Journal Theme: Ritual

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This issue of the International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education is inspired by the theme of ritual. There are many ways we might define ritual, and these definitions vary extensively contingent upon its’ focus. Rituals are usually identified by a specific set of features many of which are defined as rigid, formal, repetitive, and symbolic in nature. However, there is no single point of view to describe the unlimited variety of what we call ritual. Some view ritual as a safe container; one with a clear beginning and end. For instance, a meal, a greeting, a meditation practice, a dance, a curriculum, or the many layered processes of artmaking could look like a ritual. Ellen Dissanayake (1979) further “suggest[s] that the incorporation of aesthetic elements into ritual ceremony was an important feature in its adoption as a social practice, an adoption that mutually strengthened both activities, ritual and art” (p. 30). In this issue, we will learn about the yearly ritual of the Pearl and Murry Greenburg awards that recognize exceptional contributions to the field of art education and are made possible by the generosity of the Greenburg family. Then we will dive into the many ways our authors considered the role ritual has played regarding art and lifelong learning.

Reference

Dr. Susan Whiteland writes that her inspiration lies in the high bar of achievement set for her by colleagues and former Greenburg award winners. In her acceptance speech, she quotes former award winners, Angela LaPorte and Pamela Lawton, whose research informed her master’s thesis and continue to inspire her research of ways older and younger generations can make connections through artmaking. Dr. Whiteland has been teaching and providing service opportunities for future art educators at Arkansas State University for the last 11 years.

Eli Burke, Senior Program Manager, Designing Projects in Student Engagement and Career Development, a PhD candidate at the University of Arizona, received the Murray Greenberg Award for Emerging Scholar in Lifelong Learning. Eli explores ways art education might offer a more holistic approach to our arts communities and works to provide space for connection, cultural production, and shared histories across generations within queer communities.

Angela La Porte, Peg Speirs, and Camilla McComb introduce us to ritual and explore the role it has played across generations and through time. In this article, the authors strive to understand the transformative possibilities of bringing ritual as pedagogy to art education curriculum design and ways it could promote intergenerational conversations with participants from diverse backgrounds and ages.

In a beautiful visual essay, Mary Stokrocki explores a form of memorial rock painting as ritual that she and her neighbors came together to create during the COVID19 pandemic.

Melinda Heinz, Elissa Wenthe, and Alexis Schramels’ project offered therapeutic artmaking rituals for residents living in three levels of care, assisted living, memory care, and nursing homes. The residents worked with a variety of mediums including paint, clay, fiber, and wood, designed to fit the needs of individual ability levels. In addition, an art exhibition of resident work was created to showcase the creative abilities of these older adults.

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Libba Willcox looks at ways alternative professional development as content focused rituals for art teachers can provide learning opportunities that traditional professional development programs cannot. She finds that these rituals might provide aesthetic transformative experiences, that can empower teachers to fight against burnout, support renewal, and enable them to recover their joy of teaching.

Natalia Pilato explores the way her Sicilian mother’s generations of rituals in the kitchen shaped this author’s identity and served as a foundation for artistic expression and community engagement. Natalia invites us to have a seat at the table as we engage in a powerful narrative of shared stories and memories, that connect us to her mother’s kitchen through time, place, and making connections to a collaborative ritual of artmaking within a community.

Melinda Heinz shares stories, work, and exhibitions of members of the Men’s Shed Movement that originated in Australia in the 1990’s and has spread to Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, U.K., U.S., and South Africa. She shares that engaging in the creative activities of Men’s Sheds, has given men, and now women, who are retired, and isolated new purpose in their lives.

By engaging in the social practice of ritual or ritualistic artmaking, these authors lead us through the role ritual has played in strengthening intergenerational relationships, opening new understandings of peace and flow in creative artmaking processes, and the healing that can occur when we are engaged in personal or collaborative community ritualistic practices.

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