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Reflections

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Journal Theme: Reflections

*“May we understand
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time to reflect.”*

Susan Whiteland
Arkansas State University
Angela LaPorte
University of Arkansas
Liz Langdon
University of Kansas

To correspond with the authors regarding
this article:
swhiteland@astate.edu
alaporte@uark.edu
lizlangdon@ku.edu

The theme for Volume 4 of the International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education is Reflections. When the call went out for manuscripts to consider we asked prospective contributors to consider several questions: what does a reflection look like; what can be reflected in art education; in what ways does art making provide opportunities for reflection; and how can the process of reflecting impact lifelong learning. The authors in this issue have addressed these questions.

Pam Lawton and Angela LaPorte begin the conversation by answering the question, what does a reflection look like as they introduce readers to artist educator, Pearl Greenberg (1927-2020) using the lens of portraiture research. In their article, Pearls of Wisdom: A Portrait of Artist-Educator Pearl Greenberg, they hold up the reflecting mirror to let us examine an influential arts education advocate who in the words of colleague, M. DeSiano, “had extraordinary leadership skills”; “a mind for details and command of art education history” and “pedagogy that enabled Pearl to be an effective source for the betterment of art education”. Lawton and LaPorte share stories from their own experience with Pearl Greenberg that tell of her passion for quality art education for all ages and her vision to support lifelong learning. They also share recollections from others who were mentored by Pearl and felt she held a lasting influence on their life.

Greenberg’s reflection can be viewed in the purpose statement of the Lifelong Learning in Art Education interest group of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) that advocates supporting art education as a meaningful endeavor worthy of involvement throughout the lifespan. Just as Pearl Greenberg taught, wrote about, and participated in formal and informal art experiences for young people as well as older adults, the Lifelong Learning in Art Education interest group commits to offering resources, guidance and recognition to those who are engaged with initiatives to further art education designed for lifelong learning. It is with this intent that in honor of Pearl Greenberg the Committee on Lifelong Learning (LLL) have established the Pearl Greenberg Award for Teaching and Research in Lifelong Learning. The award seeks to recognize at the national level an artist/educator/researcher who has made distinguished contributions to the field of art education in advancing art experiences for older adults, research on the benefits of art for the aging, and/or intergenerational arts learning programs. The LLL interest group is currently receiving nominations for the next Pearl Greenberg Award. Nominations may be submitted at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3Ex5bQn>.

The second article in this issue by Pamela Lawton, Pearl Greenberg Award Lecture, describes how Pearl has influenced Lawton professionally. We are fortunate to have Pamela reflect on how Pearl’s philosophy about extending art education through lifelong learning influenced her life’s work of age inclusive, community-based art education with her pre-service students and other

populations. She clearly exemplifies a researcher-teacher who has committed to the transformational possibilities for lifelong learning in the field of art education.

Liberation Kitchen: Annotating Intergenerational Conversations Among Black Women in Art and Education by gloria wilson, Amber Coleman, Pamela Lawton, and Asia Price shows what can be reflected in pursuing art learning through arts-based research and shared conversations.

This article shares, annotates and archives stories of four Black art educators that formed a multi-generational group. It iterates supportive/generative conversations like those held round the kitchen table, marked by active listening and shared stories. The Black women art educators who joined in this dialogue, first as members of a conference panel and then virtually, found the support of the unfolding dialogue around their art and stories uniquely liberating. Theorizing through Black Feminism and Afrofemcentrism, in a profession marked by its White dominant history, lends power to their methodology called Liberation Kitchen. The authors share their art, reflective of expansive identities, to add to the conversation and illustrate the strength drawn from arts-based research. They present their exchanges as necessary provocation for thinking about the need of mentorship strategies and career pathways for supporting Black women and others from marginalized groups in the pursuit of art education.

Becoming Magic: Acquiring the Artist Identity by Kathleen Unrath, Karen Shortt-Stout, and Amy Ruopp reflect on their understanding of how a student/teacher/aspirant becomes an artist and the conditions that may facilitate this type of self-actualization. Reflective quotations from the pre-service art educator offer accounts of the magical transformative process of acquiring an artist identity and what that means to become an artist through interwoven experiences of art teaching, art making, and reflective narrative, using an a/r/tographical lens of inquiry.

Transformative Learning Through Bookmaking in a Black Women's Art Collective by Adjoa Jackson Burrowes is a visual essay that exemplifies how art making can provide opportunities for reflection. The author uses sociocultural transformative learning theory to describe the process involved in collaboratively creating artistic books and in describing the personal adaptations that the artists themselves experienced during the bookmaking project. Nine mature artists participated in the art collective. Their work is illustrated in the essay. Although the artists were challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-political unrest of the time, they were able to engage in a sense of empowerment and actively maintain their artistic practice. The Images included in the visual essay document the artists' voices and reflect topics of race, gender and age.

Arts in Mind a Multidisciplinary Approach to Museum Programs for Persons Living with Young-Onset and Early-Stage Alzheimer's Disease by Rachel Thompson, Angel Duncan and Jessica Sack discuss how the process of reflecting with people experiencing a form of dementia previously not targeted by museum programming, informs providers, participants and their care partners. The authors report on a museum-based program which they co-developed, for those living with Young-onset Alzheimer's or persons in the early stages of memory loss and their care partners. The authors, an art therapist with experience in Alzheimer's clinical trials research, and two museum educators, worked with persons living with Young-onset Alzheimer's and their care partners to look at and make art together. Sessions are anchored in art encounters that make the art accessible, and that are responsive and experiential. This article describes a successful program responding to a previously unmet need for programming specifically designed for the Young-onset Alzheimer's population and individuals in early stages of the disease.

Intergenerational and Intra generational Connections within a University Art Museum Program for People with Dementia by Sujal Manohar and Jessica Kay Ruhle is a description of a museum program, Reflections, that engages older adults with dementia, their care partners, university students, and museum staff with arts experiences at the Nasher Museum of Art. Guided tours engage participants in reflective conversations around artworks from the rotating museum exhibitions and permanent collection to art making experiences and live music. The impact of Reflection provides opportunities to build stronger relationships between participants with dementia and their partners/caregivers by connecting learning in the museum with their personal lives. The museum and university partners serve as a catalyst for reflection through the arts that can positively impact lifelong learning and strengthen relationships with caregivers.

These seven articles show examples of reflecting. Some of the authors have examined their own art practice and that of their mentors; and others have illustrated programs that use the practice of reflecting as a method of art engagement for those with memory loss and their caregivers. The act of reflecting is a powerful catalyst for appreciating what has taken place and empowering one to move forward. Paul Cezanne is quoted as saying, "Time and reflection change the sight little by little 'til we come to understand" (Seekamp, 1992). May we understand ourselves and those around us a bit better as we take time to reflect. This issue encourages us to do that—engage in reflecting.

Writing and images © LaPorte, Langdon & Whiteland, 2021

Reference

Seekamp, K. (1992) *Cezanne's background moves to the foreground* (Publication No.1385807) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Louisville] ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Pearls of Wisdom: A Portrait of Artist- Educator Pearl Greenberg

“...describing
her:
experiential
knowledge,
candidness, and
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We would like to thank Pearl and Murray Greenberg's son, Ken Greenberg, for putting us in touch with a former student of Pearl's and his overall support for this article honoring her extraordinary service to the field of art education and lifelong learning.

Pamela Harris Lawton
Maryland Institute College of Art
Angela M. LaPorte
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

ABSTRACT

This article examines the life of Dr. Pearl Greenberg, artist-educator-researcher and co-founder of the Committee on Lifelong Learning through narratives of remembrance by the authors, art education colleagues, and students who knew her. Using the qualitative research method of portraiture, an image emerges of Pearl as characterized by three patterns or themes consistently mentioned in the narratives: experiential knowledge, candidness, and supportive/mentorship. In addition, quotes from the “Aging Monologues”, Dr. Greenberg’s own narrative inquiry research, collecting narratives from participants aged 21 through 96 on their perspectives on aging, are incorporated to complete a rich, artful, and multi-layered portrait of Pearl.

KEYWORDS

Portraiture research, mentorship in Art education, lifelong learning in art, attitudes on aging

*To correspond with the authors regarding this article:
plawton@mica.edu
alaporte@uark.edu*

Growth and development in the visual arts need to be nurtured from birth through old age with authentic opportunities to function creatively (Greenberg, P., 2004, p. vii).

As word of a global pandemic began to spread, we also learned of the passing of Dr. Pearl Greenberg, on February 25, 2020. Pearl, co-founder of NAEA's Committee on Lifelong Learning in 1990, was a beloved artist-educator and passionate advocate for meaningful art education experiences for learners across the lifespan. In recognition of her many years of dedication to the field of art education and aging, the Committee on Lifelong Learning decided to create an award honoring Pearl's service. In addition to the award, we wanted to tell Pearl's story through the voices of those who knew her best, her students and colleagues.



Figure 1. Pearl Greenberg

Pearl's portrait is drawn using the qualitative research method of portraiture, invented by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot in 1986 and refined upon with Jessica Hoffmann Davis in 1997. "Portraiture ...blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life" (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. xv). Researchers employing the portraiture method, are "portraitists seek[ing] to record and interpret the perspectives and experience of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions—their authority, knowledge, and wisdom" (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. xv).

Portraiture focuses on "goodness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1986, p.13), the positive aspects of the subject studied rather than the failures, noting that imperfection is a natural by-product of what it means to be good, human, and humane. Additionally, while portraiture is used by social science researchers, its narrative, self-reflective form has broad appeal, moving against and beyond academic boundaries, into the realm of public pedagogy and liberatory education (hooks, 2003; Freire, 1970).

Five essential features comprise the portraiture method:

1. Context—the setting, mapping the place, history, culture, and aesthetic of the subject. Through context we come to understand what shapes and influences the subject, providing a grounding for interpretation. Context includes sketching the researcher [portraitist] into the setting.
2. Voice—is multimodal, includes the portraitist's perspective, autobiography, observations, reflections, and interpretations in revealing patterns and discerning meaning from description, but never in a way that overpowers the voice and actions of the subject(s).
3. Relationship—building relationships is a dynamic and complex process that involves navigating the boundaries between self and other; seeking the strength, resilience, and creativity of the subject being documented.
4. Emergent Themes—as with any qualitative research method, in portraiture the researcher (portraitist) begins with a framework and guiding questions before collecting data. In analyzing the narratives collected, patterns emerge that suggest themes based on repeated concepts, characteristics, and impressions.
5. Aesthetic Whole—Like a tapestry the aesthetic whole weaves together aspects of the previous four essential features, ensuring that the context provides a clear picture of the environment shaping the subject; voices are sufficiently revealed and modulated to create an authentic interpretation; relationships are faithfully expressed; and the consistency of emergent themes illuminating interrelationships and the structure of the portrait. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997)

Context

Pearl was born in Brooklyn, NY and spent all but the last 10 years of her life as a New York City resident. She graduated from Cooper Union in 1948 where she met her husband, Murray, of 61 years. From 1951 to 1965, she taught art at the Downtown Community School and published her first article in 1959. Pearl earned an MA at New York University in 1960 and an EdD from Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1971. Near the same time, she founded the University Council for Art Education (UCAE) in 1968, published the book, *Art and Ideas for Young People* (1970), and soon after completed another book, *Art Education: Elementary* (1972). She taught art education for over 28 years at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. During the latter years of her career, she earned certification in gerontology and published another book, *Visual Arts and Older People* (1987). During that period, she organized and volunteered to teach an experimental art course for older adults in the community, of which a few of her students moved on to enroll in credit courses at the university. Dr. Greenberg became an NAEA Fellow in 1993, was President of NAEA Fellows in 2003, and published many journal articles and contributions to anthologies throughout her career.

Voice

As portraitists (researchers) we begin this section with a snapshot of our autobiographies and narratives of relationship to Pearl.

Pam's story. I was born in 1959, the same year Pearl published her first article. My interest in lifelong learning was a direct result of my upbringing, surrounded by generations of family who engaged me in the arts as a form of socialization, passing on family history,

cultural traditions, and education as a profession. I am a fifth-generation educator. I first met Pearl in 2000 as a doctoral student at Teachers College, Columbia University, where Pearl also received her doctorate. We worked together as members of the planning committee for the International Society of Education through Art (InSEA) World Congress scheduled to take place in New York City in 2002. One year into planning for the congress, 9/11 happened and the hotel contracted for the convening was decimated. Everyone feared that the congress would have to be cancelled. Who would want to attend a conference in New York City after such a violent attack? Thankfully we still had a year to prepare and the outpouring of support we received from colleagues around the globe was astonishing—most everyone who planned to attend before 9/11 decided to come.

During this time, I began to know Pearl and her passion for quality art education for all ages. I talked with her about my dissertation research, an intergenerational arts-based research project with older adults, teens, and middle-aged adults at the Goddard-Riverside Community Center in New York City. Storytelling, oral, written, and visual, was used as the foundation for the art skills taught—artists’ bookmaking, reciprocal teaching and learning through sharing life experiences, and transforming participants meaning perspectives about people of different ages, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Pearl encouraged me to become a member of both the University Council for Art Education and the Committee on Lifelong Learning (LLL). I have been a member of LLL ever since and have served as the secretary, treasurer, and chair of the committee. I first got to know Angela through her dissertation research also on intergenerational arts learning. We met at the InSEA Congress in New York in 2000 and she provided me with my first opportunity to publish my research. After twenty years of research and teaching intergenerational learners in mostly BIPOC communities, I co-authored the book, *Community-based art education across the lifespan: Finding common ground*, based on my research and published by Teachers College Press. I think Pearl would be pleased.

Angela’s story. As a long-time admirer of Dr. Greenberg’s work in lifelong learning, I met her in the early 1990s while a graduate student at Arizona State University. First introduced to Pearl by my mentor and chair of my thesis committee, Dr. Mary Stokrocki, I was awestruck to finally meet someone whose writings on the visual arts and older adults had positively influenced my own research. At the same time, I had been teaching art at a residential care facility in Mesa, Arizona with another mentor, Dr. Bernard Young. Together, we engaged higher functioning older adults aged 70 to 94 at the facility with art. Over a two-year period, I noticed their yearning and enthusiasm as they regularly greeted us with anticipation outside of the classroom door. This inspiring experience soon became the topic for my master’s thesis, a microethnography, to better understand art education in this particular context.

Knowledgeable of Pearl’s publications and activist role in access to art education beyond what she referred to as “kit oriented,” I also wanted to offer opportunities beyond replicating and painting prefabricated ceramic forms or other prescribed, contextless, busywork. My thesis aligned with her vision to expand art education access for older adults to be more actively engaged in visual art experiences already had by younger age groups, including conversations around art, reflections, and art making processes built on individual and collective interests in learning and life experiences. During this time, I joined the

Committee on Lifelong Learning, where I met Diane Barret, Donald Hoffman, Jean Ellen Jones, and many others. Soon after completing my thesis, I continued graduate studies at Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) where I expanded my knowledge on art education and aging.

Remaining inspired and influenced by Dr. Greenberg, and positive arts experiences with older adults throughout my life, the study of critical theory, ageism, and racism while at Penn State moved me to an enlightened inquiry. How would my own intersectionality limitations, a child of first-generation parents of Italian descent from a coal mining village in Southwestern Pennsylvania, impact my future research and practice in art education? As this question resonated in my mind, I stumbled upon an intergenerational program opportunity in New York City's lower east Harlem community between culturally and racially diverse teenagers and older adults. In order to grow, I felt that I needed to place myself into a new, uncomfortable environment. Although I felt at ease in an intergenerational community arts atmosphere, Pearl's home, New York City, placed me into a learning context where I initially felt discomfort as an outsider in terms of race and urban space. Despite the initial discomfort, I found a home in this place and familial affinity towards the participants. It became the site of my dissertation research. I began to understand how positive interactions between two groups separated by age and/or racial backgrounds had a potential for deconstructing racist and ageist stereotypes.

Upon completion of my PhD at Penn State, I took an art education faculty position offered to me by the University of Arkansas, where I alone developed the K-12 art education program alongside my continued interest in lifelong learning and social justice. Since then, NAEA published my edited book, *Community connections: Intergenerational links in art education* at the end of 2004 in which Pearl wrote the Preface to the text stating, "we must approach each other as people, not as ages and stages" (p. vii), or any other form of categorization or stereotype, a message that continues to ring true with me today. I continued inspiring interactions with Pearl while serving as chair of the Committee on Lifelong Learning from 2005-2009, during which time, I edited our NAEA Committee on Lifelong Learning conference proceedings.

Over the years, I participated in two renditions of Pearl's "Aging Monologues," based on her research over nine years of collecting responses from people aged 21 to 96 about their thoughts on aging. It became a presentation performance at the 2003 NAEA Convention in Denver, and in 2006, at the NAEA Convention in Chicago, when we added Pam's voice to our group, whom I first met in 2000 at an InSEA World Congress in New York City, and shared our intergenerational research interests. I can remember the extensive time rehearsing and editing the script with Pearl prior to our debut, and her passion-filled voice during our preparation and performance. Over the years, Pam and I also became friends and continue to share a meaningful connection to Pearl Greenberg through professional interactions, the "Aging Monologues," and a continued active membership in the Committee on Lifelong Learning. I am certainly thankful for Pam's continued commitment to our organization. She is deserving of our inaugural Pearl Greenberg Award. Pam initiated our *International Journal on Lifelong Learning in Art Education*, of which Pearl would have been proud. I am now honored to serve as co-editor with Susan Whiteland and Liz Langdon to

continue promoting lifelong learning in art education. I have to admit that Pearl Greenberg has made an important contribution to the complex lens through which I view the world.

Research Questions

To create our portrait, we developed the following questions for students and colleagues who knew Pearl to include their personal voices: What was your relationship to Pearl (colleague/friend/student)? How did you come to know Pearl? What can you tell us about her? What story can you share about your interactions/work with her? How has she impacted your work and how you see/interact with the world? If there is one statement you can make about Pearl's influence on you and art education, what would it be?

Relationship

To further elaborate on Dr. Greenberg's portrait, we disseminated the questions as a Google form and emailed it to alumni from Teachers College, Kean University, and members of the University Council on Art Education, founded by Pearl. What follows are the responses we have received to date via both the Google Form and email.

Pearl was Pearl 24/7, always ready to help, advise, initiate, carry through and enjoy professional and social events. Pearl never wavered from her ideals for people and her profession, art education. She had extraordinary leadership skills, and was master of the carrot and stick. With an extraordinary mind for details and command of art education history, she clearly could easily challenge any misunderstanding of art education and pedagogy. Her knowledge of art education history and pedagogy enabled Pearl to be an effective source for the betterment of art education. A staunch feminist before the word was coined, Pearl lived life as a modern woman. Mother, wife, artist, teacher, professor and highly acclaimed writer on art education, Pearl fought for the rights of women in the workplace and society. Pearl authored more than five books and produced a constant stream of articles and presentations. A vigorous supporter of classroom teachers and teaching, she participated fully in state and national art education organizations. As a mentor one could not ask for more support, guidance and insight. She did more than imaginable for my professional growth and career. I unabashedly refer to Pearl as my "fairy godmother" because, if there is one person to name who has ignited your professional career, for me, it is Pearl Greenberg. Pearl was a grassroots mensch [person of integrity and honor]. (M. DeSiano, personal communication, February 12, 2021)

Another colleague of Pearl's, Mary Stokrocki writes,

I am grateful for Pearl's nomination and encouragement of me to be a NAEA Fellow (2002). As a young professor, I responded that I didn't know what "Fellows" do, and she told me they "Need Women Now" and you will bring ideas. She always took me to NAEA receptions when I was alone. So grateful! She taught me to "pay back," promote other young teachers and professors. (personal communication, February 10, 2021)

Diane Barret, an early member of the Committee on Lifelong Learning and former chair of the group remembers Pearl as,

a strong advocate for LLL ...[and] a mentor for me and for many others because of her years of experience in developing art programs for older adults. Pearl always spoke out against a “kit oriented” approach to programming...She conducted surveys to determine: what quality programs were out there in the community, if older adults knew what to look for—and if they were able to recognize a good program if all they have known is “trashy art?” (Barret, et al, 2009, p. 5)

A former student of Pearl’s from her days teaching at the Downtown Community School, filmmaker Christopher Guest remembers,

She introduced to me a different way of looking at the world around me. She would take our class on walks in the neighborhood and always say “take off your blinders and see what is around you.” My work as a filmmaker has certainly been influenced by her perspective. Observation is the most important element of what I do. How people talk, walk, what sounds and colors are in our environment. It was profoundly important to have her ideas expressed to me as a young person. (personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Emergent Themes

In interpreting and analyzing Pearl’s impact on the field of art education as mentor, artist-teacher, and researcher through our remembrances of her as well as those of other colleagues and her students, three themes or patterns emerged from the narratives in describing her: *experiential knowledge*, *candidness*, and *supportive/mentorship*. Additionally, we considered the narrative responses Pearl collected as part of her last art education research project, the “Aging Monologues,” a project that speaks to the person Pearl was and the causes she passionately championed.

The “Aging Monologues,” is a collection of 150 responses from 21 to 96-year-olds to a two-part questionnaire asking participants to share their earliest childhood memories as well as theirs and others’ thoughts on aging. Pearl initially wanted to include younger participants, but public school personnel deemed it inappropriate for young people due to implications of sickness and death associated with aging. The following is an excerpt of Pearl’s script included in the 2007 Committee on Lifelong Learning conference proceedings performed and shared as one of many versions of documented voices from Pearl’s “Aging Monologues” research.

Age Group 21-25: A 22-year-old said, If I could stay 22 forever, that would be wonderful...who wants to get old? A 24-year-old wrote, originally, I thought of aging as growing taller, then shrinking... or having lots of hair and then none...I know 80-year-olds stronger, brighter, more energetic than some 20-year-olds...I look forward to becoming older to see what happens with technology as I get to be 50 or 60.

Age Group 26-30: At 29 I don’t think much about aging, but I do worry about those around me. I have lost friends my age. These losses showed me that I have to have a purpose. I have to live life as best I can and be kind to others.

27-year-old: I see aging as the most beautiful thing that could happen in our lives...Aging reminds us every day that life is not forever...WE SHOULD CHERISH EVERY MOMENT!

Age Group 31-40: I think of aging when I am able to detect some progress, such as in my work, awareness of growth, maturity, being wiser. As I turn 40, I am aware of my body changing into that of middle age. I now have reading glasses, and my butt has gone south. What makes me happy is a strong sense of family and purpose in life, an awareness of starting the 2nd half of my life and I do NOT want to waste it!

Age Group 41-50: This culture is not nice to women who are over 40...I am 45 and trying to cope with my physical maturity...in my early 20's I thought I'd never be 25, and when I turned 25...what a surprise... AND I WISHED I COULD GO BACK. At 30 I began to feel the clock ticking and the obsession our society has with young women...I was in the theater world where everyone is so conscious of age.

Aging is more a matter of mind than years. My mom died when I was 13 and I missed her so much during my life. I want to live long, see my children married and with children of their own BUT not so long as to be a burden...and I DO want to be able to enjoy retirement.

And now let's skip some years and see how some folks think when they get into their 70's....71-76: I never thought about aging, although I know it happens and I've seen dead people at funerals. I think I expect to "drop dead" someday. I can't imagine what I'd do if my wife dies before I do. I depend on her so much, I think I'd be devastated and I wouldn't know what to do...I'd miss her terribly.

One begins to think, how much longer will I live? And will I be able to function well into old age? BASICALLY, IT'S THE PITS! Almost all of my friends and relatives are either ill or dying. I don't want to get old but I am not ready for the alternative. How can I be useful to my family? Furthermore, is there an afterlife? Will I be reunited with my parents and husband? Things cannot abruptly end...or do they?

Age Group 77-85: Having been very active socially, athletically, and in business I was amazed when I heard anyone refer to a 77-year-old as "old." This year, having experienced some physical discomfort for the first time, I am equally amazed to realize that I too am getting "old," that I am being patronized by people who move more rapidly than I. They seem to equate slight physical incapacity with mental incapacity. I HATE IT!

Age Group 85 +: Aging frees one from the stress and burden associated with such things as status...financial, cultural, or whatever....and there are certain perks...such as when Ann and I go about hobbling on our canes, clinging to each other...doors open, the way clears, people are extra polite and helpful...Occasionally we hear a remark about that "sweet old couple." It annoys Ann that I get such a big

bang out of this. Of course, once we're inside at the bar, where everyone knows us, things are more normal as we hop onto the bar stools...HA!

Aesthetic Whole

Throughout all the narratives of relationship to Pearl, the three themes, *experiential knowledge, candidness, and supportive/mentorship* are also reflected in the quotes Pearl pulled from her research for the "Aging Monologues" performances. In particular, *supportive/mentorship* was an important aspect of the authors' and respondents' commentary. As a leader in the field of art education, Pearl played a key role in promoting others' careers and leadership positions and asking colleagues to support young students, teachers, and professors in art education. Beyond mentorship, Pearl was *candid* in her encouragement of people of all ages to see the world from different perspectives. Tapping into her *experiential knowledge* gained from the time she was an artist-educator through post-retirement, Pearl encouraged a thorough observation of the visual as an artist-educator, and careful listening to the verbal and written perspectives of others in "Aging Monologues." Pearl shared the complexity of the visual and verbal/textual world through a critical lens to ultimately promote an equitable access to quality art education for all ages, *womb to tomb*.

The quotes that Pearl pulled from her monologues' collection seem to share some perspectives about aging, experience, and societal stereotypes. Younger respondents didn't think much about aging, but associated it with death and dying. One who interacted with older folks saw older adults as mentally and physically above the abilities of younger peers. Those in their 30s to 40s noticed their own body changes, but identified a sense of progress in their career. While 41 to 50-year-olds began to realize society's stereotypical views on aging, and obsession with youthfulness, ages from 71-76 equated aging with sickness and death and questioned afterlife and their own usefulness. There seemed to be a breakthrough around age 77 and older with mention of some physical decline, but preference for remaining mentally and physically active with a freedom from stress around social, cultural, or other societal categorizations. There was mention of strangers being extra polite, that evoked negative aging stereotypes. However, familiarity with older adults seemed to normalize perceptions. Although we cannot equate ages with stages, ageism is revealed in the monologues. Yet, younger respondents' intergenerational experiences with active and engaging older adults seemed to play a role in shaping more positive perceptions of aging.

Conclusion

As authors, reflecting on context, voices, and relationships, we see the value of Dr. Greenberg's life as "pearls of wisdom." In her roles as artist-educator-researcher-mentor, Pearl planted seeds for us to nurture within ourselves and our pre-service students on the importance of authentic creative experiences for learners of *all* ages. Not only do we share with others a valued mentor in Dr. Greenberg, we reminisce on our final performance of the "Aging Monologues." While the monologues offer perspectives on aging from multiple points of view, Pearl's choices in the text are revealing and inspirational.

Since Dr. Greenberg lived to experience the oldest participants' age category from her "Aging Monologues" study, we end this tribute with a quote that she selected to include in one of the NAEA Convention Aging Monologues performances.

86-95: Hardest part of aging is the slow process when it starts...the real slowing down AND accepting the fact of this even though your brain is still clear. You try to do as much as usual of art, music, painting, sculpture, writing. Life seems so long, but aging comes on fast and it's very hard to accept. BE ACTIVE AS LONG AS YOU CAN! LIFE AS WE AGE IS A BIG TEST FOR ALL OF US...FIGHT FOR IT AS LONG AS YOU CAN...AMEN!
(Greenberg, 2007, p.5)



Figure 2. Aging Monologues Performance 2006: M. Roberts, P. Greenberg, A. LaPorte, P. Lawton, M. Greenberg and J. Ready

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Pearl Greenberg Award Lecture

Pamela H. Lawton
Maryland Institute College of Art

*“Each time I
facilitate a
community-based
art course or
research project I
think about Pearl
and my peers doing
this work.”*

KEY WORDS

*Award
Lifelong Learning*

To correspond with the author regarding this
article:
plawton@mica.edu



Pamela Harris Lawton, recipient Pearl Greenberg Award

I am deeply honored to be selected as the first artist-educator to receive the Pearl Greenberg Award for Teaching and Research in Art Education. I had the good fortune to meet and work with Pearl when I was a doctoral student at Teachers College, Columbia University in 2000. We met as part of the planning committee for the International Society of Education through Art (InSEA) World Congress scheduled to take place in New York City in 2002. One year into our planning, 9/11 happened and the hotel we contracted for the congress was decimated—as were our spirits. It was a challenging time, (we seem to be experiencing a lot of those lately) and we feared that the international art educators who planned to attend would be fearful of coming to New York City. Thankfully we still had a year to prepare and the outpouring of support we received from colleagues around the globe was astonishing—most everyone who planned to attend before 9/11 happened decided to come.

I got to know Pearl and her passion for quality art education for all ages. I talked with her about my dissertation research on arts-based intergenerational learning and she encouraged me to become a member of the Committee on Lifelong Learning. I have been a member ever since and have served as the secretary, treasurer, and chair of the committee.

When I joined the Committee on Lifelong Learning 20 years ago, membership had dwindled and indeed for many years we had small numbers. Around 2005 more scholars were writing about community-based, and intergenerational art education in school, community, and museum settings. We noticed more people were engaged in art education

research with older adults and intergenerational learning, and our membership began to grow.

This growth led us to consider better ways to promote the Committee on Lifelong Learning and meet member needs, including publishing venues for lifelong learning research. With that in mind I created an eye-catching logo for the committee and founded a peer reviewed journal, the *International Journal for Lifelong Learning in Art Education*, published annually, which I am proud to say will soon publish its fourth volume.

Twenty years ago, when I was conducting my dissertation research, there were very few scholarly publications on art-based, intergenerational learning. In addition to Pearl's work, Angela La Porte (2000) published an article, "Oral history as intergenerational dialogue in art education" in *Art Education Journal* on her dissertation research which I referenced in my dissertation. I met Angela at the 2002 InSEA World Congress when she attended my session and that meeting resulted in my first publication in 2004, "Artstories: Exploring intergenerational learning connections through narrative construction," a chapter in her edited anthology, *Community Connections: Intergenerational Links in Art Education*, and spawned a lifelong friendship.

I looked forward to connecting with Pearl, Angela, and new members like Susan Whiteland, and later Liz Rex, Jenny Urbanek, Christine Woywod, Andrea Elliot, Priscilla Lund, Liz Langdon, and Deborah Wall (to name a few) at the annual Committee on Lifelong Learning business meeting at NAEA conventions. I recall Angela and I participating in the "Aging Monologues" performance Pearl created and reprised for the 2007 NAEA conference in Chicago. The "Aging Monologues" developed from survey research Pearl conducted with participants aged 21 to 96 over the course of nine years (Greenberg, 2007). She asked respondents two questions: "What are your earliest memories as a child?" and "What are your thoughts on aging?" (Greenberg, 2007, p. 3). From the 150 responses she collected, Pearl developed a script based on quotations from her research. Angela, Pearl, Maureen Roberts, Murray Greenberg (Pearl's husband and staunch supporter), Maureen's husband, Jack Ready and I performed the dialogue.

Each time I facilitate a community-based art course or research project I think about Pearl and my peers doing this work. Over the past 20 years, I have conducted artstories research, intergenerational community-based art projects, in New York, Washington, D.C. Richmond, VA, Charlotte, NC, Nicaragua, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, London, UK and Edinburgh, Scotland.

Artstories is a term I coined to describe both my art and research practice.

Artstories are:

- Shared oral histories, performances, collaborative written identity pieces and/or visual illustrations (forms of narrative) that examine life themes related to psycho-social development.
- A concept and age integrated arts learning curriculum theory conceived of as a means of creating more inclusive and empowered communities through arts-based narrative co-inquiry (story sharing).

- Exhibited, read, and performed for others as a means of furthering multicultural understanding through art and story sharing.
- Community arts-based educational research projects that examine the ‘storied’ nature of learning, how narrative co-inquiry enhances the social and moral education of youth, and creates sustainable learning partnerships between schools, communities, and arts organizations. (Lawton, et al, 2019, p. 35)

In 2019 I co-published a book, *Community-based Art Education Across the Lifespan: Finding Common Ground*, based on my research and written with two colleagues I had worked with. In the book, I posit a theoretical framework for conducting community-based, intergenerational art education research. As someone with a love for acrostics, the framework suggested is based on an acrostic of the word, “erect” meaning to construct or build.

E.R.E.C.Ting Frameworks to Build Partnerships

- The five guiding principles of the E.R.E.C.T. conceptual framework suggest a best-practices model for organizing, planning, implementing, and assessing CBAE experiences that build upon community assets. These principles are part of any well-considered CBAE project:
- Educational. CBAE provides teaching and learning opportunities for all stakeholders, artist-educators, and the broader community through art experiences, while also promoting narrative co-inquiry, the public exhibition/sharing of understandings and knowledge gained, and art skills, processes, and products.
- Reciprocal. Stakeholders in CBAE establish common ground whereby the contributions and voices of everyone involved are equally heard, appreciated, and considered. Reciprocity is key to developing rapport and trust, valuing diversity and inclusion, and building connections across communities of difference to further understanding and/or meaningful change.
- Empowering. Involvement in CBAE and narrative co-inquiry creates opportunities for self and communal empowerment and efficacy.
- Collaborative. CBAE programs are designed as collaborative creative experiences in which each stakeholder has a meaningful role to play, shares their knowledge, and cooperates in a mutually respectful manner toward the accomplishment of personal and collective goals.
- Transformational. Well-planned CBAE experiences allow for the possibility of an empowering event (Lawton, 2004) to occur that may lead to personal, communal, and societal transformation for the overall benefit of individuals, the community, and broader society. (Lawton, et. al, 2019, p. 11)

Each of the Artstories projects I have developed has met at least three of the five and, in most cases, all five of the guiding principles listed above. As a lifelong learner, I plan to continue this work and add to scholarship on art-based intergenerational learning and creative aging.

Thank you again for this amazing honor. As Pearl would say, quality art education should encompass learners from “womb to tomb” in formal and informal settings rather

than focus solely on k-12 learners. As an older adult myself now, I appreciate this perspective even more.

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Liberation Kitchen: Annotating Intergenerational Conversations Among Black Women in Art and Education

*“We cannot
ignore the deep
learnings that occur
across generations
and professional
occasions within
the field.”*

For all of the Black women art teachers
and art educators we have encountered
and for those we have yet to meet.

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gloria j. wilson

University of Arizona

Amber C. Coleman

University of Arizona

Pamela Harris Lawton

Maryland Institute College of Art

Asia Price

Middle Tennessee State University

ABSTRACT

In this essay, we, four Black women art educators, draw from Black feminisms and Afrofemcentrism. Our practice considers nuanced ways that Black women curate spaces of communal care, which position forms of dialogic encounters with one another. We put forward aspects of Black life, as lived in and through sharing intimacies of the geospatial and as continuation of Black radical traditions. We argue that a kitchenspace indexes a Black praxis, centering intergenerational knowledge-sharing and methodology toward liberation. We think with Black feminist scholar/artists and insist a method of self-annotating, indexing our lives into the otherwise absences of Black women's narratives in the field of art education. We practice the theorization and method of using images of personal artwork and our dialogues. These annotations realign new centers of knowledge and refuse cannibalization by Euro-dominant narratives.

KEY WORDS

Critical arts-based research, kitchen, Black feminism, liberation, Afrofemcentricism, Black radical tradition, Black praxis

To correspond with the authors regarding this article:

gjwilson@email.arizona.edu

amberccoleman@email.arizona.edu

plawton@mica.edu

asiapricecheer@gmail.com

// annotation //
an-no-ta-tion

/,anə'tāSH(ə)n/

noun. a note of explanation.

We begin this essay with recognizing the importance of centering Black women's experiences in the wake of living and working within the historical and contemporary effects of the afterlife of enslavement in North America (Hartman, 2019; Sharpe, 2016). With this acknowledgment and reckoning in mind, we, the authors, four Black women art educators, offer an arts-based (wilson, 2018; wilson, 2020a) critical-activist project (Rolling, 2013), which documents our on-going conversation and theorization. Beginning with a conversation at an in-person conference panel presentation held in February of 2020, our initial public dialogue served to annotate (Sharpe, 2016), or imagine how Black women art educators might connect and render our experiences visible.



Figure 1. Seated l-r: Asia Price, Pamela Harris Lawton, gloria j. wilson, and Amber C. Coleman at Art and Education for Social Justice Conference.

// Theoretical Framework: Black Women's Artstories¹ //

For the purpose of this essay, we center Black women's artstories as a theoretical frame. Theorizing this form of storytelling we connect Black feminisms and Afrofemcentrism to think with and enact radical communal care and healing justice for ourselves and other people of color in our field, opening space to share our stories and knowledge with each other. Black feminisms articulate that Black women's voices have often been suppressed or silenced as they represent existence at the intersections of two marginalized groups: Black people and women. In response to this erasure, Black women advocate for themselves and

¹ An artstory is one's personal quest for identity and meaning through art and story; or alternatively as a group's collaborative search for communal, intergenerational, and multicultural understanding through shared oral histories, collaboratively written identity pieces on life themes related to psychosocial development, and visual treatments of these themes created by the group (Lawton et al., 2019, p. 35)

cultivate community to care for themselves and others, often through dialogue (Collins, 1990). Black feminists advocate for ethics of caring and love as liberatory and healing strategies (Lorde, 1984/2007; Nash, 2019). In addition to Black feminisms, as artists, we utilize Afrofemcentrism (Tefagiorgis, 1992), a theory of art history and art-making that “focuses on the Black woman subject as depicted by the Black woman artist, exploring the distinct manner in which the latter envisions and presents [the] Black woman’s realities” (Tefagiorgis, 1992, p. 475). The centering of history and various forms of making by/about/for Black women necessitates the interconnectedness between storytelling and art. Afrofemcentrism focuses on the individual and collective realities of Black women to actively and thoughtfully center Black women, their experiences, and histories as subject matter (Tefagiorgis, 1992). The combination of Black feminisms and Afrofemcentrism as theoretical frames help us articulate the unique ways that Black women communicate their experiences and tend to each other in creative and dialogic ways.

// Methodology: Liberation Kitchen //

If you don’t understand us and understand what we’ve been through
Then you probably wouldn’t understand what this moment is about
This is home
This is where we from, this is where we belong
(Knowles, 2016, 0:00-0:13)

Our methodology pulls from ancestral, cultural, and embodied ways of communing with one another. This methodology, conceived as “liberation kitchen,” allows for thinking with politics, experiences, and uses of a kitchenspace, a private and domestic space with which Black women: 1) first occupied as “propertied domestic help” and 2) since the civil rights era, in excess of being propertied, have imagined themselves otherwise (think, “free”). Specifically, we think metaphorically with the kitchen table in order to center the ways that Black women operate in relation to shared spaces and curate opportunities for connection and belonging. As the Solange lyrics (Knowles, 2016, 0:00-0:13) state above, this methodology recognizes the importance of homeplaces (hooks, 1990) to identity and relationship-building, connecting the individual and community as Black women enact multiple forms of care and dialogue in the pursuit of their and others’ liberation. Extending this logic, we also think with Carrie Mae Weems’ *The Kitchen Table Series* (1990/2016) and Black women’s conversational methods and communal spaces such as knitting circles, talk shows, community organizing, and beauty salons.

These kitchen conversations often occur in circles, non-linear formations with no specific beginning or ending. Within a circle, or kitchen-table style conversation, those in conversation can start and stop at any point, with the circle remaining intact. The methods and spaces of these conversations blur notions of public and private as Black women share their own stories and the stories of others round after round. Moreover, the table setting can be a fruitful medium for continuous and continued connections and critical conversations (Wilson, 2020b). In bringing these experiences to the table, Black women create and claim seats at their own table. This sharing of experiences requires vulnerability within the dialogue and active listening. While sitting at the table, those who are participating can reimagine what the table can be and how it can function. Ultimately, the goal of sitting at the table is to extend dialogue and action beyond the table.

Engaging in conversation with one another via kitchen table reflexivity (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015) and art-making, we extend prior critical arts-based research methodology, which centers racialized identity in art education (wilson, 2018). In doing so, we aim for evocative and critical engagement with and through the intersections of aesthetics and historicized legacies of oppression. Our narratives serve as aesthetic and material inquiry, provocation, and representation, seeking to build bridges across generations as well as historical and contemporary limitations. As such, we map our diasporic inheritances, artistically and conversationally, emphasizing and sharing our distinct and collective experiences as Black women in the field of art education. Our scaffolded narratives and embodied inquiry-knowledge bridge diversity across generational experiences of Black women art educators. Additionally, we represent these experiences through acts of art-making as other Black art educators have done (Coleman, 2020; Coleman & wilson, 2020)

// Annotation as a Method //

Through the process of annotation, as articulated by Sharpe (2016), we tend to our various experiences as Black women living within the context of the United States. Acknowledging the history and continuation of violence and erasure that has characteristically impacted the experiences of Black people in this context, we use annotation to highlight our unique experiences at the intersection of being racialized as Black and gendered as women. We also stress and elucidate how our racialized and gendered experiences impact our varied academic positionalities and experiences within the field of art education as an undergraduate student, graduate student/emerging scholar, mid-career scholar, and established scholar.

In this essay, we offer several annotations as engagements from our on-going dialogue, offering shared intimacies through text and visuals. We weave annotations of our initial dialogue, images of our personal creative work and practice, and private messages with one another via posts to a private Tumblr (social media) account. These annotations reflect not only our personal experiences and perspectives, but a connection to a larger Black diasporic history and our intergenerational learning.

// Conversational Intimacies //

“...simply because a Black woman’s body is present in a White dominated space, does not mean she has power, voice, or access to the same knowledge-making opportunities as her White counterparts with whom she shares the space.”

(Acuff, 2018, p. 202)

Previous research acknowledges the absence of documenting the experiences and contributions of Black women in our field (Acuff et. al, 2019), and indicates a gross omission of Black women and Black feminist discourses in art education (Acuff, 2018; Acuff et. al, 2019; Coleman, 2020). However, this essay and our corresponding (on-going) dialogue serve as refusal of these omissions. Insisting on making space, we annotate our tending to collective relationships and intergenerational knowledge. Additionally, we view this essay as a means to map new research methodologies through dialogues, which take place across geospatial and generational positionalities of Black women situated in the arts and education (Carruthers, 2018; Evans-Winters, 2019; McKittrick, 2006).

While our formal learning experiences occurred in art education programs situated in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions of the United States, we are thrilled that our paths have intersected. As such, we are intentional about staying in close touch. Through these intimacies (Nash, 2019) we refuse and disrupt epistemological, ontological, and axiological negation in addition to material manifestations of marginalization, while simultaneously building our own understandings in community with one another and with others who insist on Black visibility within the arts in/through education.

As we began our conversation at the above-mentioned conference, four questions sparked our initial dialogue: Who or what influenced your decision to pursue a career in art education? How many (if any) Black women art educators have you had contact with? What support and consideration do we need, demand, expect from the field? What are some possible strategies or pathways to increase the number of Black women art educators? What follows are excerpts from our conference dialogue, in response to each of these questions. Accompanying the quotes are images from the conference presentation slides. Each excerpt and image serve to annotate stories of Black women, which have been devalued and redacted within art education histories and scholarship.

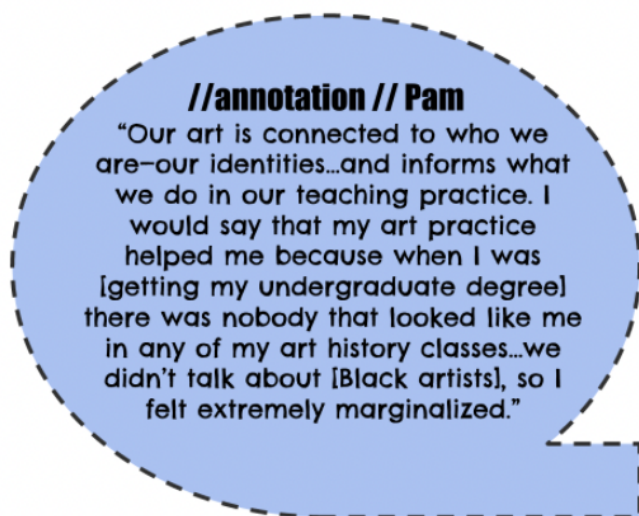


Figure 2. Pamela H. Lawton. (1990). *The Rainbow of Black Womanhood*, linocut.²

² Pamela Harris Lawton completed this reduction linocut at the beginning of her art career, 30 years ago, as part of her MFA thesis. Like our collective, it speaks to the broad and scintillating array of women that inhabit the African diaspora—each with a different story, gifts, and outward appearance but all connected through the common experience of systemic oppression, living in a world dominated by whiteness and toxic masculinity. Her earring is the Asante (Ghanaian) symbol *Osram ne Nsoromma* (star and moon) meaning faithfulness, love, harmony, and femininity. The colors have a dual meaning, they represent the red, brown, yellow, and black skin colors of BIPOC cultures. In West African color symbology red means active, seriousness, blood of the ancestors; green symbolizes fertility and growth; and black is synonymous with spiritual maturity, purity, dignity, and status (Dr. Kwaku Ofori-Ansa, personal communication, 1990).



Figure 3. Asia Price engaged in curriculum building and creative practice as an art education student at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, TN.



//annotation // gloria
"I had no idea Pam existed in the world of art education; that Joni Boyd Acuff existed in [art education] until I started connecting through conferencing and reading articles outside of what was provided in my graduate courses. It never occurred to [my professors] to connect me with someone who might have been doing [similar] research or already paved a path for the research that I was doing."



Figure 4. gloria j. wilson. *The Blackademic*, textile with text transfer.³



// annotation // Amber
"Where do we [Black women] fit in this world of art education? [This question] set me off on the trajectory I'm on right now. When I started applying for Ph.D. programs I asked 'where are they?' They have to teach at somebody's school. I want to be able to have interactions with Black faculty, with Black women faculty."

Figure 5. Opening of *To Be Black and Female: Reflecting on Black Feminism and African American Women's Art in Museums*. Curated by Amber C. Coleman, October 12, 2017, Lamar Dodd School of Art Galleries, Athens, GA. Photography credit: Mikael Coleman.

³ Black women are knowledge holders. This hand-made doctoral gown represents the legacy of Black women in and outside of the academy who resist precarity and erasure within dominant narratives of intellect. The signification in academic regalia signals limited notions of what is valued as knowledge. Black women's "knowledges" exceed these notions and are often passed along, intergenerationally, through oral traditions.

// **When and Where We Enter** //

“Only the BLACK WOMAN can say, ‘when and where I enter, in the quiet undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.’”
Anna Julia Cooper (1892/2016, p. 12)

Using our liberation kitchen methodology, we offer multiple annotations from our initial conference conversation as well as our recent Tumblr conversations. These annotations take you in and out of our conversation, with no particular beginning or end in mind, and reflects how we continued our conversation. We also offer artistic provocations as annotations throughout this essay as means to visually connect with our work and experiences, individually and in community. We recognize that many connections can be made across these annotations and we are continuing to think and work with them as well.

As we continued our conversation after the conference and during the COVID-19 pandemic, we addressed a pivotal question via a private Tumblr page: How has this collective of intergenerational art educators transformed your thinking, teaching and professional aspirations? What follows are excerpts from this burgeoning Tumblr dialogue, responding to this question. Accompanying the quotes are images of our recent art-making. Each excerpt and image serve to annotate an aspect of our engagement with one another across generations. What is more readily apparent is the mutuality of respect we have for one another. Although Pam is the eldest (self-identified) and from a generation that gained freedoms from the U.S. civil rights movement, she treats the “young-uns” in the collective as peers. She also acknowledges her growth in learning from “contemporary Black life” (personal statement, March 2021). This sentiment supports our “liberation kitchen” model, which, rather than being hierarchical, is circular. We cannot ignore the deep learnings that occur across generations and professional occasions within the field. Asia notes a growth in her confidence, since being connected to our group, while Amber signifies her growth in learning toward becoming an art educator. Gloria makes note of the mentoring and mentorship opportunities that exist within the group. This designates the strength of working alongside and across generations of professionalization.

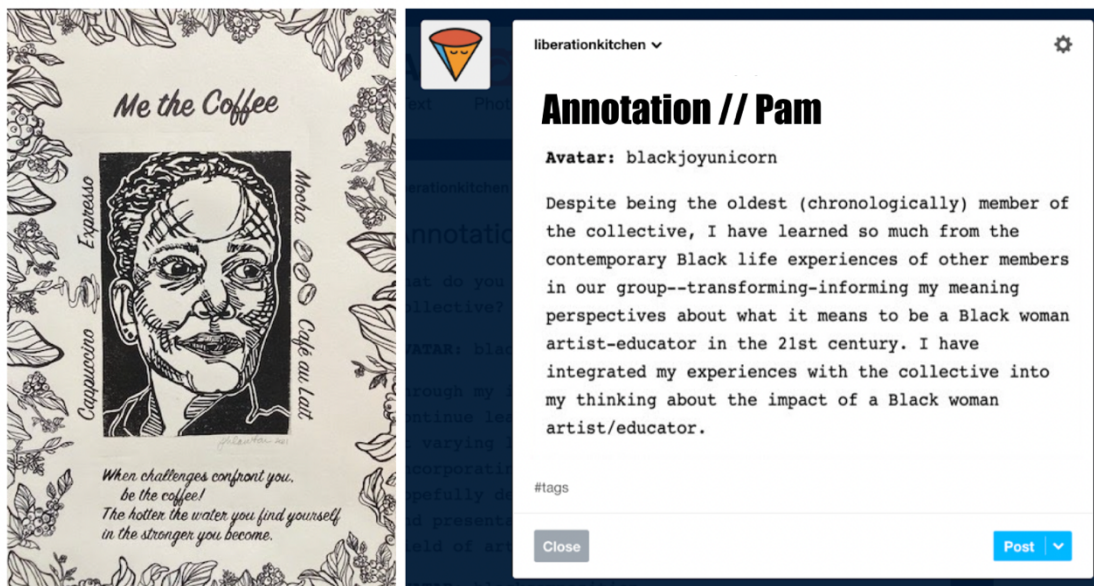


Figure 6. Pamela Harris Lawton. (2020). *Me|Be the Coffee*. Woodcut with drawing and hand lettering.⁴

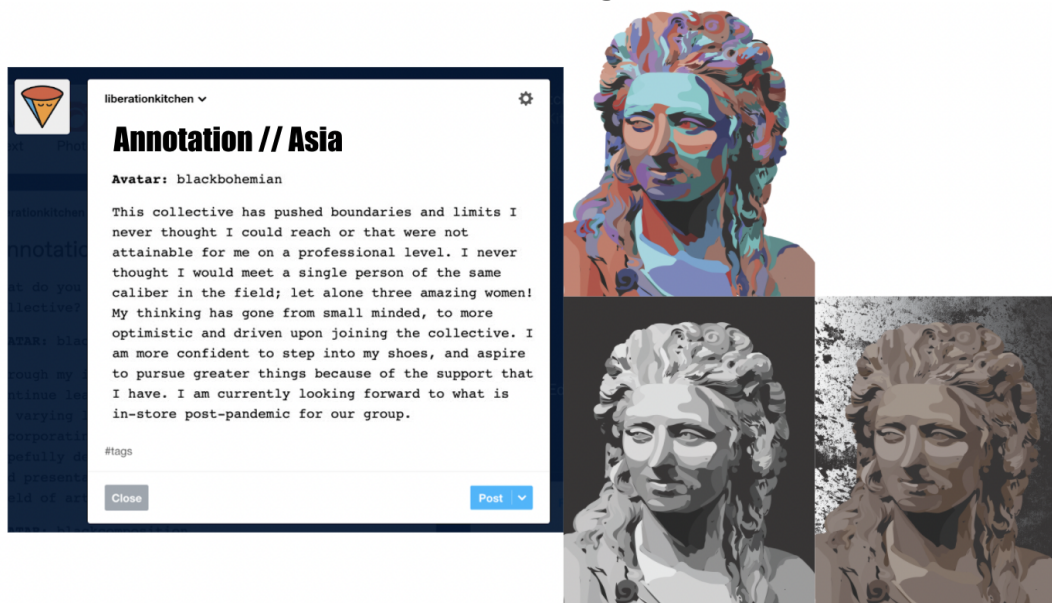


Figure 7. Asia Price. *Untitled*, digital print⁵

⁴ This print illustrates a proverb about strength and resilience using coffee as a metaphor. Black women, like coffee come in many flavors, tints, and shades from espresso to mocha, cappuccino to cafe au lait—each with its own strength. The global pandemic, which struck a few weeks after our conference tested Pam’s resiliency and flexibility, this proverb spoke to her on a personal level.

⁵ My work explores the relationship between being a young woman and being African American. With influences as diverse as Takashi Murakami and Faith Ringgold, new combinations are generated from both explicit and implicit structures. Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated by the ephemeral nature of relationships. What starts out as hope soon becomes debased into a hegemony of power, leaving only a sense of failing and limits of our existence. As shifting phenomena become reconfigured through boundaries and critical practice, the viewer is left with a testament to the outposts of our culture.

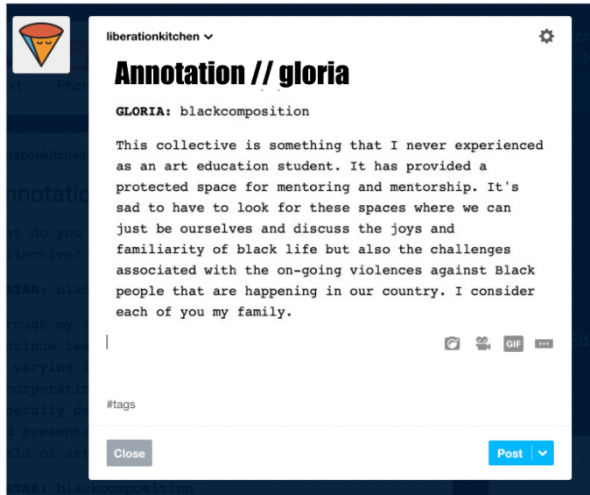


Figure 7. gloria j. wilson. (2014). *Kitchenspace: Pressing comb, circa 1985*.⁶

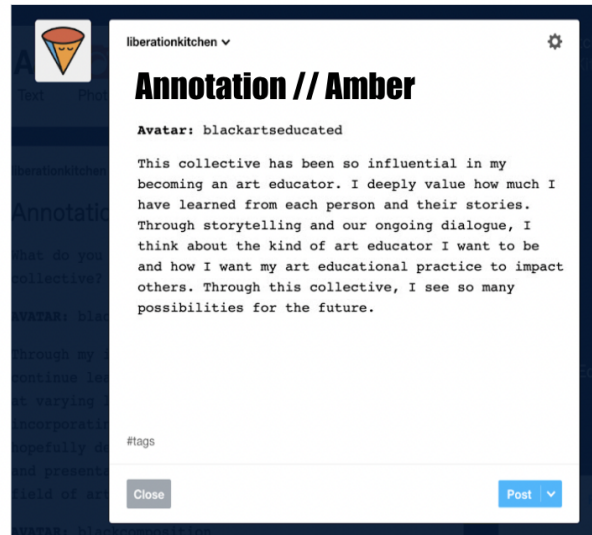


Figure 8. Amber C. Coleman. (2021) *Dear Black Woman: A Self-portrait, linocut*.⁷

⁶ For many Black women, the “the kitchen” references the curly-coiled hair at the nape of the neck. The pressing (hot) comb—a metal comb, when heated on the kitchen stove, is a tool used to loosen the curl pattern for versatile styling. This tool brings back memories of my youth and when I received my first “pressed” style, in the 7th grade, from my grandma Vera. She taught my Filipina mother how to press my hair. The burnt smell of the paper towel used to “buffer” the heat from the comb is still fresh in my senses. This kitchenspace reflects an interiority of my Afro-Asian life, mamas and madeas.

⁷ This artwork is a continuation of a series of art-making that began with the 2017 exhibition *To Be Black & Female: Reflecting on Black Feminism and African American Women’s Art in Museums*. “Dear BLACK Woman” is an open love letter to the author and other Black women, insisting that our lives, experiences, and dreams matter.

// Forging Intergenerational Relationships & Learnings //

As art educators whose lived experiences span three generations, our interactions are those of fictive kinship, co-mentorship, shared authority (Wilson, 2017; Vaughn & Feinberg, 2016). Bonds of fictive kinship (establishing family-like connections with biologically unrelated persons) are often established among communities of color whose shared experiences arise from histories of systemic violence, subjugation and oppression. It was easy for us to find these connections with one another and to see our gathering together as a form of mentorship and radical care across generations. Mentorship, for us, occurs as a reciprocal and dynamic exchange. We share authority in the co-authorship of this article, while “actively acknowledg[ing] the relevance of [one another’s] story” (Vaughn & Feinberg, 2016, p. 252). Our conference presentation, artworks, subsequent texts, Zoom calls, and Tumblr social media posts serve to annotate how co-mentorship occurs, within our group, while also activating a cypher “call and response” performance (Coleman & Wilson, 2020) of our lived experiences as Black women art educators.

Our intergenerational relationship activates the “four main components of the transformative learning process: life experience, critical reflection, reflective discourse, and action” (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 134). Mezirow (2000), who developed the theory of transformative learning, defines it as “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (p. 5). According to Mezirow (2000), transformative learning occurs when a “disorienting dilemma” or concern surfaces triggering critical self-reflection. Lawton (2008) contends that “critical self-reflection can also occur as the result of an empowering event” (p. 80) such as sharing personal stories and collaborating on visual/verbal artstories.

In our case, both a disorienting dilemma and empowering event come into play. As Black women art educators, we have transcended numerous barriers within our personal lives and the profession: systemic racism, lack of role models who affirm and value our knowledge, and professional standards/tests designed to exclude these knowledges (Lawton, 2018). Yet, when we do encounter other Black women art educators, we feel a sense of kinship, joy and empowerment; we begin building supportive networks within an oppressive system, as a means to sustain us and generate change. Johnson-Bailey and Alfred’s (2006) race-centric perspective examines transformative learning through the lens of cultural boundaries, emerging from the experiences of racialized communities living in opposition to the cultural norm (whiteness), from childhood through adulthood. While each of our journeys as Black women art educators differs, the destination remains the same—teaching in arts/educational institutions created for and dominated by White culture.

In order to move from survival to thrival (Love, 2019), we must engage in care that resists being pushed to the margins and works to disrupt power structures that do not have our interests and well-being in mind. The race-centric approach “revolves around three key concepts: inclusion, empowerment, and intellectual growth” (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006, p. 52). Despite being categorized as the “most oppressed” in academic discourses, Black women educators spring from a long tradition of excellence in emancipatory education (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006). We stand on the shoulders of the many Black women educators and art educators who came before us: Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Grace Hampton, Augusta Savage, Lois Mailou Jones, Elizabeth Catlett, Alma Woodsey Thomas, and countless other Black women across time and space.

// The Future of Liberation Kitchen //

“won’t you celebrate with me
 what i have shaped into
 a kind of life? i had no model.
 born in babylon
 both nonwhite and woman
 what did i see to be except myself?
 i made it up
 here on this bridge between
 starshine and clay,
 my one hand holding tight
 my other hand; come celebrate
 with me that everyday
 something has tried to kill me
 and has failed.”

Lucille Clifton (1993, p. 25)

From our desire to celebrate the fruitfulness of our collective, we began these conversations with a series of questions to explore and ground our experiences across the span of 20 years in the field of art education. Our conversations have since guided us to consider how to align our “knowledge centers,” projecting our voices as an act of refusal (Sharpe, 2016) of continued marginalization of Black women in the field as well as the history of the field. For us, kitchen liberation is about building bonds of community while also appreciating the unique experiences and abilities we bring to the table. It is about joy, healing, care, love, accountability, thriving when as Lucille Clifton (1993) notes, “that everyday/something has tried to kill me/and has failed” (p. 25). The future of liberation kitchen means that this dialogue and our work will not end here with us. We consider this essay as a second iteration of our unfolding conversations in support of future curation, mapping, and archiving of the onto-epistemologies of Black women in and through the arts and education. In reflecting on our on-going dialogues and art-making, we realize that we learned much from actively listening and sharing our stories with each other and our past and future audience members and co-conspirators. Liberation kitchen as a methodology aims to prompt on-going conversation and action. We view our conversation as a necessary provocation for thinking about the need of mentorship strategies and career pathways and throughways for supporting Black women and others from marginalized groups in the pursuit of art education. Liberation kitchen necessitates that we think about the need to enact Black radical traditions of social movement-building and community organizing, which are less hierarchical and that support our and others’ existence, thrival, and futures in the field of art education (Acuff, 2020; Carruthers, 2018; Love, 2019). Thus, it becomes important to not only share our stories, but to annotate and archive them for future use, strategizing on behalf of those whose lives and work have historically been and continue to be redacted in our field.

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Becoming Magic: Acquiring the Artist Identity

*“understand
the nature of
artistic identity
and how
it is acquired
in both
a personal and
social context”*

Kathleen Unrath
University of Missouri
Karen Shortt-Stout
University of Missouri
Amy L. Ruopp
University of Missouri

ABSTRACT

This research mines the internal reflective process of an artist/researcher/teacher who witnesses her own becoming, seeing herself, in multiples and weaves a multimodal narrative while contemplating, revealing, and living multiple identities through visual inquiry. The purpose of this research, in its broadest sense, is to better understand the nature of artistic identity and how it is acquired in both a personal and social context. We seek to understand how we might create more fertile conditions and facilitate appropriate rites of passage for transitioning individuals from student/teacher/aspirant to self-actualized artist.

KEY WORDS

artist identity, a/r/tography, art teacher development, artistic development

*To correspond with the authors regarding this article:
unrathk@missouri.edu*

“To learn, I believe, is to become. To become different.” -Maxine Greene

What follows is a collaborative investigation between two art education researchers and our student, Karen, as she shares her artistic learning journey to becoming an art teacher beginning with Karen’s voice in italicized text.

In the beginning, I was as a collector, an appraiser, a conductor, a shape shifter, a change maker, a student and a teacher; first and foremost, I was—I am still—a wonderer. Throughout my life I have been many things, but not an artist. Did I know then—do I even know now—what it means to be one? What follows is an account of identity and transformation; the story of how I became an artist. To say that I am an artist now begs the question, why was I not an artist before? In truth, I have always embodied many qualities that artists typically share. Inquisitive, rebellious, and avant garde in my youth, I was rarely satisfied with the given. My father, an unlikely sort of artist in his own right, inspired and instilled in me a deep appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of the mundane and the inherent mystery and magic of lived experience, values which have inspired a unique sense of connoisseurship in many aspects of my life. Despite all this, I did not consider myself an artist and found it uncomfortable to don such a title. Throughout my youth I viewed artistic production like a kind of sorcery; a magic power I was not gifted by the stars to possess. It was my understanding that one is either born an artist or is not; the idea of becoming an artist never even occurred to me. Fundamentally, I believe I did not understand what the concept meant. Perhaps I understand it only slightly better now.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) noted “Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to or lead back to ‘appearing,’ ‘being,’ ‘equaling,’ or ‘producing’ ” (p. 239). It is emergent in nature, quietly “mattering” as experience unfolds. This ephemeral process is elusive as Deleuze and Guattari observe in Jackson and Mazzei (2011) “a line of becoming is not defined by the points it connects...on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle” (p.87). The opportunity to reveal the process through a retelling of epiphanic moments in the genealogy of an emerging art teacher provides a nuanced glimpse into artistic becoming. According to Jackson and Mazzei (2011), “becoming is the movement through a unique event that produces experimentation and change” (p.87). The unfolding and coalescing of the duality of artist teacher identities emerge as students move through their preservice art education program.

Thus, we sought to understand how one emerges from student to artist teacher and how that awareness unfolds within an art education preparation program at a large Midwest research-intensive university. According to Irwin (2013),

a/r/t/ography

promotes artistic inquiry as an aesthetic awareness, one that is open to wonder while trusting uncertainty. As such, an *a/r/t/ographical* lens serves as a mechanism for thinking and exploring what it means to transform identities. Through attention to memory, identity, autobiography, reflection, meditation, storytelling and cultural production artists/researchers/teachers/learners expose their living practices in both evocative and provocative ways. (p. 355)

Irwin (2004) states that a/r/tography invites all of us to “live a life of deep meaning enhanced through perceptual practices that reveal what was once hidden, create what has never been known, and imagine what we hope to achieve” (p.35-36). This research mines the in-between spaces, the internal reflective process of a pre-service art educator who witnesses her own becoming, and weaves a multimodal narrative while contemplating, revealing, and living multiple identities through visual inquiry.

Literature Review

This research is a/r/t/ographical in its theory, design, and process in that it illuminates the personal journey of a pre-service artist researcher teacher in the act of investigating the phenomena of her transformation and unveiling of her multiple entangled identities.

Theory as a/r/t/ography creates imaginative turn by theorizing or explaining phenomena through aesthetic experiences that integrate knowing, doing, and making experiences that simultaneously value technique and content through acts of inquiry; experiences that value complexity and difference within a third space. Art is the visual reorganization of experience that renders complex the apparently simple or simplifies the apparently complex. Research is the enhancement of meaning revealed through ongoing interpretations of complex relationships that are continually created, recreated and transformed. (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p.31)

Thus, the purpose of this research is to better understand the nature of artistic identity and how it is acquired within an art education program at a large research university. We seek to know how we might create and design emergent experiences that facilitate appropriate rites of passage for transitioning individuals from student/aspirant to self-actualized artist teacher. As art education professors, our reflexive stances are guided by a constructivist ontology of art education that is meaning-based, emergent in nature, and consistent with the lived experience of learning through embodied a/r/t/ographical encounters. Thinking through a/r/t/ographical lenses while plugging into constructivist theories (Vygotsky, 1987) weaves a dynamic picture of the emergent artist/teacher identity.

To gain the necessary perspective on such a complex and nuanced topic, first consider the notion of identity itself; what it is and how it develops. The very act of constructing and examining one’s own personal narrative plays a significant role in the shaping of and acquisition of identity. McAdams (1993) defines identity as “what it is about [one’s] life that provides [them] with meaning, unity, and purpose ... It is a story” (p. 6). According to McAdams, it is stories that define who we are—a personal myth—that is co-created between ourselves and lived and explored in our social contexts. “The stories we live by have their sources within our own imaginations, in our personal experiences, and in the social world wherein we live and tell” (p. 268). McAdams also implies that the process of telling our stories can reify and/or redefine our myth by means of self-understanding. In other words, the act of expressing our personal identity through narrative may also help to develop, define, and transform it. It is through the narrative nature of identity construction that one is enabled to convey and reflect on experience. Through an a/r/t/ographic lens, art

making and art teaching are intertwined in a weaving of known and unknown experiences only fully examined through reflective narrative.

The notion that a structured study of personal narrative may be essential to identity acquisition and learning echoes Connelly and Clandinin (1990). They claim that:

Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general conception translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (p.2)

Targeted reflection on one's personal experience is essential to improving practice as both a teacher and learner. Supported by researchers such as Dewey (1910), Schon (1983), and Marzano (2012) makes a case for reflective practice as an indispensable habit of mind for students as well as practitioners and professionals across a variety of fields, though they highlight its particular importance in the field of education and the practice of teaching.

Additionally, we examine some of the same questions posed by Carl Weinberg (1988): "How does learning how to become [emphasis added] an artist contribute to the task of training and sustaining classroom teachers?" (p.17), and "How might the process ... provide insights into what teachers need to understand in order to do what they do better?" (p.18). In other words, what can we learn about the practice of teaching through the process of examining our own development as artists? As Weinburg underwent the process of learning to paint, he gleaned several insights that align with findings such as the value of process over outcomes, the importance of overcoming fear and vulnerability in order to be more fully and authentically invested in the learning and creating experience, and the overall understanding that teaching, like art-making, is a life-long learning process.

Methodology

Rita Irwin (2013) describes a/r/tography as "a research methodology ... that lives in the rhizomatic practices of the liminal in-between"(p.199). She further states, "These in-between spaces of becoming prompt disruptions of dueling binaries, conceptions of identities and the rush to certainty." A/r/tography explores the intersections of plural identities experienced by artist/researcher/teacher and attempts to unify knowing, doing, and making as they coalesce into what may only be described as aesthetic experience (Irwin, 2004). In this spirit, we embrace the implausibility of disentangling the research practices from the researcher, the experiences of the subject, and the artifacts of that experience, and instead consider them a neatly nested, holistic narrative.

The questions which have guided this a/r/tographical inquiry from its first inception were motivated by a desire to uncover and illuminate the enigmatic nature of becoming; those in-between states in which one experiences profound connection, manifestation, and ultimately, transformation. As artist teachers, we wonder what it could mean for our practice to embrace the teeming essence of wonder, the pliant state of vulnerability, and the power of the personal creative process so that we might continue to be transformed while guiding

students through their own transformative encounters. In an attempt to resolve this quandary, Karen mined her own experience as an emerging artist teacher in a pivotal state of metamorphosis. Through a series of insightful and data rich dialogues with Karen, we collaboratively identified the defining features of Karen's experience of transformation through the creative process of becoming an art teacher.

A/r/tography explores questions and experiences through the three lenses of the artist/teacher/researcher assuming multiple lenses simultaneously. In this case, it also assumes an autoethnographic disposition. Auto-ethnography is considered an umbrella term indicating "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p.2), which in this case refers to a sense of personal identity which is both experienced and performed by the individual and recognized in a social context.

As a collaborative auto-ethnographer (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2012), Karen represents the researcher and the researched, the narrator and the interpreter, embodying the lenses of the artist/researcher/and teacher. These three identities take shape as each new identity and layer of understanding is popped open by some epiphanal moment when another iteration of personal truth is revealed. Each part is distinct, but fits snugly inside the whole. Karen revisited this metaphor often over the course of her artistic development, as it seemed to visually communicate the layered, folded nature of identity and transformation. It is only through the process of revealing these hidden portions of her inner self that she began to truly shape the story, which informs her own work and her own identity. Ultimately, we, the authors, value the self, and in this case, the subject, as a legitimate source of knowing and generating insight (Palmer, 2010).

Examining Karen's experience within the context of her art education coursework, and in particular, in an undergraduate/graduate course entitled "Teaching for Studio Thinking," designed to prepare the artist/teacher to guide students in a more authentic learning paradigm by exposing them to experiential encounters with the artistic process. One of us, as director of the art education program, saw students transform in their understanding of what it meant to be an artist and wanted to understand what was happening that produced such significant observations from art education students. Karen enthusiastically agreed to share her experiences through three in-depth interviews. Drawing upon the Three-interview Series model developed by Dolbeare and Schuman (1982) and described by Seidman (1998, 2006), the biographical experiences of an emerging artist were prompted through a triad of discrete, 90-minute interviews held one week apart. In the first interview, Karen described her life's journey to the art education program and the important moments that impacted her decision to become an artist teacher. In Interview two, she described the details and memorable moments that unfolded throughout her "Studio Thinking" coursework in which this new identity emerged. The third interview prompted her to reflect on the two previous interviews for insights into how epiphanal life experiences and reflective understanding of significant learning experiences supported the development of an artist identity.

Analysis of the interview data took an a/r/tographical turn. This included repeated listening of audio recordings and reading of transcriptions, noting transformative statements

of becoming. We used these to visually map where transformation emerged as well as drawing connections between seemingly disparate experiences and concepts. With each revisiting of the conversations, Karen's journal entries, and the physical objects created during this space of artistic inquiry, new layers of meaning were revealed which were at once surprising and manifest upon reflection.

Discussion in Karen's Voice

Magic

When I first began this research, I had no idea what I was looking for. I knew only that something profound had happened to me over the last few months, something that seemed to escape my description, something magical. It's unsurprising that the word "magic" reverberates throughout our data; my artwork is explicitly concerned with magic, more specifically, those icons who embody it—witches. Yet, as I listened to our dialogues, I found myself using the language so profusely, I had to wonder, what does this word "magic" really mean and why is it so inextricably linked to my experience of becoming an artist?

In the months during which I was creating the body of work that would come to represent a profound personal transformation, I contemplated the meaning of magic obsessively. I needed to understand the nature of the curiously entangled fear and fascination we somehow simultaneously feel about the subject. Why are witches both persecuted and venerated, sometimes at the same time by the same people, all across history? Where else does this conflict persist in our own cultural psyche?

Magic is a word with many definitions, connotations, and contexts; however, one might discern that the one irreducible and indivisible commonality among them is power. To be more specific, I define magic as any power, influence, or skill, predicated upon esoteric awareness—that is, knowledge or ability that is secret, inexplicable, misunderstood, or mysterious. Magic, we might add, is a phenomenon that not everyone possesses or understands. We often imagine that a special birthright or elaborate ritual of initiation is the only gateway to its mysteries. There is certain congruence here in the way we conceptualize magic power and artistic talent. The uninitiated may find difficulty in rationally explaining the origins and nature of artistic aptitudes. This special, esoteric ability grants power and influence to the artistic practitioner while it may solicit vulnerability in the layperson or aspiring artist. Whether by coincidence or providence, the inextricable duality of power and vulnerability is a central theme in the very series of work, which marked my own transformation from aspirant to artist.

Wonder

It's impossible to describe the phenomenon of becoming without some acknowledgment of wonder. My journey began with the cultivation of wonder. Throughout my developmental life, the experience of wonder has engendered in me an intense fascination with both aesthetics and the many phenomena of life and its mysteries. As the dialogues unfolded it became apparent that my Father had a particular influence over these significant, early experiences.

During our first conversation, I recount a memory from my childhood; an early encounter with the profound, aesthetic experience of wonder. My Dad woke us all up one morning at about 6:30 AM. There had been an incredible ice storm in the night. For some reason, he had already been up and out of the house, probably to get wood for the stove. The old house was always freezing. He made us all pile into his truck and drove us up on the old ridgeline road because he wanted us to see the way the sun was coming through the ice-covered trees. It was blinding—like the whole landscape was covered in tin foil. For 20 minutes or so, I rode along with my face pressed up against the cold window until the sun was too high in the sky and the effect was lost. I've never seen anything like it and I'll never forget it. My Dad was always doing things like that, creating these magical moments. I don't know if he was really aware of what he was doing. He was just so affected by things and he wanted to share that.

Kingwell (2000) described the concept of wonder as, “the experience of astonishment before the world...the experience that prompts philosophy, a doorway to pure theory”(p. 85). He goes on to say that, “Wonder invites not only investigation of the world, but also reflection on the subject who experiences it, and on the experience itself.” (p.89). Wonder, then, might be viewed as a key condition, perhaps the preeminent condition, for a rich and generative learning environment. Wonder makes fertile ground of the mind and the soul. It readies them for the acquisition of new knowledge and the transformation of self. As teachers, we can facilitate wonder by cultivating it within ourselves. It is a contagious condition that is shared more readily than imparted.

In my art education Studio Thinking class, we were invited to produce our own ideas for a content rich series of visual artwork rather than given a creative prompt or task and asked to respond. We were pushed to entertain many possible concepts before settling on a particular idea. In a sense, we were exercising our ability to wonder, to ask ‘what if’ and ‘why not’ until we had discovered a question so enticing that we would be compelled to spend the next several months endeavoring to resolve it.

That alchemical mix of trepidation and excitement defined those first weeks of studio. The pure potential of ideas coursed through our collective discussions. I was inspired with the budding possibilities of harnessed wonder. With this wonder came ideas, and with ideas came the eventuality of execution. Execution came with its own burden; the burden of every maker: vulnerability.

Vulnerability

As quickly as my ideas had formed, and as potently as I perceived the potential in them, I began to experience that familiar feeling, an erosion of confidence in my ability to justify myself in my creative direction. I sat on my ideas for several weeks, mulling over the subjects with what I thought were bound to contain the most accessible meaning and relevance. I became preoccupied with the audience, my classmates, and instructor, and what I thought might be the most impressive solution to the assignment.

My husband attempted to counsel me saying, “Forget about trying to make a statement. What do you want to make? What’s in your head?” Well...I want to make witches, I said. I don’t know why yet, but something tells me I need to make them. He responded, “Then that’s what you’re going to do. Don’t worry about why. It’ll come to you.”

How do you teach students and teachers to trust their intuition? Many teachers, let alone students, still feel the pressures of vulnerability on their own work. It is much easier to rely on a trodden path, a known narrative or a tired talking point than it is to strike out into the territory of the deeply personal and unknown. Those strides, which we as teachers take towards this uncharted inner territory will undoubtedly, carry us into new realms of understanding, meaning making and perspective for our students’ future benefit.

The experience of vulnerability in the face of growth, learning, and becoming is described by Turner (1977) as he observes cultural rites of passage of pre-industrial societies. He observes that the novice or initiate must be “ground down to a sort of homogenous social matter, in which the possibilities of differentiation may be still glimpsed, then later, positively refashioned into specific shapes compatible with their new post-liminal duties and rights as incumbents of a new status and state” (p.37). In other words, in order to be transformed, one must be sacrificed. What Turner describes vividly parallels Karen’s experience of transformation through creative work. The work of creativity is the labor of love and to love, wholeheartedly, is to be vulnerable.

When I finally sat down with a group of my peers and instructors to discuss the direction of my work, their excitement was overwhelming and palpable. The fact that there were still ambiguities to be resolved only intrigued them more and they freely offered up advice, ideas, and support. From that point on, I would have to allow the work I was shaping to speak to me. I would have to listen, look, feel, and respond. I would have to embrace ambiguity, the unknown, and my own vulnerability in order to truly enter into the creative process.

The Power of Process

There is genuine terror in not knowing what you are doing. One of my earliest epiphanal encounters in the Art Education Program introduced me to the importance of play, letting go, and quieting the ego in the artistic process; I relied heavily on this newly acquired insight as I approached the task at hand.

The first witch came into being, more or less, by accident. I had discovered a new material, an air-drying clay substitute, popular with doll-makers, that I thought might come in handy. I wanted to get a feel for the texture and pliability of the material. I needed to know how it behaved so I began to play. As I worked a form over my kneecap, a mask-like face began to emerge. First the nose, then sagging cheeks and pursed and withered lips. I remembered a stone I’d found near a creek a few days prior. This would become her eye; unblinking, ever watchful. The expression that emerged was wizened and skeptical; unflinching, fleeting and mysterious. Without even knowing it, I had begun to wrap my hands around a metaphor, which would guide me through the duration of the project. The face I’d created on

something of a lark, was the moment of conception for a character, a narrative, and a series of symbolic connections that I had been struggling to verbalize or materialize for some time. The more I researched the traditions and history of witches, particularly their brutal and hypocritical persecution throughout the ages, I began to see that the very same fear, ignorance, and violence that burned across the globe for thousands of years still persists in our culture and collective psyche.

From then on, the process of making became a lens through which everything I encountered was filtered. I began to see relationships to the work in history, politics, and my daily-lived experience. The metaphors deepened and expanded, as did my inquiry into the subject material of femininity, nature, magic, fear and power. I realize now that this is a crucial stage in the making of meaning. As artists, as researchers, as learners, and narrators, we appoint significance according to our own frame of interest or experience. We assign meaning to processes, objects, and narratives, making our own version of order from chaos.

It is my conclusion that meaning is not found in art, in teaching, or in life, but rather, meaning is made. Meaning resides in us, those who create and engage with art, it is not relegated to the work itself as a rigid and inanimate fact. When it comes to meaningful making there are no right or wrong answers. The questions become not, “what does this artwork mean?” but, “how does this work affect us?” Students who understand this relationship to art, visual culture, and the stimulus-rich post-modern environment in which they live are empowered to construct meaning that develops their identities and understanding of their worlds.

The Studio Thinking class was the first time I had the opportunity to make meaningful work; work that explored an idea that intrigued and fascinated me. Everything else I had done was just “stuff”, practice, and projects. The work I did in the studio thinking class was an investigation. It was research. What ultimately survives is what I learned from it and the experience that I had. The objects that I made, at this point, are secondary. They are artifacts of an experience.

As artists, teachers, and researchers, it is what we learn that matters more than the art objects, themselves. If we can use the objects to start or add to a conversation, that is good, but it is still the conversation, the thinking that matters most. I learned so much through the process of producing this work. That’s the really interesting thing for us as teachers. I began to see how students learn through art. They don’t just learn how to make lines or build things with clay. If you’re doing it right, they learn about the world and they learn about themselves. They explore things that they wonder about.

Conclusions and Insights

Herein, we captured the reflective annotations of an emerging artist as a “narrative representation of lived experience through the telling and inscribing of stories” (Denzin, 1989, p. 11). This intimate study confirms that perceptual reflection through a/r/tographical lenses can resolve and uncover significant moments within learning experiences of both students and their teachers. Extrapolating from the results of this deeply personal

introspection we glimpse the blossoming awareness of how artists acquire the artist identity. We found that who they are and might become as artists and art educators is similarly enriched through embodied inquiry. This self-reflection and an awareness of their own artistic journey deepened meaning making that we can all convey into our classrooms.

These insights grew from facilitated studio experiences, in-depth reflective interviews, and a/r/tographical analytical engagement with emerging data. We note that the studio classroom, rich with epiphanies, reflections, and meanings that emerging artists make of their studio experience are evolving, adaptable, and deeply revealing to art educational researchers. According to Karen,

By imposing a fluid architecture for self-reflection and self-inquiry, I was able to engage with my art making in new and profound ways that deepened my understanding of artistic process and the meaning of my work. The liminal space of becoming, became productive epiphanies. It was in these epiphanies that realizations unfolded which led to the acquisition of a new identity. “A limen is a threshold, but at least [in some cases], it is a very long threshold, a corridor almost, or a tunnel, which may indeed become a pilgrim’s road, or...may cease to be a mere transition and become a set way of life, a state, that of the anchorite, or monk” (Turner, 1977, p. 37) and dare I add, an artist.

As an artist, I am always in a state of becoming, never being, because to be an artist is to move through experience in a spiral, to exist in a constant state of inquiry, wonder, and vulnerability, and to occasionally be empowered by the practice to manifest artifacts of our encounter. My work was a physical object in the past. Now it is an experience, a marker of time, growth, and change in my life. It is more than evidence. It is the manifestation of my journey.

This research highlights a critical awareness for artist teachers: that it is through reflection, questioning, and meaning making that we are all continually defining and redefining who we are and how we develop as artists, researchers, and teachers. Karen’s account details what the art object signals about depth of understanding, the degree of engagement, and the extent of identity mediation that unfolds in the art-making process. Art teachers facilitate the production of physical objects, but our roles are something akin to that of spiritual leaders. It is through our guidance that our students become who they are while we continue to grow and learn along with them, because “meaning is a product of our experiences and identities” as the researcher and the research, the making, the knowing, and the being, are inseparably wound into one.

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Transformative Learning through Bookmaking in a Black Women's Art Collective

“...books were a rich and varied visual testament to our cumulative learning and the strength of our collaboration.”

Adjoa Jackson Burrowes
Flint High School

ABSTRACT

This visual essay by Adjoa Jackson Burrowes uses the sociocultural dimension of transformative learning theory to examine bookmaking in a Black women's art collective as they worked on an artists' book initiative called project 2020 that amplified the historically muted voices of Black women artists during the pandemic.

KEYWORDS

Transformative learning, bookmaking, artists books, black women, art collective Project 2020, pandemic, race

To correspond with the author regarding this article
adjoa.burrowes@gmail.com

The artists' book initiative, *Project 2020*, was conceived in response to the challenges of maintaining a consistent art practice during one of the biggest existential threats to humanity in recent history. The COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-political trauma that resulted, including social isolation, prompted nine mature Black women artists to join in a creative union to amplify our historically muted voices through bookmaking. The work of creating these artifacts continued in spite of many challenges but ultimately acted as a source of inspiration for many of the participating artists. The visual narratives, created over a nine-month period, serve as an example of transformative learning practice as each member was required to adapt their art making to the ever-shifting conditions.

Project 2020: An Artistic Response

The idea for this collaborative artists' book project came into being as a result of a conversation I had with two artist friends, all members of another artist collective, WOAWA (women of an undetermined age). We each decided to invite two artist friends to create a book structure no larger than 12" x 12" when folded, in conversation with the socio-political events taking place. A total of nine artists met virtually and at a safe social distance in July, 2020, to share the thematic focus of their books. By August, 2020, each artist completed the structure, theme, and their artistic entry for the book and mailed it to the first artist on the rotation. Every 30 days the books traveled, first by mail, then during in-person book swaps to the next artist in the rotation. In March, 2021, after nine months of gestation, the completed books were returned to their mother-creators for finishing touches.



Figure 1. Second Artists' Book Swap in October, 2020, with Artists Gail Shaw-Clemons, Pamela Harris Lawton, Author, and Francine Haskins

The theoretical framework for this visual essay is the sociocultural dimension of transformative learning theory. “Transformative learning is about change in the way we see ourselves and the world we live in. The mental construction of experience, inner meaning, and reflection are common components” (Merriam, et al., 2007, p. 130) of transformative learning. Initially developed by Jack Mezirow in 1978, the theory has undergone many transformations and expansions. Taylor (2005) developed seven lenses based upon approaches posited by adult education scholars. He breaks them down into “two groups, based on their ‘locus of learning’” (Merriam, et al., 2007, p. 131); those concerning the individual and those focused on sociocultural learning.

The sociocultural model of transformative learning derived from Freire’s (1970) social emancipatory theory “in which transformation is an unveiling of the social transformation of the oppressed through an awakening of their critical consciousness that leads to empowerment” (Lawton, et al., 2019, p. 29). One of the approaches within the sociocultural model is the race-centric view which speaks to the “experiences of individuals of African descent within the sociocultural, political, and historical” (Sheard, 1994, p. 6) context they live in. In this approach transformative learning is seen as a daily, conscious strategy.

The race-centric approach to transformative learning is particularly poignant for the artists in *Project 2020* because it speaks to the ways in which the intersection of racism and sexism (and we add ageism as another intersection) transform the ways in which Black women think, exist, and view the world. “To foster transformative learning, this perspective promotes inclusion of voices traditionally silenced and sense of belonging as a member of the group” (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006 as cited in Merriam & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 143). As with Critical Race Theory, story or counter narratives are the mechanism through which transformation occurs.

Project 2020 embodies a transformative learning framework as art practice in three important ways. First, as artists, the conditions in which we created the work required constant adaptation, transforming us as practitioners along the way. Delayed and lost mail packages, restrictions on in person gatherings, and fatigue were some barriers we had to overcome. Because the collective was made up of women at a very specific intersection, we aimed to create social support for our members, so it also fulfills the social emancipatory aspect of transformative learning—ultimately awakened our consciousness as artists through highlighting the ways in which our shared identity impacts our lives as artists, and people in a broader sense.



Figure 2. New York Artists, Gloria Patton & Michele Godwin.

Second, the artifacts themselves are examples of transformative learning in that they follow an exquisite corpse art model defined by the continual transformation of a work by the participating artists in response to each book’s theme and the artistic visions of previous artists in the rotation. Each book began with the individual's choice of form, narrative, media, and theme. With each monthly rotation, each artist was free to add their contribution within the original artists’ book format. The resulting books were a rich and varied visual testament to our cumulative learning and the strength of our collaboration. Artist’s books have a “mongrel nature” (Phillpot, 1998 as cited in Burkhart, 2006, p. 249) meaning they defy specific definition, existing at the junction of art, documentation, and literature” (Phillpot, 1998 as cited in Burkhart, 2006, p. 249) much like the members of our collective live at the intersection of race, gender, and age.



Figure 3. Artists Francine Haskins and Pamela Harris Lawton during “Magical” Meet-up at Artist-Mentor Lilian Burwell’s Home/Studio, August, 2020.

The four key aspects of transformative learning, “life experience, critical reflection, reflective discourse, and action” (Merriam, et al., 2007, p. 134) are embodied in our process. Through making art together and engaging in conversations about our perspectives and approaches, artists engaged in this kind of practice learn from one another in ways that are both transformative and empowering.

Third, through our public blog (<https://bookproject2020.blogspot.com>) and the work itself, we demonstrated transformative learning in the relationship between ourselves as artists, our work, and the audience, ultimately seeking to awaken consciousness, or conscientization (Freire, 1970) within our audience on the various socio-political themes that we all tackled. In addition, the benefits of this particular art practice were highlighted through the blog posts where artists shared work in progress, finalized art technical discoveries, and research about their topics.

Themes, Research, and Process

Monthly socially-distanced book exchanges, allowed us to interact in person. This ritual was especially poignant for those isolating alone at home during Covid-19. Regrettably, as the pandemic worsened, in-person meetups were changed to book drop offs outside of our homes. Frequent video meetings, however, created continuity.



Figure 4. November 2020 Book Swap at Artist Aziza Gibson-Hunter’s Home.

Washington, D.C. was the base for most of the artists in our group, while others lived in Virginia, Maryland, and New York. All are art educators—some retired after decades of service, while several members actively navigated the sudden switch to digital learning in schools, universities, and communities, as a result of the pandemic. As bookmakers, painters, printmakers, dollmakers, and mixed media artists, we embraced the artist’s book as a powerful medium to tell our own stories as Black women artists living through the multiple crises and traumas of 2020. This urgent social reality showed up in the themes we chose.



Figure 5. Artist Gail Shaw-Clemons Printing the text for her book, *The Crocodile*, at Pyramid Atlantic Art Center, Hyattsville, MD.

Prompted by the killing of one of her students by police in New York, one artist created a visual critique of police brutality. Dandelions or thistles were frequent metaphors for women's resilience in other books, while the *We, The Coffee* book highlighted the strength of Black women in times of crisis—like coffee, the hotter the water (or situation) the stronger the coffee.



Figure 6. Artist Julee Dickerson-Thompson discussing her *We, The Coffee* box book at Artist-Mentor Lilian Burwell’s home, August 2020.

Other topics included masks as symbols of survival, pain, and resilience, inspired by Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poem, *We Wear the Mask*. I turned to a Ralph Ellison essay referencing names to launch my book. Another artist used a small book *Retablos of Resistance* "inspired by Mexican retablos [gilded and carved folding screens typically found in churches/homes most are small, book-sized altars] and ex-votos [small paintings on tin]" (Artist #9, unpublished document). Another's concept of "progression" sparked questions for her about how things come to change in the world and in society, while another member explored X as an unknown factor in math, along with its uncertainty and doubt, as a prompt for hers. Finally, one member urged us to bear witness to what we "witnessed" in 2020, and decided to use the recurring silhouette of a young girl as a symbol of innocence.



Figure 7. *Retablos of Resistance* artist pages.

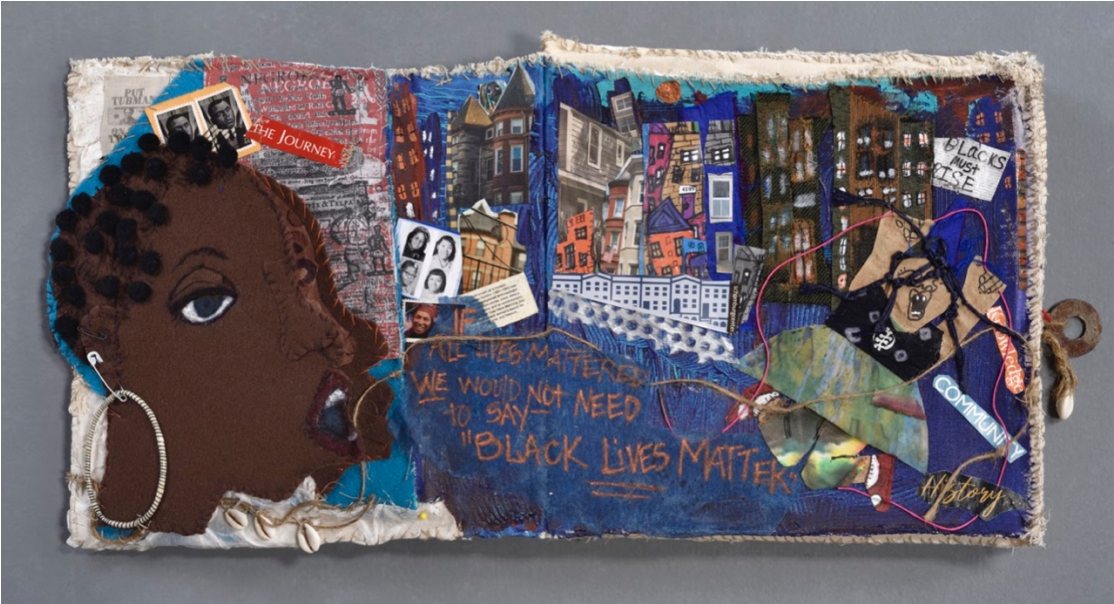


Figure 8. Witness in the Midst of it All artist pages.



Figure 9. We, The Coffee artist pages.

Though each artist took different paths to conceive their artists’ book, informed by their own unique histories of making, each was united in their determination to make meaning from the multiple crises that erupted that year. The visual narratives embodied in the nine unique artists’ books document the traumatic social, cultural, and political

landscape in a restorative act to transform our pain. The transformative learning that took place built our resilience, cemented our relationship as a community of artists, and empowered us to amplify our voices.



Figure 10. Artist Kamala Subramanian's entry in Artist Francine Haskin's book, *Witness in the Midst of it All*



Figure 11. Artist Michele Godwin's entry in Artist Francine Haskin's book, *Witness in the Midst of it All*.



Figure 12. Artist Aziza Gibson-Hunter’s entry in Artist Kamala Subramanian’s book, X.



Figure 13. Author's entry in Artist Kamala Subramanian's book, X.



Figure 14. Artist Francine Haskin's book, *Witness in the Midst of it All*, with entries from three artists.

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Arts in Mind: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Museum Programs for Persons Living with Young-Onset and Early-Stage Alzheimer's Disease

*“This public, yet
protected,
environment allows
for a sense of
intimacy, both
among the group and
between participant
and care partner,
while maintaining
an environment of
excitement,
spontaneity, and
connection that
comes with a
social outing.”*

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Rachel Thompson

Yale University

Angel Duncan

University of Tampa

Jessica Sack

Yale University

ABSTRACT

This paper reflects on Arts in Mind, an ongoing museum-based program for those with Young-onset Alzheimer's or in the early stages of memory loss. Co-developed in 2019 by the authors, an art therapist with experience in Alzheimer's clinical trials research and two museum educators. Arts in Mind is a monthly program that invites people living with Young-onset Alzheimer's and their care partners to look at and make art together. Arts in Mind responds to a previously unmet need for programming specifically designed for the Young-onset Alzheimer's population and individuals in early stages of the disease. Sessions are anchored in the art encounter, accessible, responsive, and experiential. Additionally, the program a site of mentorship for the next generation of art therapists, museum educators and medical professionals. This paper offers a replicable and sustainable partnership model for museum and art therapy-based memory loss programs for an often overlooked population.

KEY WORDS

Museum education, Alzheimer's Disease, Art Therapy, Young-onset, Memory Loss, Social Prescription

To correspond with the authors regarding this article:

rachel.thompson@yale.edu

aduncan@ut.edu

jessica.sack@yale.edu

In this paper, we—an art therapist with experience in Alzheimer’s disease clinical research trials and two museum educators—reflect on our experiences designing and facilitating Arts in Mind, a co-created, accessible, and engaging museum program for people living with Young-onset and early-stage Alzheimer’s and their care partners. Arts in Mind at the Yale University Art Gallery provides participants and their care partners the opportunity to embark on art experiences that combine close looking, conversation, and artmaking. The program began when Angel Duncan approached Jessica Sack and Rachel Thompson at the Yale University Art Gallery in 2019. Knowing that the Yale University Art Gallery already had a program for those with moderate-stage memory loss, Duncan proposed co-developing a program for those with Young-onset Alzheimer’s and those in the early stages of Alzheimer’s. Her work in clinical research showed her firsthand that Alzheimer’s research centers often serve as one of the only social outlets for this population.

While clinical trials aim to find a cure by slowing and stopping the disease’s progression, the arts aim to preserve quality of life. Current research studies expand upon our understanding of how the arts impact the brain and may even offer clues into consciousness and where memory pockets, areas of the brain where memories are stored, may be housed (Badhwar, 2018). As awareness of and interest in using dignified arts programs grows, expressive art therapy is becoming an increasingly popular and promising means of enhancing quality of life for the Young-onset Alzheimer’s population as a complement to research trials (Flatt et al., 2015). Additionally, art museum programming for visitors with memory loss has become more common as a way to normalize the inclusion of those living with dementia in society. We recognized the potential in bridging the fields of art therapy and museum education to design an experience that combined art appreciation with artmaking, particularly for those with Young-onset Alzheimer’s, whose unique needs are often overlooked.

Background: Responding to an Unmet Need

A gradual growth in Alzheimer’s awareness has been marked by an emergent emphasis on destigmatizing the disease and improving quality of life in the absence of a cure. In some cases, medical professionals are seeing community programs as potentially therapeutic and have begun to recommend “social prescriptions,” non-medical interventions often provided by local community groups that aim to supplement medical treatment by providing activities for wellbeing, enjoyment, and social engagement (Drinkwater et al., 2019). Chatterjee and Thomson (2015) have applied the concept of social prescribing to describe how physicians might recommend informal treatment for patients with Alzheimer’s in public spaces as opportunities for community engagement, social interaction, and recreation (p. 306).

In recent years, the arts and humanities, by way of art therapists and museum educators, have expanded offerings for those living with Alzheimer’s, particularly for those in the moderate stage of the disease as a way of normalizing memory loss in public spaces. The Médecins francophones du Canada, a physicians membership group, partnered with the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in an effort to better serve patients with physical and mental health ailments (BBC News, 2016). The initial phase of their partnership was to provide up to 50 social prescriptions for a visit to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The concept that “art is good medicine” has encouraged patients to sign up to attend the museum’s exhibits. Following this project, the United Kingdom initiated a campaign to implement museum visits

as prescribed interventions throughout the U.K. by 2023 (Solly, 2018). Physicians are showing interest in observing how being in the museum and viewing art enables their patients to find peace of mind, ease suffering, and combat symptoms of isolation and loneliness.

Museum programs have become recognized as sites of informal care for people with Alzheimer's, but those with Young-onset Alzheimer's are often overlooked in the design of these programs. While Alzheimer's is often seen as an "old person's disease," Young-onset Alzheimer's is a rare form of the disease affecting persons younger than the age of 65. Young-onset Alzheimer's impacts approximately 200,000 to 240,000 people in the United States (Mayo Clinic, 2020). However, as healthcare professionals may dismiss younger individuals seeking diagnosis as being too young to have memory loss, and as physicians do not always know where to turn for help in assessing these younger patients' symptoms, these numbers are presumed to be underreported (Alzheimer's Association, 2019).

Both individuals with Young-onset Alzheimer's and those over the age of 65 years who are in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease often find themselves feeling trapped. They feel too cognitively intact to attend a day-stay or need homecare services, yet they experience anxiety and embarrassment from their inability to keep up with conversations, and therefore forgo their usual social activities (Riley et al., 2014). Most arts-based programs have been designed for those in the moderate to later stages of the disease, and therefore, those with Young-onset Alzheimer's and those in early stages of Alzheimer's disease have had fewer opportunities to participate. Persons living with Young-onset and early-stage Alzheimer's who lack social opportunities may be particularly vulnerable to loneliness and isolation, factors that can potentially exacerbate the disease's progression. Additionally, there is an increased risk for developing a neurological disorder, such as Alzheimer's disease, when mental and psychosocial stressors fail to provide social opportunities (Sutin et al., 2020; Hsiao et al., 2018). In developing Arts in Mind, we saw a need for engagement for this subset of the population.

We recognized that museum programs could be particularly beneficial for people living with Young-onset Alzheimer's disease because they have elements that are both public and intimate; participants visiting museums as part of memory loss tours are able to maintain an important connection to public life with their care partners while still feeling safe among their group of peers in an experience designed specifically for them (Brorsson et al., 2011). This public, yet protected, environment allows for a sense of intimacy, both among the group and between participant and care partner, while maintaining an environment of excitement, spontaneity, and connection that comes with a social outing. Additionally, because museum programs attract a variety of audiences with a broad range of needs and goals, museum educators are trained in using pedagogies that are structurally flexible and readily adaptable to the particularities of the groups they serve. For Young-onset populations, a session's structure and content can be adjusted to the varying needs of each individual in the group as well as the often rapid progression of the disease. Museum educators' methods for facilitating art appreciation experiences can be deepened by the expertise of art therapists, who can provide opportunities for deeper psychological perspectives through the artmaking process. This commitment to collaboration has been a guiding principle in the development of Arts in Mind.

Designing Arts in Mind: A Multidisciplinary Collaboration Connecting Medical Professionals, Art Therapists, Museum Educators, and Their Students

In designing Arts in Mind, we drew on and learned from each other's unique expertise working with those with Alzheimer's in our own professional settings: art therapy, clinical trials research, and museum education. Recent research has suggested that when professionals with different areas of expertise collaborate to design, implement, and evaluate art museum programs for people with Alzheimer's disease, art museums can be effective settings for social prescriptions. Flatt et al. (2015) hypothesized that, in the context of a program for people with Alzheimer's, a key element of the program's success was the "early and sustained collaborations between the University of Pittsburgh and the [Alzheimer's Disease Research Center's] Education and Information Core and the Andy Warhol Museum" (p. 388). The medical perspective has been integral to Arts in Mind since the program's design and inception, as staff from the Yale University Alzheimer's Disease Research Unit (ADRU) helped to identify the participants from their research center who might benefit from a museum program as a social prescription. Their medical expertise and knowledge about study participants' interests allowed them to recommend participants to Arts in Mind. They also recognized the need for more opportunities for this population to participate in arts-based programming. Once our team had identified the group of participants based on referrals from the ADRU, we collaboratively planned sessions to match their interests, needs, and preferences.

Additionally, to ensure programming like Arts in Mind becomes part of the practice for the next generation of art therapists, museum educators, and medical professionals, we made sure to incorporate mentorship opportunities for emerging professionals in each discipline. Since the creation of Arts in Mind, medical school residents, art therapy students, and Wurtele Gallery Teachers—Yale University graduate students trained as museum educators—have been participant-observers in Arts in Mind sessions and have contributed to the program's design and evaluation. These mentees have become valuable members of the group and often engage with the participants in conversation about the art.

Arts in Mind: The Product of Collaboration

We designed Arts in Mind to connect the fields of medical research, art therapy, and museum education to create a program that could be used as a social prescription for individuals living with Young-onset and/or early-stage Alzheimer's disease. By combining art therapy modalities with museum spaces and pedagogies, Arts in Mind seeks to provide an enjoyable, social, accessible experience that engages abstract thinking while activating the imagination and encouraging self-expression.

A typical Arts in Mind session includes two to three artworks that span a variety of styles, time periods, and geographies. Each session has a two-part structure that begins with the museum educators guiding the group through closely looking at the chosen works of art by facilitating inquiry and dialogue. Participants—both those with Alzheimer's and their care partners—observe the artworks, describe what they see, and make connections. Second, the art therapist leads an art experiential that connects to the artworks just viewed and discussed. Participants are invited to draw or use gallery-safe materials while engaging in the directive in front of the work of art. After making art together, the art therapist leads a

reflective conversation in which participants along with care partners share with the group what they made and what it means to them. In addition to this two-part structure, each session of the program includes four common elements: sessions are anchored in the art encounter, accessible, responsive, and experiential.



Figure 1. Gallery Teachers, art therapy students, and resident physicians engage in close looking activities with participants.

Anchored in the Art Encounter

The art encounter is the core experience of Arts in Mind. Drawing on best practices from both museum education and art therapy, we select objects that have the potential to foster discussion, activate memories, and connect to an art experiential. We select one or more objects that can be grouped by themes, such as landscape, heroes of stories, the decisions artists make, and duality. Choosing a theme serves multiple purposes. For the facilitators, grouping objects based on a theme helps to guide conversation, drawing out and highlighting connections among the artworks. For participants, those in the earlier stages have been able to make connections between objects within a chosen theme and have enjoyed the task of comparing/contrasting works of art within a theme. Participants in the later stages might not be able to recognize and make connections among artworks within a theme, but still find meaning in each artwork, one at a time. Additionally, care partners enjoy the thematic framework of the sessions.

While the art encounter is the anchor for all participants, we have found that the nature of this encounter differs depending on the stage and severity of Alzheimer's for each individual. For those in the earlier stages, the conversation has focused on motifs, techniques, and aspects of the artwork such as color, material, and mood. For those in the later stages, the art encounter serves as a springboard for other types of discussion, such as memory sharing and storytelling, and for the art experiential. One Arts in Mind session included discussion of a photograph of Yosemite National Park, along with an oil painting depicting the landscape from a similar vantage point. Guided by our open-ended questions, participants in the earlier stages as well as some care partners compared and contrasted the two images, pointing out areas where the painter might have deviated from the reality that the photograph showed. However, those in the later stages were more interested in responding to the personal questions we asked, such as, "Has anyone been to a place like this?" or "Which do you prefer—the painting or the photograph?" We found that participants—even ones who were usually quiet—were eager to share their memories that the artworks provoked as well as their preference between the two pieces.

Accessible

When planning Arts in Mind sessions, we consider a variety of logistical factors to ensure that the museum is accessible for participants, keeping in mind that, for people living with Alzheimer's, accessibility is a "constantly changing experience" (Brorsson et al. 2011, p. 591). Accessibility encompasses a variety of factors including not only the ease of physical access, but also elements such as noise levels and crowding. We take these factors into account when designing Arts in Mind visits to ensure that spaces are not sonically or spatially overwhelming. We choose galleries that were not being used by any other groups and that are large enough to accommodate a group of approximately 20 participants, including care partners, leaving enough space for comfortable movement during art experientials. We aim to make travel throughout the museum as direct as possible, avoiding especially long or unnecessary travel between objects whenever possible to allow the group to remain focused and aware.

We also consider visibility in our choice of artworks, taking care to select objects that are both large enough to be visible even from a distance, and avoiding artworks that are difficult to see because of low contrast, dark colors, or the presence of a glare.

Additionally, we design the structure and content of sessions to be accessible for Arts in Mind's target population. We have found inquiry-based pedagogies, such as Visual Thinking Strategies (Yenawine, 2013), as well as thinking routines, such as "See, Think, Wonder," (Project Zero, 2019) to be adaptable for the Arts in Mind model, and in implementing these strategies, we take care to adopt a conversational tone rather than a quizzing one. Instead of asking a long series of closed-ended questions that prompt participants to identify elements of the artwork, we might opt to ask fewer questions—ones that are open-ended in nature—to generate discussion about the piece. When looking at a landscape painting together, we might ask, "What are you noticing?" or "What does this make you think about?" rather than questions that may have only one right answer.



Figure 2. The museum has foldable stools on rolling carts that are wheeled to each object so that participants can walk without carrying them.

Responsive

Arts in Mind sessions are carefully planned with structure and sequence but are responsive enough to meet the needs of the group. Alzheimer's disease progresses more rapidly for some than others, and Young-onset in particular is sometimes thought to progress more rapidly than other types of Alzheimer's (Stanley et al., 2014). In early sessions of Arts in Mind, we recognized that most of the participants had been recently diagnosed and were in the early stages of Young-onset. This meant that the participants were aware of the effects of memory loss on their own behavior but could still engage in and enjoy abstract thinking and discussion. A flexible teaching plan accommodates a range of needs among the group's participants.

In one session, an adaptation we made was transitioning from abstract to concrete themes and adjusting the questions and artmaking directives to allow for a range of engagement from the participants based on their own needs and abilities. We noticed that participants in the earlier stages of the disease were interested in discussing historical and thematic links between works of art, and as the disease progressed, they became more interested in the visual aspects of single objects. This also played out in the art experientials; those with the earlier stage diagnoses were able to create something in which they predicted what would happen next when an image showed a potential narrative, while those with more advanced Alzheimer's preferred observational drawing from the artworks.

Responsiveness is also vital given that the makeup of the group can vary from month to month due to a variety of factors, such as doctor's appointments or participants having a

bad day. Thus, we often tailor the general plan as needed and adapt in the moment to best accommodate the abilities and preferences of attending participants. This flexibility requires a great deal of what Schon (1983) refers to as “reflection-in-action,” which in our case, entails consciously reflecting on informal feedback we receive from participants and adjusting as necessary (p. 129). In one session, we spent longer than usual on the close looking segment of the program. As we were discussing a landscape painting, we heard one participant remark to his care partner: “If we spend any more time talking, we won’t get to draw!” This signaled to us that participants might be getting restless, and in order to maintain their focus, we transitioned to the art experiential portion of the session.

Experiential

The art directive portion of the program is a key component of sessions, and the art therapist is integral to ensuring that the art directives are meaningful for participants. For those living in the more moderate to later stages of the disease, selected artwork and themes may be more concrete in imagery and discussion points with a step-by-step process of artmaking. Whereas for those living in the Young-onset or early stages of the disease, the artwork selected is aimed to invoke an abstract thinking process where participants can reflect on and discuss the art. Participants are also able to focus their attention on specific details in the artwork, relying on their insights of what they see and in exercising their imagination on what the art is meant to represent. Engaging in art experientials either during or after observing the artwork, participants make art based on the theme of the visit. For example, looking at shapes and textures within an artwork, participants may use cut-out felt shapes and yarn to create their own artwork. Other artmaking directives may include looking at an artwork and focusing on a certain section within it and sketching what they see.



Figure 3. Participants use felt and yarn kits to create scenes inspired by the artworks on view and to experiment with elements of art, composition, and abstraction.

The art experiential component of the session also includes a space to reflect on the process of making. The art therapist leads this conversation, inviting participants to respond to questions such as “What was it like to create your artwork?” and “What would you title your piece?” Often, the title that participants give their piece can offer insight into their thinking and state of mind. This is an opportunity for both partners to share their creative process and to make meaning of their work, creating further opportunities for self-expression and connection—both between couples and among all those involved with the group. Often, this reflection conversation has become a space for laughter, encouragement, and even awe at the creativity of the members of our group.

The multidisciplinary nature of Arts in Mind allows for each of our areas of expertise—medical research, art therapy, and museum education—to build on the strengths and deepen the impact of the others. Coupling looking at art with making art allows participants to tap into thoughts and emotions, thereby using expression and artmaking to process the art on a deeper level. Additionally, the experience allows the care partners to see their partner in a different light. Rather than having to serve as their partner’s memory, they are able to enjoy a museum program that is designed with both their needs and their partner’s needs and abilities in mind. An ongoing goal of the program is to provide an environment in which participants can connect and collaborate with each other and be true partners rather than caregiver and diagnosee.

Responses of Care Partners and Medical Providers

Each session of Arts in Mind concludes with built-in time for reflection in order for us to understand participants’ responses to the program and to take requests for themes and topics for future sessions that connect to participants’ interests. Care partners provide additional context to participants’ responses and help facilitators adapt to the group’s needs. Some care partners have shared that participating in Arts in Mind has deeply engaged their significant other. During one session, a care partner shared that when her significant other responded to questions asked of the group, he spoke directly to her and stayed engaged for longer than expected. We later learned that he specifically resonated with the photograph we showed because he was a photographer. Another participant living with Young-onset Alzheimer’s shared his enthusiasm with the group and reflected that he found art to be comforting and mentally stimulating, and that the introduction of art has further enriched his use of time at home. In addition, spouses of those affected with Alzheimer’s have reported that they have been able to reconnect with their loved ones in more meaningful ways, strengthening relational bonds. One spouse commented on the program:

This was the first time that I have seen my husband’s self-confidence come back since his diagnosis. He did not feel confident in speaking in front of people. To see him speak in front of an entire group of people who he didn’t know about the art exhibited, was so thrilling to see his self-confidence come back (personal communication, March 1, 2020).

Another care partner found that communicating through the art experientials was a means for substituting words when her partner struggled to verbally express his needs. She

expressed that the art experientials brought a calmness in the mind, providing easier access to self-expression than what could be done with words. The care partners see Arts in Mind as a space for them as well, giving them a place to connect with others while stepping back from the caregiving role. The repetition of coming together in ongoing dialogue among all parties—facilitators and their mentees as well as participants and their care partners—creates a sense of cohesive community.

We also invite feedback from the medical researchers and professional caregivers who attend Arts in Mind. After one session, the clinical researchers and caregivers who attended the program reported being able to connect with participants on a deeper level that allowed them to see the person beyond the disease. Additionally, two of the resident physicians working as ADRU study raters remarked that, as they were embarking on their careers, this program helped them to see the human side of patients and learn that social prescriptions are an option. Reflections such as these inform the ongoing development and adaptation of the program.

Creating and Sustaining Impact through Mentorship

Both the art therapist and museum educators mentor students being trained in their respective fields, and Arts in Mind has become an opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience. As part of her training, Emily Scranton, a graduate student from the Masters of Art in Art Therapy and Counseling program at Albertus Magnus College, has participated in and co-led art directives in Arts in Mind sessions. She gained an expanded understanding of museum teaching coupled with art therapy techniques that can be applied in her future career with this population. Reflecting on her experience with Arts in Mind, Scranton remarked:

Art can be as grounding for this population as it can be activating. I've witnessed participants sketching with great focus to capture details in artwork. As a facilitator, I've learned to use the artwork as a "home base." It becomes a rallying point for discussion, attention, and deeper connection (personal communication, March 30, 2021).

Our hope is that as graduate students Wurtele Gallery Teachers learn to work with visitors with memory loss during their formal education, such offerings will become part of their own expectations for what museums provide within their regular educational programming. Our goal is that when our student mentees move on to full time employment after graduating, they will apply this flexibility and adaptability to their future work with greater awareness of people's varying needs, continuing to normalize museum art therapy programs as social prescriptions in their respective fields.

Building a Replicable Model

Some neurologists have recognized that the arts can meet their need to treat their patients living with Alzheimer's in more holistic ways. Daniel C. Potts, MD, FAAN, attending neurologist at the Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Affiliate Faculty at the University of Alabama-Birmingham and the University of South Alabama Medical Schools, states:

We healthcare providers are not particularly good at breaking bad news. Diagnoses such as Alzheimer's, that have no globally effective treatments or cures, are difficult to make. But we must keep in mind the goal of helping people to live as well as possible with the condition, even if it can't be cured. A diagnosis of Alzheimer's or another kind of dementia does not render one less a person, and therefore less in need of those activities and relationships that enhance quality of life in all of us....Activities and opportunities such as these [Arts in Mind] may well ease the burden of care partnership and help to build more compassionate, inclusive communities, in addition to helping persons with Alzheimer's and other dementias to live as well as possible (personal communication, December 29, 2020).

We hope that as more physicians become aware of the need for social opportunities for their patients with Young-onset Alzheimer's, they will be encouraged to refer patients to programs like Arts in Mind as an effective treatment modality that complements medical care.

The multidisciplinary approach modeled through Arts in Mind shows the potential benefit of medical professionals, art therapists, and museum educators working together to provide care for those living with Alzheimer's. This collaborative method creates an important conversation among medical professionals, art therapists, and museum educators that can serve as a model for holistic and integrated care for our aging communities while ensuring that the next generation of practitioners receives training to sustain these programs. The multi-disciplinary approach that cuts across the existing division between the medical and art fields means that medical professionals, therapists, and museum educators can work together rather than in isolation to create holistic care programs for those struggling with the early stages of memory loss disease. Stronger partnerships between these fields means that recently diagnosed individuals can learn about programs like Arts in Mind through research centers, medical providers, or assisted living communities at a much earlier stage, gaining access to critical social and creative outlets along with their care partners. The model also allows for holistic engagement with care partner and diagnosee, allowing the care partner to step back from the role of caregiver and instead become a partner to the participant during the program. We found that our consideration of the needs of the care partner and their relationship with the participant living with Alzheimer's helped the care partner to find relief from stress and an opportunity to engage with their loved ones in a dignified way. While there is no cure for the disease currently available, we believe that collaboratively-designed arts programs such as Arts in Mind hold great promise for complementing medical treatment and enriching quality of life for those with Young-onset Alzheimer's.

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Intergenerational & Intragenerational Connections within a University Art Museum Program for People with Dementia

“This public, yet protected, environment allows for a sense of intimacy, both among the group and between participant and care partner, while maintaining an environment of excitement, spontaneity, and connection that comes with a social outing.”

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Sujal Manohar

Duke University

Jessica Kay Ruhle

Duke University Nasher Museum of Art

ABSTRACT

This visual essay highlights the impacts of the Nasher Museum of Art’s Reflections program, which engages people with dementia (PWD) and their care partners through interactive art museum tours. This program’s conversation-based tours with built-in time to socialize are designed to foster intergenerational and intragenerational connections between PWD and museum gallery guides, PWD and care partners, and between PWD. Discussions about artwork are visitor-driven and encourage lifelong learning among participants. Anecdotal feedback from Reflections participants and gallery guides confirms the value of relationship building, improving quality of life for PWD. By fostering community and strong connections, Reflections programs help reduce the social isolation that is common among PWD. In addition, such programs for PWD are important because they are tailored to the specific needs of this group. This reduces barriers to socialization, decreases stigma surrounding the condition, and creates a safe space within the larger institution of an art museum.

KEY WORDS

Art Museum, Dementia, Alzheimer’s, Memory Loss, Relationships, Connections

To correspond with the authors regarding this article:

sujal.manohar@bcm.edu

jessicakayruhle@gmail.com

Museums continually assess the accessibility of their exhibitions and programs. Considering the needs of their communities has led a growing number of art museums to institute programs designed for visitors with Alzheimer's disease, a form of dementia, and related dementias. Specialized initiatives are critical because people with dementia (PWD) may exhibit behaviors which are different from other museum visitors, such as, difficulty remembering locations or details, a tendency to wander, or making verbal interruptions. Additionally, the engagement needs of PWD are different and a museum tour that heavily incorporates art historical facts may not be appropriate for these visitors (Halpin-Healy, 2017).

The Nasher Museum of Art began Reflections, a program for PWD and their care partners, in 2013. Opened in 2005 on Duke University's campus in Durham, North Carolina, the Nasher exhibits rotating exhibitions and a permanent collection focused on contemporary art. PWD are typically adults over the age of 65 and usually accompanied by a care partner, who may be a spouse or partner, adult child, friend, or professional care provider. Programming for PWD supports the museum's mission to promote visual arts engagement for both the Duke and Durham communities.

In addition to aligning with museum missions, these initiatives are critical as rates of PWD increase dramatically. There are over 6 million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease today; this number is "expected to nearly triple by 2050" as the baby-boom generation ages (Alzheimer's Association, 2021). Previous studies have shown the value of arts programs on PWD (Belver, 2017; Livingston, 2016). Care partners of PWD also reported improved well-being and reduced feelings of social isolation after participating in art museum-based dementia programming (Lamar & Luke, 2016). This work builds on past research and highlights the role that university art museums can play in establishing intergenerational and intragenerational connections through a dementia program that relies on student involvement.

To remain relevant and better serve their communities, museums must respond to this population shift. As rates of dementia rise, all cultural organizations can encourage dementia-friendly environments by recognizing the ability of PWD to build relationships, continue learning, and experience joy.

University Student Engagement

Reflections offers 90-minute¹ guided tours that combine time in the galleries with art making activities and live musical performances. As a university art museum, the Nasher prioritized opportunities for intergenerational learning in the design of Reflections. The museum hired Duke University undergraduate and graduate level students to work alongside staff. The students commit to a minimum of four hours of training and four hours of leading tours per month, although most work more. The museum team has also included

¹ Participants commonly spend more than 90 minutes at the museum per visit. However, the structured portion of their visit lasts 90 minutes. Individuals might extend their visit by touring additional galleries, having a meal, or socializing at the museum.

Duke University medical students, often in their first and third years of medical school (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Graduate student, Emmaline, engaging with visitors during a tour.

For two years, Duke undergraduate student Brittany served as Education Assistant for the program, contacting nursing homes and care facilities, scheduling tours, and leading groups through the museum. Having a student in this role further solidified the connection between university students and Reflections visitors (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Brittany pointing out a detail on a textile piece.

University students also perform in the galleries as part of the live music component of the program. Duke Student Orchestra, as well as individual instrumental musicians, have performed for Reflections.

Additionally, the museum encourages student-designed projects related to Reflections. One such project, “Alzheimer’s and Art”, initiated by Sujal Manohar - a Duke University undergraduate at the time - utilized documentary photography to share the program with a student audience. The images included in this essay are some photographs from that project. They lead the viewer through a typical Reflections experience, illustrating program components and portraying the relationships between university students, museum staff and gallery guides, and participants. The photographs welcome an examination of the impact of those connections on Reflections’ participants, the museum, and the broader community.

Structural Elements that Support Connections

Reflections is structured to encourage relationship building for all involved with the program. This begins with gallery guide training, which consists of art historical content related to the collection, as well as training in Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and other techniques for visitor engagement. VTS utilizes three open-ended questions – What’s going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find? – to encourage visitor-led explorations of works of art (Yenawine, 2014). The Nasher team does not use VTS exclusively, but the technique is at the core of the Reflections experience. Additional Reflections-specific training has been led by dementia experts from the local Alzheimer’s Association, a neighboring county department on aging, and geriatric specialists from the Duke Nursing Program.

These trainings help museum guides prepare for working with PWD by considering the art objects they select for tours, assessing their questions for the group, and imagining ways to fully engage visitors using all their senses, movement, or music. To connect with PWD, training sessions include strategies for communicating with participants experiencing changes in verbal abilities, including non-verbal visitors. Guides also learn how to assist PWD who might feel agitated in the museum, or need specific physical accommodations.

The Reflections tours themselves also support relationship building. The experience starts with a warm welcome at the museum entrance. Gallery guides, including students, engage with visitors as they arrive for tours. Prioritizing conversation for fifteen minutes at the start of the visit encourages the sharing of stories. Bonds established during this period support engagement during the tour and build a more nuanced understanding of PWD among the multi-generational team of gallery guides.

Along with dedicating time, the museum staff incorporates nametags into this social period. Large print nametags are distributed to attendees and staff wear their own (see Figure 3). Having everyone wear their names breaks down barriers between facilitator and attendee. In this friendly atmosphere, conversation is easier for all involved, especially PWD who may socialize more comfortably with a nametag.



Figure 3. Museum staff incorporates nametags into social period.

After this socialization period, guides lead the group into the galleries to begin the 90-minute guided experience (see Figures 4 & 5). Designed to be conversational, the tours examine three or four artworks in the museum's temporary and permanent exhibitions. Guides intentionally structure their questions in the galleries to encourage discussion. For example, guides ask open-ended, observation-based questions with no correct answers, rather than questions relying on memory or learned facts which may lead to frustration. The guides also allow an extended silence after asking a question, giving PWD the time they may need to formulate and communicate a response. Deliberately controlling the pace of the tour can make it more accessible to PWD.



Figures 4 & 5. Museum guides leading guided tours.



Figures 6. Museum guides lead visitor-driven discussions.

As tours move through the museum, discussions are visitor-driven, spontaneous, and unique to the group's specific combination of participants (see Figure 6). Guides are knowledgeable and intersperse art historical information such as the artist's background, historical context, and larger movements of the era throughout the discussion based on visitor interest (see Figure 7). However, any content shared is equal in value to participant observations. Valuing the viewers' perspectives and curiosities further strengthens the connection between guides and participants. Creating an environment in which the contributions of PWD are appreciated is important because such spaces are so often lacking as individuals grow older and experience memory loss.



Figures 7. Museum guides share information on art contexts.

Works of art often reference complex sociopolitical or cultural themes. Discussing these artworks is another form of respect for this audience. Rather than making assumptions about the ability of PWD to engage in critical discussions. Reflections tours invite meaningful exchange and diverse opinions. Intergenerational sharing of perspectives and life experiences happens between visitors, museum staff, and students in a way that rarely takes place in other museum interactions. Discussions are full of laughter, lively moments, and genuine curiosity (see Figure 8).



Figures 8. Museum discussions full of laughter.

Beyond looking at artwork, half of the tours conclude with live music in the galleries and the other half end with an art-making activity (see Figure 9). The following image highlights the live music component of the program, with a performance from a local bluegrass trio who have played repeatedly for Reflections. Other music groups have spanned a variety of genres, including jazz, hip-hop, and classical. The musicians are hired by the museum and work with staff in advance to coordinate their song selections with the tour's featured artwork.



Figures 9. Live music in the galleries.

The following images depicts a tour which culminated in an interactive art-making activity. Past art activities include collages, watercolor painting, printmaking with stamps, and decorative crafts. Guides offer modifications to accommodate a range of abilities. During the tour depicted here, visitors photographed architectural details in the museum using Polaroid cameras (see Figure 10).



Figures 10. Photographing architectural details.

Working in pairs, participants selected a detail to photograph, framed their image, and titled the photograph (see Figure 11). The activity concluded with participants' images displayed on a temporary "Reflections Gallery" panel (see Figure 12).



Figures 11. Photographing architecture.

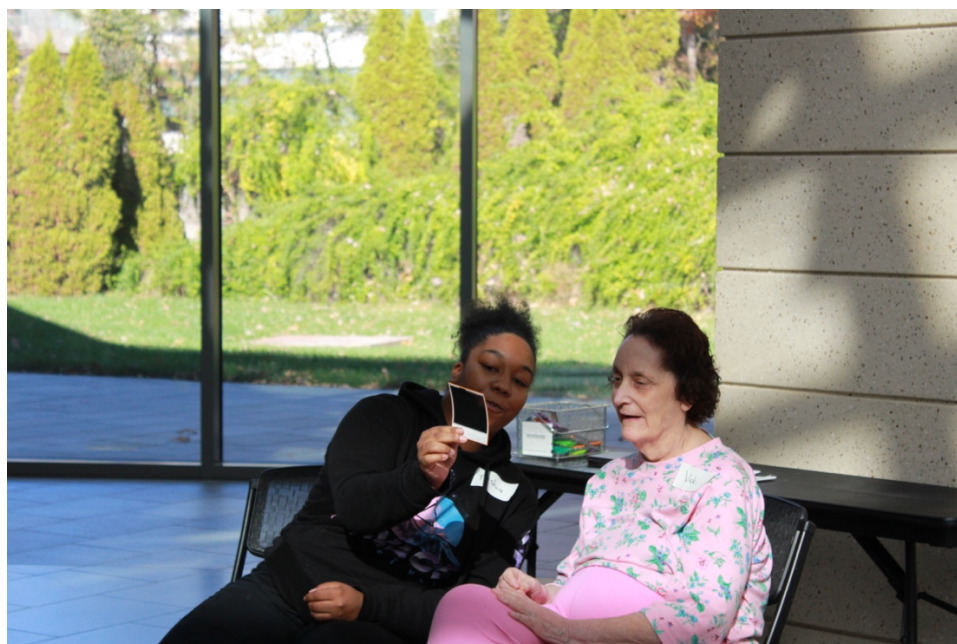


Figures 12. "Reflections Gallery" panel.

Program Evaluation and Community Impact

Perhaps the largest impact of Reflections is the connections, both intergenerational and intragenerational, it builds. Participants bond with each other, as well as with the gallery guides and other museum staff.

The Nasher's unique position as a university art museum allows for intergenerational relationships, particularly between students and visitors. Gallery guide and undergraduate student Sujal expressed the value of intergenerational connections while in college: "since most of the people I interact with are ages eighteen to twenty-two, spending time with Reflections participants has given me a new perspective on my experiences and goals." Such intergenerational connections are seen in the photograph below, with a visitor with dementia and her care partner discussing a Polaroid image (see Figure 13).



Figures 13. Care partners discuss Polaroid image.

The museum surveys participants at the end of each tour in part to better understand how visitors experience these connections. Responses have been overwhelmingly positive, and many open-ended comments focus on the relationships formed through the program. One tour participant shared, "The warmth and smiles of the [guides] does not go unnoticed or unappreciated. It is wonderful to come up the steps and through the doors to be greeted by friends." Another visitor, a care partner, commented, "Perhaps the greatest impact of that one hour was the warmth and kindness Bill sensed from our guide."

Reflections tours also strengthen intragenerational connections between visitors. Such connections are especially crucial for this audience, which is at higher risk for social isolation. PWD withdraw from social interactions for a variety of reasons, accelerating the symptoms of dementia; ultimately, isolation is "associated with reduced survival" (Orrell et al., 2000). As previously mentioned, the conversational tour structure encourages relationship building among participants. Additionally, the museum staff welcomes

Reflections visitors to join one another for lunch in the museum cafe before or after tours. Many do and this provides an unstructured opportunity for connections.

Recently, Maureen, a non-student gallery guide, shared that a participant inquired about the wellbeing of another regular visitor who had not been present for several weeks. The participant wanted to check-in on the other visitor and the family member who accompanied them. These individuals only know each other through their time at the museum and the concern expressed suggests they formed a meaningful bond through Reflections tours.

In some cases, tours strengthen the relationship between PWD and the care partners who attend with them. Pairs share that conversations in the galleries include personal details, or reminiscences, that offer new information about each other. Charles, a Reflections participant, joined a musician in the galleries playing drums which led to his wife learning that he played in a family band during college. Other pairs have found that the art making sessions lead to explorations of new art interests together. Couples have told the museum staff about learning to watercolor, collaging together, or visiting other art museums as a result of Reflections. These shared social and cultural experiences offer new ways for people to connect and relate to one another, even those in long-term relationships.



Figures 14. “Reflections Gallery” panel.

For pairs and individuals, the art education incorporated into Reflections encourages lifelong learning. PWD who have not previously identified as artists may learn and develop

new creative skills. For example, Reflections participant, Harold, enjoyed experimenting with watercolors and, outside of the museum, enrolled in a class. He honed his skills and, months later, his bird paintings were exhibited at the town library. Another visitor brought her artwork, a hook-rug, to a session to share with others after the group discussed a painting that featured a Middle Eastern rug. Recognizing the ability for PWD to continue learning and growing, and to connect that growth to their own lives, is a key component to any creative initiative (Power, 2017).

Social isolation threatens the physical and mental health of older adults and, in particular, PWD. The connections that are possible in a museum-based program, such as Reflections, can improve quality of life for PWD and positively impact the broader community by expanding awareness and decreasing stigma related to memory loss. Museum staff, university students, and other museum visitors have a chance to see PWD as full people with skills, interests, and stories to tell. In the words of two Reflections participants, “Our world is shrinking rapidly; friendships get cut off. This is a great way to meet like-minded people” and “The fact that we come back repeatedly means we can build friendships.”

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