

Editorial:

Language of Possibilities and Sense of the Im/possible in Art Education

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Schooling in the United States is “increasingly defined by arthritic traditionalisms of standardized assessments and testing, school and teacher accountabilities, models of exacerbated efficiency and tracking, and even more strident state and federal calls for more of the same” (Kanpol, 1997, p. ix).

Mired in escalating restricted conventional practices that deny humanistic and democratic possibilities, many art educators are frequently unaware of what, in reality, is possible with/in art/education. Moreover, our praxis continues to reflect dispositions and actions that are oftentimes bereft of the language of possibility or hope. Using the language of possibility, we transform our thinking from how it has been to how it could be.

Those who achieve the “impossible” tend to focus their thoughts and energies on possibilities rather than limitations. Possibilities encompass the big picture, and provide hope for the future. To predict the future, we are obliged to actively create it. Even impossibilities give way to possibilities when we exhibit conduct, habits, or ways that lead to success. What we envision today with/in art/education, raising the quality of education, equity of opportunity in education, social responsibility, research, and possible initiatives, will give birth to worlds of possibilities.

Experiencing Possibilities and Im/possibilities With/in Art/education

In the spirit of the call for papers for Volume 27 of the *Journal of*

Social Theory in Art Education contributing authors approached the theme ~~possibilities~~ possibilities in various ways. The strikethrough in possibilities concerns the slippery routes taken by some to navigate or transgress boundaries of censorship, erasure, and obstacles in social theory orientations to art education in socio-political climates and varied educational contexts.

Buffington and Kushins, Sickler-Voigt, and Chou, introduce ~~possibilities~~ possibilities through particular notions and approaches to pedagogy with/in art/education. jagodzinski utilizes psychoanalytic theory to bolster his argument for the im/possibility of portraiture in art education; whereas, Keys and Staikidis consider ~~possibilities~~ possibilities of art/education outside conventional classroom contexts.

In an essay titled ~~Possibilities~~: Reconsidering “Art for the Elementary Educator,” Melanie Buffington and Jodi Kushins describe challenges they face in teaching general education majors who routinely enter generalists preservice teacher art courses with “little to no art background” and who “might show resistance to contemporary ideas about comprehensive art education in favor of holiday art lesson plans reminiscent of their own positive experiences as elementary art students” (p. 13). Facing such challenges as these among others and the “seemingly inherent ~~possibilities~~ of the course” Buffington and Kushins consider the course a site of possibilities for the field of art education with opportunities to provide pre-service elementary educators with “meaningful reintroductions to art education” (p. 14). In an attempt to revitalize the rhetoric related to perspectives, responsibilities, needs of pre-service elementary generalist teachers, and the future of art education, Buffington and Kushins challenge the field of art education to re/consider its thinking and its resource allocations towards developing generalists preservice teacher art education courses so as to provide greater service to elementary classroom teachers who need to be able to meaningfully

integrate art into their classrooms.

Similar to Buffington and Kushins, Debrah Sickler-Voigt has focused her manuscript on pedagogical possibilities in an undergraduate Introduction to Art Education course. In her manuscript, *Opening the Door to Possibilities: Research Journals in Pre-Service Art Education*, Voigt describes a qualitative case study of six selected preservice art teachers enrolled in her course during 2005 and 2006 spring semesters. Using Tom Anderson's and Melody Milbrandt's Art for Life method, the research question that guided the study focused on themes that drive preservice art teachers' research journals and how the exploration of these themes espouse preservice art education. Through the creative research journals that fused art and writing, Voigt's students were able to analyze, interpret, and evaluate their belief systems as they contemplated what it means to become art teachers.

Likewise, Wan-Hsiang (Mandy) Chou's article, *Contaminating Childhood Fairy Tale: Pre-Service Teachers Explore Gender and Race Constructions*, describes a qualitative study in which she used creative artmaking and writing possibilities with students enrolled in her children's literature course. In the manuscript, Chou explains how her twenty-five White students of European ancestry reconstructed traditional childhood fairy tales to challenge dominant "European-American middle-class social codes [gender roles, race, sexual orientation] perpetuated by fairy tales" (p. 55). In retelling traditional fairy tales, through reworking, replacing, and adding text and illustrations, pre-service teachers gained insights into their own belief systems and gained insights into pedagogical possibilities for future classroom practice when working with learners from diverse backgrounds.

Jan Jagodzinski's essay, *Art Education in an Age of Teletechnology: On the Impossibility of Portraiture*, draws on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory "to question the possibility of portraiture and to rethink

its practice along non-representational lines” (p. 78). jagodzinski extends his discussion to Deleuze and his notion of the time-image to further problematize representation in art practice.

In considering the im/possibility of portraiture, jagodzinski challenges art education in contemporary society to deviate from its current focus on the “still image and the action narrative, even that of journalistic photography” (p. 85) and rethink the possibilities of portraiture in an age of teletechnology. To achieve the objective of maintaining political and ethical engagement of the world by art students, jagodzinski points to insights gleaned from installation, performance, time-based imagery and conceptual art as possibilities.

Kathleen Keys uses the plaza metaphor and theories of plazability in her manuscript, *Plazabilities for Art Education: Community as Participant, Collaborator & Curator* to “articulate a refreshed vision for an art education based in community pedagogy which expands possibilities, builds community, and uses art to work for social change” (p. 98). Moving beyond conventional forms of classroom based art praxis, Keys encourages communities, art teachers, artists, scholars, and other cultural workers to explore collaborative possibilities for innovative curricular design that provide learning experiences through community-based interactive art that generates social participation.

Kryssi Staikidis also moves beyond conventional forms of classroom based art praxis into rural Maya indigenous community contexts to convey the capacity and possibilities of paintings to “relay concepts of social justice” (p. 119). In her essay titled *Maya Paintings as Teachers of Justice: Art Making the Impossible Possible*, Staikidis describes her experiences studying in two Maya contexts with two Maya “master painters,” (p. 129) who as teachers had to navigate censorship, erasure and obstacles and focus their energies on possibilities rather than limitations to illuminate, through their paintings, three decades of genocide of Maya indigenous peoples.

However, as illustrated in Staikidis's manuscript, "through revealing, art can liberate, teach and create possibility" (p. 121) where there is seemingly impossibility.

In conclusion, whether this volume's featured manuscripts provided insight(s) into possibilities, considered possibilities and limitations, looked at unlimited possibilities and possible limitations, or whether they focused on transforming limitations into possibilities, the call for papers and the selected resultant manuscripts are not exhaustive of the theme. However, they collectively represent unifying possibilities with/in art/education and, hopefully, they set the stage to motivate, and mobilize art educators and respective stakeholders to effect change.

We are now at a point in the field of art education in which a new and revitalized language must be sought, a language of possibility. As art educators we all have bodies and minds to bring possibility into being. As bell hooks (1994) notes:

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In the field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (p. 207)

References

- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. New York: Routledge.
- Kanpol, B. (1997). *Issues and trends in critical pedagogy*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the research and the objectives of the study. It highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and the role of the researcher in this process. The second part of the paper focuses on the methodology used in the study, detailing the data collection methods and the analytical techniques employed. The third part of the paper presents the results of the study, discussing the findings and their implications. The final part of the paper concludes the study, summarizing the key points and offering suggestions for future research.