss? • What is the relationship between the figures in each work? What do the proximity, body pose, gesture and juxtaposition tell us? • How do the artists use the Black gaze in these two images to engage the audience? • What do you think the artists are trying to say in each of these images <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the juxtaposition of intergenerational portraits in Bey's <i>Birmingham Project</i> tell stories about the violent histories of racial inequity in America? • How does Kaphar visually represent loss in his <i>From a Tropical Space</i>? How does the mother's direct gaze in Kaphar's <i>From a Tropical Space</i> provoke emotion and provide a call to action? • After viewing these works of art, what do you better understand about current and historic racial inequities? What benefits are there of disrupting racial silence? What are our next steps?
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Figure 10. *Juxtaposition number two's theoretical orientation and practical application.*

Connecting. Bey and Kaphar empathetically visualize ideas about absence, loss, and memory. Students can begin to empathize with others by assuming a different perspective and imagining themselves in another person's role. Ask students to compose a poem from the viewpoint of one of the individuals in the image and respond to the following statements: I see, I hear, I feel, I taste, I smell, I touch, I wonder, I imagine. Include a title and share with the class or in small groups.

Connect and reflect on the stories of injustice and violence portrayed in each artwork by writing a conversation between the subjects in the

images and perform the dialogue for the class. What would the young man ask the older gentleman sitting next to him about the Birmingham incident? What would the conversation between the two women be about in Kaphar's image of their missing children?

Presenting. The Birmingham bombing was not an isolated event. Violent racist acts continue to happen across the country. Research another historical or current event that occurred as a result of racial injustice and compose an artwork to express a personal viewpoint about it. Present the artworks in a public space and invite a diverse audience to engage in a dialogue about the injustice expressed in the interpretive work. The exhibition can serve as a space where both students and the audience learn from each other and nurture conversations across barriers of difference.

Conclusion

Through the juxtapositions of Bey and Kaphar's work, we provide opportunities for students to view artwork through multiple frames. The discussion questions and activities offer students a way to participate in difficult conversations about missing narratives. Further, they instigate conversations about the history of racial injustices and their impact on our society. It is our goal to engage students in thinking about how history is subjective and can be reimagined and revisited to gain new understandings of our country's complex relationship with race.

Students can share their experiences, identities, and inquiries to produce counter-narratives and empathize with others of different cultural backgrounds, race, and gender. To inspire change, it is essential to include underrepresented stories about past histories and ask provocative questions. These creative and critical discussions must occur in our classrooms for students and teachers to work together to reimagine and design an anti-racist world.

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