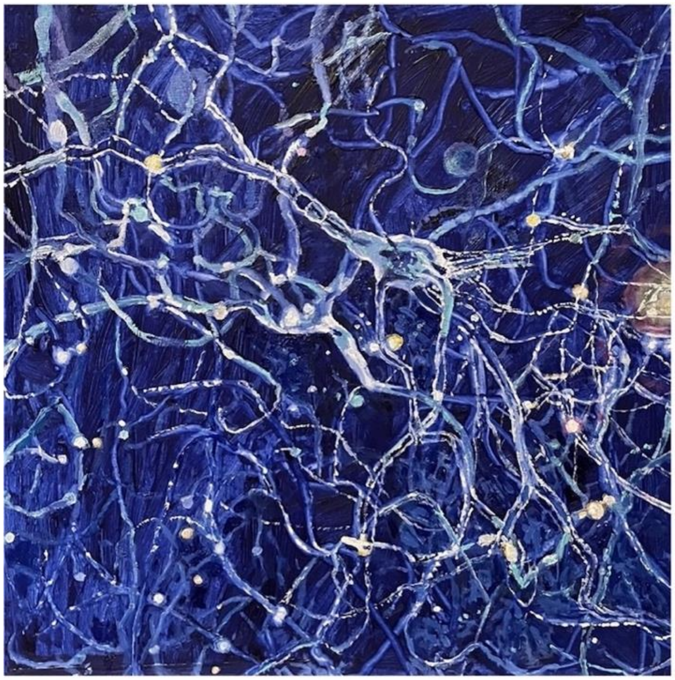
The International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education

Volume 7 | 2024



Connections

IN THIS ISSUE:

Journal Theme: Connections

Pearl and Murray Greenburg Award Lectures

Intergenerational Art: A Cultural Perspective

Ritualized Engrossment: Portraits of Early-Career Faculty Practicing Renewal

Crip Time and Creativity: Exploring Intergenerational Artmaking in a Children's Museum

Lest We Forget-About My Mother

Best Practices for Hybrid Art Museum Programs for People with Dementia

Amplifying the Coloring Art of a Friend with Alzheimer's Disease Through Collaboration

https://doi.org/10.25889/wmy1-jw37

Founder

Pamela Harris Lawton	Virginia Commonwealth University

Editor

Linda Helmick	University of Missouri

Editorial Board

Andrea Elliott	Converse College
Deborah Wall	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Susan Whiteland	Arkansas State University
Pamela Harris Lawton	Virginia Commonwealth University

Reviewer Roster

Joy Bertling	University of Tennessee
Rebecka Black	University of Arizona
Bryna Bobick	University of Memphis
Rebecca Bourgault	Montserrat College
Adjoa Burrowes	Washington, DC
Catherine Cross Tzinstzos	North Carolina
Melanie Davenport	Georgia State University
Libya Doman	Virginia
Cheri Ehrlich	Kutztown University
Andrea Elliott	Converse College
Susanne Floyd Gunter	Converse College
Linda Hoeptner Poling	Kent State University
Cindy Jesup	Florida State University
Elizabeth Langdon	The University of Kansas
Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja	Finland
Ann Lowshan	Museum Educator
Marjorie Manifold	Indiana University
Rachel McCain	SUNY Purchase College
Jeanne Nemeth	Herron School of Art & Design, Indiana University, Indianapolis
Anne O'Neill	Warren High School, Arkansas
Jessica Kay Ruhle	Duke University
Claire Schultz	University of Nebraska, Kearney
Ryan Shin	University of Arizona
Paige Smith-Wyatt	Florida State University
Borim Song	East Carolina University
Kryssi Staikidis	Northern Illinois University
Anne Thwaits	University of Arizona
Christine Woywod	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial: 1
Journal Theme: Connections
Linda Helmick

Pearl and Murray Greenburg Award Lectures 4
Margaret A. Walker
Linda Helmick

Intergenerational Art: A Cultural Perspective 14
Steve Willis

Ritualized Engrossment: Portraits of Early-Career Faculty Practicing Renewal 24
Samantha Goss
Libba Willcox

Crip Time and Creativity: Exploring Intergenerational Artmaking in a Children's Museum 37
Kelly M. Gross

Lest We Forget: Exploring My Mother's Journey Through Dementia 50
Cynthia van Frank

Best Practices for Hybrid Art Museum Programs for People with Dementia 72
Pooja Lalwani
Sujal Manohar
Jessica Kay Ruhle

Amplifying Art of a Friend with Alzheimer's Disease Through Collaboration 80
Elizabeth Langdon

Cover Images by van Frank and Gross.

Full Journal DOI:

International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education | Vol. 7, 2024

Linda Helmick, PhD
University of Missouri

Journal Theme: Connections

"Connections knitted together through creative activity are central to our wellbeing and manifest in many forms. They offer a sense of belonging, security, and validation, and are built on trust, vulnerability, and communication, allowing us to feel understood and valued."

To correspond with the author regarding this article:
lindahelmick@missouri.edu

https://doi.org/10.25889/g7ry-x898

This issue of the International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education is inspired by the theme of connections. Connections in this context can be described as personal, cultural, or contextual and refers to personal encounters between fellow humans, in the context of the cultural universe, through creative imaginings by means of artmaking in support of self or social transformation. Connections knitted together through creative activity are central to our wellbeing and manifest in many forms. They offer a sense of belonging, security, and validation, and are built on trust, vulnerability, and communication, allowing us to feel understood and valued. They also give rise to empathy, a key aspect of relating to others' emotions and experiences, as we share joys, challenges, and mutual support. Through human connections, shared goals, and creative resilience, we are reminded that we thrive when we are engaged with and supported by others. As the authors in this issue will suggest, creative art engagement can be an effective tool of self-care and care for and with others in uncertain times. Artmaking provides opportunities to explore polarities such as vulnerability and safety, uncertainty and predictability, as well as isolation and connection. It has the power to reduce the gap between polarities through exploring relevant themes, offering an outlet for people to express and regulate emotion, increase relaxation, decrease anxiety, provide social support, and overcome trauma. Moreover, the effectiveness of artmaking also manifests cognitive behavior improvements, such as providing problem-solving skills, as well as externalizing and making sense of complex layers of thoughts in a non-threatening way (Choudhry et al., 2020). In this way, artmaking can be seen as a silver lining of hope and expression that connects us to each other, the earth, and the universe. In this issue, we will learn about the work of Dr. Margaret A. Walker and Dr. Linda Helmick who earned 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 ways our authors considered the role connections has played regarding artmaking, creative activity, and lifelong learning.

Reference

Choudhry, R., MPP, Keane, C. (2020). *Art Therapy During A Mental Health Crisis: Coronavirus Pandemic Impact Report*. AMERICAN ART THERAPHY ASSOCIATION.

Dr. Margaret A. Walker writes that her inspiration lies

Dr. Linda Helmick received the Murray Greenberg Award for Emerging Scholar in Lifelong Learning. Dr. Helmick explores ways art education might offer a more loving and healing space for connection within our arts communities. She connects therapeutic arts creative activity with equity, wellness, and inclusion to the heart of the work she does in her research and in the field with the teachers she works with.

In a beautiful visual essay, Dr. Steve Willis introduces us to two Acoma female Elders and Clan Grandmothers through his visual experiences of connection with Mother Earth, the teachings of these elders, and the art of ceramics. In this essay, Dr Willis asks us to embrace the wisdom of our ancestors whose voices can be felt in the kindness of our hearts and the strength of our family connections.

Drs. Samantha Goss and Libba Willcox illustrate through visual collaborative autoethnography the impact of making and maintaining consistent meaningful connections in sustaining their personal and professional well-being. As early career faculty, they share their struggles and difficulties, and ritualized practices they followed for renewal that was successful, sustainable, and applicable to the reader.

Dr. Kelly Gross embraces the concept of crip time as a valuable framework in the context of intergenerational engagement during an artist residency at a children's museum. Dr. Gross describes crip time as a framework for flexible differentiated planning for those who experience time and space differently due to disabilities or personal health challenges. These adaptations allowed for meaningful connections, through artmaking, across generations to be made.

In a powerful reflective visual essay, Cynthia van Frank explores love, loss and memory through her connection with her mother and seeks to preserve these memories through a series of heartfelt paintings. These paintings serve as a reminder of the realities of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia as well as a tribute to her mother's experiences as a Holocaust survivor. This essay is a profound visual landscape of their journey together.

Researchers/artists Pooja Lalwani, Sujal Manohar, and Jessica Kay Ruhle from Duke University offer insights through their study of the program *Reflections* at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. They describe ways museums could connect with a broader community by providing activities for people with dementia. The *Reflections* program also afforded intergenerational connections between program participants and students who were tour guides or performers. The authors found that this program, whether in person, hybrid, or virtual, offered a powerful model that could improve the quality of life for people with dementia regardless of location or physical barriers.

Dr. Liz Langdon connected with her neighbor, who is experiencing Alzheimer's disease, through the artmaking practice of coloring pages. In this article, Dr. Langdon examines her previously held dis-like for coloring pages and challenges her own personal struggle to display them in a gallery setting in order to share and amplify her friend's story.

Margaret A. Walker PhD
University of Maryland, College Park
Linda Helmick, PhD
University of Missouri, Columbia

Pearl and Murray Greenberg Award Lectures

"...we must approach each other as people, not as ages and stages."

KEYWORDS
Award
Lifelong Learning

To correspond with the authors regarding this article:
mwalker8@umd.edu
lindahelmick@missouri.edu

https://doi.org/10.25889/je3v-jg77

Figure 1
Murray and Pearl Greenberg.

The Pearl and Murray Greenberg Awards were established through a generous gift from Ken Greenberg and his wife, Clara Gerdes, to the National Art Education Association's Committee on Lifelong Learning. The recipients of these awards' focus on their contributions to the field of art education for post-secondary learners across the lifespan, including creative aging, community-based art education, and/or intergenerational arts learning. The Murray Greenberg Award specifically supports an emerging scholar (zero to four years beyond the completion of their graduate degree program thesis or dissertation) with $1000. The Pearl Greenberg Award for Teaching and Research recognizes an artist/educator/researcher at the national level who has made distinguished contributions with $2,500. This article includes excerpts from the 2023 acceptance speeches given during the Committee on Lifelong Learning Awards' Ceremony at the 2023 San Antonio Texas National Art Education Association Convention.

Pearl and Murray Greenberg Award Recipient
Margaret A. Walker

I greatly appreciate the Committee for Lifelong Learning in the Arts for the important work they do to ensure that all members of our community have access to the benefits of the arts throughout our lifetime. As I move closer to my golden years, I understand this work on a much more personal and practical level than I did as a young college graduate, teaching art in a K12 school to children. Studying art education in the early 90s, the work we did was singularly focused on K-12 children and their needs as growing artists - our responsibility for their artistic development ended at high school graduation.

But as I became ensconced in the community of coworkers and families of my students, I noticed a curious thing- the children were the artmakers, and the adults were the audience. It seemed that the opportunities to engage in the arts as creators diminished with age, and with that so did confidence in the art creation process. Without the confidence or accessible opportunities to create outside of their school art programs, most adults that I spoke with had not created art since their K12 art class. I believe that, because of the lack of opportunities for regular and sustained artmaking in adults' lives, they become out of practice, and then self-critical, which leads to avoidance of making art- they become consumers instead of creators.

Students and faculty from UMD and Bowie U. celebrate the completion of a 200+ participant mural, 2017

Why is this a concern? Because we know there are benefits to artmaking that can improve and sustain our mental and physical lives, as well as our communities, that are essential to our wellbeing throughout our lives. Among other things:
Art making relieves stress and anxiety
Art making helps to stimulate our minds and to keep our brains active
Art making can contribute to a positive sense of self and wellbeing
And Art making can bring us together through opening lines of communication and building community- All such important things to nurture as we age.

Community in Hyattsville, MD installing a mural for a privacy fence for ArtWorksNow playspace, 2019

In thinking back to this early interest in lifelong learning in the arts, I recognize that I did not come to this revelation through some divine act. It may feel like that at times, when our 'aha' moments are fresh and new and our passion about a question is running hot, and we can't imagine why no one else has ever had this deep philosophical revelation before! But one of the benefits of being a lifelong learner is that we spend a lot of time in self-reflection and recognize the deeply seeded influences others have had on our mindsets and understandings, and -Yes- our brilliant revelations about adults as watchers instead of as doers.

Galaxy S20+ 5G

Students, staff and faculty make prints for a community collage in the College of Education at UMD, 2024

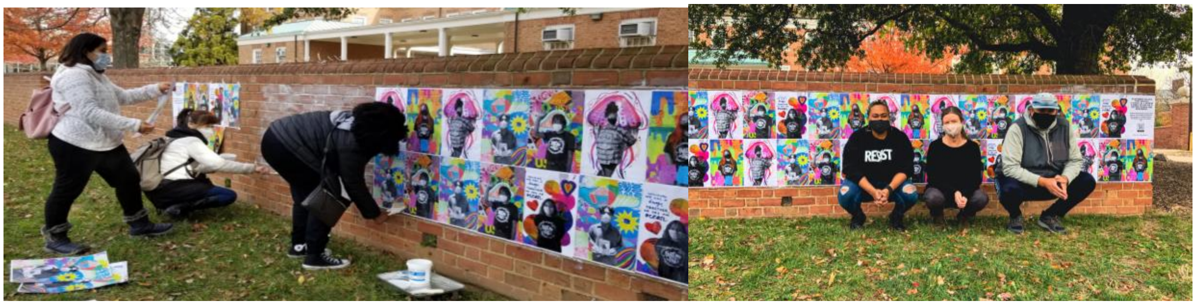
My undergraduate art education professor, Dr. Randall Craig, was a lifelong sculptor, despite his responsibilities to publish or perish at a ‘Research One’ university. He worked side by side with us in the art ed studio, teaching us his relief sculpture process, all the while instilling in us the importance of MAKING throughout life. My student teaching mentor, Margie Eisenstein, regularly found ways to invite parents and colleagues into the art making process in her classroom, instilling in me the importance of adults and children collaborating on artmaking. And at Teachers College, the scholarship of Pearl Greenberg was integral to our studies, whether in a course about engaging in art discussions at museums, or dissecting curriculum and assessment, Dr. Greenberg’s work was a lens through which we considered the learning needs and styles of all learners, no matter their age.

Dr. Greenberg’s work became much more front and center in my own research practice in 2014 when, through luck of circumstance and geography, Dr. Pamela Lawton and I, along with a community arts director Melissa Green, combined forces to create my very first Community Based Art Education (CBAE) project. With my students at the University of Maryland and Pam’s students at the Corcoran College of Art, we worked with community members at Melissa’s art center in Washington DC, who ranged in age from elementary school to 92 to create massive woodblock prints based on the idea of Freedom. Until this project, my artmaking interactions with a wide range of ages was limited to PTA art collaborations - as a CBAE facilitator that summer, I believe I learned as much if not more than my students and other participants. Pam, of course, had been doing this sort of work for a while by this point, and forgave me my blunders, and supported me as I stumbled, and celebrated my successes. Just as I imagine Pearl did for Pam when she was the one starting out in this important work.

Piecing together community woodblock plates for printing in Anacostia, DC 2014

It's been ten years since that first phenomenal woodblock project. When I call it massive, I'm not only referring to the process of hand carving 8 foot long wood blocks that were printed with a steam roller. And the local artist who joined. And the Printmaking professor, and the gallery director. And the student videography project that was created. And the poetry that was written and school children that showed up for a few of the sessions as credit for their art class at the nearby school. I am also referring to the multiple layers of community building and learning and connections that were made during the four weeks we worked together, as well as the Art making that reduced our stress, and stimulated our minds, and contributed to a positive sense of self and well-being, and that brought us together through opening lines of communication to build community. THAT was massive.

Since that first project, I have designed and facilitated many community-based art ed projects- none quite as massive as the first one, but always with the explicit intention of collaborating with participants from across the lifespan. Not only do CBAE projects offer opportunities for adults to MAKE without the pressure of critique and self-doubt that can accompany personal artmaking, but it brings together groups of people from different generations and backgrounds to engage in conversations and storytelling as they MAKE, approaching each other "as people, not as ages and stages" as Dr. Greenberg (2004) eloquently put it, and builds the strong foundation needed for communities and people to thrive. As a professor, this work is woven throughout with pre-service and practicing teachers, instilling in the newer generations the importance of creating opportunities to nurture MAKERS from 'womb to tomb' through community-based opportunities, to hopefully move our society away from simply consuming art, to creating it as well.



UMD and Bowie U. team install community designed posters- “Snapshots of our new normal”, Fall 2021

Reference

Greenberg, P. (2004). Preface. In A. M. La Porte (Ed.), Community connections: Intergenerational links in art education (p. vii-viii). NAEA.

Pearl and Murray Greenberg Award for Emerging Scholar Award Recipient

Linda Helmick

I am currently an assistant teaching professor of art education at the University of Missouri. As a white, queer artist/researcher/teacher, I put therapeutic creative activity with equity, wellness, and inclusion at the heart of the work I do in my research and in the field with the teachers I work with. I want to thank the award committee for the opportunity to carry on the legacy that Pearl Greenberg, and her husband, Murray, have made possible through their generous gifts. Gifts such as these allow all of us to continue the work we love. As an art educator and researcher, my interest in art as therapeutic has led me to believe the act of visual storytelling has psychological and physical health benefits that writing alone cannot express. I hold that creating art connected to personal experience within groups improves people’s self-respect, has restorative value, develops creativity and changes the way one views their life. My connection to this topic is personal and heartfelt, demonstrating my commitments to teaching and learning, responsive design and artist/researcher presence as valuable, fluid and intuition driven. My work resides at the intersection of critical theory, visual arts pedagogy, and positive psychology within educational and community spaces to impact ways students, fellow teachers, and communities deal with trauma, isolation, anxiety, and difficult issues such as bias, cultural stereotypes, and racial injustices.

In my doctoral studies, a figure of the past deeply inspired my work. Frederica (Friedl) Dicker-Brandeis, (1898-1944) provided a linking bridge for me between art education and art therapy. Two summers ago, I received a research grant from the university that allowed me to travel to Prague and the former Nazi internment camp of Terezin where I spent a month investigating Dicker-Brandeis’ life, work, and experiences. Dicker-Brandeis, an often overlooked but talented cross-disciplinary artist of the early 20th century, left a legacy as a gifted art educator who understood and used the power of artmaking to bring hope to children imprisoned in the Nazi concentration camp of Terezin throughout the last years of her life. Born in Vienna, she studied at the Bauhaus school of art and later taught art to teachers and refugees. Her personal vision was to teach children to master art essentials through self-expression so she could open a loving space for them to feel empowered, make meaning, and feel a sense of freedom “amid dreadful oppression and daily horrors” (Wix, 2010, p. 19). By teaching children, while interred together in the Nazi camp at Terezin to observe and experience their visual world through the expressive arts, she helped them live imaginatively under horrific conditions. In an interview, one of the children she taught said, “Everybody put us in boxes, [Dicker-Brandeis] took us out of them” (Makarova, 2001, p. 199). Her journey ended when she was sent to Auschwitz and, in a final act of bravery, she packed and hid two suitcases of the children’s artwork. These works now reside at the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Museum at Terezin.

As I was analyzing the data from this research, I found love. I found that love was at the center of Dicker-Brandeis’ passion for teaching art to the children imprisoned at Terezin. When I walked through those rooms and then studied the artwork she and the children made under those circumstances, it was obvious to me that love was in the room with them. Love was at the heart of their survival. Friedl, through her experience as an artist and art teacher, saw first-hand that meaningful creative artmaking could see them through. Could lift these young people, if only for moments at a time, out of the horrific circumstances they found themselves in. And if teaching art with love and passion could do that then, it certainly can do that now.

When I returned, I was invited to lead a professional development day for art teachers in my school district of Columbia, Missouri. I had former experience providing artmaking support for teachers online in 2020 (Helmick, 2022) when the pandemic required that we stay home, and I decided I would provide a meditative therapeutic artmaking workshop for them. In a meeting with the district’s superintendent, I asked what he thought teachers needed right now. He said love. They needed love. In this project I wondered if a meditative therapeutic artmaking professional development experience could give these teachers the love and support, they seem to be missing?

Research suggests that while professional development is key in teacher progress and well-being, conventional professional development is not geared to the needs of art educators (Conway et al., 2005). The teachers who participated in this project told me that this was the only arts-based professional development they had experienced in their careers. Most professional “activities do not emphasize development of art teachers as professionals in their field… often contribut[ing] to the feeling of marginalization and alienation art teachers feel within their schools” (Willcox, 2017, p.18). In this research, these teachers expressed the need for support, feelings of emotional exhaustion, lack of balance in their lives due to heavy work loads, and difficulty in finding community as they are often the only art teacher in their schools. As teachers have had to adapt to particularly brutal difficult circumstances due to the pandemic, levels of stress have been and still are exceptionally high. Health concerns, loss of family and friends through social isolation and even death, and adapting to hybrid, synchronous, and asynchronous instruction has been unprecedented.

For this project, I met with 12 secondary art educators for a 4-hour professional development session of meditation, art making, and sharing. My intention was for art to become a vehicle for expression and communication. After introductions, I handed out watercolor paper and placed watercolors, water, and brushes in the center of the tables. I asked them to choose any colors they were drawn to and make colorful blots that covered the paper. When they were ready, they were to fold the paper in half and then open it to create ink blot like shapes. After this creative play, we set these aside to dry.

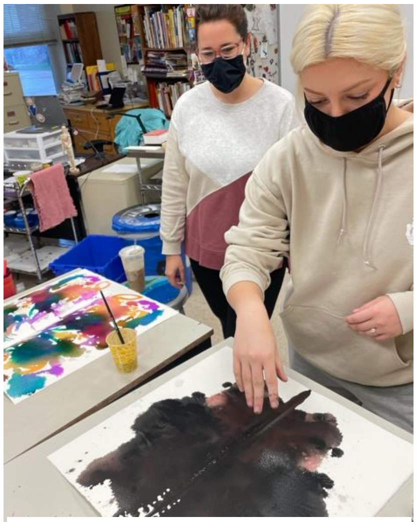


Figure 1Starting the ink blots

While our work was drying, I asked that we place ourselves in relaxed and comfortable positions so I could lead us through a visual meditation. Once we were in a relaxed position, together we took three deep breaths, and then closed our eyes while I led the meditation.

After the meditation and a short reflective sharing of our experiences, I placed drawing and painting materials on the table in place of the watercolors. I asked that they look at their inkblots, think about the meditation and feelings that might have come up, and use the art materials to explore and draw out what they could find in the shapes. One teacher retrieved sewing supplies from her bag and soon, multiple participants were sewing into their artwork.

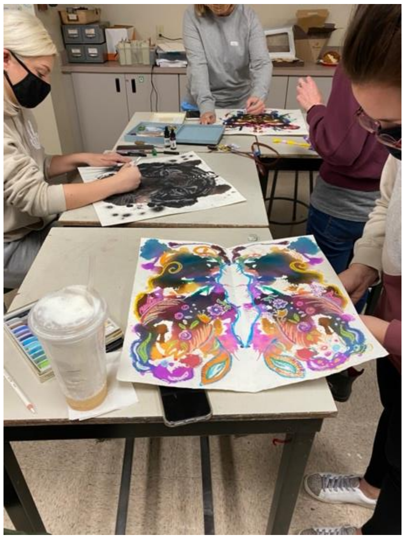


Figure 2 Artmaking in Community

The teachers worked and talked with each other about problems and struggles at school with students and administrators. They also caught up personally with each other and talked about their personal lives, both struggles and accomplishments. I could feel that they wanted to build community with each other and were glad to be in this space together with a reason to make art. When our time together was in danger of running out, I asked if each of them would hold up their work and talk about what they made and experienced.

One teacher reflected:
While I was meditating, my mind wandered to the usual things that fill my life: my daughters, my students, and my role as a wife, mother, and teacher. When I reflected on the ink stain I created prior to meditating, I couldn't help but see the matching dark circles at the top of the paper as "power puns" (a pigtail type hairstyle I use on my girls). I constantly strive to be a figure of strength for both my children and students. I work to show balance between finding beauty in what I do not have control over and managing with pride the things I can control. Integrating my true self into my artwork, my teaching, my parenting, isn't always easy, but it's vital for my longevity. For some time now, I have really tried to emphasize the process of making art as being more important than the product. I want both my children and students to know that it's okay to take risk, learn from mistakes, persevere, reflect on progress, share knowledge, and express feelings. Participating in art making teaches all of these, plus more.

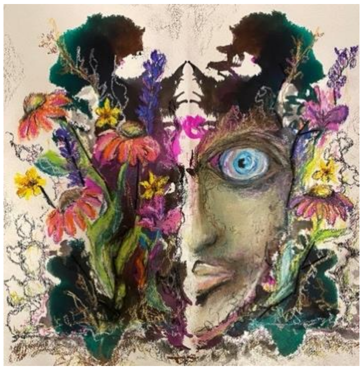


Figure 3 Power Puns

Another said:

This was a needed break from the stressors of teaching and life. Things have been so difficult, and I do not take the time to clear my head from the external and create. Having this opportunity gave me permission to take time and slow down and be with my thoughts and express feelings. It let me just feel and be and go into a different part of myself that I do not often get to visit. The process from start to finish encouraged this freedom, connecting to others, connecting to self, exploring through the visual language of color, line, shape, form texture and value, then reconnecting with others through our artwork and stories. No stress of getting it "right", it was open and free, and at the same time complex and deeply meaningful.

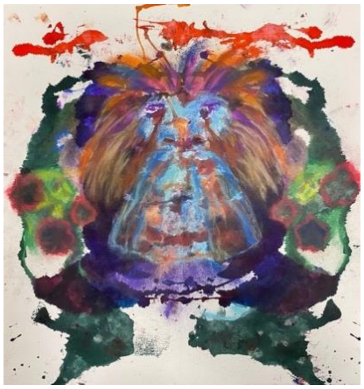


Figure 4 Completed ink Blot

Another reflected:

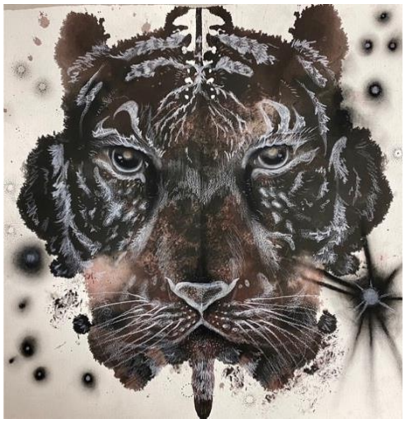


Figure 5 Completed ink blot

This experience reinforced that I do not take enough time to create, but honestly, I don't know how I would find the time. Teaching and raising a family do not leave a lot of time but mostly it doesn't leave me with a lot of creative energy. I dedicate a lot of my creative energy to my own children and my students. I also give a lot of *physical* energy to my children and my students. I am mentally and physically exhausted at the end of the day. When I am forced to attend a PD in which artmaking is the purpose, I am always grateful because I must do it. I am being asked to set aside everything else going on in my life and make art. It is lovely. I feel rejuvenated.

I hear this many times. Folks I work with know the benefits of making art, and relaxing into the creative activity, but they do not make time for it on their own. I will hear them say that they use their commitment to me research as an excuse to make art.

In the space of the workshop, each of these teachers welcomed the opportunity to take off their daily armor and feel restored and rested. They found space for safety among other art teachers where they could discuss, affirm, and support each other. This helped them understand that they were not alone and that their struggles were not personal problems but shared with the other teachers around them. Creating a supportive space with meditation, artmaking experiences, and reflection provided openings to acknowledge their emotional exhaustion, and sharing stories about the meditation and the artwork enabled each of them to feel supported and understood.

I hope in the future to continue this work, not only with art teachers, but all teachers, and inspire others to support teachers in this way. Ways we share and support teachers trickles down into the classroom and influences the ways teachers support their students.

References

Conway, C., Hibbard, S., Albert, D., & Hourigan, R. (2005). Professional development for arts teachers. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 107(1), 3-9.

Helmick, Linda J. (2022) "An exploration of restorative artmaking during COVID-19," *International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education*: Vol. 5, Article 8.

Makarova, E. (2000). *Friedl Dicker Brandeis Vienna 1848—Auschwitz 1944*. Tallfellow/Every Picture Press.

Willcox, L. (2017). The a/r/t of renewal: Artistic inquiry as an alternative professional development [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Wix, L. (2010). Aesthetic empathy in teaching art to children: The work of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis in Terezin. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, *26*(4), 152–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2009.10129612

Intergenerational Art: A Cultural Perspective

Steve Willis, PhD
Missouri State University
Art and Design
Springfield, Missouri

"When researching taking a cultural trip for my students, a Sundance sister said, "You should meet Grandma - she is wonderful." So, with that recommendation, I headed to New Mexico to find the connections I needed for my travel class."

Abstract

This paper will present the experiences that I had with two female Elders in the Acoma Pueblo. By working with a traditional Acoma family, I gained an intimate view of the positionality of the family structure, intergenerational teaching, and the Acoma culture. Like my experiences with many Eastern Tribes (my ancestral lineage is with the Powhaton Society), the Acoma culture is a matrilineal society. This paper will include anecdotal narratives along with images of the Pueblo, Sky City, and traditional ceramic forms. I will present the sacredness of the environment through art-making and art-sharing between generations. The two Acoma Elders are mentors to younger familial, tribal members, and off-Rez visitors by sharing their knowledge and wisdom with the younger generations and the society.

Keywords

Elder, indigeneity, pottery, artmaking, culture, Acoma

To correspond with the author regarding this article:
SteveWillis@MissouriState.edu

https://doi.org/10.25889/pz6v-ee56

In this visual essay, I present my first-person narrative in the Acoma Pueblo. Working with an Acoma family generated intimate experiences through the teaching of two Acoma female Elders and Clan Grandmothers. I will describe how cultural connections were made with the sacredness of the Earth, prayers for all people, and the art of ceramics. As I wrote in *Elders + Art + Culture* (2024), these Elders perpetuated the invaluable role of history-makers and history-keepers in the lives of younger generations and society.

Figure 1 Sunset view from Grandma's house in Acomita looking southwest.

Figure 2 View of the Acoma Pueblo terrain.

How it began

I moved my family from Florida to Springfield, Missouri in 1999. When we moved, my wife and I were veteran Sundancers on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

When researching taking a cultural trip for my students, a Sundance sister said, “You should meet Grandma - she is wonderful.” So, with that recommendation, I headed to New Mexico to find the connections I needed for my travel class.

I called Grandma but talked to her relative who told me she was at the Santa Clara Pueblo Festival Days. He told me to look for two Acoma ladies in a blue Chevy pickup. I found Grandma and Auntie. They looked like they had been waiting for me. Grandma looked at me as though I was family. I felt it. I knew they were to be my mentors. What I didn’t know was that I was on a journey to become an Elder myself. Over the years, I was taught how to decode the significant familial and cultural symbolism they used. I was slowly walking the path to becoming an Elder.

Art as cultural education

When I showed up at Grandma's doorstep with my students, she invited us warmly into her home offering us food and beverages, which is an Acoma tradition. Grandma would become our mentor as she talked about her life, her childhood growing up in Sky City, being sent away to White school, getting married, raising her family, and celebrating her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Auntie told us how she became a Healer for the Acoma People.

Missouri State University
www.missouristate.edu

Figure 3 The university van in front of Grandma's house

Art as life

We were told by Grandma and Auntie that the clay used to make Acoma potteries is considered sacred – a connection to Mother Earth. They taught us to become gentle and loving – a ubiquitous aspect of the Acoma culture.

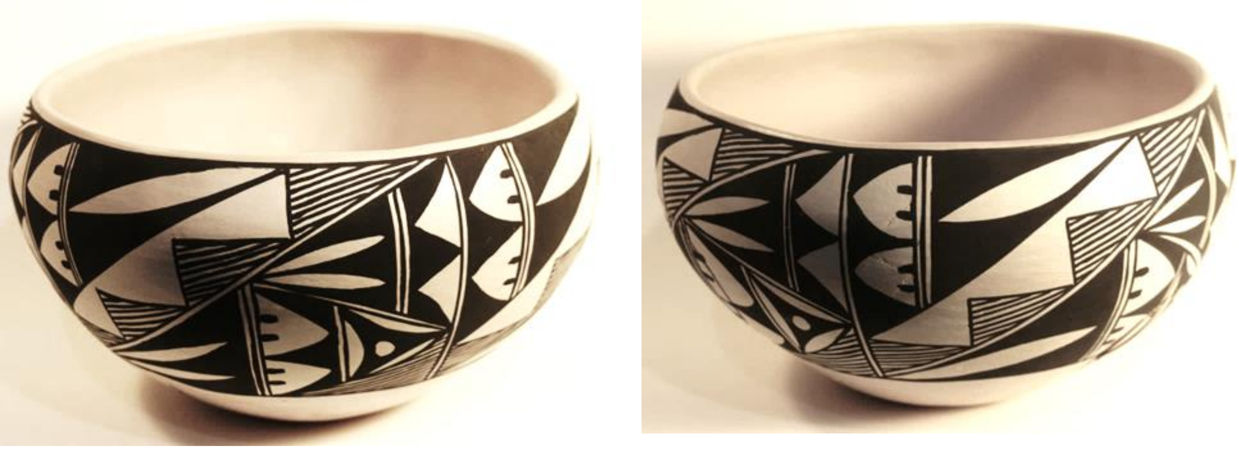


Figure 4 Acoma pottery. View 1. View 2. Collection of the author

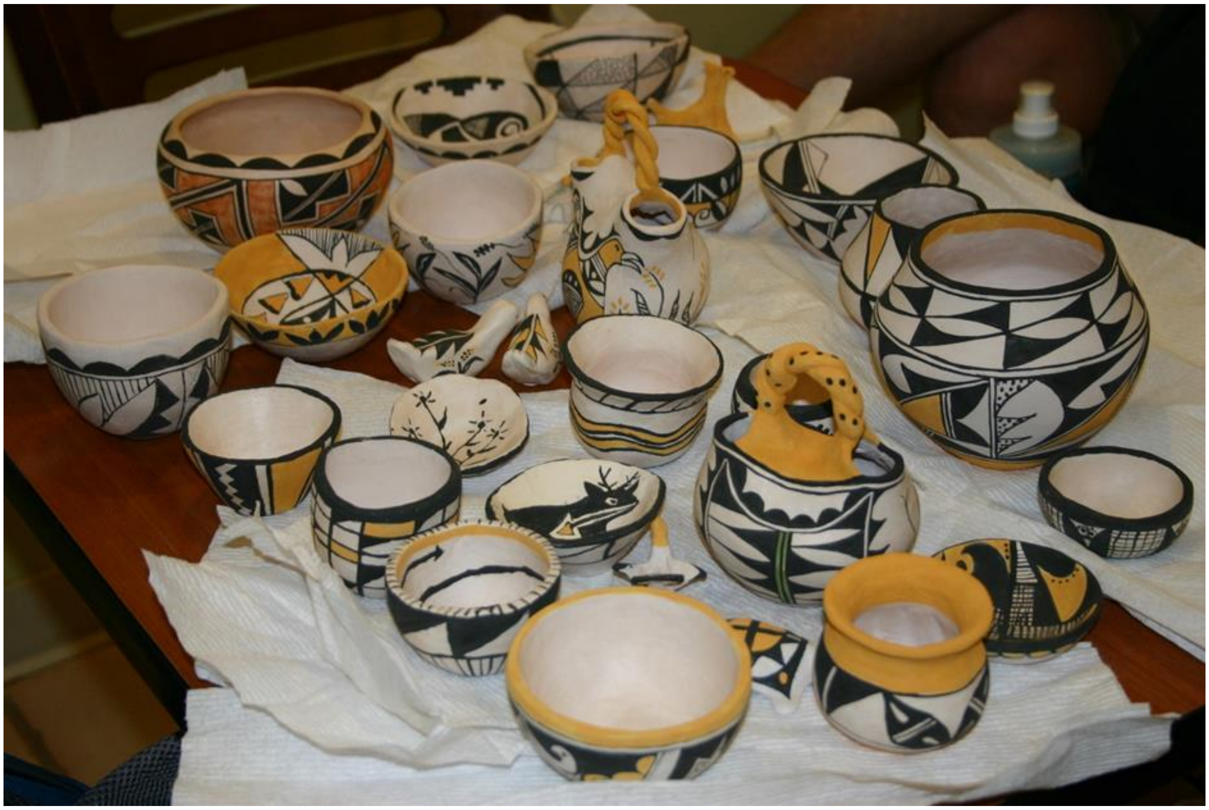


Figure 5 Grandma’s and Auntie's potteries

They told the students that making a ceramic pot is a form of prayer. My experiences with Grandma reinforced my teaching. I teach this way now.

I am a reflection of the powerful and gentle woman she was. I surprise myself when I sound like an Elder – a position I am unsure I deserve. I realize now that I have become an Elder. I recall the subtleties that impacted my relationships to let love, gentleness, kindness, and grace precede my pedagogy. I am forever grateful.

Learning from Elders like Grandma and Auntie was always easy. The depth of their mentorship was discovered through reflection. Their teaching was subtle and powerful as it passed intergenerationally – it connected us all. Grandma was unfailingly loved. I hope one day one of my students might think that I, in some small way, helped them become a better person filled with compassion and love that they use in their future classroom.

Grandma and Auntie shared their lives and culture through the art of Acoma pottery which has been in their culture since before recorded history. The process of collecting the materials (clay, pigment to grind, and yucca to make a brush) has changed very little. It was very clear that Grandma and Auntie were intimately connected to the environment. As they taught, and as the students experienced - *everything is part of life, and life is full of prayer*.

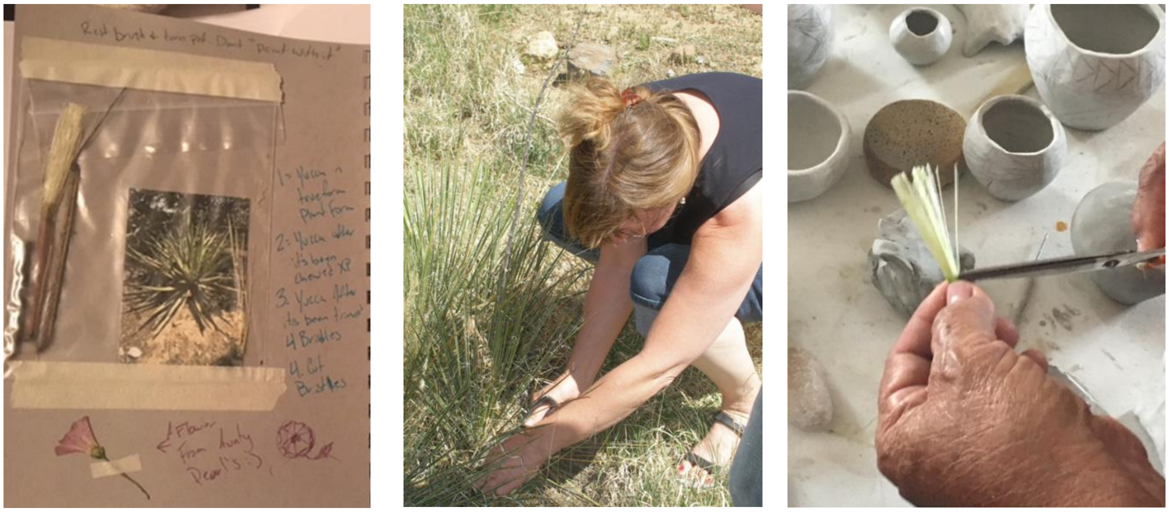

2. Yucca after it's been chewed XP
3. Yucca after it's been trimed
4 Bristles
4. Cut Bristles
Flower From Aunty Pearl's

Figure 6 (L) Student's journal of a photo of a Yucca plant and brush. (M). Student collecting yucca for a brush. (R) Auntie demonstrated how to make a yucca brush.

Art Education as life

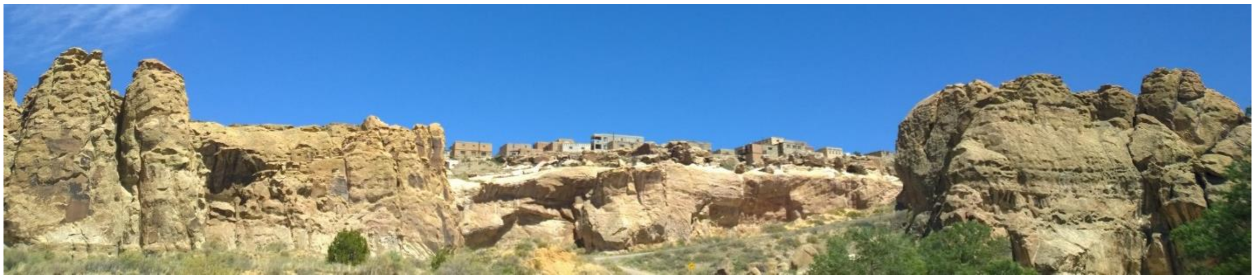


Figure 7 Sky City – Enchanted Mesa seen from Coyote Canyon.

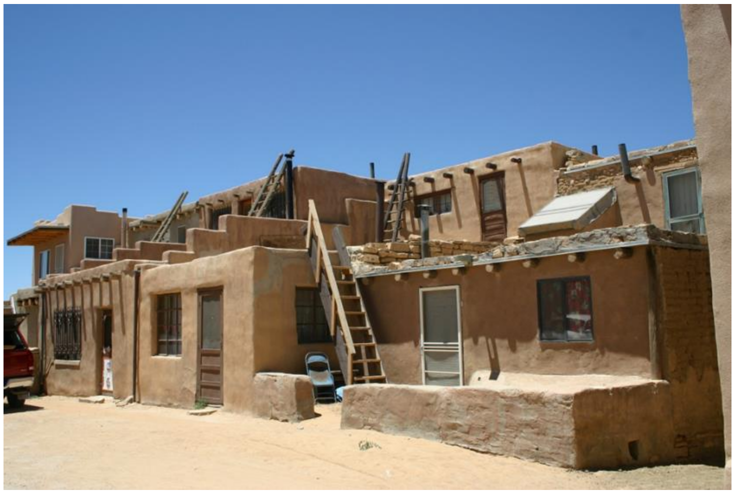


Figure 8 View of Sky City's main plaza

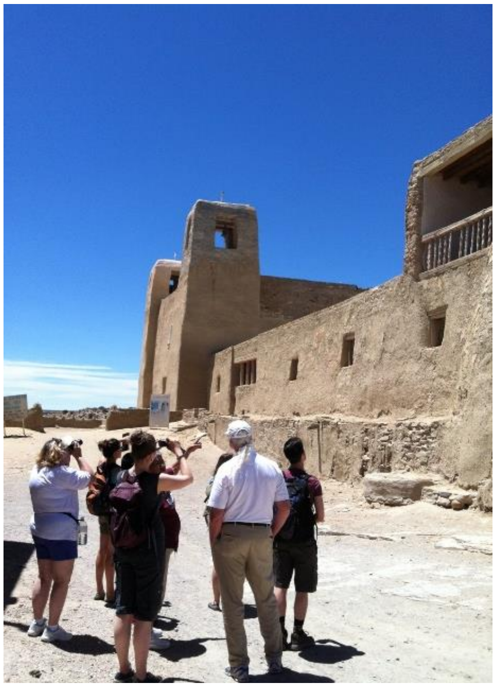


Figure 9. San Esteban church on Sky City that Acoma men were forced to build (between 1629 and 1641) and maintain.The author with students facing San Esteban.

It is a challenge to capture in words what these amazing Elders *taught about* how to live. They taught us about ourselves, the Earth, the Spirits, our families, and our cultures. They taught us how to love. I reflect on their cultural knowledge and spiritual abundance in my classroom and studio.

Art when Grandma was older

Each year, as I arranged another trip, and called Grandma to get the correct dates that did not interfere with her spiritual practices at Sky City, I worried. We never really talked about Grandma's diabetic condition or her coronary issues; I never shared that with the students.

Grandma was the keeper of the pottery knowledge and held a vast well of knowledge that she always willingly shared. A student noted:

> *By far, Grandma was the most authentic, sincere, and genuine person I have ever met. Her zest for life was refreshing. My favorite part was watching her light up as she made potteries. It is her passion. I can only hope to be as dedicated to my craft as Grandma. Above all, I appreciated her acceptance of us, we are a part of her family and are welcome to visit in the future.* (course reflection)

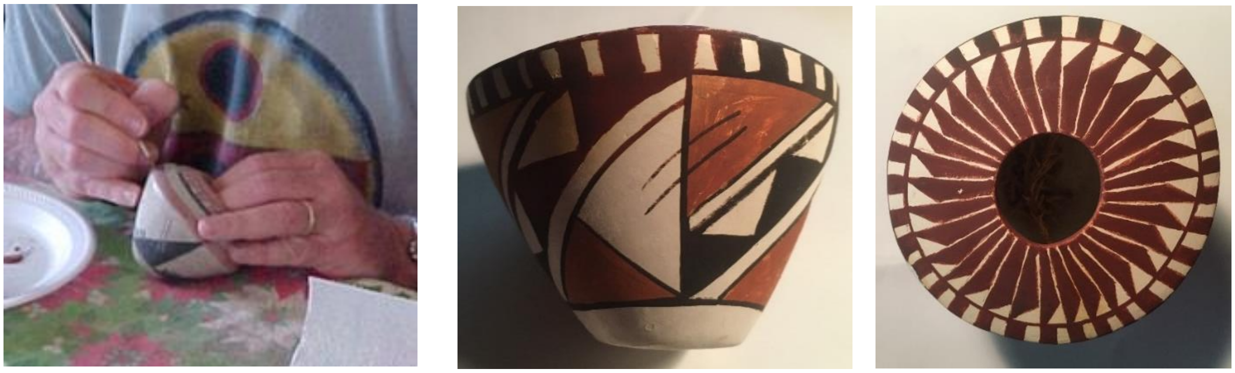


Figure 5 The author joining his studnets to make traditional Acoma potteries.

Art + Culture + Environment

In many Native cultures, living is praying, and this is reflected in the art. Art and life are not separated. Acoma art and culture are inextricably intertwined. As Grandma said, potteries are the earth, and Mother Earth is who we are, where we live, and how we are human beings in the interconnectedness of all things on earth and sky – every life is important.

Additionally, the students were able to experience other traditions: a dung firing, and making and baking horno bread. Each day, Grandma or Auntie would prepare traditional Acoma food. The traditional chili stew was too spicy for most of the students but perfect for me.

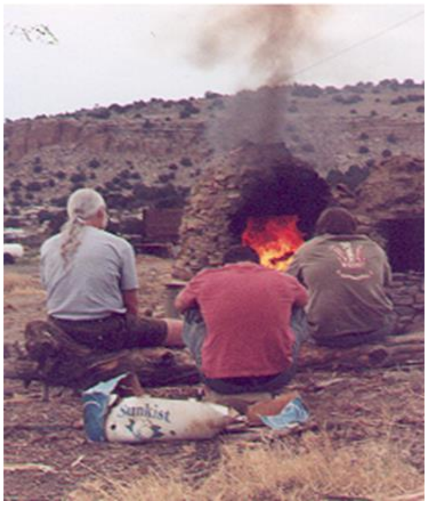


Figure 6 The author and students start the horno oven fire for the horno bread

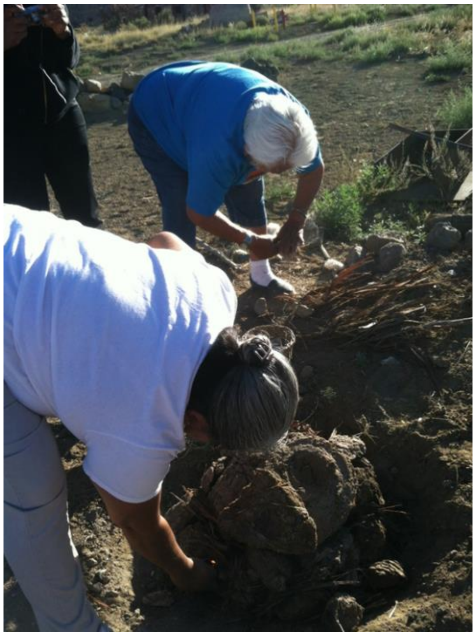


Figure 7 Grandma and her daughter setting the dung-fire.

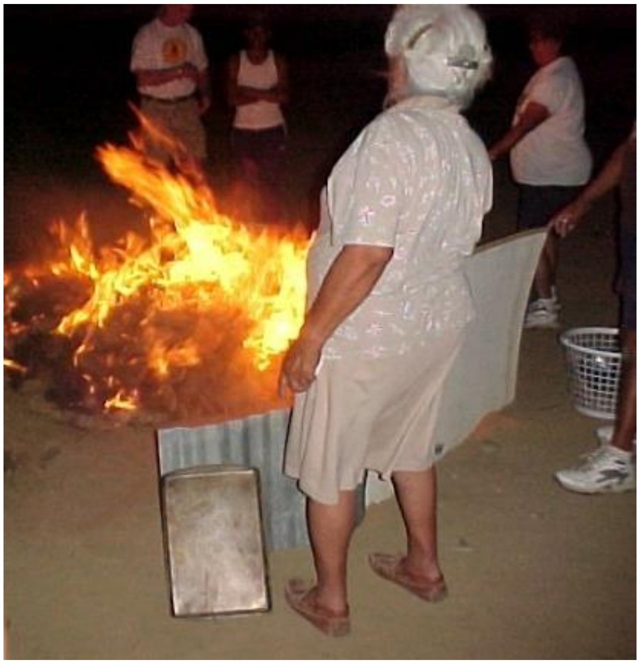


Figure 8 In process dung-fire with Grandma.

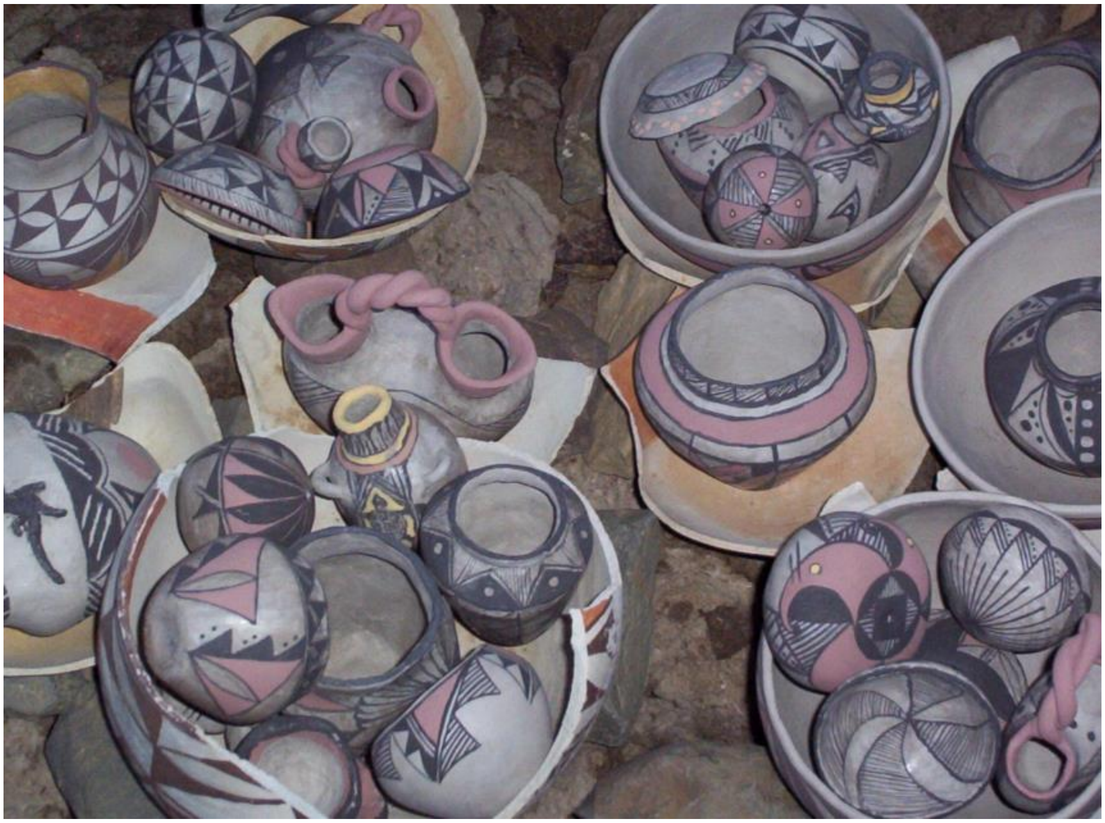


Figure 9 Student potteries ready to be fired.

Changes in pedagogy

I have noticed recently there is a separation of student and teacher, and processes have been replaced by video tutorials, screen addiction, and fatigue. In my classroom, I insist on dialogic exchanges in the classroom community like I experienced with Grandma. I know that many of the Elders are the link to long-held traditions and are trying to teach the younger generations but technology is preferred by many students for the speed and convenience for a different type of educational experiences. Grandma's teaching, like mine, teaches traditions that include knowledge and wisdom not found except through deliberate and thoughtful face-to-face involvement with an Elder's experiences. I have found this true in my teaching.

Conclusion

The times with Grandma, and Auntie, were indelibly etched in my experiences. As a multigenerational mentor, Grandma taught each person with respect and honesty. She shared her oversized heart openly.

We must recognize the importance of our Elders, They must never be placed in dismal circumstances for the convenience of an all-too-busy family. We can learn the care of Elders from many traditional cultures that are not distracted by the demands of Western (un)civilization.

The family must be at the center of Elder health. I hope that many in Western cultures, particularly those in the US, can revitalize their traditions of family to support each member's highest needs. The young can learn so much from their Elders if allowed to share the same space and time.

We can learn about ourselves, our families, and our community from our Elders and the Elder artists who live a full life as master teachers. We can embrace the wisdom, patience, and kindness of the invaluable role of the Elder artist in the lives of younger generations, and by proximity, the society as a whole.

Reflection

The experiences I gained from my grandparents and parents formed who I am. I learned skills in spirituality, civility, and behavior. I know how to make decisions, be responsible, and understand respect. I miss my grandparents and parents but I can still hear their voices in my mind and feel their teaching in my heart. Without the strength and teaching of my nuclear family, I would be floating in the abyss of not-knowingness. It is my sincere prayer that all people, have uplifting, stabilizing, and fulfilling family, community, and cultural wisdom in their hearts that will be shared with the next generation and beyond.[1]

---

[1] Steve Willis (Powhatan ancestry) taught art in public schools for 23 years before joining the faculty at Missouri State University in Springfield, where he is a Professor of Art Education. His research interests are in indigenous knowledge, Native American practices, and spirituality in art. He has served as a consultant for various schools, school districts, and community arts organizations; has presented at national and international conferences; has published in national and international journals and has served on many editorial boards. His recent book with Richards, A. (2023). Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers, 3rd ed. Kendall-Hunt, The Hocq'reila Experience, Earth Circle, and Chrysalis: Teaching with Love, KDP reflects his spirituality and cultural awareness. Steve is active in both the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) as a Vice-President (2017–2021) and the United States Society for Education through Art (USSEA) as President

References

Willis, S. (2024). Elders + Art + Culture in *Art Education and Aging*. Davenport, M., Cohee Manifold, M., Hoeptner-Poling, L., & Bourgault, R. (eds). The National Art Education Association.

Willis, S. (2005). The Acoma experience in *Community Connections: Intergenerational Links in Art Education*. LaPorte, A. (ed). The National Art Education Association.

Willis, S. (2004). Acoma pottery: First-hand experiences for art educators. *Teaching Artists Journal. 1(1)*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

(2013–2015). Steve is a Distinguished Fellow of The National Art Education Association (2017) and has received The United States Society for Education through Art's Kenneth Marantz Fellows Award (2018); The United States Society for Education through Art's Edwin Ziegfeld Award (2016); and The Missouri Higher Education Art Educator of the Year (2006). Steve graduated, with his Ph.D., from Florida State University. As a contemporary artist, he creates images concerning spirituality.

Ritualized Engrossment: Portraits of Early-Career Faculty Practicing Renewal

Samantha Goss, PhD
University of Northern Iowa
Libba Willcox, PhD
Indiana University, Indianapolis

“Though our practice is sustainable and successful, it is highly individualized. In sharing our ritual, we hope to inspire and encourage others to develop their own authentic renewal practices. Below we highlight problems faced by early-career faculty, explain our conceptual framework of ritualized engrossment, and share vignettes of our ritualized engrossment to illustrate the impact this practical approach has upon our early-career faculty wellbeing.”

Abstract

In higher education, the demands on early-career faculty often lead to mental health challenges and time poverty. This article explores two major issues that negatively impact faculty well-being: the disconnect between doctoral socialization and tenure-track realities, and the struggle to balance unrealistic expectations with sustainable practices. To address the dissonance we felt as early career faculty, we developed a renewal practice called ritualized engrossment, characterized by connection, collaboration, care, and commitment. Grounded in aesthetic approaches and using methods from portraiture and collaborative autoethnography, we present two narrative portraits illustrating the impact of this practice on our well-being. Our portraits illustrate moments when we considered the rightness of fit and our research trajectories. Our findings demonstrate how ritualized engrossment fostered vocational vitality and provided essential support for us as early-career faculty. This practical approach highlights the importance of consistent, intentional, and meaningful connections in sustaining personal and professional well-being.

Keywords

Early Career Faculty, Vocational Vitality, Ritual, Engrossment, Renewal, Burnout

To correspond with the authors regarding this article:
samantha.goss@gmail.com
swillcox@indiana.edu

https://doi.org/10.25889/5han-5q97

The system of higher education maximizes workload and responsibility, which contributes to mental health issues and time poverty. Faculty must negotiate productivity, efficiency, and quality of work, which no amount of time management can solve (Berg & Seeber, 2017). As early-career faculty, we are both navigating our positions' demands, trying to avoid burnout, and struggling to maintain vocational vitality. We love what we do but maintaining our occupational and personal well-being initially felt impossible. In this article, we share our practical approach in which we engaged in ritualized connection to practice renewal, maintain well-being, and prioritize vocational vitality. Though our practice is sustainable and successful, it is highly individualized. In sharing our ritual, we hope to inspire and encourage others to develop their own authentic renewal practices. Below we highlight problems faced by early-career faculty, explain our conceptual framework of ritualized engrossment, and share vignettes of our ritualized engrossment to illustrate the impact this practical approach has upon our early-career faculty wellbeing.

Early-Career Faculty Well-Being and Burnout

The early-career faculty experience has been researched to improve attrition rates and job satisfaction (Reybold, 2005; Trower, Austin, & Sorcinelli, 2001), and other issues that arise from the dissonance when transitioning from doctoral candidates to early-career faculty (McCormick & Willcox, 2019; Reybold, 2005). We discuss two major issues that negatively impact faculty well-being 1) the gap between doctoral socialization and the reality of higher education and 2) balancing unrealistic expectations of the ideal worker with sustainable practices. For this article, we define early-career faculty as faculty members in the first three years of their career after graduate school; further, in this article, we narrow our focus to the experience on a tenure track.

Complexities of Being Early-Career Faculty

Doctoral socialization is an important experience because "students are simultaneously directly socialized into the role of graduate student and are given preparatory socialization into a profession" (Golde, 1998, p. 56). Scholars recognize that this dual socialization is important, but also impossible to achieve, leaving a gap between what is learned and the awaiting reality (McCormick & Willcox, 2019; Reybold, 2005). The research, teaching, and service experiences of doctoral students often reflect a lack of balanced preparation for the numerous roles of faculty (Golde & Dore, 2001; McCormick & Willcox, 2019; McDaniels, 2010; Napper-Owen, 2012; Weidman, 2010; Weidman & Stein, 2003). According to McCormick and Willcox (2019), the dissonance experienced by this gap requires new faculty to deconstruct and reconstruct their academic identities to better fit their new professional context leading many early-career faculty members to question the rightness of fit (Morrison et al., 2011) and combat imposter phenomena with perfectionism and overcompensation (Hutchins & Rainbold, 2017). Whether suffering from the imposter phenomena or not feeling valued, the gap between socialization and reality contributes to questioning identity and belonging, and negatively impacts early-career faculty vocational vitality.

Early-career faculty are also affected by unrealistic expectations, time poverty, and navigating the political context of their new career. Higher education institutions capitalize on and promote the "ideal worker" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016), someone dedicated to the job who only prioritizes job-related experiences. Early-career faculty often strive to prove legitimacy to their new institutions, further amplifying the imbalance between personal and professional life (Guillaume et al., 2019). This struggle is more complex for early-career faculty because they must also navigate contextual politics and implicit norms when prioritizing and organizing their time (Coke et al., 2015; Crooks & Castleden, 2012). Ultimately, the early-career faculty experience is dominated by the need to balance internal and external expectations of research, teaching, and service; it is also haunted by the need to balance personal and professional responsibilities without burning out.

Burnout

When overall work-life balance is not achieved during the transition from doctoral student to early-career faculty, burnout occurs. Burnout is a term commonly discussed in opposition to well-being in human service professions. While this syndrome has become a buzzword since the beginning of the pandemic, burnout has been researched and linked to job dissatisfaction since the 1970s and linked to the teaching profession since the 1980s (Larrivee, 2012). Teachers are the largest group of professionals associated with this phenomenon. We must explore burnout and how it occurs to understand its relationship to the major struggles of early-career faculty.

Maslach (2003), a leading scholar on burnout, describes how careers like teaching can systematically embed core dimensions of burnout: 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) cynicism or depersonalization, and 3) reduced personal accomplishment or a lack of self-efficacy. When interacting with and caring for humans throughout the day, professionals may experience emotional exhaustion. To cope with this exhaustion, many find the need to separate themselves from others (depersonalization) or begin to view others in a negative way (cynicism). Professionals who navigate feelings of isolation and cynicism often feel less productive, successful, and efficient in their careers (reduced personal accomplishment or lack of self-efficacy). Instead of viewing burnout as a personal failure, Maslach asks professionals to consider what job-related stresses cause burnout syndrome.

These major issues of early-career faculty create significant dissonance (McCormick & Willcox, 2019) and contribute to increased emotional exhaustion. Eventually, this can feed cynicism and reduce self-efficacy. Exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced self-efficacy then become signs of diminished vocational vitality and symptoms of burnout.

At this point in the article, we intentionally choose to frame our issue as maintaining vocational vitality instead of combatting burnout. Since the pandemic, the term burnout has been utilized more frequently without the appropriate depth of this phenomenon. We align with Intrator and Kunzman's (2007) discussion of vocational vitality. They use it to describe teachers with vocational vitality as those who "remain vital, present, and deeply connected" (p. 17). Expanding upon this, they share three elements of vocational vitality as being engrossed, tuned-in, and purposeful. These teachers are enthusiastic, have a nuanced understanding of their students and the context in which they teach, and are "efficacious agents capable of challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to ordinary contexts and approaches" (p. 17).

In our experience, one must focus on personal and vocational vitality to find success as early-career faculty. We ultimately needed to turn to each other to navigate the specific challenges of our first three years as early-career faculty. While 18 hours and over 1,000 miles apart, our weekly check-ins turned into a ritual that supported our well-being during those years; we have theorized our practice as ritualized engrossment.

Conceptual Framework

To address our need to maintain vocational vitality, we began a renewal practice characterized by connection, collaboration, care, and commitment, which we call ritualized engrossment.

While we never went to school together, we met through our shared mentor Richard Siegesmund. For Libba, Richard helped her find art education as a career path during undergrad and later became her mentor and thesis advisor for her master's degree. For Samantha, Richard was a mentor throughout her doctoral studies and her dissertation advisor. We met at an event during the 2012 National Art Education Association Convention because of his engrossment in each of us and our academic futures. Throughout the next decade, we have become close and used his teachings to guide our teaching and scholarship. We were inspired by Siegesmund's (1997) discussion of Aisthanesthai, the ability to perceive, as the English etymological root for aesthetics. Specifically, we noted Aisthanesthai, in one conjugated form, "reflects a dynamic state between subject and object with each effecting (not simply affecting) the other" (p. 118). Our conceptual framework is rooted in an aesthetic approach to living that embraces felt perception as a dynamic, impactful, pleasurable, and essential realm in our everyday lives (Dewey, 1934; Siegesmund, 1997). It is our ability to see something special in our everyday interactions that enables us to create a practice of well-being and utilize an aesthetic approach for addressing early-career faculty perceptions of burnout and maintaining vocational vitality. The following sections remain grounded in an aesthetic approach as we pull from Hofsess's (2013, 2015) writing on teacher renewal, Dissanayke's (1992) exploration of the overlap between art and ritual, and from Noddings's (1984, 1992) explication of engrossment to complete our conceptual framework of ritualized engrossment.

Renewal

Renewal is the lens through which we consider well-being. Hofsess (2013, 2015) explored teacher renewal through an aesthetic lens, understanding that renewal is a process and a relational way of being in the world. Similarly, Willcox (2017) conceived of renewal as a process rather than a product. Dalton (2015) also advocates for us to understand renewal as a continuous process but emphasizes the connections to personal and professional life. We seek an ongoing practice that aligns with the generative process of renewal. The needs and details of the process change over time to sustain our overall well-being.

Ritual

Dissanayake (1992) argued that there is a biological need to make art or make something special. She argued that "... what feels good is also usually a clue concerning what we *need"* (p. 32). Her theory of aesthetics weaves together play, art, and ritual to argue that art is a behavior or a process. Similar to our connection with renewal scholars, we embrace the process of "making special" as a rewarding need and an essential component of our well-being.

More interesting for us, is the connection Dissanayake highlights between art and ritual. For Dissanayake (1992), rituals are compelling, formalized, socially reinforcing, and bracketed. They are designed to "arouse, capture, and hold attention" (p. 46) and intentionally set apart from everyday life to embrace the nonordinary while connecting us emotionally. According to Dissanayake, rituals are often explored during transitions and performed for transformations.

Our renewal ritual was made special as we formalized our weekly check-in to hold us accountable to each other. Through telling our stories and sharing our perceptions, the weekly meetings were socially reinforced and bracketed from the course of our daily work. Our ritual created a mutual awareness that allowed us to link our experience together in an attempt to weather the transition from doctoral students to early-career faculty and in doing so, our perceptions of burnout transformed into a deeper understanding of our experiences, our institutions, and our trajectories. Ultimately, the ritual enabled us to be tuned in to each other and our complex changing contexts. We recognized the emotional commitment was not just the result of the ritual, but the essence that held it, and us, together. We argue that our emotional commitment, our engrossment (Noddings, 1984), is what made our renewal practice possible and successful.

Engrossment

Noddings (1992) defined engrossment as "an open, nonselective [full] receptivity for the one cared for" (p. 15). The receptivity described goes beyond simply getting to know someone or paying attention to them. Engrossment is aesthetic in nature because it is both the felt perception of the experience and the ability to understand in hindsight-- similar to Dewey's (1934) description of aesthetic experience. Engrossment is an essential aspect of a renewing ritual, which can address our reduced vocational vitality.

We developed a nuanced understanding of each other as educators, researchers, mentors, and friends through our engrossment. Aligned with Noddings (1984), we are committed to our relationship and dedicate consistent attention and time, demonstrating the necessary reciprocity. We have been able to provide "rational objectivity" (Noddings, 1984, p. 33) for each other to solve problems or determine new paths. We have also sat with each other's situations through engrossment in a way that is healthier than (overly) ruminating about our own predicaments.

Ritualized Engrossment

Based on the previous concepts, we conceive and practice an aesthetic approach to maintain vocational vitality through ritualized engrossment. By formalizing our weekly meetings, we created a ritual that also reflects "making special" as we prioritize and honor this experience. Our engrossment is strengthened through this ritual, but also informs the support we desire to provide each other. Both of these elements allow our ritualized engrossment to help us experience renewal weekly and at key moments of our personal and professional lives. Maintaining renewal through ritualized engrossment is critically important for our own vocational vitality.

Mode of Inquiry

We sought to understand and share our early career experiences that benefited from this ritual. Our research interests in renewal and engrossment led us to borrow from Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis's (1997) portraiture methodology and from Chang et al.'s (2013) collaborative autoethnography to explicate and share moments from our ritual. From 2019 to the present day, we have met weekly to support each other through the tenure-track process. In 2019, we began our weekly phone calls to discuss previous research, but this tradition evolved to become an honored weekly ritual in academia. In 2020, we transitioned our ritual to Zoom meetings, checking in with each other, supporting our needs, and providing the necessary time to engage in our personal research. Inspired by my institutionalized writing circle, we decided a weekly meeting on the calendar would block time that could not be interrupted by colleagues, students, and other pressing needs. Thus, our ritualized engrossment practice was born. We honored two hours every week to support each other, and remain flexible about the best use of the time; sometimes this was to brainstorm ways to better teach our students, to engage in research activities (i.e., writing IRBs, coding data, identifying grant opportunities, and writing proposals), and to navigate service requests/demands in politically savvy ways. Our meetings always began with check-ins and discussion of what was most pressing personally and professionally. Often, we transitioned into specific work time with dedicated breaks to report progress and chat. Borrowing from the Pomodoro Technique of productivity (Cirillo, 2018), we would dedicate 10-15 minutes of discussion per 45 minutes of work. This allowed us to support each other, be productive, and find ways to navigate life in academe. While the meeting day and time changed from semester to semester, we strive now to end each week with our ritual, allowing us to be personally and professionally renewed for the upcoming week. During our chats, we discussed life-changing breakups, familial health issues, and partner deployment; we also deep dive into ways to eat when time and money are lacking and the perfect balance of comfort and professionalism in conference attire. We also pushed each other to submit presentations for conferences, shared about calls for book chapters and special issues, and designed simple workshops to engage communities. This ritual moved beyond a traditional academic friendship, as we invested time in each other’s lived experiences, professional successes, and tenure-track process.

Inspired by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis’ (1997) questions, we began by considering “What is happening here [in our ritual], what is working, and why?” (p. 42). As we started to see our ritual as an essential part of our well-being and asked, how and to what extent did our practice of ritualized engrossment impact our perceived well-being during the early-career faculty experience? Through personal memories, archived materials, self-reflection, and conversations, we were able to collaboratively revisit key moments and consider their connection to early-career faculty well-being and vocational vitality (Chang et al., 2013). From our analysis, we were able to select the two impactful experiences to share as narrative portraits.

Portraits of Ritualized Engagement

We share the complexity and nuance of our ritualized engrossment and how it contributes to our well-being as early-career faculty. In our portraits, we illustrate moments from our renewal practices where we have needed to consider the rightness of fit of our positions and navigate our research trajectories. Each portrait was written from the individual’s point of view and then reviewed with the other author to fully depict the moment.

Libba’s Portrait

I am exhausted. Truly exhausted. I am still reeling from a meeting with my department chair yesterday. I do not know how long I can do this. I find myself attending extra meetings all of the time because the College of the Arts and the College of Education cannot get on the same page. Seriously, I know that we need to cut content for our degree to be at 120 hours, but trying to convince my Dean is the hard part. This will mean fewer studios and fewer course credits for multiple students. It is not something he is willing to hear. My new chair has no idea what this means to the program, the Professional Standards Commission, and what is coming down from the Governor. I keep trying to explain, but it is as if he cannot hear me. I really do not know what to do but to keep moving forward.

Frustrated by the constant waste of time, I rush to my office to gather supplies for my writing circle that is housed across campus. Today is a beautiful day in south Georgia; sunny and around 75 degrees in early November. A walk across campus will be what I need. I can see the Spanish architecture, the bustling students, and sunshine while I have a weekly check-in with Samantha. Thank goodness I am able to bounce these experiences with her. Throughout our weekly hour conversations, she has heard me grieve what I thought higher education would be and struggle to come up short-- over and over again. Coordinating my program, teaching a five-five, serving on too many committees, and still having to do an enormous amount of research… I have perfectionist tendencies and worry that this job may kill me. Can one person really do everything they are asking?

As I walk up the hill by the library, we start chatting about our lives. After venting about a conversation with my department head, I move on to a conversation with local high school art teachers. One of the teachers is retiring and her position will be posted soon. They jokingly asked me to apply. I am truly considering it. I share this option with Samantha, yet again, as I keep walking along the beautiful brick walkway toward the Camellia trail. My progress, like everything in this town, works a little slower and takes a little longer. As I am huffing and puffing (because I am getting angrier with each detail I share), I mention the list I have started to make about quitting higher education and returning to high school. I often look back on my time as a high school teacher as the best job I ever had and wonder if it would be possible.

As I walk up to the beautiful old home that houses the Center for Learning and Teaching, I sit on the porch and share my intention to apply for the high school position. Samantha listens actively and cuts me off after a few minutes… “Seriously?? No. Libba, No. You are not serious now. You cannot do this.” This intervention is the first one I have heard that makes me pause. Samantha’s understanding of my doctoral experience, how much I love teaching teachers, and my life goals, pride, and brain really make me rethink. She understands how to rationalize with my exhausted brain and cut through the bullshit. If it were anyone else, or if we did not have this relationship, would I be able to listen to the advice? After a few minutes, I have to go to attend my writing circle and am left considering, is this really the same at all higher ed institutions or is this just what they are asking of me in this position? Could it be different somewhere else?

Epilogue

I left that position in May of 2020. I am in a healthier, happier job and restarted the early-career faculty experience. While I still struggle with balance and burnout, I recognize that I can do this—it is possible. Finding the right fit is essential to vocational vitality and our ritual enabled me to understand not only what was problematic in my own life, but what I needed to be successful-ish.

Summary

Libba’s portrait illustrates her struggle with the rightness of fit. Her doctoral socialization heavily focused on research, leaving her unprepared to maintain that love with the reality of her teaching and service load in the previous position. The incredible demands of the position made it impossible to find a balance and sustainable practice. The challenges of finding balance and sustainable practices were overwhelming. While the teaching load may have appeared manageable (5/5), the reality was far more complex. The courses often involved small class sizes, without a determined sequence for methods courses, demanding extensive preparation and differentiation. In addition, the burden of organizing practicum placements for each student in every methods course was immense, as the school required 100 hours of practicum per course. This involved individually coordinating placements, maintaining relationships with schools and teachers, and ensuring each student's experience met the program's high standards. The sheer volume of these logistical demands, on top of her teaching and administrative duties, further contributed to the unsustainable workload. Moreover, the service expectations were excessive, stretching her across fifteen committees and requiring a heavy administrative burden. She was responsible for coordinating the entire program, which included generating annual program reports and assessments, advising over 20 students, and revising the curriculum to align with several governing bodies' expectations. The lack of institutional support made it nearly impossible to juggle these responsibilities with teaching, research, and service. The workload was relentless, leaving little room for the meaningful service or scholarship that aligned with her passions. Without sustainable structures in place and under constant pressure to meet unrealistic expectations, burnout was inevitable.

The emotional exhaustion and lack of self-efficacy in her previous position led her to question her career in higher education. Our ritualized engrossment was important for helping her see that her passions, interests, and abilities did belong in higher education, but not that position (or in a high school). Samantha being able to share her perspective of Libba's situation was important for considering positions that would be an appropriate fit and fight against Libba's concerns about her professional abilities.

Since starting the new position, our continued ritual has supported Libba in recognizing the need to set boundaries early and strive to make sustainable work habits. Samantha's continued support has helped Libba recognize that making colleagues aware of personal and program needs help create successful long-term practices. More recently our meetings have focused on discussing goals and progress on the tenure track, strategies for stepping into leadership roles, and making choices about our work. Samantha has helped remind Libba to focus on the activities in academia she truly values, such as planning engaging activities for her students, serving as a reviewer for art education journals, contributing at the state and national levels, and mentoring enthusiastic students pursuing their careers. While she remains involved with committees for both the School of Education and the School of Art and Design, the expectations are now realistic, recognizing the limited resources available. Samantha's support and active listening have become an integral part of Libba's navigation of academe and ability to trust her instincts.

Samantha's Portrait

Staring at a blank Google Doc, the space feels overwhelming as I try to determine how to present my scholarship for my third-year review. Actually, this only includes my first two years but is being submitted in the first two and half months of my third year…. AND three of those semesters were impacted by COVID. Not that anyone cares. My assistantships in my doctoral program prepared me very well for service and teaching. I was able to teach or TA a wide variety of classes. I worked with the department to plan and execute visits from other scholars and work on numerous reports for the university and state. Research expectations were focused on yearly presentations at state and national conferences and, of course, finishing our dissertations. We were encouraged to have complex, rigorous dissertations. I am well prepared in research methods, both qualitative and quantitative thanks to the program's expectations.

I actually love my colleagues and feel a general sense of appreciation and respect, which I know is not the case everywhere. Even with that sense of belonging, I can feel disconnected; I sometimes feel they have a limited definition of what counts as art education research. I know my training gave me the mindset that almost anything can be looked at as art education. My work has never been student-based; I am interested in the teachers’ inner workings or thinking more broadly. Engrossment and care extend to art beyond the K-12 classroom. It can be researched in a theoretical or practical way. I see our areas of interest being art education, art, and education. This often feels like more work because each of those strains functions differently. My state-level research tends to be very focused on practice, as I am trying to also accomplish service goals of recruitment and supporting local art educators' needs. I see that as a reflection of my engrossment in practice. When I move into research at a national or international level, I am more concerned with considering the impact of engrossment on thinking and decision-making in studio classrooms or a teacher's philosophy and pedagogy, or even more theoretically. Mentally juggling all this leaves me too exhausted to properly communicate the connections to this blank screen. It all takes time, time that I do not have. We are a teaching university (in a pandemic), but I feel like I am expected to continue my research as if everything is normal.

I look forward to my virtual meetings with Libba because I feel heard and can find real solutions. In other situations, I feel pressured to change my interests or how I work to meet the demands of tenure. Having watched Libba navigate her way out of a job that was not working, I know mine is working. I am still struggling to find the balance between reality and my expectations. I feel like the things I care about and want to prioritize in research are valuable whenever I get feedback outside of my institution. Especially from Libba because she can rattle off a number of related things to read, which I take to mean I am not straying away from art education or wasting time. I have 15 minutes before our meeting starts and I get back to my blank screen. I start putting in the things I did during the past year and making notes. It seems clear to me. I am happy with what I have done. I can see my productivity as consistent and relating back to engrossment and being in relationship (as cognitive processes or lived experience) within the context of art. These priorities have gotten stronger in my teaching and upcoming research projects; I just need to make this clear to everyone else.

Epilogue

I am still in this position and continue to appreciate my coworkers and department overall. Some days, I have self-doubt and worry about how others perceive my research interests. Other days, this lingering fear just makes me more determined to keep doing it to bring the entire picture to life and better advocate for my passions.

Summary

Samantha's portrait reflects her struggles connected to her research and overall trajectory at the time of her third-year review. Her doctoral socialization was unique in that she had ample opportunities to learn service and teaching, but the research emphasis was on presentations and finishing her dissertation. Taking a position at a teaching institution made her incorrectly assume there would be a similar workload to her doctoral responsibilities. She enjoys research but struggles with prioritizing it when experiencing substantial time poverty. She is torn between working with responsibilities for undergraduate and graduate students. Her institution is predominantly for undergraduates. However, she is the coordinator of the graduate art education program guiding students through sequential classes tied to their final research project, while also planning and recruiting for the next cohort. Her undergraduate course is secondary methods with a 30-40 hour field experience component with limited placement opportunities. Maintaining connections to local art teachers and classrooms goes beyond placing students. Her secondary preservice teachers also host middle and high school students on campus for workshops, exhibitions, and overall recruitment. Teachers in her area switch jobs more often than in her previous location making it very important to consistently develop new connections.

Although she is a member of the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences she works on committees (field experience, new major orientation, curriculum working groups, and secondary senate) in the College of Education because of their direct impact on her class and students. Within her own college and department, she handles collecting data and reporting on student outcomes yearly, co-advises around 100 art education students, collaborates on all matters related to the art education major, and supports shared departmental responsibilities of recruitment and orienting new majors during some Friday morning sessions. More recently, her service work has led to leadership positions in the faculty union, the advising council to the provost, and as treasurer in her state art education organization.

These common early-career teaching and service expectations resulted in Samantha having a lowered sense of accomplishment and increased depersonalization, which impacted her research agenda and productivity. She attempted to prioritize or reframe her interests to align with her department's limited understanding of art education research and ambiguous tenure expectations. While she understands the flexibility provided within the tenure guidelines, especially in the arts, the unspoken expectations of one publication a year could have been expressed explicitly. Having research in the pipeline was not a focus of her doctoral program, leaving her less prepared to establish this immediately and in the midst of the pandemic. Producing new work yearly did not equate to a printed publication in the expected timeline due to the nature of art education publications at that time. Eventually, she did meet this goal, but with less consistency between the acceptance and final publication dates.

Engaging in our ritualized engrossment informed Libba's view of Samantha's work allowing Libba to share a more positive framing of many situations. Samantha was able to see her accomplishments more clearly because of ritualized engrossment. As Samantha was becoming more detached from her department, meeting with Libba helped her remain engaged in her profession. In one instance, Samantha felt misunderstood about feedback regarding researching sketchbooks in a high school classroom rather than her own studio course. The context made a difference; her department viewed art education research as happening in a K-12 classroom. Libba made it feel okay to want to start in the studio class, which better aligned with Samantha's current workload and would provide more information to possibly investigate the same topic in another education context later. We also discussed the need for more alignment between high school and college courses as a possibility for future research that would work for both Samantha and her department. This reinforced her research agenda and ability to advocate for her work and feel increasingly more connected to her position and department.

Conclusion

Our ritualized engrossment provided the renewal and support necessary to maintain vocational vitality and work towards overall well-being. We were able to develop deep and nuanced understandings of each other and our situations through ongoing engrossment. Our consistent ritual created trust and fostered clear honest communication. We were able to avoid unhealthy rumination over our challenges by sharing and being open to collaboratively finding solutions or simply receiving support. The depth and authenticity of our relationship allowed for our ritualized engrossment to develop into an important ritual for well-being. We do not think this would have happened if the relationship was mandated through a mentorship program or even by ourselves. We noticed and benefitted from our inherent interest in each other. We encourage early career faculty to seek out relationships and develop their own unique rituals.

To strive for ritualized engrossment, we advise you to:

- Find others that can provide mutual support and renewal. Do not allow yourself to be or feel isolated! We found being in different institutions allows us to be even more honest without worrying about repercussions and provides alternative perspectives. The quality of support we can provide each other comes from being not only art educators; we have had similar career experiences and share many values related to our teaching and research.
- Invest time into being engrossed in your own, and others, contexts and experiences. The depth of understanding is priceless when faced with difficult, confusing situations. We found the strength and depth of our connection to be renewing.
- Design opportunities for connection that are consistent and can become a ritual. We set a realistic goal for connecting based on practical needs first; feedback and collaboration related to common courses and research projects. We knew we would prioritize things connected to our work. Tying this to work and putting it in our schedule, equal to teaching a class, made us maintain the scheduled meetings and allowed it to become routine and ritual. We made our weekly meeting special and essential; because of our deep commitment to it and each other, we continue to show up and continued to practice renewal. This opportunity for connection did not take add extra burdens to our weekly list but significantly contributed to our feelings of renewal.
- Be open to compromise to support your overall well-being; between your expectations and reality, your perspective and others, now and the future. Navigating compromise allows you to take an inventory of what matters now and what you would like to work towards, then consider it within your reality. We were able to see things more realistically having a trusted, engrossed friend providing how they saw our situations.

Keep in mind that ritualized engrossment is highly individualized, and these practices must be tailored to the individuals involved. This effort toward renewal will help you maintain your vocational vitality amid the early career faculty experience.

References

Berg, M. & Seeber, B. K. (2017). *The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy.* University of Toronto Press.

Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F. W., & Hernandez, K. C. (2013). *Collaborative autoethnography.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315432137

Cirillo, F. (2018). *The pomodoro technique: The life-changing time-management system.* Virgin Books.

Coke, P. K., Benson, S., & Hayes, M. (2015). Making meaning of experience: Navigating the transformation from graduate student to tenure-track professor. *Journal of Transformative Education, 1*3(2), 110-126. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614562216

Crooks, V., & Castleden, H. (2012). All we really needed to know about tenure-track faculty positions we did not learn in graduate school. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*, *56*(4), 393-397.

Dalton, J. E. (2015). The expressive teacher: Renewing vitality through arts-based professional development. *Journal of Art for Life, 6*(1), 1-13.

Dewey, J. (1934) Art as experience. Perigee.

Dissanayake, E. (1992). *Homo aestheticus: Where art comes from and why*. University of Washington Press.

Golde, C. M. (1998). Beginning graduate school: Explaining first-year doctoral attrition. *New Directions for Higher Education, 1998*(101), 55-64. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.10105

Golde, C. M., & Dore, T. M. (2001). *At cross purposes: What experiences of doctoral students reveal about doctoral education.* The Pew Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from http://phd-survey.org/report%20final.pdf

Guillaume, R. O., Martinez, E., & Elue, C. (2019). Social media use, legitimacy, and imposter phenomenon: A collaborative autoethnography among early career faculty. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research, 14*(2), 125-136.

Hofsess, B. A. (2015). Do with me: The action orient of aesthetic experiential play. *Visual Arts Research, 41*(2), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.5406/visuartsrese.41.2.0001

Hofsess, B. A. (2013). Methodology in the afterglow. *International Journal of Education & the Arts, 14*(1.8), 1-21. Retrieved from http://www.ijea.org/v14si1/.

Hutchins, H. M., & Rainbolt, H. (2017). What triggers imposter phenomenon among academic faculty? A critical incident study exploring antecedents, coping, and development opportunities. *Human Resource Development International*, *20*(3), 194-214.

Intrator, S. M. & Kunzman, R. (2007). The person in the profession: Renewing teacher vitality through professional development. *The Educational Forum*, *71*(1), 16-32. Larrivee, B. (2012). *Cultivating teacher renewal: Guarding against stress and burnout*. R&L Education.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. & Hoffmann Davis, J. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture.* Jossey–Bass.

Maslach, C. (2003). *Burnout: The cost of caring*. Ishk.

McCormick, K., & Willcox, L. (2019). Mind the gap: Transitioning from doctoral graduates to early career faculty. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 14,* 543.

McDaniels, M. (2010). Doctoral student socialization for teaching roles. In S. K. Gardner, & P. Mendoza (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. 29-44). Stylus Publishing.

Morrison, E., Rudd, E., Picciano, J., & Nerad, M. (2011). Are you satisfied? PhD education and faculty taste for prestige: Limits of the prestige value system. *Research in Higher Education, 52*(1), 24-46. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-010-9184-1

Napper-Owen, G. (2012). Raising the next generation. *Quest, 64*(3), 131-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2012.704777

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminne approach to ethics and moral education.* University of California Press.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education.* Teachers College Press.

Reybold, L. E. (2005). Surrendering the dream. *Journal of Career Development, 32*(2), 107-121. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845305279163

Siegesmund, R. (1997). Teaching art as reasoned perception: Aesthetic knowing in theory and practice. *Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education*, *14*(1), 116-126.

Trower, C. A., Austin, A. E., & Sorcinelli, M. D. (2001). Paradise lost: How the academy converts enthusiastic recruits into early-career doubters. *American Association for Higher Education Bulletin, 53*(9), 3-6.

Ward, K. (2010). Doctoral student socialization for service. In S. K. Gardner, & P. Mendoza (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. 57-77). Stylus Publishing.

Ward, K. & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2016). Academic motherhood: Mid-career perspectives and the ideal worker norm. *New Directions for Higher Education,* 176, 11-23. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20206

Weidman, J. C. (2010). Doctoral student socialization for research. In S. K. Gardner, & P. Mendoza (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. 45-56). Stylus Publishing.

Weidman, J. C. & Stein, E. L. (2003). Socialization of doctoral students to academic norms. *Research in Higher Education, 44*(6), 641-656. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026123508335

Willcox, L. (2017). The a/r/t of renewal: Artistic inquiry as an alternative professional development [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Kelly M. Gross, PhD
Northern Illinois University

Crip Time and Creativity: Exploring Intergenerational Artmaking in a Children's Museum

"Unlike a normative classroom environment where students might enter for scheduled pre-planned blocks of lessons, the museum environment was a fragmented space of comings and goings, starting with timed entries and restricted numbers that slowly eased throughout the residency. This concept became particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, as both the pandemic and personal health challenges necessitated slowing down and re-evaluating planned activities."

Abstract

This paper investigates the intersection of "crip time" and creativity through an intergenerational artmaking project conducted during an artist residency at a children's museum. The article, framed within the "Shadows and Light: Investigating with Children" project, explores how play-based learning and the non-linear concept of crip time influenced the creative process and outcomes in a museum setting amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The study examines the role of intergenerational interactions in fostering creativity, agency, and engagement among children and the artist-in-residence. The research methodology involved qualitative analysis of imagery and iterative documentation of art processes, emphasizing the impact of flexibility and adaptive practices on creative learning. Findings reveal that slowing down and adapting to crip time allowed for deeper exploration and meaningful intergenerational connections, ultimately informing future design and implementation of art programs in similar settings.

Key Words

Intergenerational Learning, Artmaking, Crip time, Play-based learning, Artist Residency

https://doi.org/10.25889/eahj-zt91

To correspond with the author regarding this article:
kgross1@niu.edu

Intergenerational relationships are vital for the social fabric, offering mutual learning, understanding, and support opportunities. Intergenerational artmaking involves interactions between participants from different age groups, often including young children and adults (such as their caregivers, museum workers, or teaching artists). This dynamic can offer opportunities for reciprocal learning and engagement across age divides, fostering shared understanding through creative processes such as artmaking. Art, as a social practice, has the potential to bridge generational gaps, creating spaces for peace, healing, and renewed energy. This article explores how engaging in art processes can allow for intergenerational play and creative practice in artmaking. Through an artist residency project focusing on "Shadows and Light: Investigating with Children," the data, collected in 2021 at a children's museum in the midwest of the United States, illustrates how play-based learning became an avenue to investigate intergenerational artmaking experiences and the impact of crip time on my creativity.

Intergenerational programs' significance and impact have been well-documented. According to Kaplan (2004), intergenerational programs enhance social support networks and foster a sense of community, which are crucial for the well-being of older adults. Museums are one place where intergenerational programming occurs, and for children, museum programming engages them, their caregivers, and the museum workers with the environment and exhibits. Cortellesi, Harpley, and Kernan (2018) point out that while intergenerational learning is often thought to flow from older to younger generations, it can be multidirectional. As Thompson (2013) argues about childhood art, learning and making can "emerge in the spaces between children and teachers and researchers. (p. 100). In discussing intergenerational collaborative drawings, Knight (2013) discusses how this practice brings adults and children together to think and theorize in order to create visual imagery. To effectively collaborate with community-based practitioners, such as artists in residence, museums can become sites of communities of practice, fostering an ethic of shared power (Sac et al., 2022) and developing intergenerational programming.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, I applied for an artist residency at a local children's museum. The residency aimed to enact play-based learning with children and their caregivers as investigators of light and shadow. However, COVID-19 restrictions challenged my carefully planned curriculum and never-ending to-do list. Much like Samuels (2017) describes "crip time" as broken time, “forc[es]ing us to take breaks even when we don’t want to, even when we want to keep going," (para. 11). my own time during the artist residency was affected by a fall a few months earlier and my decreasing mobility, which would later require multiple surgeries. Nevertheless, the quiet of a children's museum during the limited attendance of COVID-19 and my lack of ability to easily move provided a slowing down that resulted in the gift of time. In this space and time, I was given the opportunity to make, explore, and play with materials and concepts in ways I never expected. I learned with and from the children and their caregivers in an intergenerational environment as an artist-in-residence. This paper will discuss the themes of light and shadow that I explored throughout the artist residency, the connection to the children's museum, and my small body of work (some collaborative with children) that emerged. In this manuscript, I reflect on the experiences and insights gained from an intergenerational artmaking residency, focusing on the dynamics of creative collaboration and the impact of flexible, play-based learning approaches. Rather than approaching this as a conventional research study, the emphasis here is on the evolving nature of the program and the ways in which the participants, including myself, navigated the themes of crip time and creative engagement.

Crip Time

The concept of "crip time," as discussed by Samuels (2017), although unplanned, became integral to this study. "Crip time" refers to the non-linear, flexible nature of time experienced by individuals with disabilities, which often requires them to take breaks and move at a slower pace. Price (2011) expounds on how chronic pain and disability influence one's perception and interaction with time. Time can be experienced differently by those with disabilities, and institutions need to break free from normative notions of time, giving not just extra time but also considering issues of flexible time and what should happen in time (Kafer, 2013). In examining museum education, Richardson and Kletchka (2022) discuss how crip time is a description of how different bodyminds experience space and time, leading to a need for changing practices and creating more flexible spaces.

Unlike a normative classroom environment where students might enter for scheduled pre-planned blocks of lessons, the museum environment was a fragmented space of comings and goings, starting with timed entries and restricted numbers that slowly eased throughout the residency. This concept became particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, as both the pandemic and personal health challenges necessitated slowing down and re-evaluating planned activities. Further fragmenting the instruction was my pain and lack of ability to move within the space, causing me to need to sit for long periods of time. Activities that I had originally planned needed to be modified. If supplies ran out, I would have to carefully plan how many times I could go back to the supply closet, often forcing children and caregivers to make do with whatever was available.

Play-Based Learning, Creativity, and Agency

Early Childhood educators have long asserted that play is essential for learning at a young age (Frobel & Jarvis, 1899). Dewey (1966) asserted that active learning and inquiry are essential components of student engagement leading to learning. Research on STEAM utilizing child-centered approaches to learning based on constructivism theory found that creativity, autonomy, and play were common themes in early childhood experience (Hunter-Doniger, 2021). Similarly, studies performed on outdoor play areas have found that the inclusion of elements that can be easily manipulated by children, such as pinecones and rocks, and were more open-ended, allowed for greater creativity, solving problems, and collaborating with others (Cetken-Atkas & Sevimli-Celik, 2023). Artist-in-residence with adults has been found to promote fun and active learning, leading participants to describe the artmaking process as enjoyable and engaging (Ungemah & Stokas, 2018).

Creativity can be seen in the small acts of playfulness that we engage in and the ways in which adults continue to engage in making arts. In discussing the inclusion of unicorn iconography in artmaking, Weida and Bradbury (2020) describe the influence of childhood imagery and folklore in adult art practice as "a form of collaborative and inclusive remix" (p. 44). The significance of creativity in lifelong learning is echoed by Csikszentmihalyi (1996), who introduced the concept of "flow" as a state of deep engagement and intrinsic motivation in creative activities. Sullivan (2005) further explores how art practice can serve as a form of inquiry, enabling individuals to explore and construct knowledge through creative processes. This perspective aligns with Irwin and Springgay's (2008) concept of a/r/tography, which integrates artistic practice, research, and teaching as interconnected modes of inquiry.

In this residency, the learning was not structured in normative ways based on a teacher-centered model that might exist in traditional school environments. Rather, each situation was designed to be exploratory with elements that children could explore, manipulate, and make decisions with. Through the process of play and exploration, children and their caregivers would discover or reinforce concepts about light, shadows, and color in art-based projects, therefore allowing the artistic practice to be a form of inquiry through which the participants constructed knowledge. The goal was that children and caregivers would find the learning to be a natural and engaging part of the artmaking process.

Reflective Approach and Documentation

The purpose of this project was not solely to gather formal research data, but to explore the evolving relationships and learning experiences that emerged during the residency. For this project, I adopted a play-based approach to learning and artmaking. I conducted a qualitative analysis of imagery to explore learning and ideation, as I did not have the ability or permission to record students' statements about artmaking. As the project evolved, I became increasingly interested in how my work was influenced by this play-based approach. The residency involved a three-cycle play-based investigative series of shadow and light. Each of the cycles included activities connected to an exhibit in the museum, and any collaborative work completed with children was documented.

One important step was the documentation of progress and the comparative analysis of how the work evolved over time, emphasizing process over product. Constructionism, as defined by Papert (1993), emphasizes the importance of making and interacting with concrete sets to support conceptual understanding. In this framework, artifacts or objects serve as evolving representations of learners' understandings (Sheridan et al., 2014). Documenting these processes is crucial to thoroughly examining the development of understanding, particularly when researching with children. This documentation served as a form of investigation, allowing me to reflect and identify critical moments in learning. In this article, I examine:

- What is the impact of "crip time" on my creative process and outcomes in parallel and collaborative intergenerational artmaking activities?
- How does a constructionist, play-based learning approach influence children's agency and engagement in intergenerational art projects?
- In what ways does the documentation of the artistic process contribute to understanding the development of intergenerational engagement and learning outcomes?

Visual analysis played a key role in the experience, involving a comparative examination of imagery and processes from three cycles. I reviewed my field notes and visual documentation to identify patterns and recurring themes related to agency, collaboration, and creative engagement. This process supported the iterative nature of the project, allowing me to refine the programming and adapt to participants’ evolving needs. At the conclusion of the residency, combining observational data with visual analysis, a pattern of understanding of how intergenerational making and learning unfolded and how participants, including myself, navigated the time and artmaking.

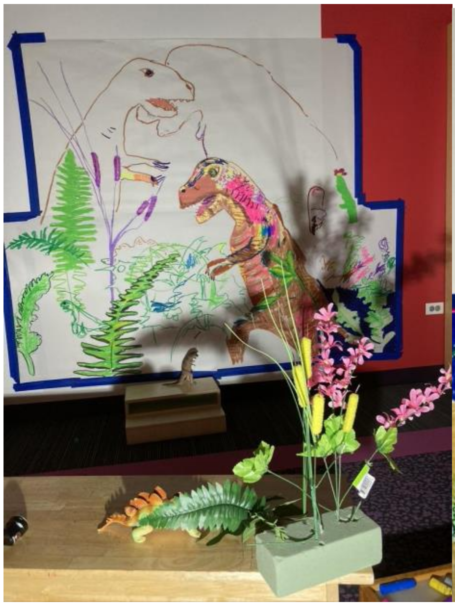
Initially, I perceived the children and perhaps their caregivers as the sole participants. However, as my time in the museum demonstrated, I recognized my own role as a participant. I became more interested in how my work and artmaking were influenced by the situations I developed and the children interacting with me. Based on my interactions with children, a significant portion of both murals was completed by myself, and I realized that this residency was much more about my artmaking than I ever conceptualized.

The importance of documenting learning processes is underscored by Dewey (1938), who argued that experience and education are intertwined, and that reflective thought is essential for learning. This approach aligns with Engeström's (2001) concept of expansive learning, where learners engage in cycles of questioning, reflecting, and transforming their activities. These theoretical underpinnings guided this study's methodological framework, emphasizing the creative process's iterative and reflective nature.

Findings

Cycle 1: Shadows and Light

The first cycle focused on investigating shadows and light through guiding questions such as "What are shadows?" and "How do shadows change?" Activities included creating temporary murals with the children, tracing shadows, and manipulating light sources. This cycle highlighted the importance of student agency, as children had the freedom to choose colors and imagery, leading to increased engagement and creativity (Figure 1). The process of slowing down and adapting to "crip time" allowed for a more reflective and intentional approach to artmaking. During this stage, we collaboratively created two temporary murals based on a plethora of action figures and items brought in. Caregivers negotiated with children to choose objects and place them in front of the variety of lights to project shadows and trace the objects onto the murals. Through exploring movement in space, children and caregivers discovered how the positioning of the lights and objects impacted the size of the shadows. The first mural (Figure 2) greatly deviated from my original vision of a green natural environment when one young child decided to add in a rainbow dinosaur, and another started adding known symbols of hearts. By the end of the mural, children claimed ownership of the piece by adding their initials and letters to the drawing, laying claim to their own agency and meaning-making in the museum. For the second mural (Figure 3), I decided to limit the color palette available and to see the effect it would have on the art produced. At the time, I was much happier with the mural's visual qualities and could create much more of the work without interference. The children seemed less interested in creating this piece with me, and I noticed as they came through this part of the museum, they were less likely to engage.



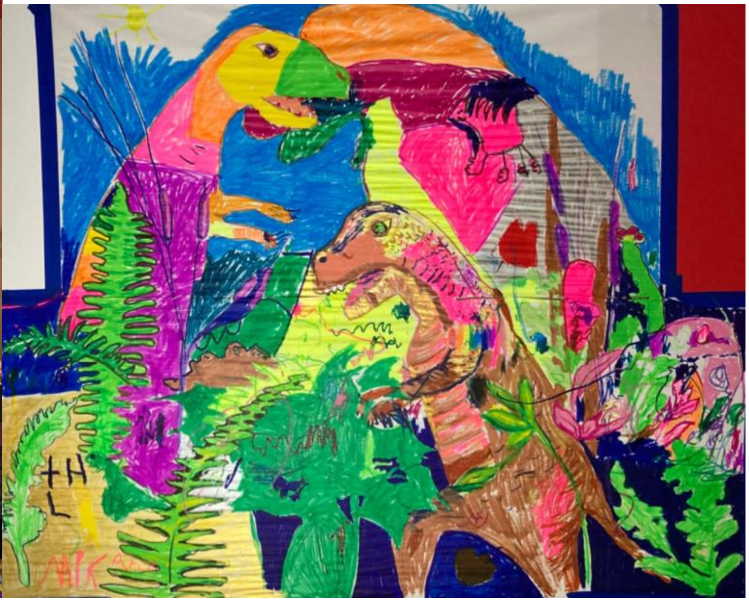


Figure 1 Process of Mural 1
Figure 2 Mural 1 in its Final Form

A comparative analysis of the two murals suggested differences in the visual imagery, choice of colors, and inclusion of symbols. The excitement and joy of the rainbow dinosaur was not replicated in the second iteration. Although the visual aesthetics of the second image personally appealed to me as an adult, children continually gravitated toward the first mural. The ability to freely choose color and imagery led to greater student interest and continued agency as each subsequent child in the rainbow dinosaur mural deviated further from my intended vision. Student agency and empathy is a critical component of meaningful learning experiences. Jeffers (2009) explores the role of empathy and mirror neurons in art education, suggesting that engaging students in creative activities fosters a deeper connection and understanding of their peers. Dewhurst (2014) discusses how collaborative art projects can foster empathy by creating shared spaces where participants co-create and negotiate meaning and processes together, leading to a deeper understanding of one another’s perspectives and experiences. This empathetic engagement was evident in the collaborative mural projects, where children's choices and contributions shaped the final artwork. My own work was more controlled and less playful, and in the next cycle, I was determined to be more mindful of the work children were engaged in.

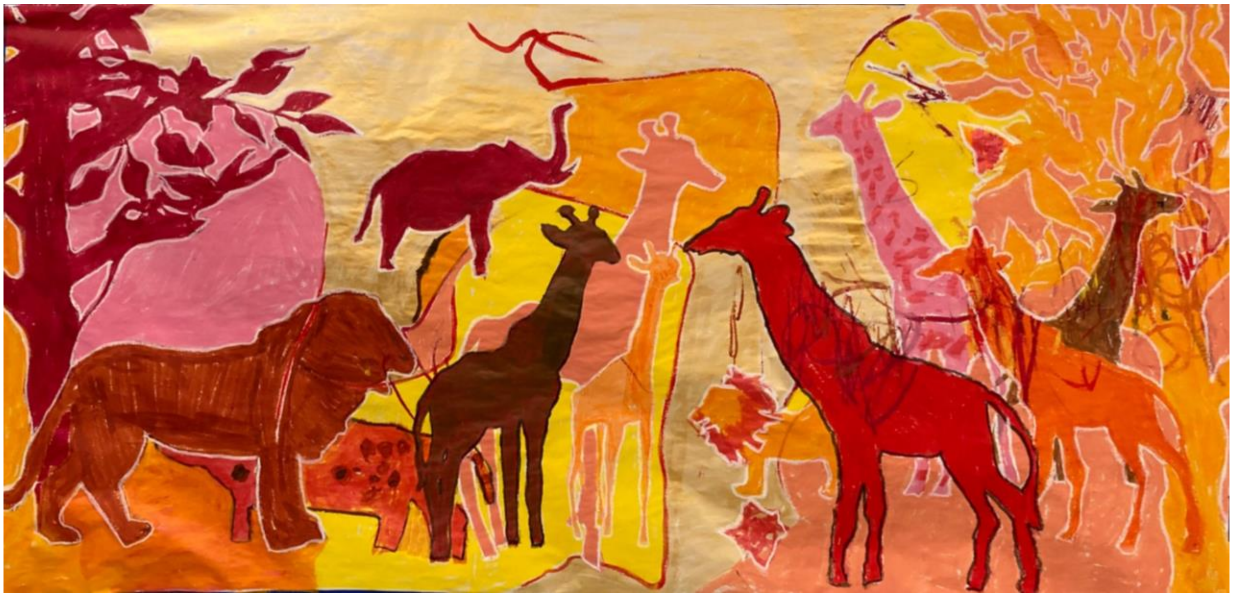
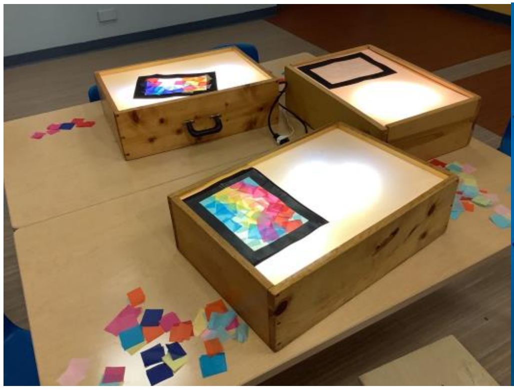


Figure 3 Limited Color Palette and lack of agency

Cycle 2: Light and Color

In the second cycle, I was guided by new questions considering how light passes through objects and how colors mix. Rather than collaboratively working, this cycle involved parallel play, where the children and I created art alongside each other but learned with each other (Figure 4). The importance of time for deep investigation and experimentation or play became evident, emphasizing the need for extended engagement in the creative process. The concept of crip time continued to influence the pace and nature of the interactions, allowing for deeper exploration and creativity. I spent weeks in the studio making art alongside children as they would come in. Some would stay for minutes, and others would stay for an hour or more. Some would play with the color of the light tables (Figure 5), and one student started balling up paper. Another made the paper extend beyond the frame! They broke every rule that I could think of when I envisioned this project for them.



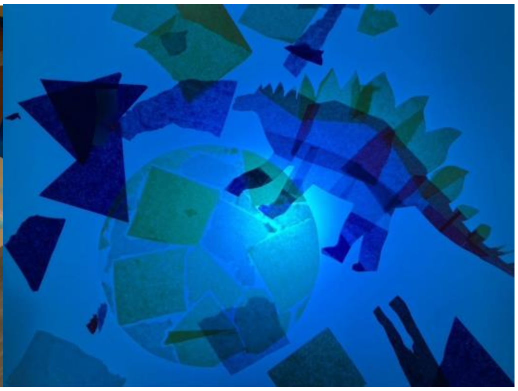


Figure 4 Light Table Set Up
Figure 5 Playing with Color of Light Tables

The children's willingness to break the rules of artmaking encouraged my artmaking. During this cycle, I explored materials and storytelling further. I learned that I could manipulate collages by cutting shapes (such as rainbow dinosaurs) out and layering them to create more in-depth stories. However, I hit a wall and was unsure what to do next. The children loved making and watching me make, so I continued creating more dinosaurs and plants, thinking and waiting (Figure 6). It was a gift of time.

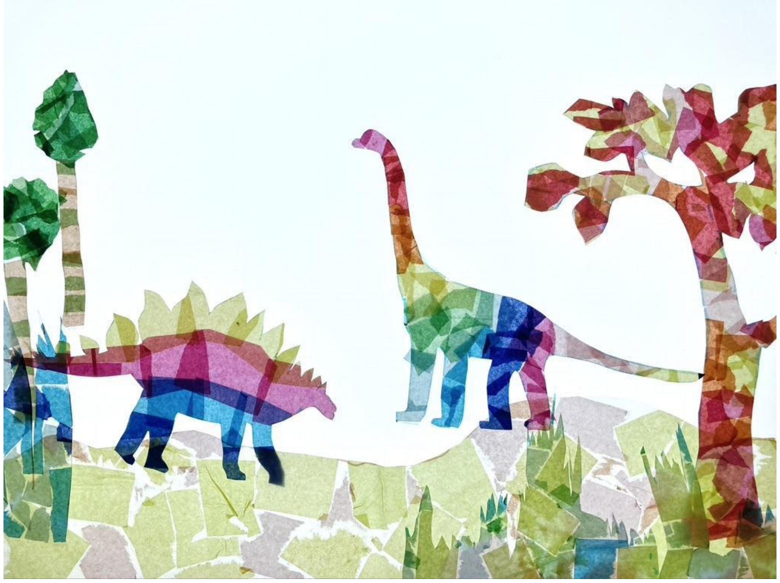


Figure 6 Rainbow Dinosaur on the Light Table

Richardson (2013) commented that the function of time within the artmaking process is mainly left unexamined, often relegated to notions of chronology and progress. This observation resonated with me as I engaged in the creative process during this cycle. I decided to take this opportunity to explore color mixing and light passing through objects further. A picture from the previous week's work made me think how individuals' overlapping social identities, such as disability, gender, and age, can shape their experiences and influence the outcomes of their creative practices. These overlapping identities can interact in complex ways, impacting how people engage with art and each other through intergenerational experiences. In cycle 2, I wanted to be closer to what the children were doing in the studio, and I accomplished this by abandoning my notions of progress, time, and product to play alongside the children. This cycle re-emphasized the importance of time for deep engagement and experimentation. As an art educator, I don't often talk about time when developing curriculum, but this cycle made me realize the importance of slowing down and breaking my notions of progress and curriculum goals in the pursuit of open-ended lines of inquiry.

At the end of this cycle, I was reading Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018), in which I was introduced to the concept of circles of care, and I began to play with stop motion as a visual metaphor to express the web and interconnected and intergenerational roles of women and caregivers in the lives around them to support, interact, and uphold each other (see Figure 7). I began to see the use of visual media to describe my own experiences as a mother, caregiver of children and aging parents, academic, and researcher while at the same time acknowledging the breaks and the gaps in my health.

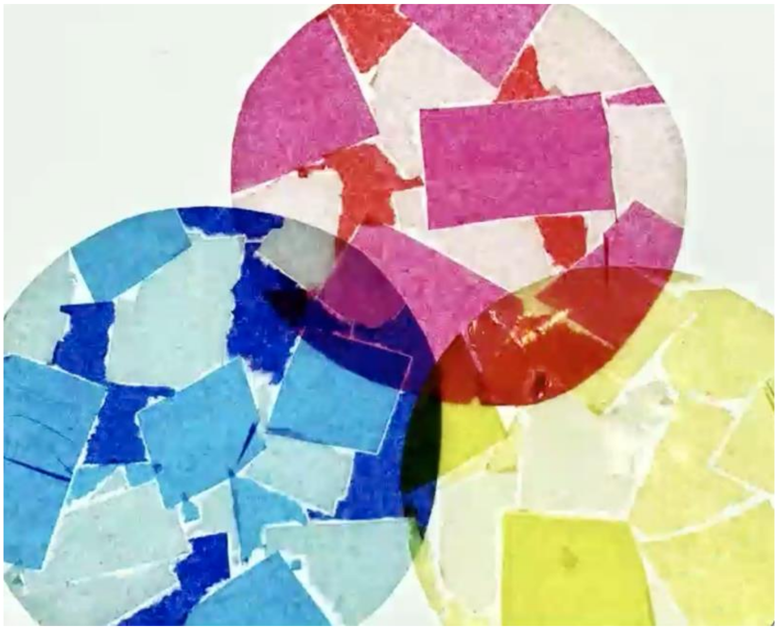


Figure 7 Still from Video Clip

Cycle 3: Shadows and the Final Mural

The final cycle combined elements from the previous cycles, culminating in a final mural project (Figure 9). This project reflected the cumulative experiences and learnings from the residency, incorporating shadow cardboard sculptures and projected lights. We worked with cardboard constructions to create interactive pieces for a shadow exhibit (Figure 8). During this phase, I felt my joy in my work exploding. The museum entered a new phase of reopening with many more participants, making the third cycle exciting with more children and caregivers. How many gumballs can you collect in an upside-down umbrella (Figure 8)? What makes something a hat? Looking at these images of myself, I can see a sense of whimsicality that was lacking in the earlier controlled mural-making (Figure 3).

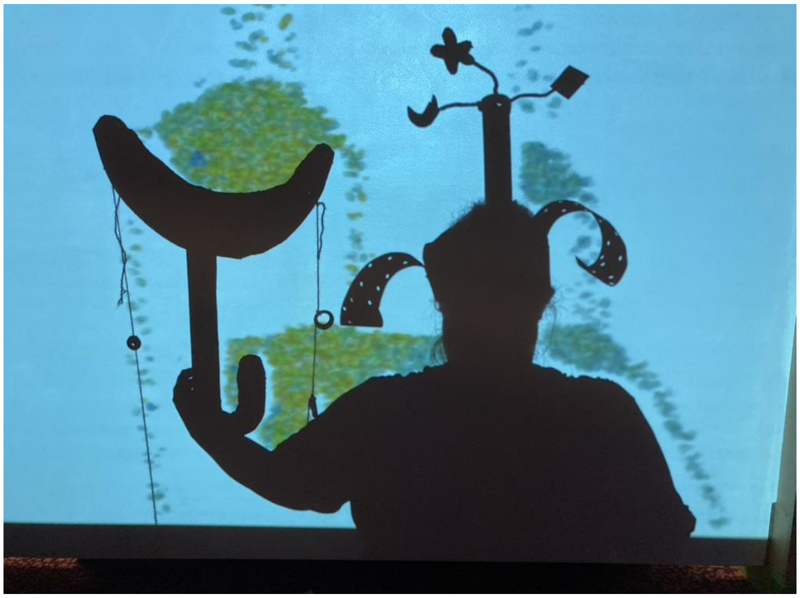


Figure 8 Gumdrop Umbrella

The mural was a collaborative project that utilized cardboard sculptures created from the shadow project, lights and objects from the initial murals, children, caregivers, student interns, and me working together. Letting go of my preconceived notions that had slowly happened over the three work cycles allowed the mural to develop organically as the children each added to it. Much as Weida and Bradbury (2020) describe the unicorn as legendary, magical, and linked with creative imagination, the inclusion of dinosaur imagery in young children's art seems to draw on these same qualities. Therefore, including dinosaur imagery in the final mural piece seemed imperative. In this mural, I tried to listen to the children and let them take active agency in the piece, where they chose to add swirls to a sun-like shadow and dark black shapes/lines to a butterfly flying overhead. We worked together to make sense of shadows and shapes, deciding where to overlap and merge imagery. Much like a river held up by a dam, the alteration of time altered thoughts and the creative process, slowing it down and deepening it, becoming more powerful and promoting a closer interaction with materials and concepts. This fostered a return to playful creativity, which is reflected in the meaningful and collaborative final piece incorporating previous projects.

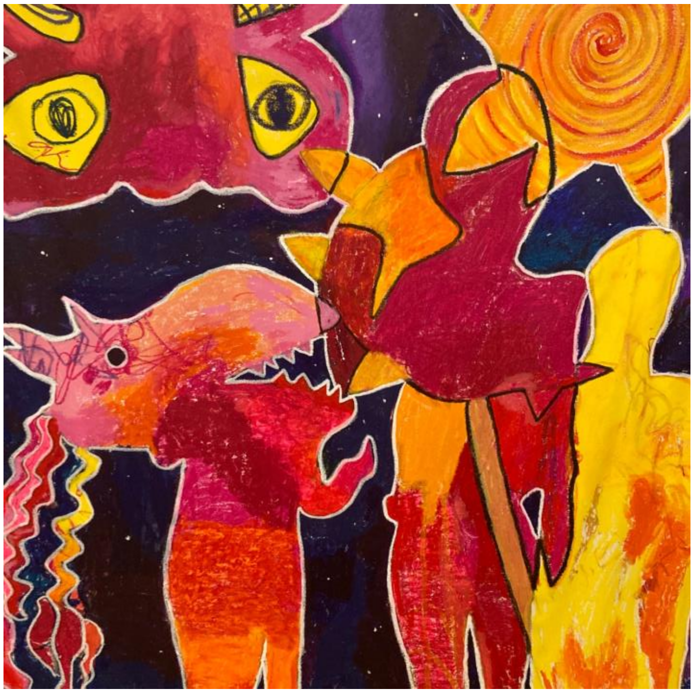


Figure 9 Final Mural

Intergenerational Relationships through Art

The documentation demonstrated that artmaking can facilitate intergenerational interactions, creating opportunities for play. Collaborative art projects, such as the murals, allow for shared experiences and mutual learning; the concept of "crip time" allowed for more meaningful interactions, as the slower pace provided space for deeper connections and understanding. The role of art in fostering intergenerational relationships is supported by Kaplan (2004), who emphasizes the importance of social support networks and community engagement for older adults. By involving multiple generations in the creative process, the data highlighted how art can serve as a medium for building empathy, understanding, and shared experiences.

Interpretations

The interrupted movement of time during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for deeper interaction with materials and concepts, fostering a return to playful creativity. Crip time provided the necessary space for this reflective and iterative process, resulting in a meaningful and collaborative final piece that incorporated pieces from all of the previous projects. Creativity plays a crucial role in lifelong learning, providing a means for personal growth and engagement across generations. The art highlighted how art can engage different generations, fostering a sense of agency and ownership in the learning process. The documentation from the cycles illustrates the role of intergenerational connections, learning, and making as part of the creative process. The influence of "crip time" emphasized the importance of flexibility and adaptation in creative processes, allowing for a more inclusive and accessible approach to lifelong learning. The questions posed in this article are answered through a multifaceted exploration of crip time, play-based learning, and intergenerational artmaking.

The impact of "crip time" on my own creative process and outcomes is evident in the shift from a structured, pre-planned curriculum to a more flexible and adaptive approach. This aligns with Samuels' (2017) concept of crip time as a non-linear experience, allowing for a deeper engagement with materials and unexpected discoveries. The shift to crip time due to health changes and the pandemic restrictions significantly transformed my creative process. It necessitated a shift from a structured curriculum to a more flexible and adaptive approach leading to unexpected discoveries and a more reflective artmaking process. For instance, during the creation of the first mural, the children's unexpected contributions led to a deviation from my original vision, resulting in an increased sense of playfulness and vibrance in the artwork. This demonstrates the positive influence of "crip time" on fostering creativity and adaptability in intergenerational artmaking.

Adopting a constructionist, play-based learning approach, as advocated by Papert (1993) and Dewey (1966), significantly enhanced children's agency and engagement in art projects. By providing children with the freedom to choose colors and imagery in the collaborative murals, they were able to express their creativity and take ownership of their contributions. This approach not only fostered a sense of autonomy but also promoted a deeper understanding of the artistic and scientific concepts being explored. For example, in the first mural, children's active participation in selecting and arranging objects for shadow tracing led to a more dynamic and meaningful final piece. In the second project, children were much more willing to play with the layering of materials, creating depth and breaking the frames I had established. Through this process, I found my creativity was also spurred, and the learning became multidirectional, as described by Cortellesi et al. (2018), from which I was learning from the children and my creative practice.

As suggested by Dewey (1938) and Engeström (2001), documenting the artistic process played a crucial role in understanding the development of intergenerational engagement and learning outcomes. By capturing the evolution of the artwork and the interactions between participants, I could identify critical moments in the learning process and reflect on the impact of different approaches. For instance, the comparative analysis of the two murals revealed significant differences in visual imagery, color choices, and the inclusion of symbols, highlighting the influence of student agency and the evolving nature of the collaborative process. I was able to reflect on the continuation of themes such as dinosaurs, which became the unicorn of the project, through multiple weeks and media, even though I had previously had little interest in the subject matter. I recognized how my work became more playful and invigorated by simply playing with materials and imagery, an indulgence I rarely allowed myself in my adult textually driven life.

Conclusions

This study highlights the significance of intergenerational artmaking in creating spaces where learning is reciprocal and multidirectional. Through my experiences as an artist-in-residence, I experienced that the transmission of knowledge was not one-directional or teacher-centered. Instead, children and adults alike had the opportunity to act as teachers and knowledge holders. My own learning was deeply influenced by the children’s agency, creativity, and engagement. This prompted me to reframe my approach and recognize that intergenerational programming must allow space for all participants, regardless of age, to contribute and lead. The participants acted as both learners and teachers, resulting in an effect where, “the anticipated audience was clearly not the only beneficiary of those intended impacts” (Dewhurst, 2014, loc. 2543).

The concept of *crip time* provided a valuable framework for understanding the non-linear and flexible nature of creative engagement, particularly in the context of intergenerational interactions. Time interruption, time that allows for short or long engagement, and slowing time were all acceptable and successful practices for engaging participants and myself in the programming. By embracing a slower, more flexible approach to time, I was able to engage more genuinely with children and the creative process. This flexibility fostered a more personally meaningful exploration of materials and concepts. Documenting these processes visually enabled me to reflect on and adapt the programming to the needs of the participants, which in turn enriched my understanding and creative practice.

This data underscores the potential of art to strengthen intergenerational and lifelong learning. Individuals can develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others by engaging in creative processes, fostering peace, healing, and renewed energy. Artmaking has the potential to cultivate empathy, agency, and understanding through shared creative experiences. The insights gained from this study, particularly the emphasis on crip time, play-based learning, and process documentation, can inform the design and implementation of future intergenerational art programs in children's museums and similar settings, promoting creativity, agency, and meaningful connections across generations. By incorporating these elements, museums can create more inclusive and engaging environments that foster creativity, agency, and meaningful connections across generations. For example, flexible schedules and open-ended activities can accommodate diverse needs and abilities while encouraging children's active participation and decision-making, enhancing their sense of ownership and investment in artmaking. These programs can serve not just as sites for children’s learning but as spaces for adults and facilitators to learn from children, deepening their own creative practices and perspectives.

References

Cetken-Aktas, S., & Sevimli-Celik, S. (2023). Play preferences of preschoolers according to the design of outdoor play areas. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 51*(5), 955–970. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01358-7

Cortellesi, G., Harpley, J., & Kernan, M. (2018). Intergenerational learning: A tool for building and transforming cultural heritage. In A. M. Labrador & N. A. Silberman (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Public Heritage Theory and Practice. Oxford: Oxford Handbooks Online.*

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. HarperCollins.

Dewey, J. (1966). *Democracy and education*. New York: Free.

Dewhurst, M. (2014). *Social justice art: A framework for activist art pedagogy.* Harvard Education Press.

Fröbel, F. & Jarvis, J. (1899). Friedrich Froebel's Education by Development. New York, D.

Hunter-Doniger, T. (2021). The joy of creativity, autonomy, and play. Art Education, 74(4), 22-27.

Jeffers, C. S. (2009). Within connections: Empathy, mirror neurons, and art education. *Art Education, 62*(2), 18–23.

Kaplan, M. S. (2004). *Intergenerational Programs and Aging*. Haworth Press.

Lakh, E., Shamri-Zeevi, L., & Kalmanowitz, D. (2021). Art in the time of corona: A thematic analysis. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, p. *75*, 101824.

Price, M. (2011). The bodymind problem and the possibilities of pain. *Hypatia*, 26(3), 453-475.

Samuels, E. (2017). Six ways of looking at crip time. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 37*(3). https://dsq-sds.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/5824/4684#top

Piscitelli, B., & Penfold, L. (2015). Child-centered practice in museums: Experiential learning through creative play at the Ipswich Art Gallery. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, *58*(3), 263-280.’’

Richardson, J. (2013). Time unhinged. *Visual Arts Research*, *39*(1), 90–107.

Richardson, J. T. E., & Kletchka, D. C. (2022). Museum Education for Disability Justice and Liberatory Access. *Journal of Museum Education*, *47*(2), 138–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2022.2072155

Sack, J., Thompson, R., & Wang, O. (2022). Connecting communities of practice around early childhood learning: Working toward symbiotic relationships in the art museum. *Art Education*, *75*(2), 27–32.

Ungemah, L. D., & Stokas, A. G. (2017). Making Space for the Possible: Artists-in-Residence in Community College. *Art Education*, *71*(1), 24–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043125.2018.1389589

Weida, C. L., & Bradbury, C. (2020). The unicorn as lifelong companion: Remixing inclusive, intergenerational art education journeys with the freedom of Froebel and wildness of Waldorf. *International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education*, *3*(1), 6.

Lest We Forget: Exploring My Mother's Journey Through Dementia

Cynthia van Frank
High School Art Specialist
The Study School, Quebec, Canada

> *"With these paintings, I hope to preserve my mother's memories in a tangible form, offering a glimpse into her life and experiences before they disappear. The objects depicted in the paintings are touchstones that connect my mother to her past. They symbolize the richness of her life despite the challenges posed by dementia."*

Abstract

Lest We Forget - About My Mother" is a poignant visual essay comprising a series of small and medium-sized oil paintings that serve as a tribute to the artist's 92-year-old mother, who grapples with dementia. Through these paintings, the artist delves into their personal journey as a caregiver, reflecting on their mother's life, challenges, and the impact of memory loss. Each painting depicts significant objects from the mother's life, serving as touchstones to her past and symbolizing the richness of her experiences despite dementia's challenges. Knitting emerges as a recurring motif, embodying comfort and routine while conveying moments of resilience and resourcefulness. The consistent use of Naples Yellow as the background color unifies the series, while shadows subtly underscore the fragility of memory. Through emotional realism, the artist explores themes of love, loss, and memory, offering viewers a glimpse into the complex emotions surrounding dementia. Ultimately, the series serves as a heartfelt preservation of the mother's memories and a celebration of the enduring power of connection amidst the shadows of mortality.

To correspond with the author regarding this article:
cynthiavanfrank@gmail.com
https://www.instagram.com/cynvanfrank/
https://cynthiavanfrank.art/

https://doi.org/10.25889/qjjb-bq14

My series of paintings is a heartfelt exploration into the world of my 93-year-old mother, delving into themes of dementia, memory loss, memory preservation, and love. In a world where more than 55 million individuals grapple with these conditions, my aim with this series of paintings is threefold: to shed light on the often-overlooked realities of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, to challenge the stigma that surrounds them, and to advocate for greater support and compassion for those affected by these challenging conditions (Alzheimer's Disease International, n.d.). Additionally, these paintings serve as a tribute to my mother's experiences as a Holocaust survivor and as my mother, capturing her memories and preserving them for future generations. In my mother's generation, those who survived the Holocaust are now old, many are victims of the ravages of memory loss. It falls on the second-generation survivors, and their children, to keep their memories alive. Through my art, I aim to honor her legacy and the resilience of those who have faced unimaginable hardships, while also exploring my role as her caregiver and the universal experience of confronting mortality.

The paintings depict objects that were once relevant in my mother's life or have been altered to help her function. I become an archivist who observes and pieces together artifacts to reconstruct, explore and understand both her past and present journey. Several paintings show objects from her life and include reflections on their importance in her journey with dementia. Objects carry memories and meanings, often becoming the only testament to a person's life. They can evoke emotions through their appearance, a concept known as appearance emotionalism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d.). In my artistic practice, I emphasize the emotional resonance of objects, viewing them as vessels of memories and meanings. This emphasis on emotional resonance led me to define the style of my work as ***emotional realism***. This style involves rendering objects from observation in a realistic manner, akin to contemporary realism which focuses on realistic depictions of the modern world (Realism Today, n.d.). Both emotional realism and contemporary realism share a commitment to capturing the essence of their subjects authentically. However, through the materiality of lightly applied impasto paint, I aim to convey the deep emotional connection I have with my mother and her experience. Emotional realism allows me to blend realistic depictions with an expressive quality that communicates the emotional resonance of my subjects. This approach emphasizes the dual focus on realistic representation and emotional depth, capturing not just the physical reality of my mother's world, but also the profound emotional landscape of our shared journey.

Throughout her life, my mother faced numerous challenges, including being a hidden child during World War II. Jewish families often placed their children in orphanages, convents, or with non-Jewish families to protect them from the Nazis. My father stayed hidden in an orphanage, while my mother found refuge in a convent where she was converted to Catholicism. These experiences resulted in a struggle with introversion and subservience. I had a complicated relationship with my mother during my childhood and was a parentified child, taking on responsibilities typically meant for a parent (Newport Academy, n.d.). As I grew older, we developed a deep bond, and she found her voice after my father passed away. Unfortunately, her memories began to slip away, and she was diagnosed with dementia. This experience has been both heartbreaking and illuminating, forcing me to confront my own mortality and the fragility of memory.

With these paintings, I hope to preserve my mother's memories in a tangible form, offering a glimpse into her life and experiences before they disappear. The objects depicted in the paintings are touchstones that connect my mother to her past. They symbolize the richness of her life despite the challenges posed by dementia.

Each narrative accompanying the paintings reflects my reactions to the objects and memories that my mother holds dear. They explore themes of love, loss, and memory. Knitting is a constant thread throughout the series, symbolizing comfort and routine. One painting, in particular, portrays a poignant moment in my mother's life. She unraveled the sweater she had knitted for my father and used the yarn to knit a sweater for herself. This painting is a tribute to my mother's resilience and resourcefulness, as well as a reflection of the enduring power of love and memory (see *Figure* 5).

Throughout, I use the same color, a neutral Naples Yellow, for each background, unifying the series as a cohesive whole. The presence of shadows in each painting serves as a subtle reminder of the fragility of memory and the ever-present threat of dementia.

In conclusion, the series "*Lest We Forget: Exploring My Mother's Journey Through Dementia*" serves as a profound exploration of the human spirit. Through the realistic yet emotionally charged depiction of objects from my mother's life, I have attempted to capture the essence of her experiences and our shared journey. The artworks embody the lifelong learning that comes with caregiving, illustrating how we adapt and find meaning even in the face of devastating illnesses like dementia.

By documenting these objects and their significance, I aim to preserve my mother's legacy and provide a tangible connection to her past. This series is not only a tribute to her but also a reflection on the universal experience of dealing with dementia, offering solace and understanding to others in similar situations.

Ultimately, "*Lest We Forget*" is a celebration of my mother's life and a testament to the strength of our bond. Through this work, I seek to understand my evolving relationship with my mother, which remains fluid and growing despite her dementia. It is a call to remain curious about our loved ones, to seek connections in new ways even if they are different from what we had hoped for, and to honor the memories that shape who we are. Through art, I hope to inspire empathy, compassion, and a deeper appreciation for the journeys of those affected by dementia and their caregivers.

How this series about my mother began

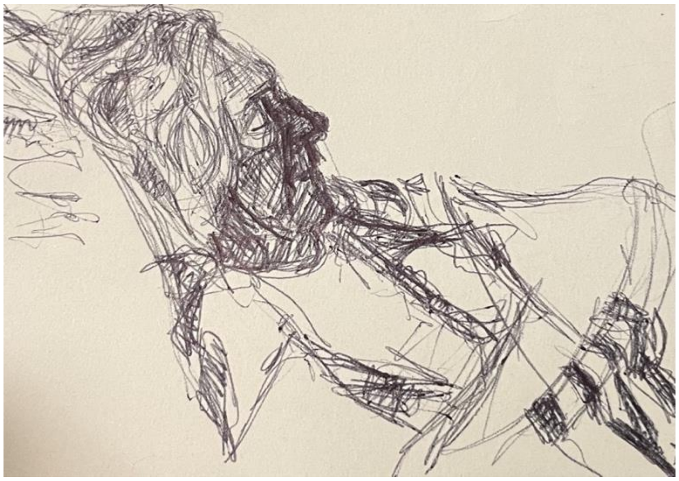


Figure 1 Untitled

Three years ago, my mother was in the hospital. While sitting beside her, I felt an impulse to create a quick study of her lying there. This moment sparked a series of paintings, each one compelled by the desire to capture her story and my reaction to this phase of her life. I began with a quick sketch done while she slept, using only a pen and a small scrap of paper (see *Figure* 1). Drawing felt so intimate, a way to hold on to the moment. I created this sketch eight days after my mom turned 91. We had taken her out for supper to celebrate her birthday. Two days later, she

fainted and was hospitalized. It’s a stark reminder of how things can change in an instant.[1]
I was watching my mom sleep after she came back from the hospital. Bathed in soft light, my mother sleeps peacefully, her face reflecting a sense of calm despite a bruise from a recent fall.

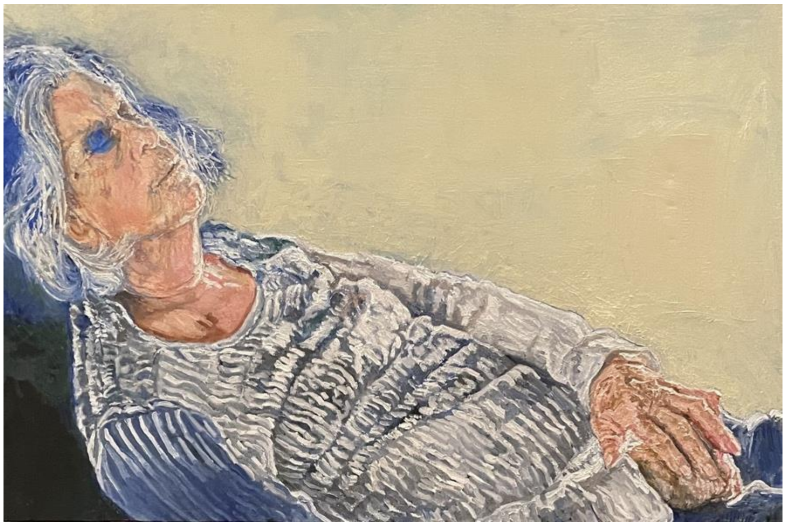


Figure 2 Watching my mom sleep

My Mother’s Love of Knitting

My mom was about 6 years old when sitting beside her mother, who was knitting. She began to twist bits of wool into knots. That’s how she learned to knit. She doesn't knit anymore.

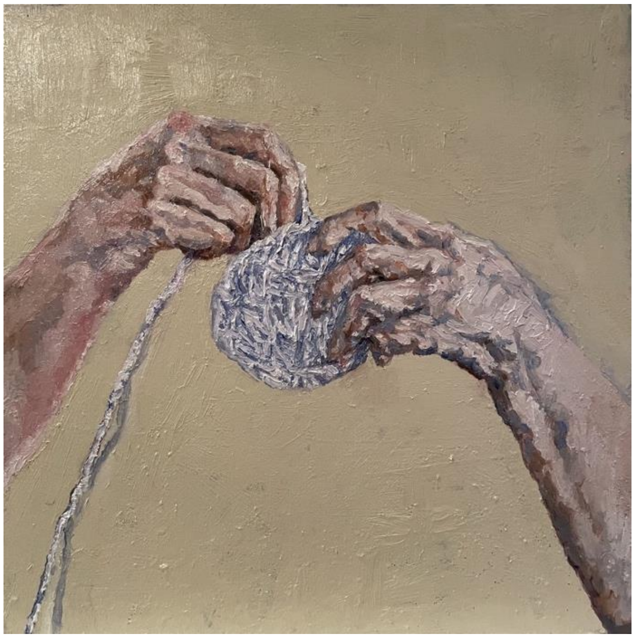


Figure 3 Rolling Yarn

---

[1] All paintings in this article are by the author, Cynthia van Frank.

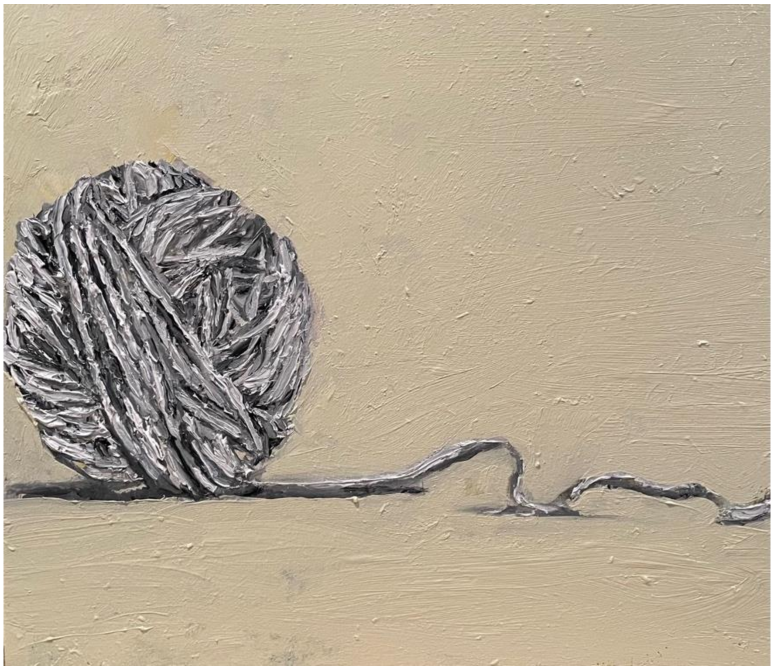


Figure 4 Ball of yarn

We noticed my mom's memory loss a few years ago, and by the time she turned 91, she began losing more long-term and short-term memory. One day, as she was showing me how she winds yarn into a ball before knitting, she accidentally dropped it. We watched as the ball rolled away and started to unravel.

When my dad passed away, my mom unraveled the sweater she had knit for him. She then knit herself a sweater from that wool.

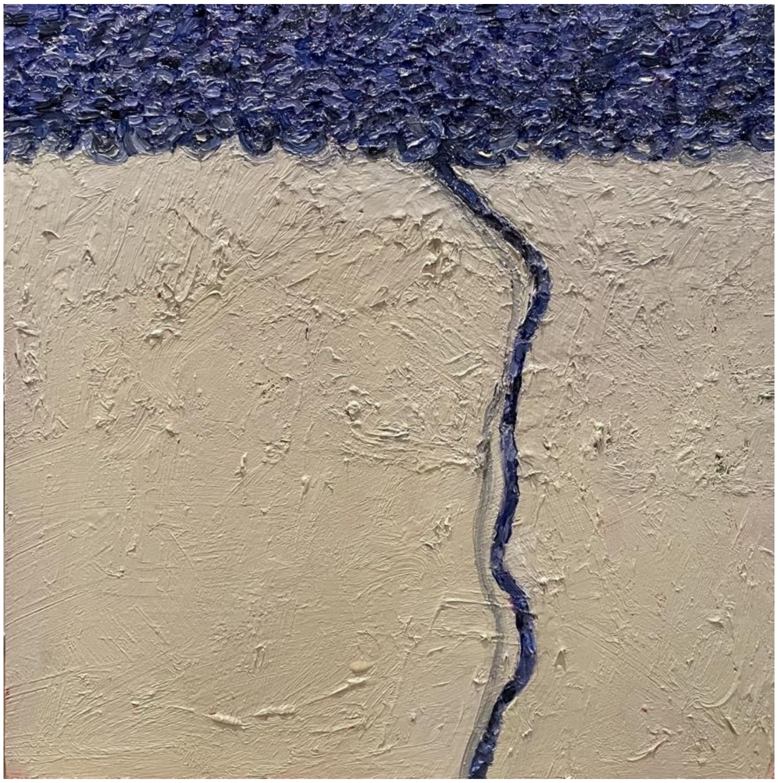


Figure 5 Unravel

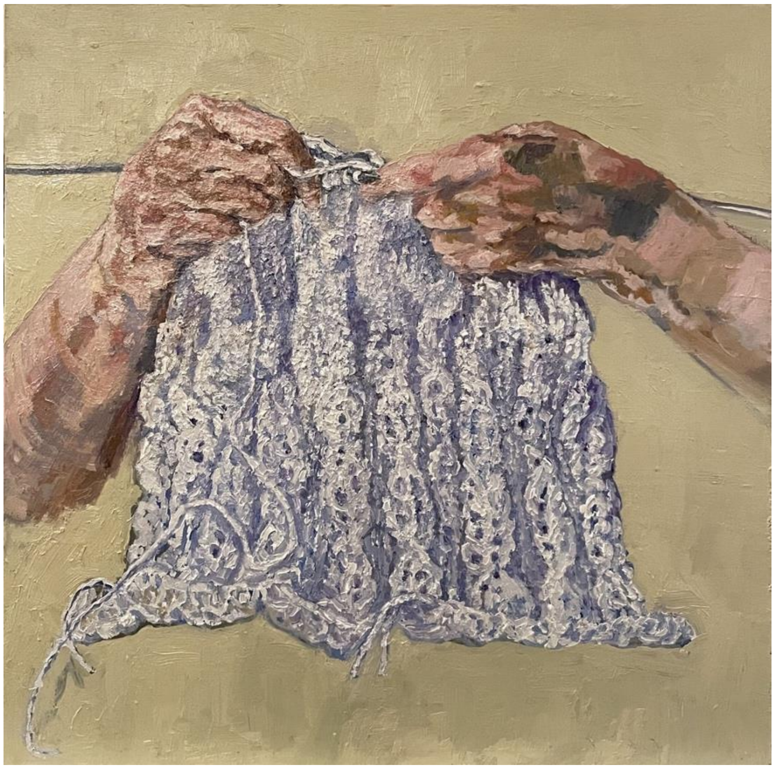


Figure 6 Mock Cable Stitch

My mom never finished this last knitting project. One day, I placed knitting needles loaded with a few rows of stitches in her hands and she immediately began to knit.

It’s difficult to understand what is happening in my mother's mind as she navigates the challenges of losing words and executive functions.

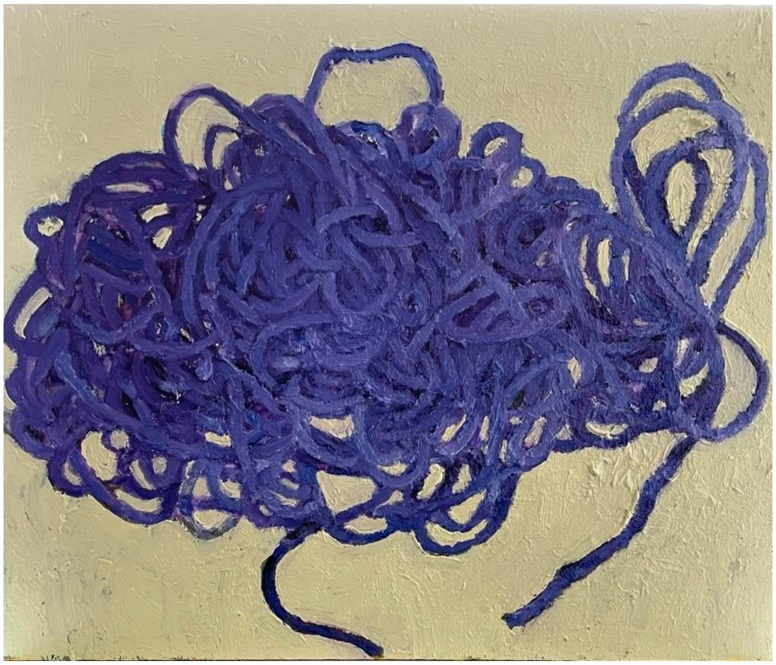


Figure 7 Tangled

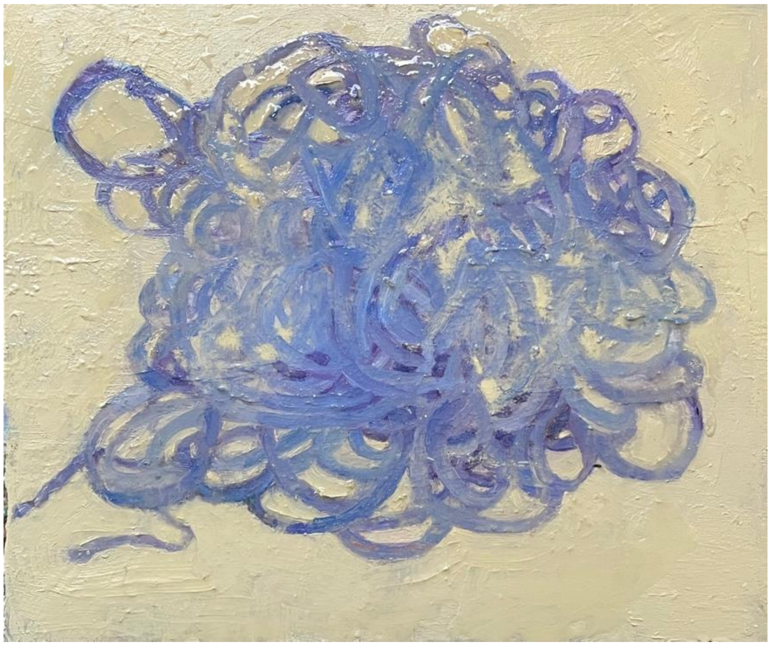


Figure 8 Fading Tangle

I watch my mom slowly slip away.

Objects in my Mother's Life

My mom and dad were married for 62 years. They had a complicated love, and it was sometimes lopsided, but it was always there. For many years, after my dad passed away, my mom would kiss his photograph good night and ask him why he left her so soon. She forgets to do this now.

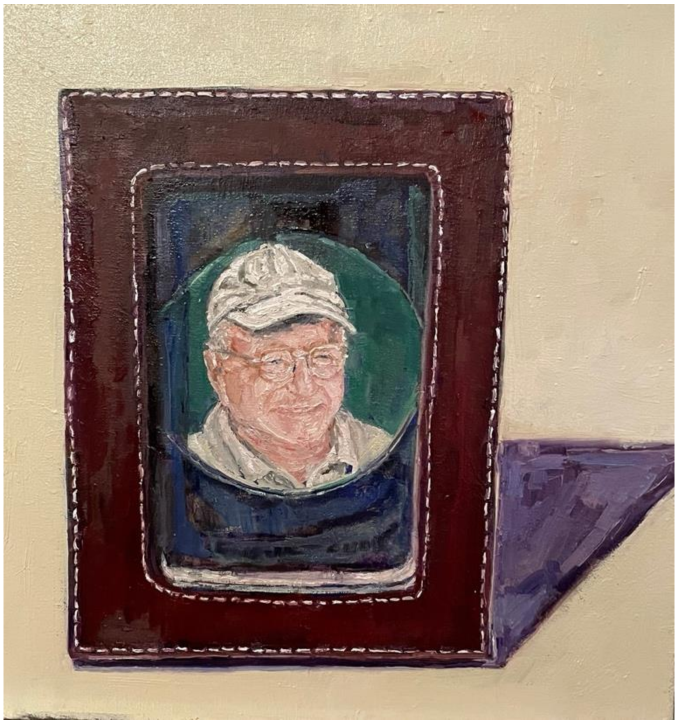


Figure 9 My dad's photograph

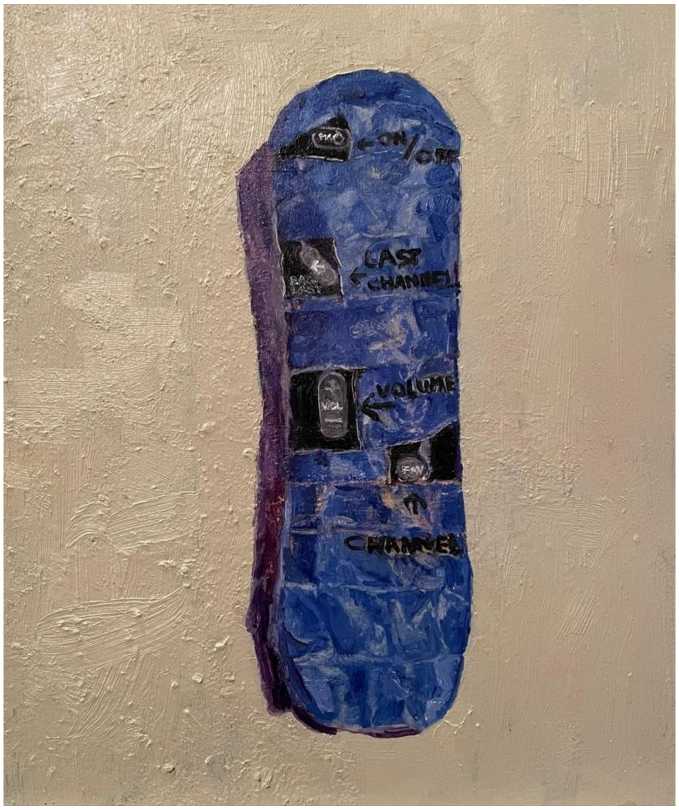


Figure 10 TV remote control

My mom spends a lot of her time watching TV. She wants to be busy, but dementia stops her in her tracks. My brother rigged up her TV remote controller with blue electrical tape blocking all the buttons except for the ones she uses repeatedly. It worked!

My mother always has a crumpled-up Kleenex in her pocket. She has suffered from nonallergic rhinitis for as long as I remember. As her dementia worsens, she blows her nose more often.

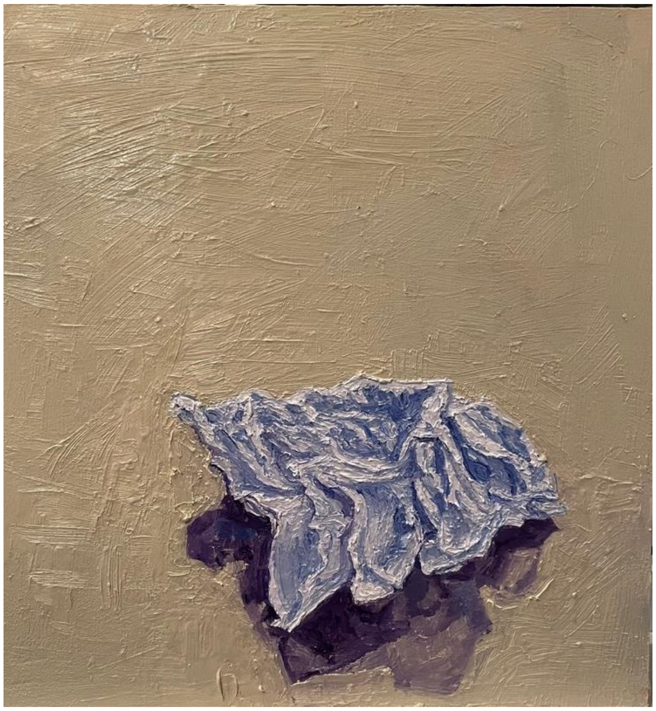


Figure 11 Kleenex and Shadow

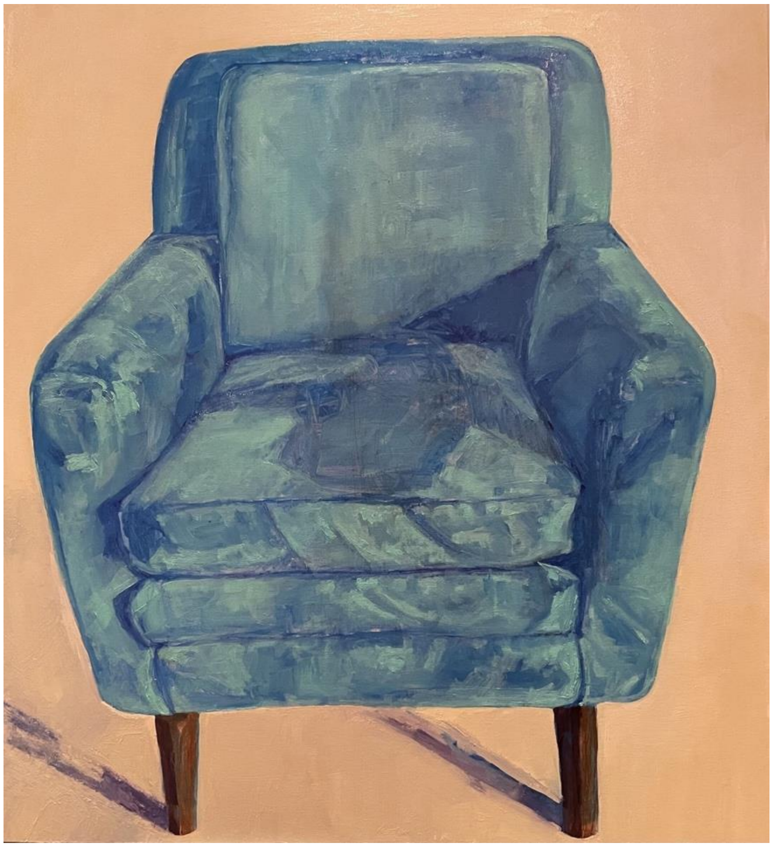


Figure 12 My mother's chair

My parents had a pair of matching mid-century style chairs for over 60 years. They were a beautiful gold colour and were placed side-by-side with a small nest of teak tables between them. My mom always sat on one and my dad on the other. At one point, my parents moved them to the basement, where they faded in colour and from our daily lives. When my mom sold the family house, we salvaged and recovered them in a beautiful blue fabric. Now my mom sits on the same chair again.

Caregiving

Washing and styling my mom's hair every week has become a special time of tenderness for both of us. My mother never prioritized herself when she was a mom of three children. This pampering and connection transcend words; it's an undemanding exchange through touch alone. With closed eyes, she finds peace in the tranquility, and so do I.

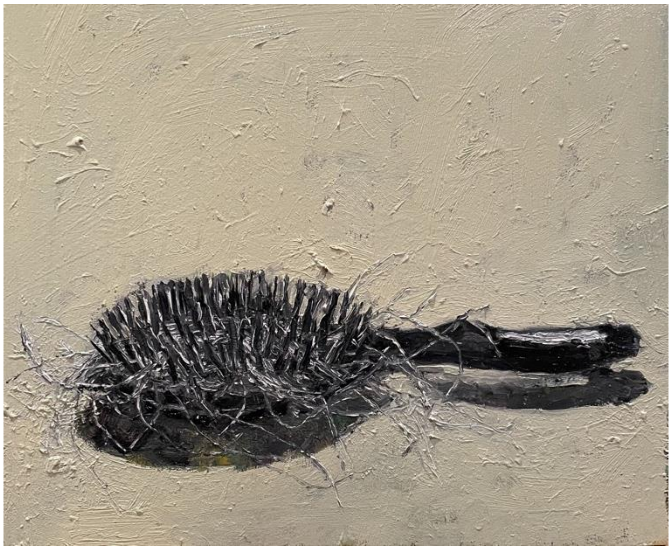
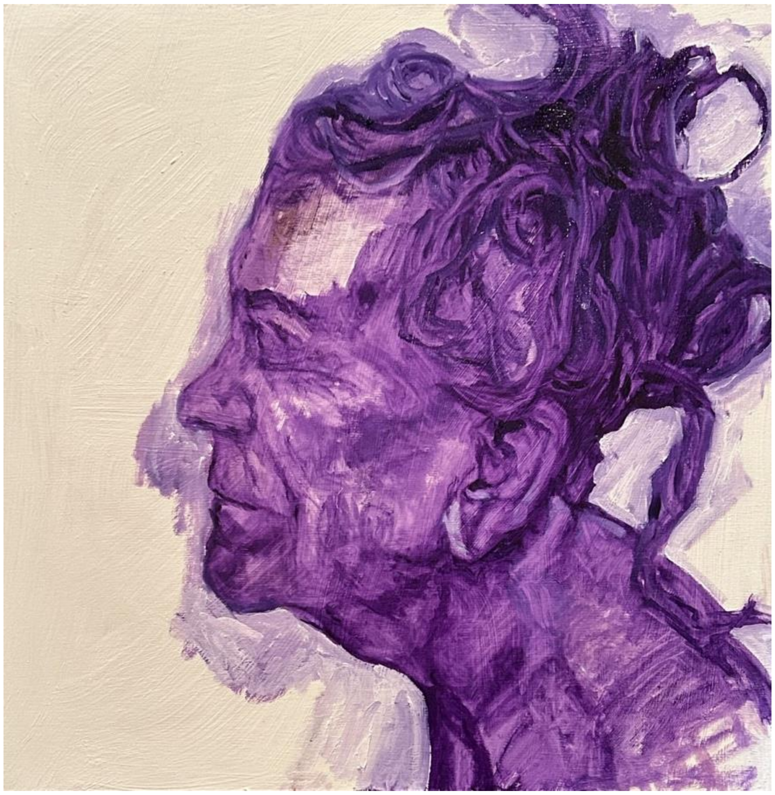


Figure 13 Hairbrush



My mom loves it when I wash her hair. I use purple shampoo for her white hair. She looked so regal when I piled her shampooed hair on top of her head. Occasionally, she sighs, reminiscing about when she used to wash my hair.

Figure 14 Purple Shampoo

In this painting, my mother's hand delicately feels the gentle cascade of water, a moment of intimate care and dignity. As her caregiver, I strive to honor her autonomy, supporting her in the tasks she can still accomplish.

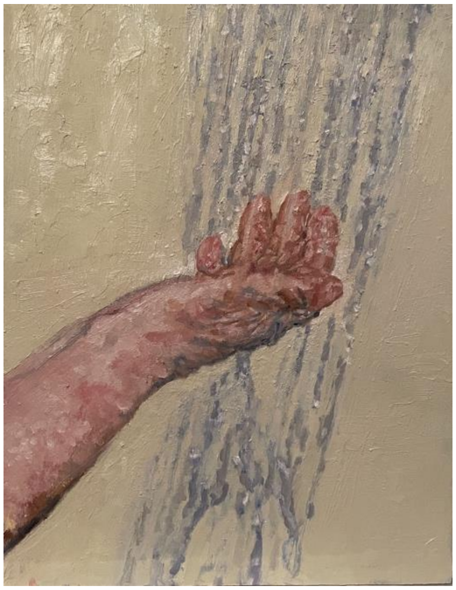


Figure 15 The Shower

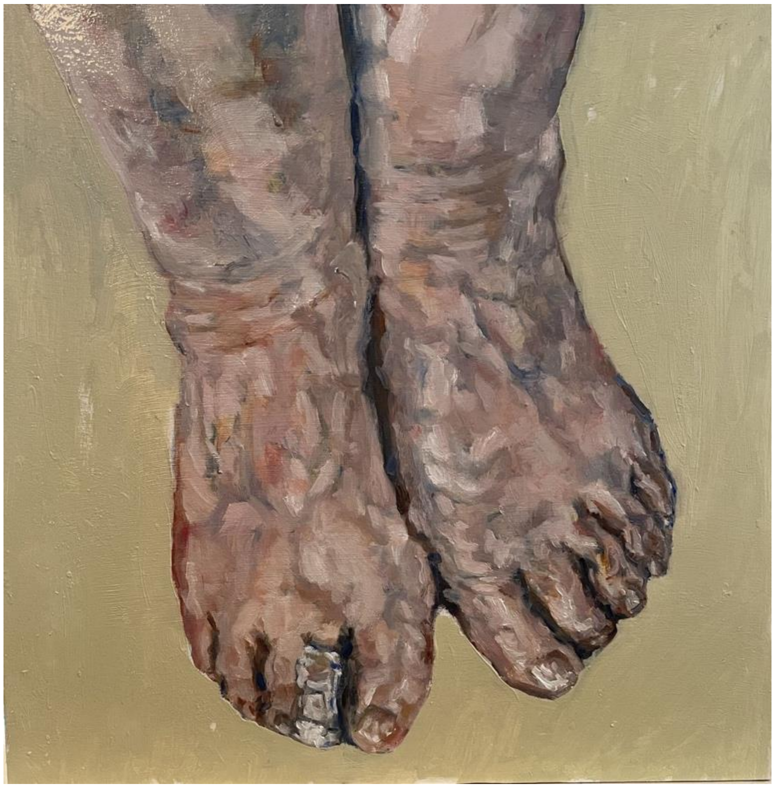


Figure 16 Bandaged

My mother always downplayed pain and sadness. Sometimes I witness small bruises or sores when I assist her as she showers. I often feel sad and powerless to help her.

After showering, my mother slips into her shoes almost instinctively. In a candid moment, she confided that these days, she often feels adrift, unsure of what to do or where to go. When I inquired if this saddened her, she simply replied, 'I'm fine.'"

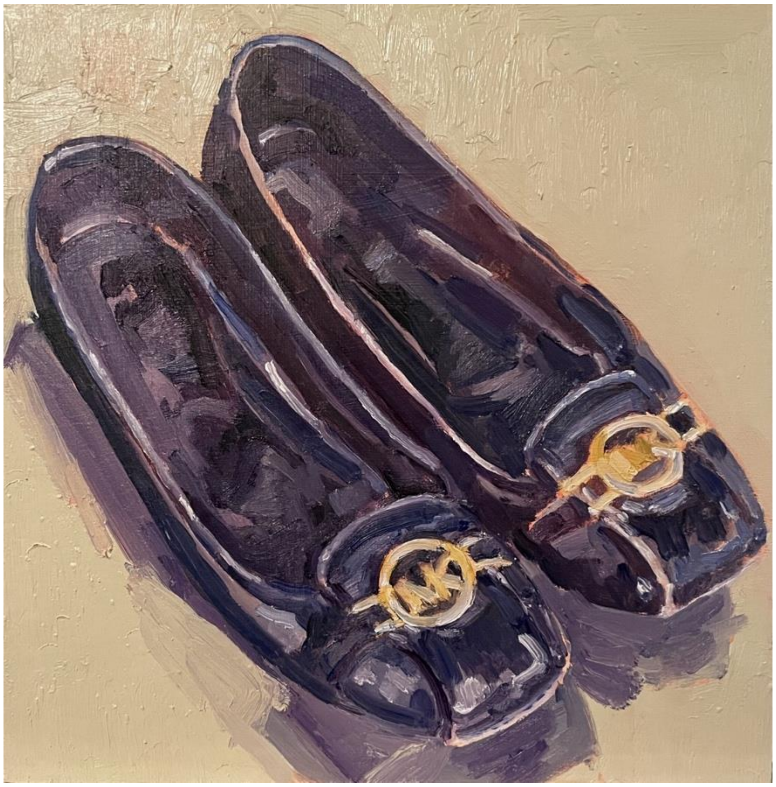


Figure 17 My Mother's Shoes

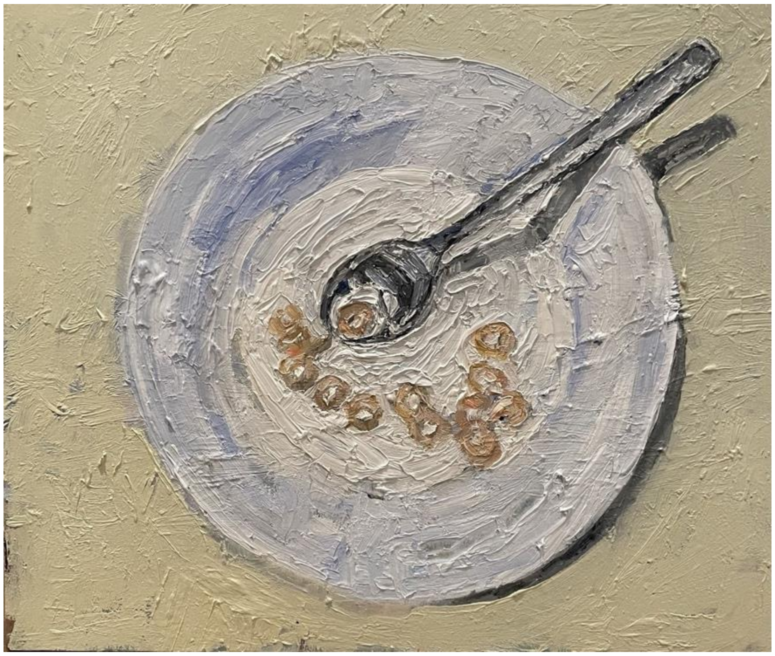


Figure 18 Cheerios

My mother often has Cheerios for breakfast. The handle of the spoon, resembling a clock's hand, and the scattered Cheerios, mirroring the jumbled numbers of a clock face. It suggests the test my mother underwent before her dementia diagnosis, where she struggled to draw a clock face.

My mom has a cup of coffee at every meal. It’s her preferred beverage.

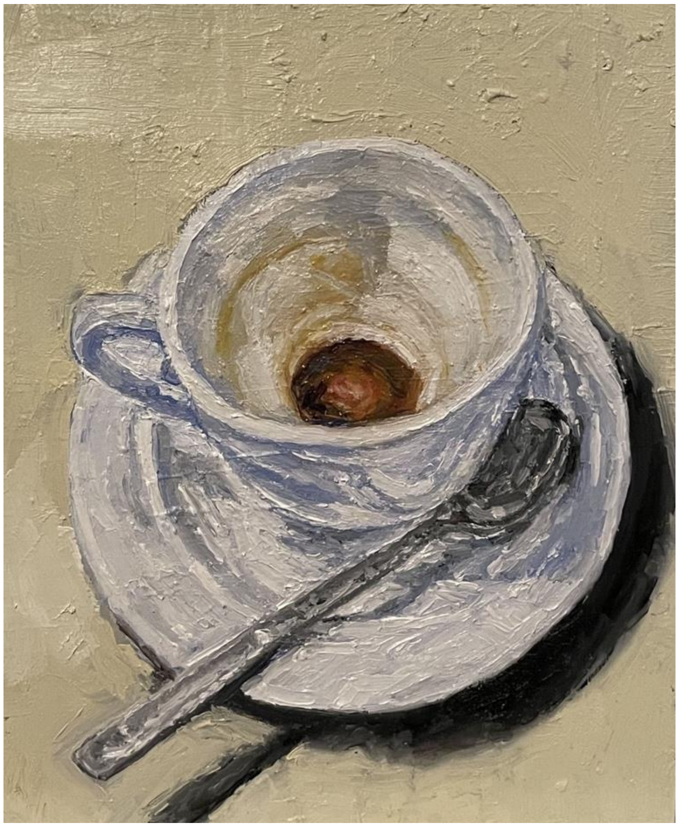


Figure 19 Coffee Dregs

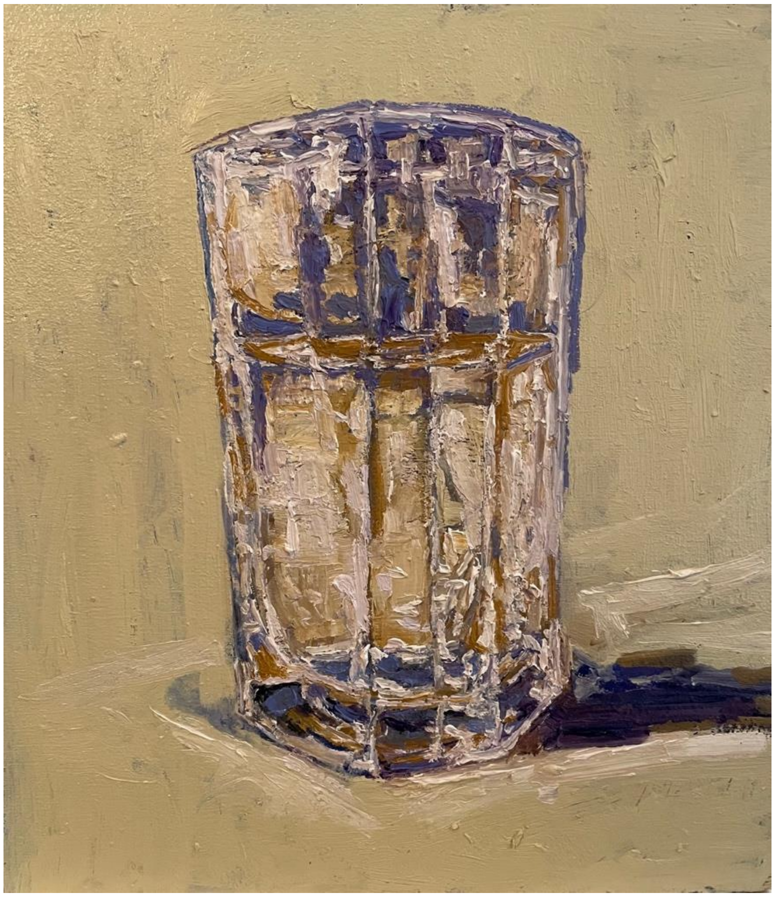


Figure 20 Glass of Water

When my mom was a young girl in Belgium, she was told by her mother not to drink water. Water was only good for one thing, and that was bathing. Of the many things she has forgotten, my mom still remembers this. Dehydration is a constant worry for us, and it has had some dire consequences for her. Now, we ensure she drinks water every few hours to keep her hydrated.

My mom was an amazing baker, renowned for her apple cake. A few years ago, my freezer was filled with her delicious apple cake loaves. I shared some, discarded others, and now I wish I had kept more. Since my mom doesn't bake anymore, I've taken up the task using her recipe. Whenever I bake her apple cake, I bring her a piece and ask if it's as good as the ones she used to make. She always tells me it is.

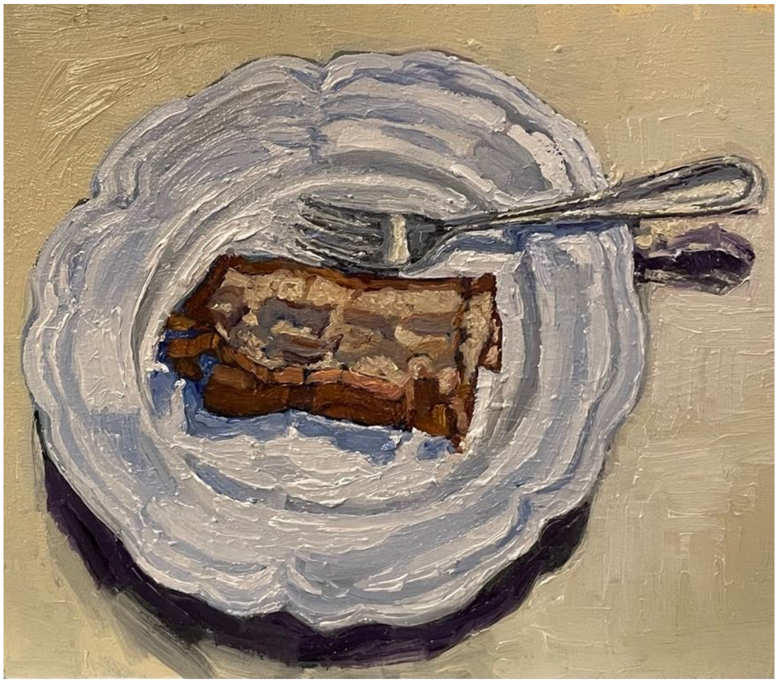


Figure 21 Apple Cake

Plants in my Mother's Life

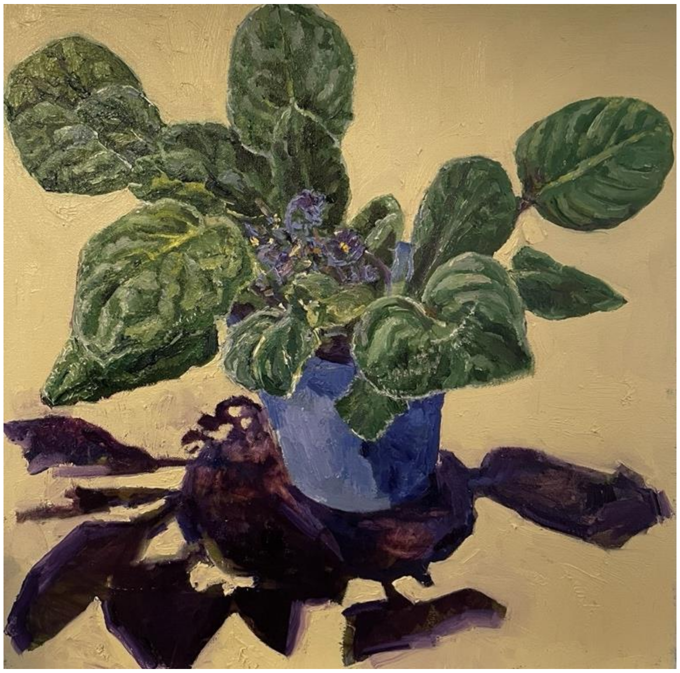


Figure 22 African Violet and Shadow

My mom had a knack for growing African Violets. When the last one died last year, I bought her a replacement for Mother's Day. My brothers and I care for it and it's thriving.

My mom planted a few grapefruit seeds with my brother when he was five. That was over 50 years ago. Those seeds grew into a 6-foot-tall tree, almost the same height as my brother. It nearly died a few times over the last few years, but it is resilient.

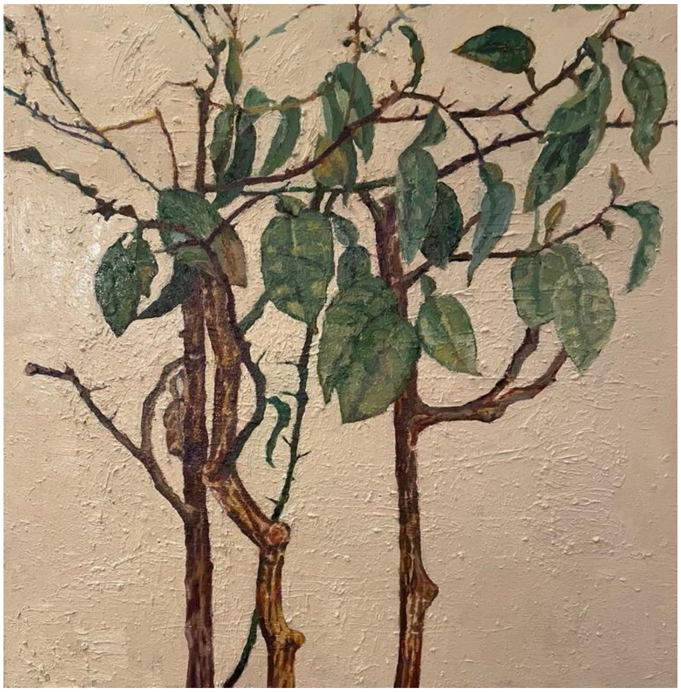


Figure 23 Grapefruit tree

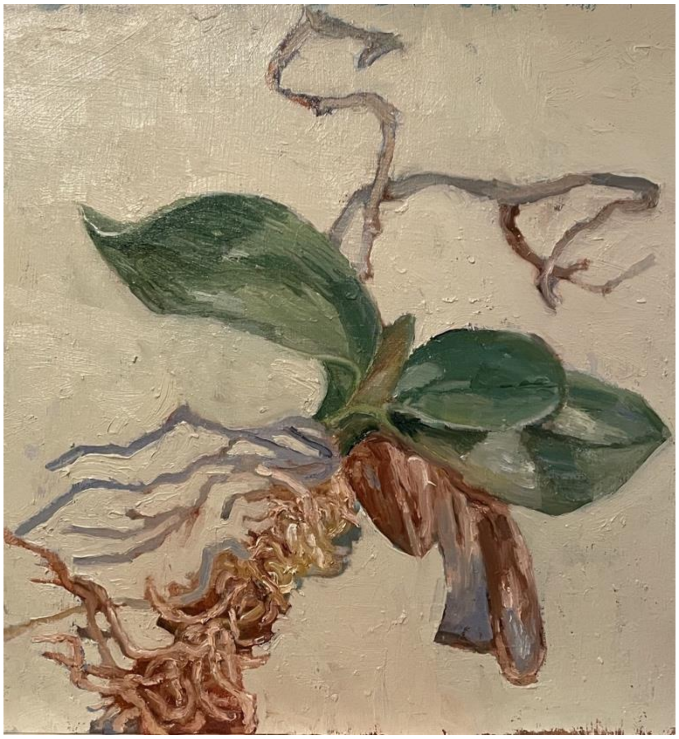


Figure 24 Orchid

My mom inherited my father’s six beautiful orchid plants when he passed away. She cared for them, and they flourished and flowered until a couple of years ago. This orchid plant is the lone survivor.

During a visit with my mom, I stumbled upon a poignant scene: a cyclamen plant wrapped in vivid pink foil. It had two remaining leaves one of which was withering.

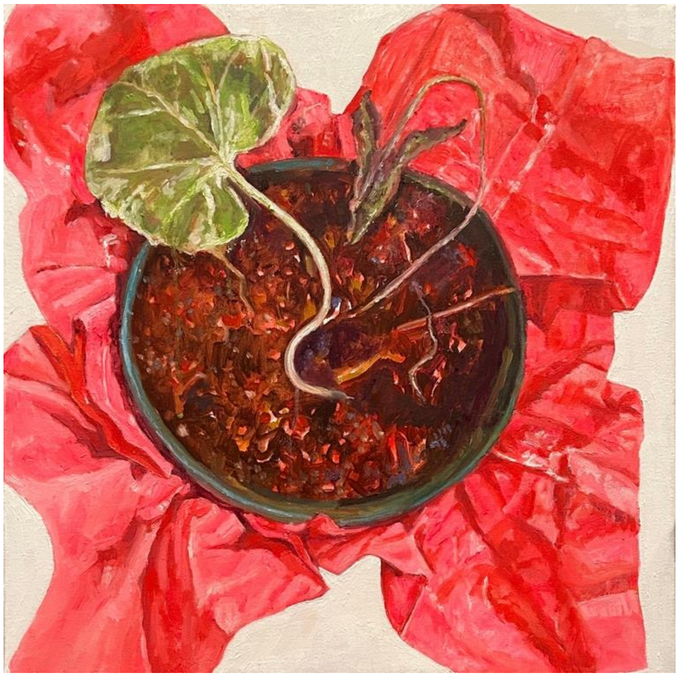


Figure 25 Cyclamen

Childhood Memories, Mementos, and the War

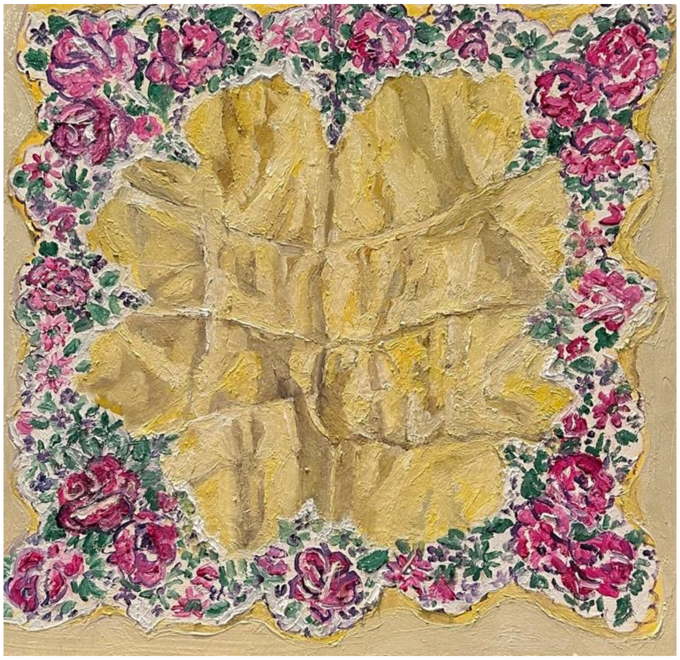


Figure 26 Handkerchief

This painting, inspired by my mother's hankie from her childhood days before the war. My mother, along with many other Jewish children, was hidden in a convent. They were all converted, and that tested their identity and innocence. Even after the war's end, my mother, feeling confused, sought comfort in churches as she grappled with her sense of belonging. Raised agnostic, our parents understood the dangers of being Jewish, striving to shield us from the shadows of the past.

My father came to Canada as a teenager after World War II. He had very few keepsakes from his life before the war. In The Kiddush Cup, — a survivor of the Holocaust, brought to Canada by my father. It's engraved with my grandmother's name, the same as my mother's, connecting generations.

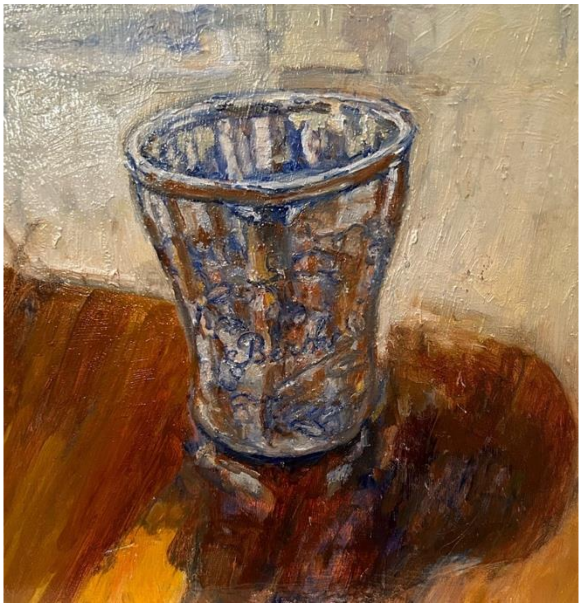


Figure 27 The Kiddush Cup

My 92-year-old mother, a hidden child during the war, found solace on a convent rooftop, convincing herself the bombs were fireworks. My two paintings–one, bombs over Brussels, echoing her innocent perspective; the other, Disrupted Navigation, symbolizing her battle with Alzheimer's.

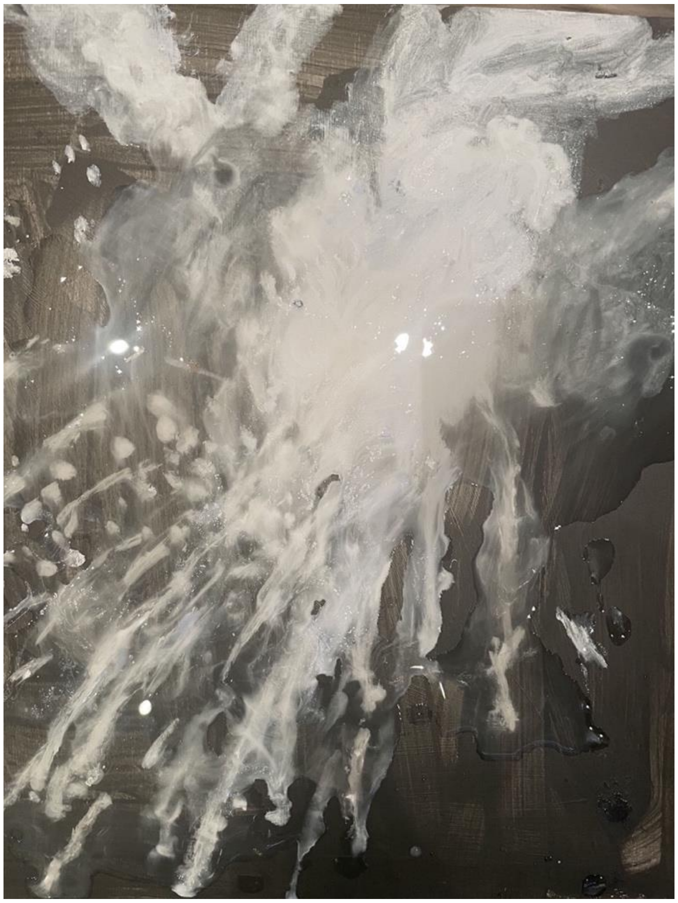


Figure 28 Bomb

Inspired by my mother's resilience as a hidden child during WWII, this piece reflects her unwavering optimism amidst chaos and danger. I see a connection between her perception of bombs falling as harmless fireworks and the narrative of disrupted neurons.

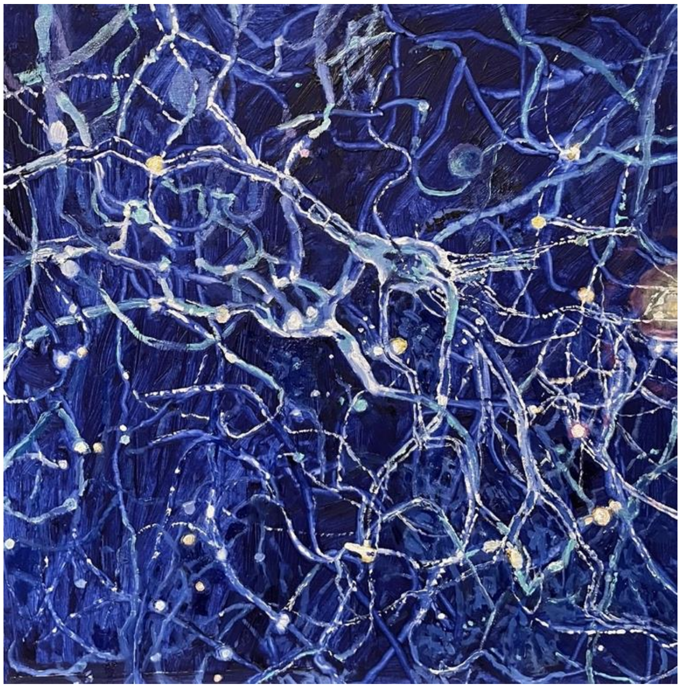


Figure 29 Disrupted Navigation

Head and Hands

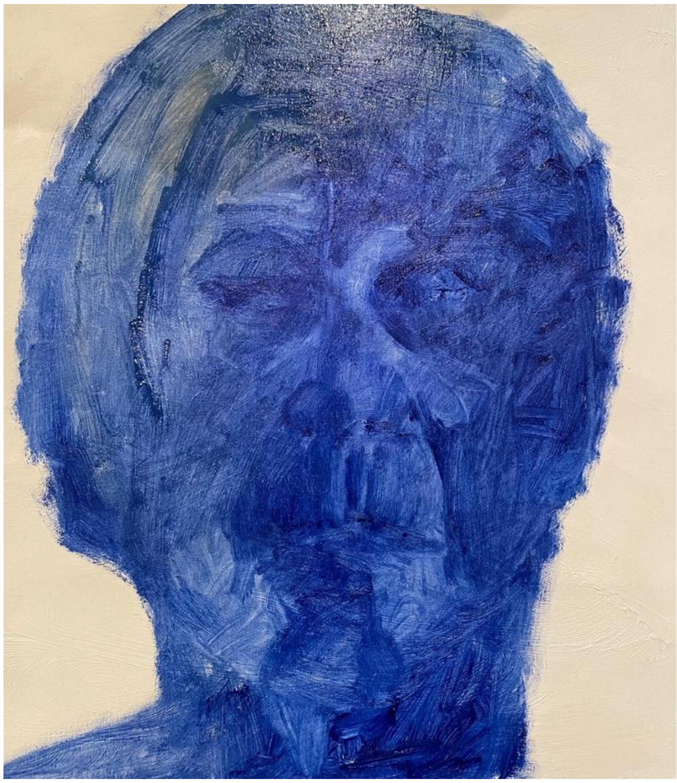


Figure 30 Untitled

This underpainting said it all. I stopped, dead in my tracks, as I saw the look I captured in my mom’s eyes. I left the painting unfinished.

I used to think my hands looked like my father’s. Painting my mother’s hands, I saw how similar they were to mine.

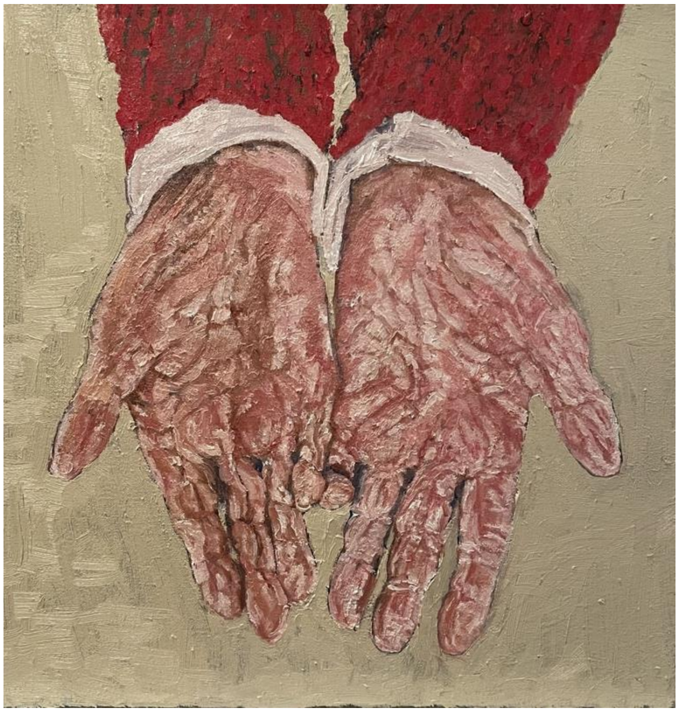


Figure 31 My mother’s hands

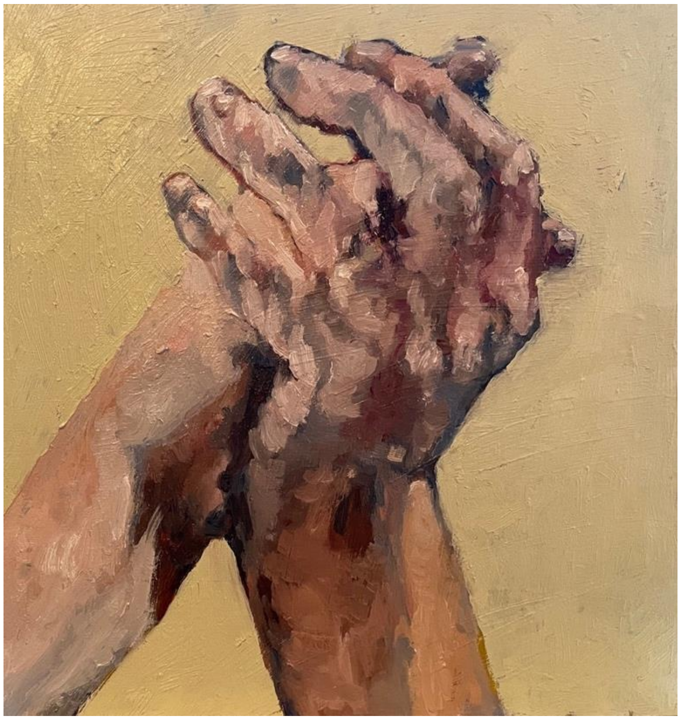


Figure 32 Dancing

My mom and dad loved to dance. They met at a dance hall in the early 1950s. A few months ago, my mom attended a piano concert at her residence. There were a few men in the audience. One man took it upon himself to ask some of the women to dance. When he asked my mom, she reluctantly agreed. Once the music started, she gracefully moved around the dance floor. I loved how gently this man held my mom and how the movement came so naturally to her.

Werther's Candies

My dad used to have a bowl of Werther's Original candies in his den. My mom used to carry them in her purse. These 3 candies are for me and my brothers.

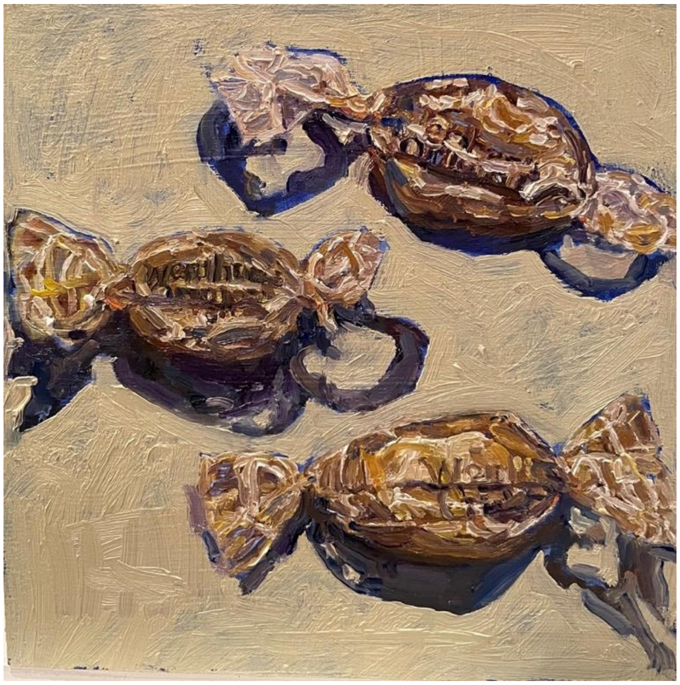


Figure 33 Three Candies

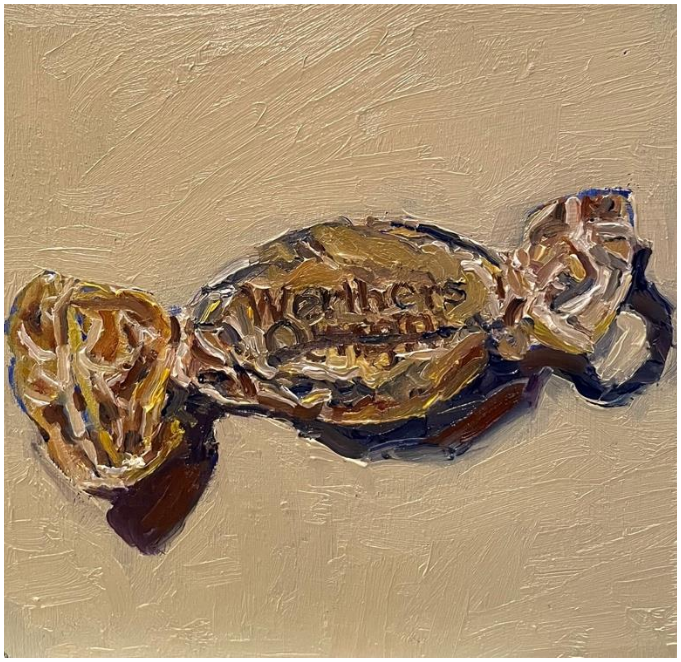


Figure 34 Candy

A solitary Werther's Original. This sweet candy is a reminder of both the sweetness of our bond and the solitude of the caregiving role.

This bowl was a favorite of my parents. Four Werther's candies sit within, symbolizing my mother and her three children.

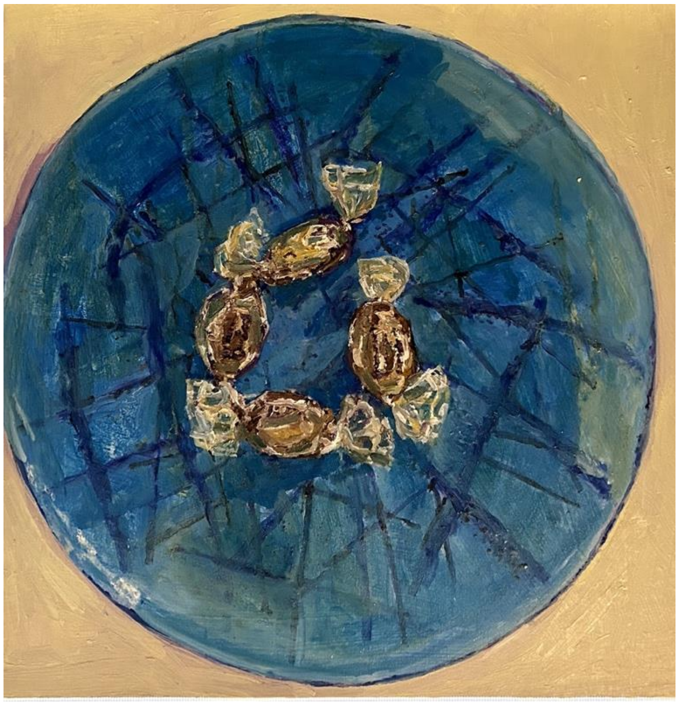


Figure 35 Mid-Century Bowl with Four Werther's Candies

My Mother and Me

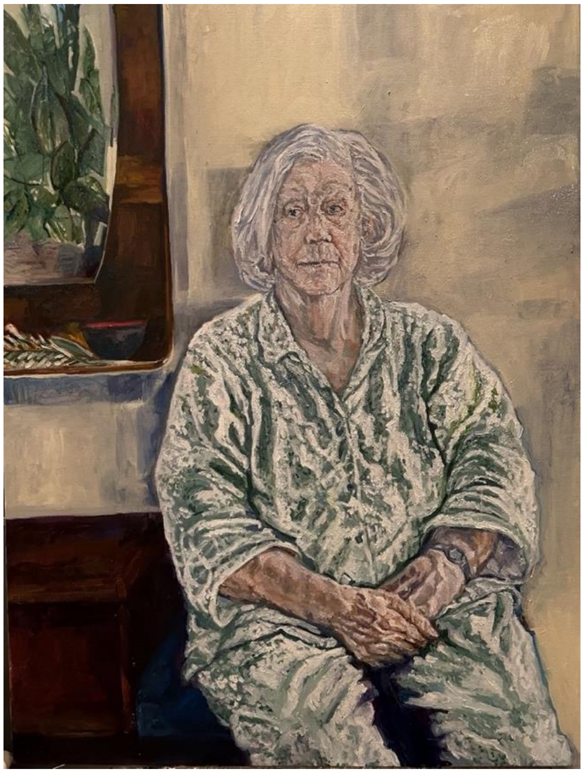


Figure 36 My mom wearing pajamas and a watch

I wanted to portray my beautiful mother in a dignified way. I tried to capture the combination of her relaxed posture with what I saw as a bit of anxiety in her eyes.

I FaceTime with my mom every night. We laugh together and always end the call by saying, ‘I love you’. She is my mirror, and we are bookends.

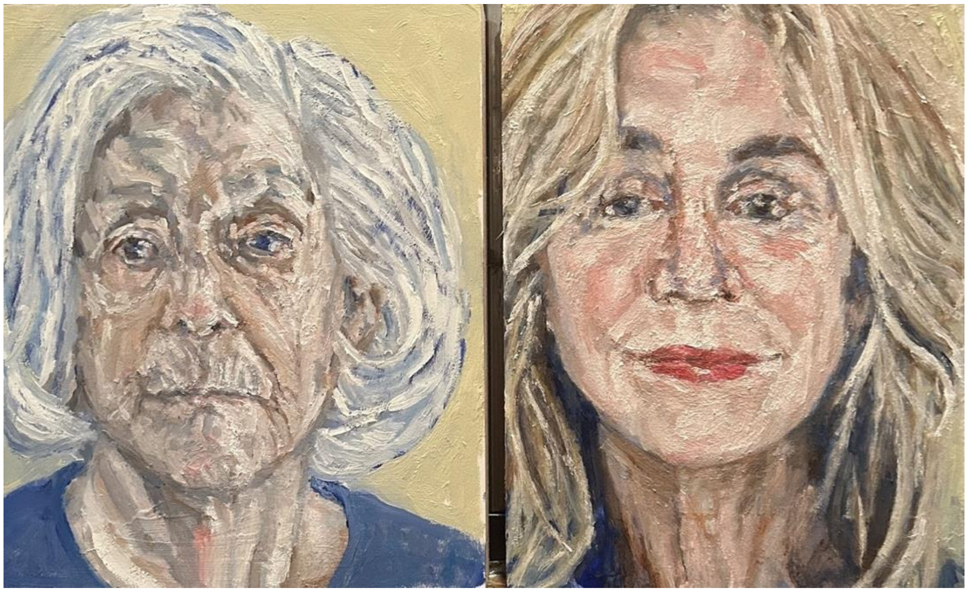


Figure 37 Bookends or Face to Face

References

Alzheimer's Disease International. (n.d.). Dementia statistics. Retrieved from https://www.alzint.org/about/dementia-facts-figures/dementia-statistics/

Newport Academy. (n.d.). What is parentification? Retrieved from https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/parentification/

Realism Today. (n.d.). What is contemporary realism in art? Retrieved from https://realismtoday.com/what-is-contemporary-realism-in-art/

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (n.d.). Emotion. Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotion/

Cynthia van Frank was born and residing in Montreal, Cynthia was a natural storyteller from a young age, enchanting her neighborhood friends with fanciful tales about her parents' wartime experiences and miraculous survival. These narratives often portrayed her parents' daring escapes, such as jumping from one train car to another to evade pursuers. Unbeknownst to Cynthia, both her parents were "hidden children" during the war, a fact they never discussed with her, adding an aura of mystery to her imaginative stories. It felt as though she was tapping into the collective memory of those who endured the war's hardships. Now, with dementia eroding her mother's recollections, Cynthia has taken on the role of family historian, dedicated to preserving their story for future generations. In addition to her passion for storytelling, Cynthia is a practicing artist and art educator. She approaches her art in series, each one a reflection of her current life experiences and perceptions of the world around her.

Best Practices for Hybrid Art Museum Programs for People with Dementia

Pooja Lalwani, BS
Duke University
Sujal Manohar, BA, BS
Duke University
Jessica Kay Ruhle, BA, MAT
Duke University

Abstract

The Reflections program at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University offers art gallery tours for adults with dementia and their care partners. Originally an in-person program, Reflections adapted to a virtual model during the COVID-19 pandemic and now utilizes a hybrid model with in-person and online programs. Surveys distributed to Reflections' participants indicate the benefits of having both in-person and virtual options post-pandemic. Anecdotal survey data and participation statistics show high engagement and satisfaction with the current hybrid mode. Literature about hybrid art education programs for people with dementia remains limited. We offer best practices and insights for other museums and organizations interested in serving people with dementia through similar arts-based initiatives.

Keywords

Dementia, Alzheimer's, art museum, visual arts, visual

"While Reflections participants may have a range of cognitive abilities, the program encourages all to engage with art, recognizing that this may look different for each individual. Public tour participants are usually in the earlier stages of dementia, while those visiting from nursing and other residential facilities live with more advanced disease. Throughout its program, Reflections also promotes art education, often highlighting contemporary art and artists from traditionally underrepresented groups."

To correspond with the authors regarding this article:
pooja.lalwani2019@gmail.com
sujal.manohar@bcm.edu
jessicakayruhle@gmail.com

https://doi.org/10.25889/9qqr-vm66

Introduction

Art museums exist to serve the broader community. As populations change, museums and other cultural institutions must adapt to the needs of their communities through programming and education efforts. Recently, art museums are prioritizing public health and establishing programs for visitors experiencing memory loss, as well as their care partners. Memory loss is becoming increasingly prevalent; an estimated 6.5 million Americans today live with Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia (Rajan et al., 2021). As our population ages, this number is expected to nearly triple by 2050 (Rajan et al., 2021). Museum activities and programs can provide social interaction that reduces isolation and supports individual autonomy for people with dementia (PWD) (Flatt et al., 2015).

PWD already face disparities in health care. For example, the American healthcare system struggles to fully meet the needs of this population given the scarcity of geriatricians (Sluder, 2020). Additionally, certain minority populations are at higher risk of misdiagnosis and many have obstacles in obtaining care for dementia (Aranda et al., 2021). These existing inequities were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which had a disproportionate impact on PWD. Studies have shown that Covid-19 is more likely to be fatal for PWD (Hariyanto et al., 2021). Early in the pandemic in April 2020, about a third of PWD had "a worsening of cognitive symptoms, particularly of memory and orientation abilities," as well as increased agitation and depression (Canevelli et al., 2020). To add to these challenges, many PWD were not able to access routine health care due to appointment cancellations and clinic policy changes during the pandemic (Canevelli et al., 2020).

While Covid-19 posed significant challenges to PWD, it also presented new opportunities for art museums to connect with this group through digital avenues. For example, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts held virtual museum visits for older adults in 2021. This museum noted benefits of a virtual tour format; for example, it was easier for featured artists to participate during the tours (Lafontaine & Sawchuk, 2022). Museums in Singapore responded to the Covid-19 social distancing measures in April 2020 by implementing numerous online arts engagement programs. Some of these initiatives have increased accessibility by offering tours in many languages, enabling adults over 50 to engage with Singapore's culture and history (Tan & Tan, 2021). Recent studies suggest these virtual art tours have both emotional and social benefits; online programs at the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art resulted in an increase in positive emotions, awe and life satisfaction among participants (Averbach & Monin, 2022).

Rising numbers of PWD and the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 indicate a pressing need to provide accessible and sustainable programming for this group, even after the initial stages of the pandemic. Previous studies highlight the positive impact of art museum engagement on both PWD and their care partners (Camic et al., 2016; Flatt et al., 2015). Such research inspired the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina to offer "*Reflections*" tours for PWD in 2013 and continue to improve the program over time. Originally modeled after the "Meet Me at MoMA" program (Rosenberg, 2009), *Reflections* tours are conversation-based and groups remain small with a maximum of 12-14 visitors. Tours last 90 minutes and include an hour in the galleries and a 30-minute live musical performance or an art-making exercise. Led by two gallery guides, the time in the galleries consists of art observation and discussion, with a structure inspired by Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). VTS-based approaches focus on three questions: (1) What's going on in this picture? (2) What do you see that makes you say that? (3) What more can we find? (Yenawine, 2013). In the gallery, participants observe a variety of artwork, from mixed-media pieces to textiles and paintings. The program is designed to serve PWD and their care partners, both of whom participate in art observation, discussions, and art-making activities. The music performances invite live musicians into the galleries; the art-making activities encourage both PWD and their care partners to create a small craft or artwork. One example of a music activity was guided accessible movement/dance to songs inspired by the tour's artworks. A recent art-making activity involved a weaving piece with paper, beads, and string, based on a weaving artwork shown during a tour. Undergraduate and graduate students are often involved in *Reflections* as tour guides or performers. Sometimes, students help design the tours as interns at the Nasher Museum. Through engagement with *Reflections*, students can better understand the experiences of PWD and how the arts can benefit health. The *Reflections* Program is generously supported by Doug and Stefanie Kahn in honor of their fathers, as well as the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (*Reflections,* n.d.).

Reflections offers both group and public tours for PWD. Group tours cater to a particular care community or organization in the Raleigh-Durham area, whereas public tours are open to any participants from the community. Some participants are also referred to the program through Duke University Hospital's Family Support Group. While Reflections participants may have a range of cognitive abilities, the program encourages all to engage with art, recognizing that this may look different for each individual. Public tour participants are usually in the earlier stages of dementia, while those visiting from nursing and other residential facilities live with more advanced disease. Throughout its program, *Reflections* also promotes art education, often highlighting contemporary art and artists from traditionally underrepresented groups. For example, recent exhibitions have featured artists of Native American heritage or included work which raises awareness about violence against African American communities. One important facet of the program is recognizing the ability of PWD to continue to learn, grow, and explore new interests – often related to current events or topics of diversity and equity – through art engagement.

Prior to Covid-19, tours took place solely in person, but like many organizations, the *Reflections* program transitioned to a virtual model during the pandemic. In March 2020, the *Reflections* team and the Nasher staff began discussing how to adapt *Reflections* to a virtual format which still allowed participants to engage with art and receive the benefits of the group interactions, including intergenerational connections with students (Manohar & Ruhle, 2021). Some students continued to serve as virtual gallery guides, gaining a better understanding of the experiences of PWD and older adults during the pandemic. Some students brought innovative and unique ideas from their other online courses to implement in *Reflections*. For example, one student applied TimeSlips techniques, such as "beautiful questions" (Basting, 2021), to virtual lessons, (as described in a subsequent section) and professional training activities for gallery guides of *Reflections*. These activities for professional development included watching the TimeSlips for Friends and Family Training Module (a method of creative engagement for PWD) and hosting a group training session over Zoom with gallery guides to practice incorporating TimeSlips techniques into sessions. Older participants also enjoyed the opportunity to connect with students and learn about their coursework and future career plans. Given that many PWD were isolated during the pandemic due to social distancing and experiencing increases in negative emotions, (Smaling et al., 2022), it was important to provide a space for real-time intergenerational community interaction. Such programs may offer structure and purpose for adults with dementia, who may be unable to participate in roles that they previously enjoyed (Manohar, 2022).

In April 2020, the program shifted to a virtual model with weekly sessions on the Zoom online platform. Each 1-hour session highlighted three or four images of artwork from the Nasher Museum's collection. These programs also often included videos with music related to the tour theme. Examples of themes include *Recycle and Reuse*, which features Stephen L. Hayes' mixed-media piece, *Flying "W,"* resembling a horse that is restrained, and *Fierce Women*, featuring Wangechi Mutu's *MamaRay*, a large bronze sculpture that portrays the likeness of a human and manta ray (Reflections, 2021). Despite a different setting, virtual conversations mirrored the insightful discussions previously held in the galleries. Participants connected artwork themes to current events and their own life experiences. Some art pieces even led to profound reflections on living with memory loss; one participant questioned whether he was "broken" after viewing artwork which was created from recycled or nonfunctional objects (Manohar, 2022). Sessions were led by one or two gallery guides, including students, who prompted lively discussions and engagement. From April 2020 to August 2021, all *Reflections* tours were conducted entirely online.

In September 2021, as Covid-19 cases declined both in Durham, North Carolina and nationally, and vaccines became widely available, *Reflections* transitioned to a hybrid model. This model included both virtual 1-hour sessions and in-person 90-minute sessions that would share the same theme each month. Essentially, the same tour was offered both in-person and virtually on different days, but the virtual format did not include the live music performance or art-making activity. The virtual format during Covid-19 and the museum's current hybrid model has proven successful, as exhibited by participants' feedback and survey responses as well as participant attendance. With its unique and effective hybrid design, *Reflections* can be a model for other art museums or creative programs which seek to engage and reach PWD in their audience.

Reflections' transition to a virtual format allowed for sustained social engagement between PWD, their care partners, and the gallery guides. The current hybrid model brought back the in-person art viewing that many of our participants and the local community missed while maintaining the virtual component that expanded the accessibility of its program to a greater audience. In doing so, the Nasher addressed the challenges of transportation to the museum, any physical limitations, and the concern of being indoors during the pandemic. From September 2021 to August 2022, Reflections offered approximately two in-person and two virtual tours monthly.

Given the limited literature on hybrid art programs for PWD, we aim to evaluate how *Reflections* adapted through Covid-19 and offer best practices for other organizations implementing similar programs. Specifically, we offer an evaluation of a hybrid art museum program that serves participants both in an in-person museum setting and virtually. We encourage arts and cultural organizations to consider hybrid models to increase accessibility, especially when working with PWD.

Program Feedback

To evaluate *Reflections*, the Nasher Museum distributes surveys to participants and tracks attendance data. During the Covid-19 pandemic, *Reflections* offered 230 tours and served 1869 participants virtually. The high attendance rate and tour frequency indicate the program's popularity and value during a time of social isolation.

Participants cited some drawbacks to having only virtual tours during Covid-19, such as difficulty viewing art on screen and less personal connection. However, visitors said that while there is no substitute for in-person viewing, virtual was better than not seeing the art at all.

After Covid-19, *Reflections* offered 17 virtual talks to a total of 90 participants, and 17 in-person tours to a total of 174 participants. The high in-person participation rate indicates the eagerness for PWD and their care partners to return to in-person programs, but also suggests that there are participants who continue to rely on virtual sessions. One comment from a survey distributed during this time appreciated that gallery guides removed masks when speaking. This is important feedback when balancing measures that prevent virus spread with the ability to successfully communicate with the visitors. Other solutions, like masks with a clear section near the mouth, could address both issues.

Eighty-two percent of respondents during Covid-19 preferred a mix of virtual and in-person tours instead of having only one or the other, indicating support for the establishment of a hybrid model. This approach allows individuals to participate regardless of location or other physical barriers. The model also accommodates those who seek an in-person experience to interact with art. Tracking participant attendance and survey responses for both the virtual and in-person sessions will continue to be critical to adapt the program to participant preferences. For example, on a recent virtual tour, one participant commented that he preferred the online format since it was easier to focus on a single art piece. This indicates that no single solution exists for all PWD and their care partners. The hybrid tours offer flexibility for this population, who may experience fluctuations or changes in cognitive and physical abilities.

Best Practices

Adapting an in-person program to a virtual model comes with challenges and new opportunities. At the beginning of each session, we no longer had the opportunity for in-person socialization and introductions in the Nasher Museum lobby. To break the ice in an online setting, we began each program with a "beautiful question," inspired by TimeSlips programs (Basting, 2021). Such questions have no correct answer, and encourage all participants to share. For example, for a discussion of spring-related artwork, the beautiful question was "What do you enjoy about spring?" All participants shared their responses in the first 10 minutes of the session, before the artwork discussion. This also allowed time for participants to join a few minutes late if they were experiencing technology issues.

In-person *Reflections* programs utilize name tags for all participants and gallery guides. The virtual Zoom program came with "built-in" name tags in the form of names written prominently under each participant's video. However, sometimes this name did not represent the participant's name. At the start of each tour, we asked PWD for their preferred names and changed the Zoom names to reflect this. This also made it easier to refer to participants and allowed attendees to get to know each other.

One obvious downside to the virtual platform is an inability to see the real size of an art piece; it was difficult to appreciate details or three-dimensional aspects of the artwork on a computer screen. To address this, Reflections tours utilize presentations which not only have artwork images, but also have close-up images of details and include images showing multiple angles of three-dimensional works. We also use a zoom-in feature on PowerPoint to examine these aspects of an art piece.

Another important component of the program is the art-making or music activity. To incorporate these aspects into an online program, we included YouTube or audio clips of music relevant to that week's theme. Sharing audio via Zoom was initially a challenge, but we found that using Zoom's share audio feature enabled improved audio quality. While participants missed the live music, sharing videos allowed participants to see concurrent visuals associated with the music and adjust the sound settings on their own devices as needed. To recreate the art activity, we piloted sending art kits to participants' addresses so they could create a craft that week. In the *Reflections* virtual tour in October 2020, a watercolor art kit was mailed to participants to practice painting feathers, accompanying a virtual session showing artworks of birds. We also experimented with art activities that participants could enjoy without additional supplies. One week, participants created mandalas using found objects in their homes or backyards such as shells, flowers, or food ingredients. During art-making activities, caregivers may assist PWD or create their own version of the artwork themselves.

Tour evaluations suggest that the current hybrid design improves the quality of life for PWD by reducing isolation and maintaining engagement. This model allows individuals to participate regardless of location or other physical barriers that might prevent in-person engagement. The hybrid model also accommodates those who seek an in-person experience to interact with art. In this current model, *Reflections* utilizes attendance data to determine the optimal number of virtual and in-person tours each month. Tracking participant attendance and survey responses for both the virtual and in-person sessions will remain important to tailor the program to participant needs. Successful hybrid programs also require ongoing communication with residential communities in the area and the Duke University Hospital's Family Support Program.

Conclusion

During this post-Covid-19 era, some remain cautious about engaging in social settings or leaving their home (Landry et al., 2021). *Reflections* participants, who are older in age, may also be hesitant to visit the Nasher Museum in person due to increased health risks. Therefore, a hybrid model may be more accessible to Durham, North Carolina, and the larger community, allowing us to reach a wider audience of PWD. Such hybrid programs can be supplemented with art-making activities or music performances for further engagement. For virtual sessions, art kits can be delivered to participants so they can engage creatively from home. There are also options to combine more aspects of the in-person and virtual experience. For example, gallery guides could live stream a walk through the galleries, better simulating the in-person environment for participants online.

We are optimistic that *Reflections'* current programming can serve as a model for other art museums and community organizations seeking to engage with PWD during this time. To boost visitor engagement and allow flexibility for visitors' preferences, hybrid alternatives could benefit both the visitors and the museum itself. Museums will develop a stronger connection with the community and therefore be permanent establishments in society, influencing culture, social networks, and health.

Continued research on programs for PWD is essential. Similar to Romero's suggestion of continuous attention to programs for PWD (2019), programs like *Reflections* will require continuous modification as populations change, global events occur, and new preferences arise. Participant evaluations are critical to this field and can be expanded. Additional research areas may include how museum staff is impacted by programs for PWD and the effect of Covid-19 on other visitors, students, museum staff, and communities. Other aspects of such art programs, such as the strengthening of relationships between PWD and their care partners, have been described and merit further study (Romero, 2019). Research may also create rich opportunities for transdisciplinary partnerships, such as arts on prescription, as cultural and medical institutions seek to learn more about the benefits of arts-based experiences for PWD and how to adapt these experiences both virtually and in person.[1]

References

Aranda, M. P., Kremer, I. N., Hinton, L., Zissimopoulos, J., Whitmer, R. A., Hummel, C. H., Trejo, L., & Fabius, C. (2021). Impact of dementia: Health disparities, population trends, care interventions, and economic costs. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, *69*(7), 1774–1783. https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.17345

Averbach, J., & Monin, J. (2022). The Impact of a Virtual Art Tour Intervention on the Emotional Well-Being of Older Adults. *The Gerontologist*, *62*(10), 1496–1506. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnac089

Basting, A. (2021). *Creative Care Imagination Kit: A TimeSlips Engagement Resource*. HarperOne.

Camic, P. M., Baker, E. L., & Tischler, V. (2016). Theorizing How Art Gallery Interventions Impact People With Dementia and Their Caregivers. *The Gerontologist*, *56*(6), 1033–1041. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnv063

Canevelli, M., Valletta, M., Toccaceli Blasi, M., Remoli, G., Sarti, G., Nuti, F., Sciancalepore, F., Ruberti, E., Cesari, M., & Bruno, G. (2020). Facing Dementia during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 10.1111/jgs.16644. https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.16644

Flatt, J. D., Liptak, A., Oakley, M. A., Gogan, J., Varner, T., & Lingler, J. H. (2015). Subjective Experiences of an Art Museum Engagement Activity for Persons with Early Alzheimer's disease and their Family Caregivers. *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*, *30*(4), 380–389. https://doi.org/10.1177/1533317514549953

Hariyanto, T. I., Putri, C., Situmeang, R. F. V., & Kurniawan, A. (2021). Dementia is a predictor for mortality outcome from coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infection. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, *271*(2), 393–395. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-020-01205-z

Lafontaine, C., & Sawchuk, K. (2022). Virtual Museum Visits in a Pandemic: Older Adults Discuss Experiences of Art, Culture and Social Connection. In Q. Gao & J. Zhou (Eds.), *Human Aspects of IT for the Aged Population. Technology in Everyday Living* (pp. 383–397). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-05654-3_27

---

[1] Acknowledgements footnote: We thank the participants and gallery guides who make the Reflections program possible. We also thank Jacqueline Perez for providing the survey data collected in 2021. The Reflections Program at the Nasher Museum is generously supported by Doug and Stefanie Kahn in honor of their fathers, as well as the Alzheimer Foundation of America.

Landry, C. E., Bergstrom, J., Salazar, J., & Turner, D. (2021). How Has the COVID-19 Pandemic Affected Outdoor Recreation in the U.S.? A Revealed Preference Approach. *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, *43*(1), 443–457. https://doi.org/10.1002/aepp.13119

Manohar, S. (2022). Repairing Our View of Dementia. *JAMA Neurology*. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaneurol.2022.3981

Manohar, S., & Ruhle, J. K. (2021). Intergenerational and Intragenerational Connections within a University Art Museum Program for People with Dementia. International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education, 4(1). https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/ijllae/vol4/iss1/11

Nasher Museum Installs First Commissioned Sculpture, MamaRay by Wangechi Mutu. (2021). Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Retrieved February 8, 2024, from https://nasher.duke.edu/stories/nasher-museum-installs-first-commissioned-sculpture-mamaray-by-wangechi-mutu/

Rajan, K. B., Weuve, J., Barnes, L. L., McAninch, E. A., Wilson, R. S., & Evans, D. A. (2021). Population Estimate of People with Clinical AD and Mild Cognitive Impairment in the United States (2020–2060). Alzheimer's & Dementia : The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association, 17(12), 1966–1975. https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.12362

Reflections: Alzheimer's Program. (n.d.). Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from https://nasher.duke.edu/programs/reflections-alzheimers-program/

Romero, D. R. (2019). Rekindling Lost Connections: Using Art Museum Educational Programs to Strengthen Personal and Community Relationships. *International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education, 2*. https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=ijllae

Rosenberg, F. (2009). The MoMA Alzheimer's Project: Programming and resources for making art accessible to people with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. *Arts & Health*, *1*(1), 93–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/17533010802528108

Sluder, K. M. (2020). Acknowledging Disparities in Dementia Care for Increasingly Diverse Ethnoracial Patient Populations. *Federal Practitioner*, *37*(2), 69–71.

Smaling, H. J. A., Tilburgs, B., Achterberg, W. P., & Visser, M. (2022). The Impact of Social Distancing Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic on People with Dementia, Family Carers and Healthcare Professionals: A Qualitative Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(1), 519. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010519

Tan, M. K. B., & Tan, C. M. (2021). Curating wellness during a pandemic in Singapore: COVID-19, museums, and digital imagination. *Public Health*, *192*, 68–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.01.006

Yenawine P. *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines*. 1st edition. Harvard Education Press; 2013.

International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education | Vol. 7, 2024

Elizabeth Langdon, PhD
University of Kansas

Amplifying Art of a Friend with Alzheimer's Disease Through Collaboration

"As an artist I wondered how best to present coloring pages as artwork in a gallery setting, while addressing a personal challenge. Coloring pages were anathema to me. As an art educator at a large university's visual art department, displaying coloring pages as art gave me pause. Personally, I had to acknowledge my subtle dislike for coloring pages which I had considered a substitute for creative art-making. Therefore, I began to ponder: how might I collaborate with Barb to amplify her art and its value? How might I situate this as research? What might I learn by revisiting my perspective on coloring pages?"

Abstract

The act of coloring pages, is recognized for its therapeutic value and this research shows how amplifying the artistry of a practitioner with Alzheimer's disease enhances understanding about the disease, improves relationships and adds value to an underrated art practice. My collaboration with a neighbor experiencing Alzheimer's disease involved presenting her coloring pages as fine art in a gallery, increasing recognition of the practice as valuable for maintaining normalcy and serving as a model for other people with dementia (PWD) and their caregivers.

Keywords

Coloring books, Alzheimer's disease, collaborative action research, arts-based research

To correspond with the author regarding this article:
lizlangdon@ku.edu

https://doi.org/10.25889/bvvs-p891

When I met my new neighbor Barb Diedel several years ago, she had flower gardens, was a choir member and had of hobby of coloring. It seemed Barb always had a coloring book page she was working on. We became “over the-garden-fence” friends, often chatting at the fence, or on her side deck. When I inquired about her five adult children’s ages, she informed me she had Alzheimer’s disease, so wasn’t able to remember their ages, but it was several years later that her health failed and the dementia became apparent.

When I received a call for submissions for an exhibition, *Untold Stories of Aging*, to take place at the university I am employed at, I decided to share Barb’s artwork and her story, because I valued how it was a focusing element in her life with Alzheimer’s disease. I am an older adult artist/researcher/teacher and I wanted to collaborate with Barb as a friend, to elevate her coloring pages as art, and to honor her and the practice that was a focus for her while living with dementia. Although our age in years was not that different, there was a big difference in our life experiences, training and current situation. Within my position as an art educator, I could address the exhibition’s call “to cultivate a space for older adults to share aspects of the aging experience that are not typically discussed in legible spaces” (Jen, S. et al., 2022). One of the challenges in the *Untold Stories’* call was for artists to engage in conversation and collaboration with an older adult. I wanted to collaborate to amplify the positives of Barb’s practice despite the challenges of other aspects of her life with Alzheimer’s. Alzheimer’s is a disease of dementia, which gradually diminishes memory and cognitive ability. Amplifying her work through collaboration would expand awareness and create a discursive space where life with Alzheimer’s was part of the conversation.

As an artist I wondered how best to present coloring pages as artwork in a gallery setting, while addressing a personal challenge. Coloring pages were anathema to me. As an art educator at a large university’s visual art department, displaying coloring pages as art gave me pause. Personally, I had to acknowledge my subtle dislike for coloring pages which I had considered a substitute for creative art-making. Therefore, I began to ponder: how might I collaborate with Barb to amplify her art and its value? How might I situate this as research? What might I learn by revisiting my perspective on coloring pages?

Methodology

Arts-based Collaborative Action Research

As part of the ongoing research for this project I addressed these questions using action research and art-based research methodologies. I surveyed my negative attitudes about coloring, researched why coloring pages are important, and grew to appreciate the benefits. The research was an invitation to explore an old bias, make new art and explore arts-based methodology.

As an art educator/researcher, I have collaborated with participants in conducting action research and involve them in planning, acting or creating, and reflecting in the research (Langdon, 2016). Action research is a living practice and is inherently relational and appropriate for pragmatic research problems (Sumara & Carsons,1997). Sumara and Carsons (1997) point out that “the knowledge that is produced through action research is always knowledge about one’s self and one’s relation to particular communities” and the action is not merely activity but "is a process through which one's life is lived" (pp. xvii-xviii). This research was integrally linked to place and people in the community.

Action researchers not only work to understand, but also act to bring about positive change, often collaboratively, with the research process emphasizing the involvement of those being studied as active participants in effecting positive change (Stewart, 2024). Specifically, I approached this as *collaborative* action research, because it meets the criteria as a joint effort of artists, working together to address a challenge with an emphasis on mutual respect and co-learning (Stewart, 2024). The problem in this approach was the limited participation of Barb. As the main participant she had stopped coloring and had cognitive difficulties. But through the action of this research, I reconsidered the care-givers' co-existence with the person experiencing Alzheimer's and extend the definition of participant to their support team as well.

In creating art in collaboration with Barb through using her coloring work, the art would be the primary data produced from this research. Assessing the art, the exhibition and any outcomes from the exhibition would add validity to the research (Blaikie, 2009). This applies to arts-based action research as well because the creation of new art is the product of collaborative action (Blaikie, 2009). Art as data collected in arts-based research can include joint creation of an artwork with a participant(s) (Blaikie, 2009). Additionally, the art is dependent on collective interpretations for its meaning (Barrett, 2010). According to Blaikie, the researcher's "voice" is present in the artwork, but not the focus, yet the research-creation and its meaning is carried out through the researcher lens. The art-based research has validity and integrity when it is complex, coherent, and consistent, and ethical processes help insure the end result's validity and integrity (Blaikie, 2009). Comprehensively this research has the action/reflection feedback of action research, and the art-based data of images collaboratively created by me and Barb. The meaning of both, the artwork and the collaboration, are assessed by both me and Barb, and the community.

Assessing the Art of Coloring

An Art Educator's History with Coloring Pages

In the 1970s I embraced an unquestioned Lowenfeldian anti-coloring book stance. Viktor Lowenfeld's *Creative and Mental Growth* (1947/1964) was a seminal publication for art educators, reflecting 1950's modernist values with an appreciation of the abstract and childlike drawings of artists like Paul Klee, Joan Miro and Picasso. Lowenfeld condemns the coloring book calling it detrimental and saying it makes children less confident in their own means of expression. Other art educators continue the critique, calling them at best recreational, and teaching conformity rather than celebrating difference (Milbrandt, 2016) while continuing stereotypical and biased representations of gender, indigeneity, and ethnicity (Stokely 2017). Yet, as I sought to address my bias, I learned that analysis of Lowenfeld's claims have found problems and biases as well, with no research showing the coloring book is detrimental to child development (King, 1991). However, because coloring books reflect popular culture, they can be analyzed as such (Cowley, 1956) and can be an entry point to visual culture critique (Richard, 2007). For example, Glen Ligon painted a series of coloring book pages from 1970's Black liberation themed coloring books that were reinterpreted by children 20 years later without understanding of the topic. The clown-like coloring on the Malcom X portrait page demonstrates how cultural perspectives and understandings change over time (Ligon, 2024). Ligon, is Black and his cultural critique makes a multi-layered statement about how random color choices in coloring books leading us to perhaps rethink norms, and tropes of local color. Maybe it is the freedom of choice implicit in coloring pages that adds to their appeal.

As I revisit the coloring book page from a post-modern perspective, I rethink its function for the practitioner outside the realm of education. The current popularity of adult coloring books, with sales of $150 million in 2023 (Verified Market Research, 2024) and a plethora of different books appealing to all age groups and interests speaks to its popularity and acceptance. Coloring books even earned recognition with their own day, August 2, celebrated by the Smithsonian Libraries who reproduce selected pages from their rare books for downloading and coloring (Smithsonian Libraries, 2018).

Coloring as Therapy

My initial research found a critique of the therapeutic role of the adult coloring book. Malchiodi (2015) argued coloring is more obsession than mindfulness, more a "feel-good" experience than an authentic creative expression, saying that it is not art therapy because it lacks in a relational aspect (para 6). Yet other research shows coloring does have therapeutic value for both an aging population and with selected younger participants in controlled studies. Coloring pages are even being recommended today by the Mayo clinic for their therapeutic value (Bobby, 2022).

The benefit of visual art therapy (VAT) for ageing populations has been well documented. In a systematic review and meta-analysis of literature documenting benefits of VAT to ageing populations, it is shown to prevent or manage dementia, as well as improve cognitive functioning, (Masika, et al., 2020). As one aspect of art therapy, coloring was shown to lower stress and reduces negative affect (Kaimal, et al., 2017). As a low cognitive demand activity, it was preferred over expressive drawing activity for generating greater states of flow (Forkosh & Drake, 2017). Flett, et al. (2017) showed that daily coloring can improve some negative psychological outcomes and is a highly accessible self-help tool. Holt, et al. (2019) study showed that coloring can significantly reduce anxiety, and improve attention span and creative cognition. Coloring designs for older adults with memory loss imparts sensory stimuli of shapes and colors, generates feelings of joy upon drawing completion, leads to enhanced vitality, and decrease patients' apathy (Hatori, et al., 2011).

Similar results have been reported with the media and method of watercolor painting as Alzheimer's intervention. In a case study about a father's Alzheimer's, the son reported that rich art-making can take place even when cognitive skills have diminished, that watercolor paintings had given his father multiple behavioral benefits including stabilizing cognitive loss, improved behavior, mood, daily living activities, and communication, all which gave him, the care giver, respite (Platzer & Potts, 2011). Potts submitted that what he saw in his father and his artwork demonstrates that the concept of self, the core of a person, may still be seen in people with advanced dementia.

Process and Project

All of these benefits seemed to apply to Barbara, as seen in her almost daily, continuous practice of coloring throughout her illness. Her husband Ray confided that at first, he was somewhat resentful of the time she spent coloring, but came to realize it made her happy and it was a respite for him. My first direct engagement with Barb's coloring books was previewing the collection of over 500 pages in 20 books filled with colored pages from the past ten years. Her color and design choices, both representational and abstract, gave me an appreciation of her persistence, skill and innate knowledge of color theory. I could amplify Barb’s work by expanding the size and extending the complexity of the coloring page, in a way that demonstrated her aesthetic sensibilities.

I paged through and bookmarked selections from the many beautiful and intricately colored patterns. Barb’s collection included a wide variety of designs, some culturally specific and some highlighting popular visual culture. They demonstrated a high level of skill and an innate understanding of color theory. I developed a plan to collaborate with Barb in a way that brought it off the kitchen table and onto the walls of the art gallery. I curated pages for similar color themes and patterns, and digitized and combined my favorites into colorful collages using Photoshop. At first, I wove edges of the rectangle pages of intricate patterns into a larger patchwork.

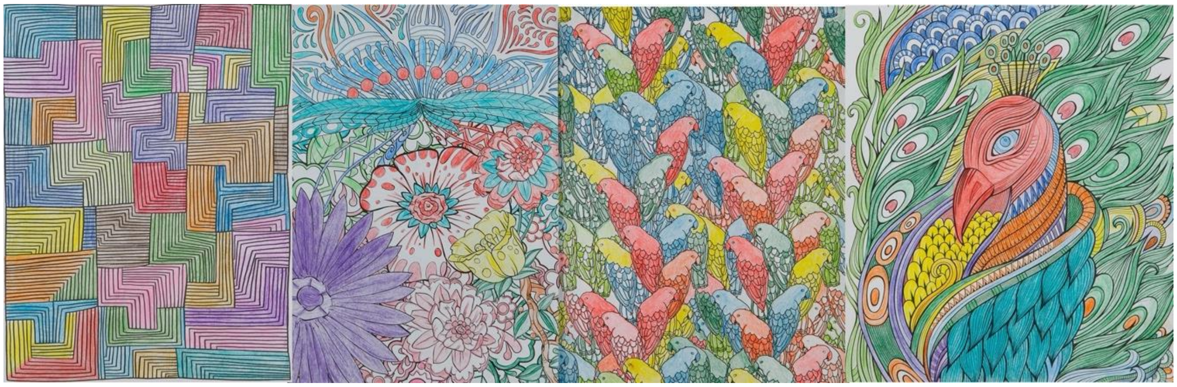


Figure 1. Four individual pages which combine into Peacock Pattern

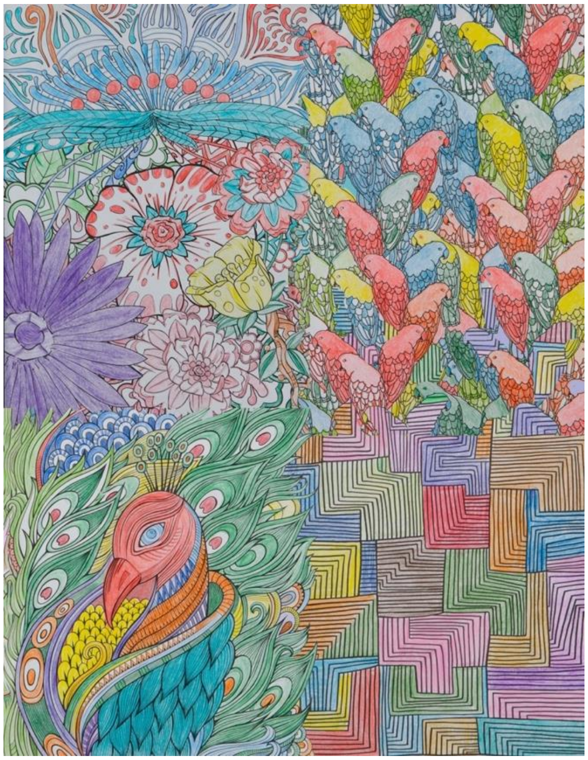


Figure 2. Peacock Pattern, digitally reproduced and woven coloring pages

I enlarged the images, printed on a wide format printer and framed them for display. I was a co-creator with Barb, and grateful for the use of her colorful designs and patterns.

For Barbara coloring was a positive and generative obsession. As I worked with the designs, I appreciated that there are cognitive challenges in creating color balanced symmetrical designs and self-similar patterns with limited color, as well as choosing color themes to express design narratives, all while working a variation of the four-color map problem, where no sides have matching color (Jensen, 2001). These cognitive skills or challenges may not be apparent to the casual observer or untrained eye, but as an artist I appreciated the skill I saw in Barb's pages and I gained an understanding of the complexity in the color patterned imagery and color themes that repeated in different books. After the first several woven images, I decided to have fun and create a surrealist bathroom inspired by her pink water buffalo and patterned lion's mane. My goal was to amplify the work she had done, and through my process of recombining images, I had fun too.

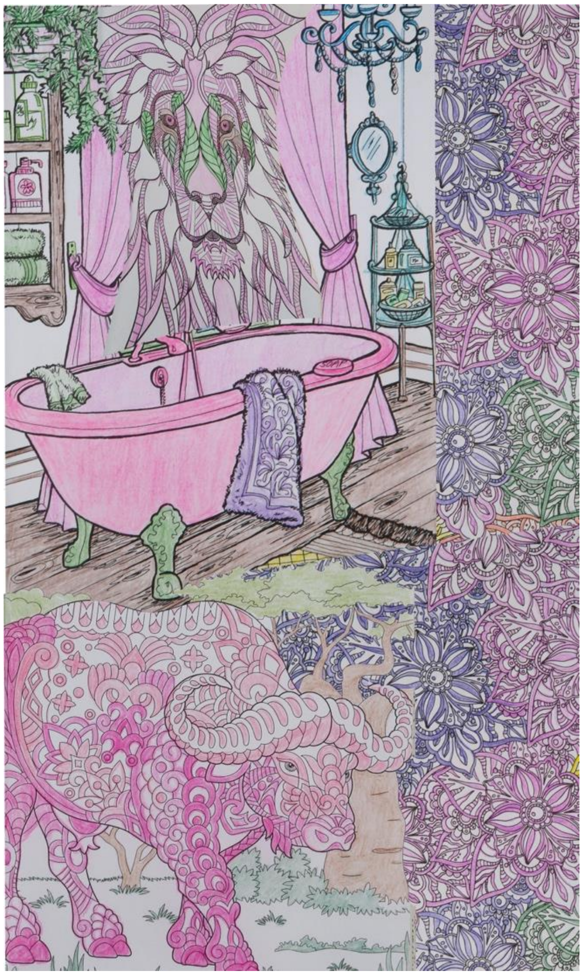


Figure 5 Four individual pages which combine into Buffalo Bath

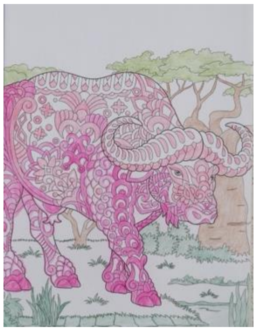


Figure 3 Water buffalo

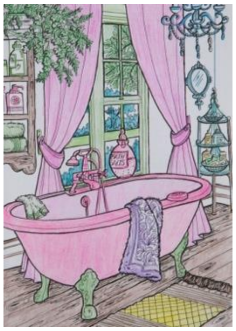


Figure 4 Bathtub

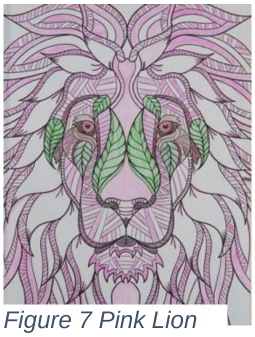


Figure 7 Pink Lion

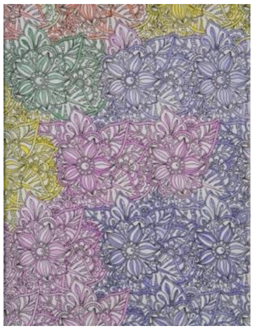


Figure 6 Floral pattern

My interactions with Barb, prior to and at the exhibition, show our engagement with the art was a commonality. We both had enjoyed working with the same designs and we could talk light-heartedly even at the late stage of her disease.

How I addressed my personal challenge and reached these goals led me to situate the work as collaborative art-based action research. I was in conversation and collaboration with Barb and her artwork, and my digital manipulations weaved her art into a larger more complex design that could hold a presence of its own in a gallery. The exhibit became a vehicle for conversation with her family and community, and a way of amplifying how an art practice is an inroad into a substantive conversation with an Alzheimer's patient.

Prior to the exhibit I met Barb and Ray's children when they gathered next door for a party and I made sure they felt invited to attend the exhibition. This began a relationship that continues until today. An end goal of collaborative action research is always creating shared knowledge and community. In Barb's case I recognized the artful application in her work and shared it in a way that was advocacy for the healing nature of art practices, not only for the practitioner but for their team of caregivers. The children appreciated their mom's artistic skills from earlier years when Barb planted beautiful perennial beds, created and ran a craft shop and did flower arranging for a local florist—utilizing her eye for color and design. They told me she had enjoyed coloring with them when they were small and with her grandchildren more recently. As Alzheimer's took over, the pages in these books became a way for Barb to focus, as other skills diminished.

Displaying the images in the exhibit elevated them to fine art status and brought together a community of support for Barb and her family. Her husband, children and their spouses and grandchildren gathered at the exhibition to honor her and enjoy the artwork. She was awarded a first-place prize for the display and enjoyed conversing with everyone. We were interviewed and recorded to document the collaboration and share this untold story (Sigler Family Aging Scholars, 2022). The five framed artworks for the exhibit hung in Barb and Ray's home and I had hope would eventually find homes with their five children.

Analysis and Interpretation

As I reviewed literature on visual art therapy and Alzheimer's disease, and reflected on my own creative engagement in this art-based research**,** I realize I had gained greater experiential knowledge of both coloring, as an art form, and connecting with a person with Alzheimer's by sharing in this experience. Both Barb and I found an inner happiness by creating art, and even with advanced dementia, Barb still demonstrated that she held a concept of self that is the core of a person (Platzer & Potts, 2011). I was grateful to Barb not only to be able to play with her pages in digital collages, but also to engage in conversations with her about the formal properties and stories of these images. During visits we discussed ideas about her color choices as we paged through these books together. She said "Art is about playing….and making your own choices."

The validity of art-based research is gained by participant confirmation of the artwork's aesthetic qualities, a coherence in the art itself, and an ethical approach to participation, which insures the end result's validity and integrity (Blaikie, 2014). The artwork's aesthetic qualities, and the coherence within the color and design, speaks to the quality of our collaboration which was highly rated by the jurors. The digital collages had coherence as the combination of colors and patterns made visual sense. The collaboration was an ethical use of Barb's talents and mine as the artwork exhibited was stronger because of both of our skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One aspect of Malchiodi (2015) critique of coloring that may be true, is that without any social engagement accompanying the practice, the therapeutic aspect may be lacking. It is important to recognize the social value of collaborative participation of artists, arts educators and persons with dementia (PWD) and their family, which lends a greater appreciation for the healing value of visual art. An important social aspect of art is looking at and seeing what is in an image and gaining an appreciation for the artist and their skills. This was my experience with Barb's work and at the exhibition where people saw that some part of Barb was not the Alzheimer's disease. Through the exhibition and a subsequent article in the local publication of the Senior Resource Center (Langdon, 2022) more local people are engaged in conversations about coloring as a practice that may help those living with Alzheimer's, or caring for someone living with it. Dodson, et al. (2023) have shown that the impact of art therapy on the relationships between individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and their care partners showed a significant shift towards better self-esteem scores and may improve relationship dynamics between individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their care partners. I propose expanding a network of Alzheimer's caregivers to include those who fill the role of art therapy facilitators, by facilitating collaborative making, displaying, or simply engaging in conversations about practitioners' art. This training would include valuing the cognitive and creative skill involved in coloring. Training those who interact with PWD to recognize people's visual skills and to engage in conversations as an enlightened viewer, can be a bridge for building understanding and greater respect.

The most recent research in neuroart, does not reflect the inherent knowledge specific to the visual arts domain that is required in tasks of coloring (Magsamen & Ross, 2023). Future research should include identifying the kinds of cognitive skills that coloring and other art skills requires, and developing training for physicians, therapists and caregivers to encourage conversation and gain greater appreciation for what the art practitioner is doing and thinking. Coloring may sound simple, but it is not child's play, and documenting how it impacts PWD cognitive skills in multiple ways could encourage more participation.

I had always understood coloring with pencils as an effective media in itself, and yet, in prior research had not considered it as part of a healing practice. This new research asks me to reconsider elder artist Elizabeth Layton's artwork, which combined colored pencils with realistic contour drawing self-portrait-based narratives, which healed her after years of mental health issues (Langdon, 2018; Langdon, et al. 2022). I now think that the *act* of coloring her images may also have contributed to the healing process that vastly improved her mental health. Her art became an early exemplar of art recognized by the American Art Therapy Association as functioning as art therapy (Bretz,1985).

One Final Note

Barbara died of Covid complicated by late-stage Alzheimer's two months after the exhibit. Two years later Ray's children are next door facilitating a sale to clear out 60 years of accumulated life, because Ray has moved to an independent living facility due to his own health problems. At the end of the estate sale, I notice one of the large framed pieces from the exhibit was still for sale. The daughters are quick to tell me that the smaller framed pieces had sold, that they were easier for people to handle and that the images seemed to hold an inexplicable appeal to the recipients. They said that is when they discovered, by sharing their mom's story, that the recipient shared a life experience like theirs, caring for someone with Alzheimer's, and the art Barb made, was bringing together strangers to share in the grief and memories.

References

Barrett, T. (2010). *Making Art: Form and Meaning*. McGraw-Hill: New York.

Blaikie, F. (2014). Arts-informed research: A visual and poetic inquiry into the aesthetics of scholarship. In K.M. Miraglia & C. Smilan (Eds.), *Inquiry in action: Paradigms, methodologies, and perspectives in art education research* (pp. 239-247). National Art Education Association.

Bobby, J. (2022, August 15). Mental Health Benefits of Coloring. *Speaking of Health*. https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/coloring-is-good-for-your-health

Bretz, L. (1985). Portrait of the Artist. In MidAmerica Arts Alliance. (Eds), *Through the Looking Glass: Drawings of Elizabeth Layton.* MidAmerica Arts Alliance. Lowell Press: Kansas City, KS.

Cowley, E. (1956). Tradition, creation, and coloring books. *Art Education, 9*(2), 6, 15. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3183784

Cross, G., & Brown, P. M. (2019). A comparison of the positive effects of structured and nonstructured art activities. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association, 36*(1), 22-29. doi:10.1080

Dodson, Sujata, Gitelman, & Liao (2023) The impact of art therapy on the relationships between individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and their care partners. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*. https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.075401

Dresler, E., & Perera, P. (2019). 'Doing mindful colouring': Just a leisure activity or something more? *Leisure Journal. 38*(6), 862-874. doi:10.1080/02614367.2019.1583765

Jen, S., Sabal, O., Wolverton, K., & Barta, T. (2022) Untold Stories of Aging in Art Project. https://www.untoldstoriesofaging.com/aginginart

Jenson, (2001) *Arts with the Brain in Mind*. ASCD. Alexandria, VA.

Flett, J. A. M., Lie, C., Riordan, B. C., Thompson, L. M., Conner, T. S., & Hayne, H. (2017). Sharpen your pencils: Preliminary evidence that adult coloring reduces depressive symptoms and anxiety. *Creativity Research Journal. 29* (4), 409-416.

Forkosh, J., & Drake, J. E. (2017). Coloring versus drawing: Effects of cognitive demand on mood repair, flow, and enjoyment. *Art Therapy 34*(2), 75-82. doi:10.1080/07421656.2017.1327272

Hattori, H., Hattori, C., Hokao, C., Mizushima, K., & Mase, T. (2011). Controlled study on the cognitive and psychological effect of coloring and drawing in mild Alzheimer's disease patients. *Geriatrics & Gerontology International, 11*(4), 431-437. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1447-0594.2011.00698.x

Holt, N. J., Furbert, L., & Sweetingham, E. (2019). Cognitive and affective benefits of coloring: Two randomized controlled crossover studies. *Art Therapy 36*(4), 200-208. doi:10.1080/07421656.2019.1645498

Kaimal, G., Mensinger, J. L., Drass, J. M., & Dieterich-Hartwell, R. (2017). Art therapist-facilitated open studio versus coloring: Differences in outcomes of affect, stress, creative agency, and self-efficacy. *Canadian Art Therapy Association Journal. 30*(2), 56-68. doi:10.1080/08322473.2017.1375827

King, I. (1991). In search of Lowenfeld's proof that coloring books are harmful to children. *Studies in Art Education, 33*(1), 36-42.

Langdon, L. A. (2016) Using action research methodologies in building a frame for practicing research. *Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education*. 2016(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.17077/2326-7070.1495

Langdon, L. (2018) Lessons from Elizabeth “Grandma” Layton, *National Art Education Association News 60*, (3), p.35.

Langdon, L., McCloskey, S., Vincent, Z., & Rice, K. (2022). Grandma Layton: A Cinderella story. *International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education*. https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/ijllae/vol5/iss1/6

Langdon, L. (2022) Barbara Diedel’s pages of colors. *Better Senior Living. Senior Resource Center of Douglas County. 50,* (8). p.10. https: www.YourSRC.org.

Ligon, G. (2024) Glen Ligon Studio. https://www.glennligonstudio.com/paintings/?series=726

Lowenfeld, V. (1947/1964). *Creative and Mental Growth*. New York: MacMillan.

Magsamen, S.& Ross, I. (2023). *Your Brain on Art*. Random House: New York.

Malchiodi, C. (2015, June 30). Are you having a relationship with an adult coloring book? *Arts and Health*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/arts-and-health/201506/are-you-having-relationship-adult-coloring-book

Masika, G. M., Yu, D. S. F., & Li, P. W. C. (2020). Visual art therapy as a treatment option for cognitive decline among older adults. A systematic review and meta- analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing. 76*(8), 1892-1910. https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14362

Milbrandt, M. (2016, July 2) Interview by S. Drummond [Radio Broadcast]. *The People Vs. Coloring Books: The Verdict Is In*. National Public Radio. NPR Archives.

Platzer, M. & Potts, D. (n.d.) P4-267: The art of Alzheimer’s advocacy. *Alzheimer’s and Dementia*. doi.org/10.1016/j.jalz.2011.05.2304

Richard, M. (2007). Engaging "looking glass" youth in art through visual narratives of the transforming self in popular culture. *Visual Arts Research, 33*(2), 24-37.

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives (2018). Color with us on National Coloring Book Day.

Stewart, L. (2024, July 30). *How to conduct action research? Overview, types & process.* ATLAS. https://atlasti.com/research-hub/action-research.

Sumara, D. J., & Carson, T.R. (Eds.) (1997). *Action Research as Living Practice.* New York: Peter Lang.

Stokely, M. (2017). Sacajawea, Pocahontas, and crayons: Representations of Native American women in children's coloring books. *Visual Culture & Gender*, (12), 39-47. http://vcg.emitto.net/index.php/vcg/article/view/106/108

Sigler Family Aging Scholars (2022, April 16). *Untold Stories Exhibition*. [Video] YouTube. https://youtu.be/6olU9zXiqtE

Verified Market Research. *Global adult coloring book market size by product type, by material type, by theme, by distribution channel, by geographic scope and focus*. (July 2024) (Report ID: 430724) https://www.verifiedmarketresearch.com/ask-for-discount/?rid=430724