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Learning & Teaching Art

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Special Issue: ‘Inflection Points in/through Art Education: Conversations Today and a Look to the Future’

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Aims and Scope

The scope of the journal is broad and is aimed at facilitating a wide spectrum of perspectives. It is essentially a medium for engaging the rich and multifaceted process of learning and teaching art that takes place in the classroom, studio and beyond. However, the seriousness of the journal is not out weighed by its aim to make critical topics accessible and readable to a large constituency of readers. It is a forum to reflect on the process of creating and teaching art, embracing teaching art in a variety of contexts, engaging art appreciation experiences, sharing scholarship in teaching artistry, and celebrating the rich traditions of art making and teaching.

The majority of art and art education journals focus on scholarship related to art education. This journal seeks to expand the readability and scope of teaching and learning art so that it is accessible and useful, yet challenging and visually engaging. Highlighting the contributions, thinking processes, and successes of artist–teachers, the journal renews an excitement for teaching and learning in the arts!

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EDITORIAL

DUSTIN GARNET
California State University, Los Angeles

A decade after the Second World War, and the creation of the National Art Education Association, then association president Ivan Johnson declared, '[w]e, as art educators, have in research a threshold for change. It should stimulate us to still further exploration and evaluation' (Johnson 1956: 6). At the time, Johnson could not have imagined how the echo of his words would still be relevant 65 years later in the face of increasingly complex social, cultural and historiographical demands. As the world grapples with both the COVID-19 pandemic and the burgeoning movement to call out systemic racism and inequality, art education theorists and practitioners alike are speculating, looking forward and thinking about what is next for the field. There is an immediate sense of momentum in the present, pushing us to rekindle old conversations and begin new ones. The unsettledness of our societies and the promise of new futures looming is an indication to art educators that we are in a liminal space, transitioning into and out of a pivotal historical moment. In response, the 22 essays that compose this Special Issue record current experiences and perspectives of this era for posterity in the field of art education.

It is through conversation that we understand the evolution of the field's knowledge base and the 'themes of change and futurity' (Bertling and Moore 2021: 24) that have marked the first decades of the twenty-first century. O'Donoghue explains that 'conversations within the field, between all those who contribute to it in different capacities, are critical for articulating what art education can do in the places in which it comes into appearance' (2020: 297), and Carpenter notes, 'what matters in art education at any given time depends on who is talking and who is asking' (2019: 6).

Some of these conversations in art education helped to shape the impulse for this project. The first of these began on 21 January 2018 when Steven Kuhn a high school art educator and long-time association member posted on

NAEA's Collaborate webpage explaining his decision to leave NAEA. Kuhn's posting garnered many responses and demonstrated the need to create a space for an academic exchange that illustrates how art educators envision the purposes of their work, now and for the future. The back-and-forth dialogue in this thread has stayed in the minds of many of us, not only for the debate it created, but also for having highlighted the cyclical questions around the disciplinary content and expansion of art education as a field. Art education scholar Jorge Lucero provides a nuanced account of the posting and subsequent responses in this conversation through his analysis in the first essay of this collection.

The second conversation that inspired this project has circulated for decades among art educators, and is succinctly presented by Mary Hafeli's question, 'how shall we balance necessary forgetting with remembering in our creation and documentation of collective scholarly insight in art education?' (2009: 378). Art educators have an affinity for the new and, as Chalmers observes,

> Not only do we easily cast past events aside […] we do the same with people and ideas; we ignore the historical precedents. We become suspicious of reading lists for graduate level courses that list too many pre-1996 books and articles. We weed older books from our libraries and personal collections […] we jump on new bandwagons before exhausting the possibilities of the preceding wagons.
>
> (2006: 291)

Blandy also recognizes 'art educators' predilection […] to focus on the problems and challenges of today without fully considering their antecedents or the larger history of the field' (2008: 4). Hafeli furthers this conversation by arguing 'Eternal return is a condition that characterizes the world of art education and its scholarship though it seems that the phenomenon goes largely unnoticed' (2009: 369). Chalmers, Blandy and Hafeli recognized this cycle of scholarly oblivion (as others have) and I argue that not much has changed today. The significance of these conversations has a direct influence on how we understand the evolution of the field's knowledge base, but also on the sophistication and depth of our scholarship. This Special Issue is, in part, a reaction to counter institutional amnesia by offering a record of this time: a collection of perspectives; multiple snapshots of the present, to stand as a source of historical insight in the future of the field.

The arrangement of this Special Issue is built on the contributions of invited scholars that are purposely diverse in both background and perspective. The invitation to this initiative provided the context for the conversations, and asked participants to critically engage with one of four questions with respect to their specific setting, experiences and consideration of the challenges that face the field of art education today:

1. How do you balance the concerns of postmodern perspectives in art education and more traditional approaches primarily concerned with artists, media and techniques within the pantheon of art? Is your concern primarily with the criteria of quality and technique as the paramount hallmarks of art?
2. From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the

disciplinary content of visual arts education – as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

3. For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that in today's art world the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?
4. The contemporary artworld tends to blur distinctions between the fine arts and the decorative or applied arts, such as vernacular art. Do you think such distinctions have value today?

Of the four listed, only questions two and three inspired responses from participants, and they have been grouped into sections as a way to focus the conversations. There were minimal guidelines regarding the length of the essays, but options were completely open as to the ways in which the questions could be addressed. Authors were also invited to work collaboratively on their responses. The invitation closed with a final request to consider their contribution as an introduction to a larger conversation that will extend into a future publication. While this issue is extensive, it does not offer the opportunity of back-and-forth dialogue that a rich conversation deserves – that is a potential for the future. One year after this collection is published, the original participants will be invited to extend their perspectives, respond to others in the conversation, and/or provide critical commentary that will be compiled into a second Special Issue of *Visual Inquiry*.

As a field, art education should foster a climate that leaves room for conversation, experimentation, risk taking, and above all respectful disagreements. We need to preserve the possibility of good-faith differences of opinion, and this project is oriented towards an open and respectful expression of diverse points of view and positions. Conversations like historical narratives are 'a powerful way of deliberating about values, priorities and, therefore, possible futures' (Adams et al. 2017:186–87). We must continue to expand within and across borders while also rethinking and reshaping how and what histories are produced and communicated. Wygant saw our challenge as 'a complex of interactions, a process of patterns and misfits, beginnings, blendings, transformations and declines – a nebulous form, changing, with no precise outline' (1990: x). As a form of history, this Special Issue 'enables us to make sense of the present, helps mould identity, and enriches understandings of the field' (Stankiewicz 2017: 6) by providing 'multiple portrayals […] essential to our vitality and validity' (Bolin 2017: 94).

Art education historians Mary Ann Stankiewicz and Paul Bolin both provide commentaries on the present assembly of perspectives at the end of this issue. The vantage points they provide push the conversations forward by contextualizing and framing this collection as a tool for arts administrators and professors of art education. With this in mind, I hope you will use this collection in your graduate and pre-service art education courses exploring the history of art education. I also encourage you to share the perspectives found in this initiative with departments of education, school boards and K-12 art teachers to provide insights into the pulse of our evolving field. Some possible lines of exploration could include:

- speculating on what's next for the field of art education;
- exploring how contemporary art education praxis can integrate into systemic structures like DBAE;
- investigating if the borders of art education can be defined;

- assessing the importance of concepts like technique, quality, aesthetics and mastery for K-12 art students today;
- imagining what curriculum and pedagogy would look like if agreement was found between the various perspectives in this collection;
- discovering correlations between twentieth- and twenty-first-century theory and research;
- tracing the genealogy of contemporary themes in art education.

As we carve out new directions and frequently shift perspectives of essentiality in and through art education, 'we also need to revisit its diverse, complex and differentiating pasts, to find within them, the seeds of a shared ethos, attitude, and/or disposition' (Adams et al. 2017: 186). Greene explained that it is when we can 'abandon one-dimensional viewing [and] look from many vantage points [...] [we will] construct meanings scarcely suspected before' (2001: 187). The space for conversations that are afforded in this collection offer 'the promise of finding something that has not yet been discovered, of recognizing something that is present but has gone unnoticed and to say something that has not previously been said' (O'Donoghue 2020: 294). While academia may tease the edges of what is and what can be, there is a clear need to ensure that conversations in the present are given time to broaden and deepen, cultivating diverse perspectives and paths of inquiry along the way.

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Question One

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

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JORGE LUCERO
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Lines drawn, lines blurred

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
conversations
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

The controversial NAEA Collaborate online thread about definitions of art and art teaching, started by Steven Kuhn in early 2018 should be published as-is – in its entirety – without commentary or further editing. Interested parties reading this polyvocal 31 pages can then have a very robust conversation about the subject. The collated PDF of this conversation – understandably – does not even come close to solving or settling the points of contention, but the document does provide a handful of useful articulations that reflect the postures of many art educators from different points of highly experienced and thoughtful views. In this way, the document does a great service in that it provides a text around which the conversation can be continued; and it allows some of us – who sometimes have a hard time saying what we are thinking – to see our thoughts in print.

In this short think-piece, I will recount the thread – with all of its contradictions – and then I will summarize the postures articulated in the conversation, not to fix my position on any of them, but rather to put a temporary bracket around the glorious tension that energizes the field. In many ways, I am provoked (in multiple directions) by various aspects of the conversation, but also – as a seasoned artist, art educator, parent, citizen, scholar and soul in a state of constant renewal – I want to pursue generativity, not stagnation. I am drawn to the energy of the discourse and its interlocutors.

A SUMMARY OF THE THREAD

Mr Kuhn, a committed art teacher from Las Vegas, gets the ball rolling by saying that he is going to quit NAEA because the organization's journal – which he has loved and used in the past – has changed, becoming increasingly political and seemingly subservient to certain subjectivities that he believes are antithetical to what art education is. Mr Kuhn's disappointment is supported by Michelle Kamhi, whose posture in the thread has less to do with whether or not some art education is too political, and more to do with whether or not some political art is even art at all. Following Ms. Kamhi's comments, several other NAEA members express that they feel liberated by Mr Kuhn's courage. They express having felt like – up until this point – they have needed to keep their thoughts about the emergence of politics in art education hidden (presumably around other NAEA members, although who the actual antagonists are in this scenario stays unclear in the thread). Some of the teachers in the thread toe a fine line discussing how they might introduce contentious – or perceived to be contentious – political material while remaining neutral during a classroom debate. Several responders felt strongly about art teachers being politically neutral in the classroom, although it should be noted that with the exception of one classroom teacher – who firmly stated 'Black lives DO matter' – the only didacticisms uttered in the thread were about the definitions of art and its education being tighter and less inclusive, not more. A Ms. Adams from Indiana noted this by stating that she did not want 'an agenda pushed down [her] throat'. This seems like a fair ask. In my analysis of the discussion thread, the only thing that could be interpreted as an agenda being pushed down anyone's throat, was the call by some for universal conventions of art and art education practice that would leave out prevalent art modes, topics and legitimate ways of knowing and describing our individual and collective lived experiences around the world today.

At this point in the thread many of the responders – from every side – began to encourage Mr Kuhn to stay in NAEA. They emphasized how important it is that different (and differing) voices find a seat at the NAEA table. Many commentators urged Mr Kuhn – and others who feel like him – to not only stay in NAEA, but to express themselves freely. Other voices that came into the thread were from both the Executive Director of NAEA and the Editor of *Art Education* at that time. Director Deborah Reeves explained the welcoming posture of the organization and Editor James Haywood Rolling, Jr. laid out as evidence the intersected themes covered in the three years of his tenure. Dr Rolling listed off the seventeen varied themes that were decidedly not politics-centric, out of the eighteen issues that he edited leading up to Mr Kuhn's last-straw moment. I can verify that the only issue-theme that was overtly political was the one that triggered Mr Kuhn's unfortunate resignation from the NAEA ranks.

POSTURES

Here I will list the different postures I saw articulated in the conversation thread. My descriptions are wordy because I wanted to avoid being harmfully reductive. You'll also notice that some of these postures contradict each other;

that is a reflection of the conversation. The postures articulated in the thread were as follows:

- Some of the political topics that occupy certain people should not be a part of the field of art education, at least not the NAEA's core publication, *Art Education*.
- Teachers should be as neutral as possible with their students as not to influence their thinking on certain topics and beliefs.
- Things which do not read as art to the general public (some of which are political) should not qualify as art.
- The field of art education is secretly fractured and many of its professionals feel like they cannot say what they think. Open debate is actually non-existent because those with unpopular opinions feel like they cannot speak without significant courage.
- Political content in the NAEA's publications is off-putting to the point of causing some members to completely ignore the publication and even leave the organization.
- NAEA is for everyone and if you have something to say, ask or show, there are plenty of peer-reviewed avenues for you to try to say it.
- Ideally speaking NAEA and its publications are like a big tent where we all have space to be ourselves and speak our voices. There's even room to disagree.
- Art is some specific set of skills and knowledge – non-political, non-spiritual, non-social, non-historical, non-current – that can and should be administered discreetly without touching other areas of human existence, especially the messy parts.
- Students have social justice needs. Presuming that the field's collective move towards social justice is top-down ignores the fact that some of those themes and ideas are frequently topics, questions and realities that some of our students carry with them.
- The NAEA and its art educators are as diverse and dynamic as the world. It should be able to reflect and withstand that fact generatively, without imploding in on itself.

These were the ones I saw. Ten postures I found in the thread, articulated for ease of use. Discuss! I, for one, am super grateful to have the time, education and (at least for now) non-threatened body to indulge in the discourse. Thanks friends.

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Art education and the practice of freedom

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
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curriculum

Education in any area or discipline is always political. In art education, we have been very slow as researchers and practitioners to embrace the interdependence between art and politics. Patriarchal views of art, emerging from hierarchal systems of thought, have shaped notions of art as a special domain (Efland 1990), somewhat detached from the everyday workings of the world. In reality, the views of art we hold correspond to our views of society. As long as art educators continue to question whether or not to be political, we remain part of a system that supports the status quo and legitimatizes existing inequities.

Art, as any other human activity, is shaped by the historical conditions within which it is created. Traditional education, in its mandate to reproduce societal structures, adopts strategies that validate and perpetuate the dominance of certain groups. Art educators, for example, contribute to reproducing existing hierarchies by teaching lessons that include accepted examples of western art, often created by White European males. This widely observed curricular choice advances a political agenda that denigrates, the contributions and perspectives of women, Indigenous, Black, Brown and differently abled folks, among others.

How we envisage and conceptualize our art education research and teaching is a political decision, with political implications. Freire states unequivocally that education is political, that '[t]here is no such thing as neutral education process' (Freire 2005: 33). Education functions as an instrument to bring about either conformity or freedom. Applying Freire's ideas to art education led me to examine prevalent conceptions of art, and their impact on what is taught in school. Unsurprisingly, art curriculum frequently honours academically trained artists and overlooks other artistic traditions, such as local, folk, women's, outside or Indigenous art. By privileging the artistic contributions of those who have had access to academic training and enough privilege to pursue a career in art, several other ways of being an artist are disavowed.

What counts as art is connected to our views of society. Limiting and hierarchical views of art, as prevalent in art education curricula, communicate clearly how art reflects society's power structure. Valuing academic training, privilege, Whiteness, maleness and ableness defines art as belonging to a circumscribed group, not to all. The fact that during my 20+ years in higher education I have worked with only a small number of Black and Brown students is evidence of some of the ways in which education creates barriers to access. I have also learned from these few students of colour that in their own art education experiences they had very limited to no exposure to the work of artists of colour like themselves. Furthermore, these students felt uncomfortable engaging with issues of race or social justice in their work as artists or educators. Creating a vicious cycle, my students were poised to repeat the exclusionist biases shaping the curriculum they experienced, and advancing the notion that certain artists matter, and some art was better than others.

As art educators and researchers, we do not often speak of these biases. We accept and reproduce them as integral to the modernist standards of art that render it somewhat separate from the messiness of society, and the inner workings of economic systems. The opposite, however, could not be truer. Art and society are connected, and the broader our conception of art, the more inclusive our views of society and democracy. Tucker (1996) reminds us that rigid categories of art making, judged according to fixed criteria, are part of a conservative project.

Since education and art are not neutral, as educators and researchers we must choose between promoting freedom and social justice or condoning and reproducing injustice. In other words, the issue is not whether or not social justice education and politics belong in the art classroom. Questions facing art educators and researchers are: 'what kind of politics do we sponsor', and 'do we value freedom or oppression'?

When I was senior editor of the *Journal of Art Education*, I made my politics clear by organizing a Special Issue on social justice and stating my commitment to art education as a vehicle of social transformation (Bastos 2010). The double issue compiled twelve articles dealing with racism, immigration, inclusive language, folk and contemporary art, social studies and media arts. The National Art Education Association (NAEA) editorial board reacted with great enthusiasm to my proposal and encouraged me; the 2010 NAEA Convention was also organized on the topic of art education and social justice. I worked with great energy and hoped for this issue, as I saw it bringing the conversation taking place among the 5000 conference attendees to the 60,000 subscribers of the journal. I was incredibly proud of the issue's content and design. However, I was unprepared for the rabid criticism it received from some. These were not typical oppositional letters to the editor. I received hate mails accusing me of being responsible for the doom of art education and for compromising the quality of art instruction. The notes were vicious, personally disrespectful and uninformed.

What I know is this: while we can have different views and political orientations as art educators, art education has an important role in promoting 'the practice of freedom' the means by which we deal critically and creatively with our reality to engage in the transformation of the world. I recognize that promoting a view of art education as politically charged can lead to tension and debate. At the same time, I am committed to affirming that only through imagination and creativity a new and more just social order can emerge.

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Message from the mothership: Futurist art pedagogy for Black lives

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS

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curriculum

For the purpose of this inquiry, we reflect on the creation of our virtual panel conversations, *The 2044 Series: Anti-Racist Praxis as Futurist Art and Design Pedagogy.* We were inspired to organize the series for two reasons: (1) to operationalize our thoughts on our roles as Black scholars amidst Black (re)awakening, social change and unlearning and (2) in part, to unpack contemporary questions in the field. Our series serendipitously responds to the following queries of this publication: 'From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom?'; 'Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education-as you understand it?'; and 'From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?'. In order to describe how these questions relate to our anti-racist pedagogical endeavour, a collaboration between two Black female art professors – an art educator/artist (Kathy) and an interdisciplinary artist/curator/educator (Lauren) – we begin first by pondering our collective art teacher memoryscape.

As a former K–8 practitioner in majority minority schools, I (Kathy) made daily logistical decisions about (age appropriate) rigour, relevance, materiality, group transitions, classroom climate and teacher reflexivity. Asked then what is the *content* of the field, I might have said 'culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings 1995; Lee 2012) artists/art, process, problem solving, media exploration, and skill acquisition'. I posit that my unlearning began when I was introduced to social justice critical terminologies as a Ph.D. student, and I continue to evolve as a present-day teacher educator. I now believe that meaning making is of primary concern because igniting students' agency and criticality does not rest solely on technique, media and performance outcomes, but visual literacy, student reflexivity and unpacking collective and individual lived experiences. Media and technique are tools for students to contextually situate themselves and unpack their emerging wonderings.

Through dialogue and art making, we should ask ourselves and our students to consider and question relevant issues reinforced in their daily visual culture, instead of ignoring them and teaching elements and principles as the *only* visual language. That time has surely passed. Social justice issues in the art classroom are not a distraction, but a mode of communication, to enrich the work and the maker (Dewhurst 2014). We use the term 'big ideas' (Walker 2001) in the art classroom, topics that garner multiple viewpoints, but as teachers we may then still avoid ideas that are deemed controversial to preempt possible backlash. From our perspective, border crossing is necessary for K–12 and higher education to continue to truly push the discipline forward. As professors, we deconstruct the field from a vantage point, which allows for broader critique and intentionality, but university programmes cannot fully theorize future pedagogy and critique current practices, without considering the life worlds of the practitioner, who (usually) is navigating within the traditionally conservative educational system.

As an artist, curator and critical scholar, I (Lauren) am often called on to conduct professional development trainings in partnership with schools and museums that teach K–12 art teachers the relevance of and importance of bringing social justice strategies to the art classroom. For me, when teachers do not connect social change perspectives to art lesson plans there is a true disconnect between the many student lives we hope to serve and to engage on a day-to-day basis. An art-based pedagogy that centres on Eurocentric values and techniques denies us the opportunity to approach our diverse student populations with greater cultural humility and awareness, and runs the risk of alienating students who have different cultural needs. Furthermore, eliminating social transformation robs us from taking social responsibility for the current state of the art academy, and fails to challenge us to do the work of reshaping a culturally biased field to be more equitable in its representations of artists and in its definitions for art. So many of the questions we grapple with today, from the lack of diversity in museum collections and visitor populations to the limited representation of BIPOC professionals in the art profession, stem from the ways in which our art classrooms have isolated the experiences of diverse communities. By excluding social justice frameworks in art classrooms, students are not critically exposed to nuanced examples in the field that might encourage them to envision a future as artists, designers, cultural workers and creative leaders.

While some might argue that cultural relevance and multicultural perspectives have been widely accepted in the field, the necessity of the current conversation suggests that there are some within our field who resist this progress and would prefer a hegemonic view of art to continue to prevail. Now we stand at a time of racial reckoning, where literal monuments have fallen. We ask in response 'is neutrality in art education still acceptable or expected?'. Are the positionalities of practitioners to remain resistant, unaware, afraid or en masse pressing towards difficult conversations and still able to maintain employment? In schools, are teachers still leary? Probably yes. Nonetheless, here we are, converging at this unique juncture in time, as K–12, post–secondary art and design, museums, artists and community spaces are now welcoming these conversations, finally willing to engage and listen.

We decided to organize and to offer the 2044 panel series to propose models for critical pedagogy, providing insight, history and some practical application, both as an entry point and a site of radical, profound discourse. We are undergirding our panel conversations by addressing the issue of race in art and design and responding to the long-standing, pervasive issue of over-policing in communities of colour and violence to the Black body. For art spaces and classrooms, we believe it is no longer acceptable to remain silent and pedagogically neutral (presumably, this is a stance where we have *all* been complicit in). Our programming is an opportunity to engage in dialogic encounters while revising and restructuring our own milieus and curricula.

Beginning in Spring 2021, *The 2044 Series: Anti-Racist Praxis as Futurist Art and Design Pedagogy* will explore the frameworks of anti-racism, critical race theory (CRT), and futurist praxis as methods of pedagogy in the fields of art and design. Our 2021 panel discussions highlight themes that challenge anti-Black racism and cultural bias in the visual arts, and will highlight national, regional and local scholars, cultural workers, artists and designers whose work embodies transformative anti-racist pedagogy and practice.

The series title is inspired by an article from legal scholar Bennett Caper entitled 'Afrofuturism, critical race theory, and policing in the year 2044' (2019), which imagines Afrofuturism and CRT as frameworks to understand how policing might be envisioned during a time in the future where the United States is projected to be a 'majority-minority' country. As Black scholars at a minority-serving institution, the 2044 series is a platform for the field to consider what it means to teach art and design both presently and in a new world that is more diverse and more equitable. We situate our work in the academy and classrooms as political sites (or ruptures) and institutions of transformation ripe for inquiry.

Envisioning a future where racialized difference is validated and valued, we see art and design as platforms for social justice, change and the creation of a better world. As we foreground racial inequities and systemic oppression, we position visual art, design and its pedagogy as prime spaces for racialized dialogue and recontextualization. Since historic and contemporary narratives of policing have laid the groundwork for our current position of racial unrest, which continues to disrupt pervasive systems, we believe that there is a unique opportunity to explore how similar anti-racist pedagogies can move art and design education into the future. As we embrace futurist practice, we believe that we must start first with the exchange of ideas and conversations, followed by action.

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Snapshot: Summer 2020

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
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art education history
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At this moment and for the last months, the intensities and sensations associated with human dignity and subsistence are befuddling. I am writing on 30 July 2020. This day's events in the United States included the homegoing celebration of congressman and civil rights activist John Lewis, the passing of 150 days since the murder of Breonna Taylor, the death of former presidential candidate Herman Cain from COVID-19, adding to our over 150,000 person death toll, the announcement of the worst-ever quarterly plunge of the GDP in history and the current president's tweet from early in the day floating the delay of the 2020 election. I certainly cannot speak for all art educators, but my parameters for art education are more permeable to the events of our time than ever.

As educators grapple with unprecedented changes to their delivery of art content during the coronavirus crisis, most have stretched themselves to incorporate online learning in record time and are now exploring socially distanced learning options as some venture back into schools. What transformations we have undergone! Any glance at the recent postings on our CONNECTS NAEA Open Forum indicates the generosity of art educators in their sharing of expertise, their vulnerability in expressing the need for help and the support offered for those attempting new delivery modes.

The amount of resource sharing and requests for assistance has been incredible to witness as I adapt my teaching for the approaching fall semester. In my survey of responses to this emergency, most have been focused on problem-solving and solution-finding around technological knowhow and material and content fixes to best meet safer-at-home delivery models. But there is another sustained public health threat besides the coronavirus pandemic, and if the NAEA Open Forum postings are any indication, this particular pandemic does not appear to enjoy such an all-hands-on-deck, collaborative response from art educators, despite a call to action shared with all NAEA members almost two months ago.

As I prepare for my synchronous, remote delivery of courses and avail myself of multiple Zoom and Canvas trainings offered by my institution, I am undertaking mandatory COVID safety training, and I am also completing required and elective training related to our university's fight to reduce systemic racism. Our anti-racism efforts come in direct response to a university lawyer saying a racial slur during an on-campus panel discussion called 'When Hate Comes to Campus' in the fall of 2019. This incident garnered national and international media attention, along with student disclosures via the #BlackatUNT Twitter hashtag. These events, set against the senseless killings of Black Americans at the hands of police officers across the country and the declarations of racism as a pandemic by no less than nineteen US states, all serve as catalysts for our ongoing institutional transformation. While my university is both a Minority Serving Institution and a Hispanic Serving Institution, the character of our change is slow, hidden and disjointed, especially in comparison to the lightning speed with which we shifted to remote delivery (in under ten days' time) and when compared with our mobilization towards COVID-19 safety.

Art teachers have displayed great resilience and flexibility in their can-do efforts to enhance their educational delivery and school safety. But we do not seem to have placed equal focus on evolving our field to fight systemic racism. By way of example, the sustained exchange of postings and information on our NAEA Open Forum related to COVID and online art teaching in the last few months far outweighs the scant number that even come close to touching on anti-racist art education since the killing of George Floyd in May 2020. Again, as in 2018 when Dr James Rolling Jr defended his decisions as editor of the journal *Art Education* against accusations of being overtly political in publishing a number of articles sympathetic to the Black Lives Matter movement and addressing the Ferguson riots, Rolling again stepped up on 10 June 2020 (now as president-elect of NAEA) in his open letter to NAEA titled 'Black Lives Matter' (2020a). The letter offered twelve recommendations for countering the perpetuation of systemic racism against people who are Black, Indigenous or persons of colour.

Another online version of President-elect Rolling's letter (2020c) included the self-portrait captioned '[l]eaning in hard against a racist society that resists change' (the image subsequently became the cover for his book *Growing Up Ugly* [Rolling 2020b]). This image stays with me, particularly his constricted facial muscles and cinched skin appearing to struggle under gruelling effort. To me this embodies his stated exhaustion, surviving a lifetime of racism.

I assumed Rolling's letter would ignite a spark for change and I anticipated that some of the close to 17,000 members of our Open Forum would soon post reactions. But these have yet to materialize as they did in 2018 after Rolling's defence of his editorial decisions.

In my search for assistance with my fall teaching, I came across several internet websites offering anti-racist art education resources, but only Cindy Ingram's podcast *Art Class Curator* directly addressed anti-racism with Rolling in a podcast interview from 9 June, a day before his letter arrived in NAEA member inboxes. In the podcast, Ingham vulnerably discusses with Rolling issues that get to the heart of what I bet most art teachers fear when tackling anti-racist art education. The next and last podcast shared on 16 June contained Ingham's reaction to a Facebook post (now deleted) accusing her of making art political by taking an anti-racist approach to art education. In response, Ingram passionately advocated for breaking art education out of the bubble separating it from our lives as humans in this time.

It was heartening to hear Ingram promote active anti-racism efforts in whatever form art education takes going forward. But the tripartite pressures she identifies as a lack of support pushback from all directions and the ever-present fear of failure enclosing around individual art educators threatens to only progress the belief that the cure might be worse than the pandemic itself. My last sentence could describe either the coronavirus or racism pandemic and yet the responses to each have been incredulously dissimilar. Both pandemics endanger the status quo of art education. One is months old in the United States and the other has occurred on a daily basis over generations, both within and beyond our national borders.

Since we are demonstrating our incredible nimbleness and generous collaborative abilities to change our field in the face of one pandemic, the question begs to be answered, 'what is holding up your individual and combined responses to meet the necessary change associated with long-embedded racism?'. NAEA president-elect Rolling asks others to stand with him as he leans in hard against a field resisting the unravelling of systemic racism. The burden of leaning in against any pandemic should not be left up to one person or group, such as the 20 per cent of art educators identifying as Persons of Colour, nor should it be the sole burden of the over 50 per cent of Students of Colour taught by art educators in the United States. It is a call every one of us must heed.

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WANDA B. KNIGHT
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Teaching *is* political: Social justice and the politics of art education

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
conversations
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

Injustice exists in our world. Some communities experience disadvantages due to their gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, language, age, nationality or religion, among other areas, but disadvantaging becomes unjust when the social, political, economic and educational consequences of inequality adversely impact specific groups.

If we reflect upon schooling, for example, and its oppressive history concerning specific populations, social justice education is imperative in visual arts education to counter the past. As teachers, we must ensure equitable delivery of education to every learner and be socially responsible by challenging the status quo and unjust educational practices. Moreover, we need more skilled and (com)passionate visual arts leaders to guide this worthwhile endeavour.

> Social justice education involves:
>
> coming to understand oneself in relation to others; examining how society constructs privilege and inequality and how this affects one's own opportunities as well as those of different people; exploring the experiences of others and appreciating how those inform their worldviews; perspectives, and opportunities; and evaluating how schools and classrooms operate and can be structured to value diverse human experience and to enable learning for all students.
>
> (Darling-Hammond et al. 2002: 201)

Given that we have the responsibility to encourage critical thinking and facilitate learners' problem-solving skills, art educators can be dynamic agents of change for social justice through the content or topics we tackle and through particular pedagogical practices that challenge social, economic and cultural inequalities stemming from differential distributions of resources, power and privilege. Even so, not all visual arts educators agree on whether social justice content and politics have a place in visual arts education.

ARE SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS A DISTRACTION FROM THE DISCIPLINARY CONTENT OF VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION?

I have witnessed many opponents of social justice education hide behind the claim that there is no time to cover anything more than basic visual arts knowledge and skills. Some criticize social justice pedagogy as political and prefer to steer clear of politics in the visual arts classroom completely. Others seek to remain neutral in their perspectives for fear of indoctrinating their students. However, social justice topics need not be a distraction from the perceived disciplinary content of visual arts education, nor do we have to give up one (social justice education) to have the other (visual arts education). As a visual arts educator who has dedicated my life to being an agent of change for school reform and social justice, I weave social justice content (e.g. race privilege, power, dominance, whiteness, oppression, classism and sexism) throughout my teaching.

Visual arts educators who perceive such topics as being political and choose to be neutral or not to engage with politics and political discourse within the visual arts classroom should recognize that teaching, at its core, is inherently political. Education is a matter of our nation, meaning that politics affect education and education affects politics. Moreover, 'teaching is never a neutral act' (Freire 1968: 19). Neutrality is a political choice that supports the status quo. Thus, it is disingenuous for art educators to advocate for neutrality in teaching while knowing very well they cannot teach the visual arts effectively within a vacuum. Likewise, because art can convey charged meanings about race, class and gender, among other areas, art education is not a purely academic endeavour but a pursuit tainted by social and cultural politics. What we teach is politically and ideologically informed. So are our textbooks and curricular materials, our teaching strategies and the processes we use to advance our learners' thinking. Furthermore, how we teach is shaped by the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which we enact our pedagogy.

DISCIPLINARY CONTENT OF VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION

Social justice education seeks to achieve a world where all society members enjoy fundamental human rights and equitable opportunities and circumstances to live and thrive in a world free from oppression (Knight 2011). From my perspective, visual arts education would benefit from being transdisciplinary. The International Bureau of Education (n.d.) defines transdisciplinary as 'an approach to curriculum integration which dissolves the boundaries between the conventional disciplines and organizes teaching and learning around the construction of meaning in the context of real-world problems or themes'.

A visual arts social justice education could combine the goals and perspectives of various disciplines (Garber 2004). These subject areas might incorporate history, sociology, cultural studies, critical race studies, disability justice studies, feminist studies, gender and sexuality studies and visual culture and material culture studies to explore issues of dominance, inequity, power, privilege, supremacy and oppression in various contexts. Possible areas of focus and settings include schools, mass media, the art world and cultural institutions such as museums and community arts organizations. Whether we dabble in the discourse surrounding social justice topics and 'politics' in visual arts education or keep our ideological dispositions to ourselves, as participatory citizens within a democracy, all visual arts educators must actively work against injustice. To do anything less, we may be reinforcing oppressive structures that deny learners equal access and opportunity for equitable education.

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PAMELA HARRIS LAWTON
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Art education needs a curriculum paradigm shift

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
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curriculum

As a Black woman, reflecting on my K–12 public education in Washington, DC during the late 1960s and 70s, many of my teachers deviated from the ‘standard’ curriculum, meaning they found ways for their predominantly Black students to learn about and appreciate the contributions of Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) to the founding and continued progress of the United States. I was educated during the height of the civil rights, Black Arts, Black is Beautiful and Black Power movements, for which I am eternally grateful. My education in tandem with my upbringing made it possible for me to develop into a confident and proud Black woman. I particularly recall my fifth-grade teacher, Mr Shelton, a Black man from Mississippi, candidly telling us what it was like for him growing up there in the 1940s. In fifth grade, we studied both US and world history and his real talk opened our eyes to the lives of the colonized – us – through telling the stories of people whitewashed or removed from our history books.

My high-school art teacher, Mr Usilton, a White man who grew up in a homogenous rural community, received his art education in New York at

Pratt Institute where he was exposed to diverse people and perspectives, and he made it his mission to educate us about Black art and artists. We are still in touch today. These teachers' lessons were crucial to how we as young Black people saw ourselves and our place in this world dominated by whiteness, white supremacy, and racist laws and ideology. Unfortunately, I do not believe students in primarily white classrooms received this same education.

POLITICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

Because public education relies on politics, politics cannot be distilled from education. Everything we do as teachers intersects in some way with politics and current events, and politics thrives on sociocultural events and issues. Therefore, social justice education, driven by the sociopolitical landscape, cannot be considered a 'distraction' to the curriculum. The term distraction implies that diversity, equity, inclusion and globalization concerns, such as social justice issues, are unimportant. This is the same as saying the lives of marginalized people like myself are unimportant, that our treatment as second-class citizens distracts from more 'important' issues like climate change, the economy, public health, etc. What could be more important than human rights? If the goal of education is to prepare young people to be responsible, ethical and empathetic citizens who participate fully in their communities, how can we teach them *any* subject effectively without referencing the sociopolitical landscape? Ignorance dooms us to repeat past injustices over and over again.

VISUAL ART EDUCATION CURRICULUM CONTENT

If art can be thought of as 'aesthetic communication about things that count [,] […] a cognitive approach to art education [should stress] the construction and intelligent interpretation of art and other aspects of visual culture in their authentic social contexts' (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005: ix) and not just art for art's sake. Art curriculum, like that of other school subjects, needs to be fluid. It should shift depending upon current and future events, the needs of students, and the larger world. When art education is based on big ideas (Walker 2004; Gude 2007) rather than the elements and principles of art and design or historical periods, then the study, making and interpretation of art becomes about 'understanding art as an expression of human experience – emotions, values, mores, and institutions' (Anderson and Milbrandt 2005: ix), including institutionalized racism, sexism, ableism and other social justice concerns.

CONTEMPORARY ART AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ART EDUCATION

Educating learners about, with and through contemporary art and artists involves delving into social justice issues. Many contemporary artists create work designed to make human rights, environmental, health and other disparities more visible. Many of these artists identify as BIPOC, women and LGBTQ+. If these artists are eliminated from the curriculum because they are considered too 'political' or don't represent white heteronormative values or create art based on the teachings of Eurocentric aesthetics, then as art educators we are suppressing the visual voices of these important artists and those students who identify with them. We are promoting a 'fake news' art education.

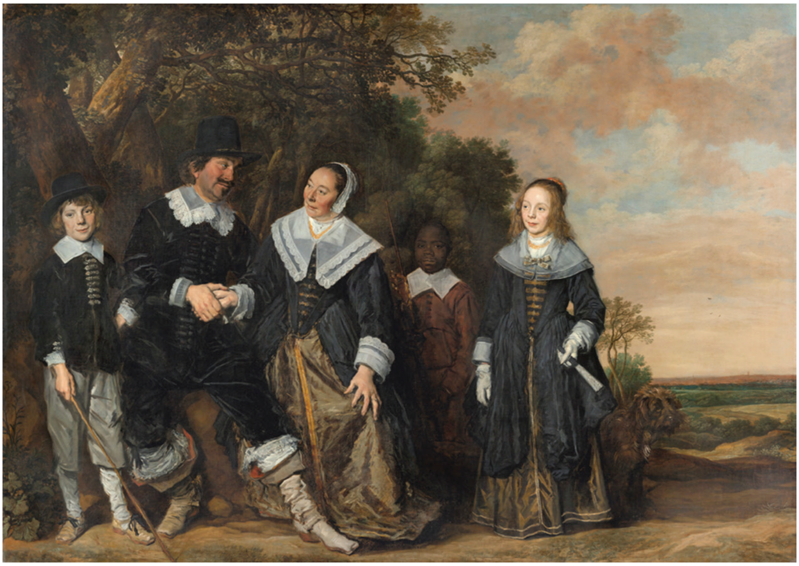

Figure 1: Frans Hals, Family Group Landscape, *1645–48. Oil on canvas. 80 inches x 112 inches. © Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.*

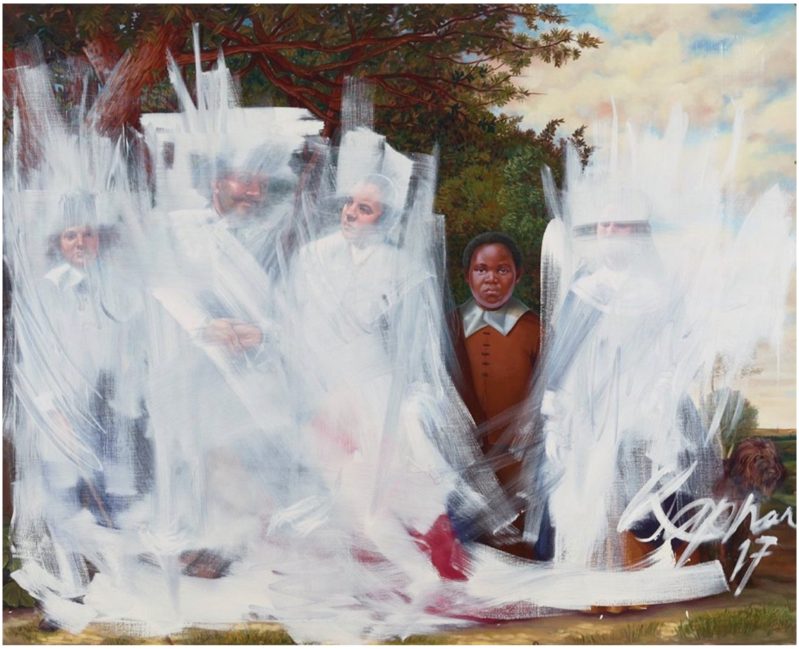

Figure 2: Titus Kaphar, Shifting the Gaze, *2017. Oil on canvas. 83 inches x 103.25 inches. Brooklyn Museum. © Image courtesy of the artist and the Brooklyn Museum.*

Teaching art through a social justice lens does not mean glossing over art history, the development of skills or experiences with traditional art mediums and materials. It means expanding our notions of art beyond the figurative and traditional to include conceptual, socially engaged art and our definitions of who an artist is and what artists do. It means designing art education curriculum layered with meaning relevant to the experiences and lives of students; putting historical and contemporary works addressing themes of human experience in conversation with each other to demonstrate how artists over time have addressed the same sociocultural and political concerns and their impact on people.

To visually demonstrate my point, consider the work of Titus Kaphar, a contemporary Black multi-media artist. Kaphar uses juxtaposition to expose fundamental problems with representations of power, privilege and vulnerability, leaving it to the viewer to construct the narrative based on their knowledge of history and personal experience. His art expresses a need for 'new, more transparent, and inclusive histories' (Lawton 2021: 47). In the painting *Shifting the Gaze* (2017a), based on a family portrait by seventeenth-century Dutch artist Frans Hals, Kaphar illustrates how marginalized subjects in art and in life can be easily overlooked or emphasized, bringing awareness to the ways in which whiteness dominates culture. Kaphar completed the painting onstage during a TED Talk (2017b) and then whited out all of the figures but the Black servant, masterfully shifting the viewer's gaze. The white over-paint does not obliterate the figures (history), but shifts the viewer's focus to the historically marginalized. As art educators we need a curriculum paradigm shift. We need to include the histories, experiences and art of underrepresented cultures and the issues that impact them in our curriculum to better prepare our students to have 'courageous conversations [that lead to] a more connected, civic and empathetic world' (Brooklyn Museum n.d.).

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Existence is political

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
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encounter
visual culture
politics
worlding

I believe that social justice education is central to the art classroom. Art has always been political for it has been a means of changing the world, of understanding the 'other's' perspective, of wondering, of worlding. Art has captured the stories of colonialism, forced removal, genocide, war, anti-immigration, containment, racism, immigrant rights, erasure, othering, conflict, border issues, violence, disenfranchisement, slavery, middle passage, bearing witness to, as well as place-making, place-keeping, healing and sharing. It may be the only time we are confronted by another's story or encounter another's perspective. And recent times have brought to light that there is a need to (re)invest in neighbours, neighbourhoods and communities and to secure the place-keeping of a variety of cultural spaces, not just our own. We cannot know their stories without their art and visual culture.

As bell hooks has written, aesthetics is 'more than a philosophy or theory of art and beauty; it is a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming' (1995: 65). It is the creation of alternative modes of life. This aesthetics of existence is a performative act of renaming and remaking existence. It is a life lived! Thus, the art classroom should play a role in such oppositional politics, for it has the possibility of creating radical cultural practice. Aesthetics here is connected to ethics. We should be called to witness, to listen, and to meet the other at sites of resistance (Little and Cobb forthcoming 2022). I do not think those practising social justice art education do enough of this. Those practising it may often talk about others, versus with others. I believe the most radical art may not be protest art but one that allows us to envision a way of seeing and feeling with others, both human and nonhuman.

Additionally, I think art making is a way of worlding through storytelling. Worlding can create spaces imagined for change. Donna Haraway (2016) discusses such endeavours as speculative fabulations, which is storying that crafts relations of possibility (Little and Cobb forthcoming 2022). According to Johansson (2016), such possibilities provide ontological occasions of the not-yet-thought and create understandings of what might be. Speculative fabulations are critical tools to imagine futurities that differ from the worlds we inhabit now and can be used to rewrite histories and social relations and emplace. Afrofuturism is an example. This critical lens is used by musicians Sun Ra and George Clinton, artists Wangechi Mutu, Nick Cave and Jean-Michel Basquiat, and writers Octavia Butler and Samuel R. Delany, among others who combine science fiction, images of technology, fantasy, historical fiction, magic realism, Afrocentrism and/or non-Western cosmologies. According to Bould (2019) and Dokotum (2020), Afrofuturism prioritizes the construction of counter narratives or counter futures devoid of the limiting and negative imaginings shaped by the colonial imagination such as describing or understanding Africa as a monolithic space or African-descended people as ignorant or primitive. Afrofuturism uncovers and restores histories erased and their consequences in order to contradict and correct. For example, in discussing the Afrofuturist film *Black Panther* directed by Ryan Coogler in 2018, Dokotum focuses on its counter narrative character when he says:

> *Black Panther* turns the old stereotypical Hollywood depictions of Africa inside out, and reverses their values. It restores what is African to a position of knowing, as opposed to an inscrutability to be 'discovered', to a place of authority as opposed to a place to be captured and enslaved, to a place of developed wealth as opposed to a land of raw materials to be mined and exported to the Western metropolis for eventual re-entry into Africa as expensive value-added products. Its people enjoy a tradition of nobility and royalty as opposed to ignorance and savagery, they are a sources of light and knowledge as opposed to the frightening forces of the 'heart of darkness'.
>
> (2020: 253)

We need such speculative thought as Afrofuturism, as well as LatinX and Indigenous futurisms, to help imagine and build better futures. Art teachers should consider enacting, experimenting and inventing with such methodologies for it can enable reconfigurations of spaces that affirm the presence of a variety of bodies, and ways of knowing and feeling.

I do not believe such work is distracting. Art should have 'aboutness' (Danto 1981; Barrett 1994) and as such it needs to be about lives and places. Moreover, since life exceeds representation, art needs to have a range of modalities that include affect and emotion for such sensations describe how we are involved and intertwined. Affective encounters are a crucial part of our knowledge production, because they highlight the feelings of the other and for the other (Little and Cobb forthcoming). The materiality of the work should act on those who encounter it. A focus on materiality can enable an experience of the political through the affective. So aboutness is connected to form, and as such we should be teaching how to communicate about the world, its people, and its places, through material means.

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Downplay social justice issues in art education

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS

social justice
conversations
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

When we offer sociological or political commentary on art under the guise of social justice, we are on the periphery of art. Students may be learning the sociology of art, but they are not learning the core disciplines of art. ‘Public sociologists’, who embrace social justice, have an ongoing debate with ‘professional sociologists’, who embrace empiricism and human science methods (van den Berg 2014). Public sociologists believe that sociology should assert its disciplinary authority and favour the cause of social justice. By contrast, professional sociologists are concerned with collecting facts and testing theories before making the world more just. Van den Berg is deeply disturbed by the arrogance of those who perversely promote the social justice agenda as the basis for research. I am equally disturbed by the unreflective insistence of some art educators that the teacher promote social justice in the art class.

According to social justice activists, ‘acceptable’ results in the human sciences and in the arts must align with the values of social justice. This is not

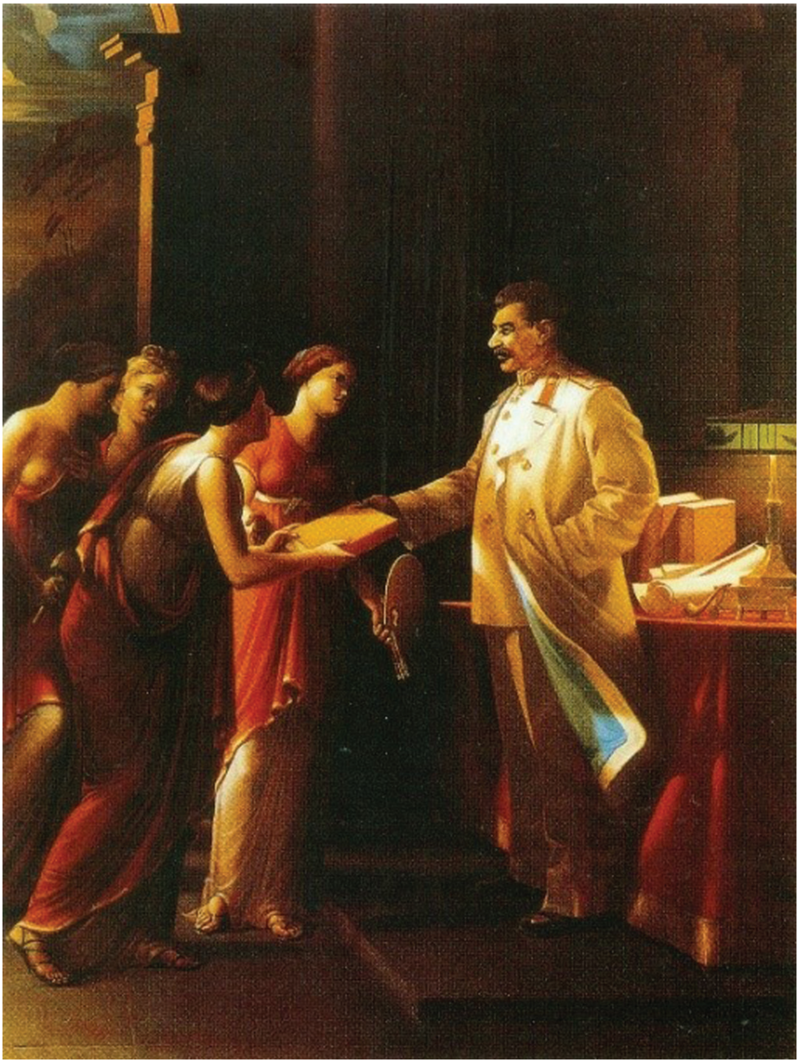

Figure 1: 'Stalin and the Muses', Komar and Melamid, 1981–82. Robert and Maryse Boxer private collection.

new: Stalin (Figure 1) and Marcuse (1978) (Figure 2) among many, believed that artworks must be judged solely on the basis of the 'progressive' political messages that they carry.

Hughes (1993) inveighs against such political rectitude. He notes that activist art offers no guarantee of aesthetic quality, and that 'the fact that a work of art is about AIDS or bigotry no more endows it with aesthetic merit than the fact that it's about mermaids and palm trees' (Hughes 1993: 186). Smith (2005) notes that using political standards to assess artistic worth leads to aesthetic impoverishment. Brooks (2019) observed a recent show of politically engaged American artists. He says, 'Now one gets the sense that not only is the personal political, but that the political has eclipsed the personal'.

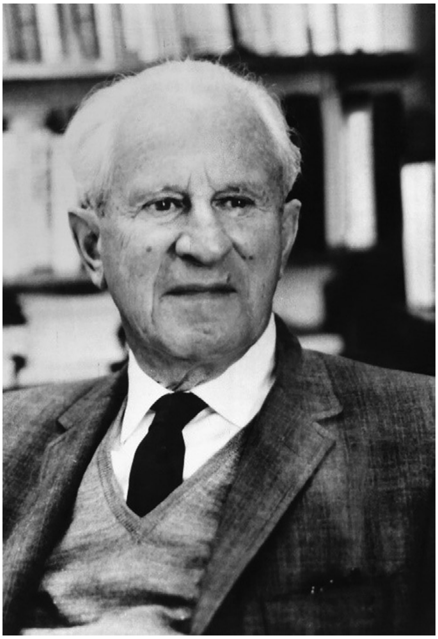

Figure 2: Photograph of Marcuse, 1968. Everett Collection Historical/Alamy.

Other critics pass harsher judgments on works that rely almost exclusively on progressive political posturing at the expense of skill and aesthetic impact (Gopnik 1991; Kamhi 2014).

SOCIAL JUSTICE SHOULD PLAY A SMALL ROLE IN TEACHING ART

Quinn (2006) provides a representative argument for integrating social justice education into arts education. She expects art educators to guide students in critiquing the structural and political origins of inequality, racism, patriarchy and most other societal ills as they are reflected in the arts. She blames the capitalist elites and their neo-liberal apologists for most of these evils. However, some art educators counter her claims by noting that engaging in social justice issues in the classroom is often at the expense of the core disciplines of the visual arts.

Efland (2004) warns against the uncritical adoption of a visual culture approach. He disagrees with Duncum's (2002) call for art education curricula to be grounded in visual culture studies. Efland's remarks apply equally to the implementation of a social justice agenda because in both cases the core discipline of art is never properly engaged. Efland states that Dancum:

> is wrong in thinking that issues like media ownership, audience reception, or the formation of taste publics are content areas that belong to the province of art. [...] If the sociology of art helps students understand the connections between art and the social world, we may have taught something quite valuable, but *we have not taught art*!
>
> (Efland cited in Duncum 2002: 243, original emphasis)

SOCIAL JUSTICE IS A DISTRACTION FROM THE STUDY OF THE VISUAL ARTS

Dealing with social justice issues in the classroom raises two problems:

1. Responsible engagement with these issues requires scholarship and extensive study in order to develop a credible position. As Efland suggests, the study of social justice issues is better done in a social studies or history class rather than an art class. Artwork based on a superficial social analysis is likely to be aesthetically superficial in turn (Pariser 2008, 2010, 2019).
2. The world of the arts is so rich and broad that giving the arts their due will take up all of class time, with little or no time left for sociological or economic critique.

DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE MUST PREDOMINATE WHEN TEACHING ART

The disciplinary content of art education consists of the development of studio skills using diverse media and techniques for the purposes of personal expression (Hetland et al. 2007). It also includes learning to respond to and critique a wide variety of artworks (Barrett 2008), some made by classmates and others from the universe of art. An important disciplinary component is familiarity with different historical and global contexts and traditions in art, from all cultures and periods.

I believe that art teachers should offer their students the skills and knowledge to help them function as consumers, practitioners and lovers of the arts, not as political activists. The serious issues associated with questions of Social Justice are far too important to be handled simply as an add-on for art class.

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Queerly with critical intent

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
conversations
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

This query seems set on casting respondents into binary positions; I much prefer 'and/also' to 'either/or'. While pursuing my MFA in studio art during the mid-1970s my mentor once remarked that 'anyone can be taught technique, but no amount of technical bravura or manual skill will make up for a lack of ideas' (Lintault 1975). Artists make artworks *in the world* and not regardless of its challenges and demands. I consider it an ethical obligation as an art educator to address social injustices and misrepresentations, and further believe that to do otherwise one risks aligning oneself with indefensible practices.

The art classroom *must* function in the world and address critical social justice concerns, and correspondingly art students need to be instructed in techniques that empower their thoughtful engagement in the world. Students' articulation of possibilities outside binaries, often offered to them as options, can expand that which today passes for art education.

As a long-time member of the NAEA Caucus on Social Theory in Art Education, I aim to advance that group's constitutional mandate:

- to promote the use of theoretical concepts from the social sciences, which include, but are not limited to, anthropology, sociology and political science;
- to study visual culture and the teaching of art;

> - to inform art educators about theory and practice in the social sciences, thus acting as a liaison between social scientists and art educators;
> - to encourage research into the social context of visual culture and teaching art;
> - and to develop socially relevant programmes for use in the teaching of art.
>
> (Kim 2021)

As an art educator I recognize no regime reigning over my practice. I encourage students in my classroom to think deeply about how, as a society, we have come to accept the world as it is presently constituted. An art educator's best aim is to support those under their tutelage to rethink insufficiencies and develop useful technical skills to support them in clearly communicating their thoughts, inspiring alternate visions, creating/finding more inclusive practices, acting to challenge injustices, and taking stances that artists have historically been emboldened to chronicle.

I seek to fuel the flames of passion formative students may have at first kindled timidly: to empower students to speak their truths to authorities who would have them make pretty art, but say nothing; teaching students how to harness arts media and deploy it in ways that can create openings for others to consider. I wish to encourage students to not only make art, but write about it too, and to publish their explorations of problematic ideas first giving rise to expressions they continue to hold wdear. For this art educator, students who have something to say, and are willing to think through materials to come to deeper understandings of that which they sense but cannot put to word or form are those whose work most inspires me.

Over a period of years I was honoured to write with (under)graduate arts students in higher education (Sanders 2008, 2009b; Sanders and Buenger 2010), encouraging them to declare what artists most inspired their work. The exemplars they shared, stories they took from artists commenting on the AIDS pandemic (Sanders 2009a), and explorations of gender and sexualities (Sanders 2010) represent just a few of the students with whom I worked. While broaching myriad concerns, their artwork illustrated and their written words affirmed a valuing of queer standpoints.

Students in middle school and high school deserve to be introduced to art historical figures who, they discover through rigorous research on their lives, are known to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer, even if these terms were not widely used during their lifetimes. All art students deserve to be told the whole truth about the artists they study, not partial truths with important biographical data omitted. I hope to be preparing preservice art educators that understand homophobia and hate speech is far less likely to be mindlessly recirculated if in the course of an art history lesson they happen to mention Leonardo was gay, just as easily as Rick Steves remarks in his Italian travel tips.

Art educators can valuably demonstrate diligence in equity and inclusion, and through transparency in examination of art-historical figures who for far too long have been sentenced to the closet. The Supreme Court may have ruled in favour of same-sex marriages, and that peoples' rights are to be respected, but that will not prevent administrators or school board members from demanding untruths be shared with still-unformed minds. Public school educators have every right to be fearful of losing their jobs, should they broach one of the invisibly prohibited subjects, or step on the toes of those in high places who may do anything they can to ensure impressionable youth have no 'unacceptable' role models, or appreciate the significant contributions non-heterosexual artists have made to our society, the cause of civil liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Art educators further need to acknowledge the other intersecting marginalities art exemplars may embody. These could include gay black men whose works may actively confront racism, urban decay and violence, as explored through the work of Nick Cave, Glenn Ligon or Mark Bradford. Broaching proud black women's sexuality, art educators could consider the powerful work of Mikalene Thomas or the evocative performance work of Coco Fusco. An art educator who thinks an artist could be queer, deserves to be encouraged to do their own research. The College Art Association as well as the NAEA has special interest groups with resources galore to share – just ask, and do tell!

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Jittered orthodoxies

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
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art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum
civil arguments
institutions

Any attempt to talk about culture, its past history, contemporary politics or heterodoxy must involve selection. This includes the choice of engaging in an argumentative tradition, which involves adoption of Scepticism and a dialogic praxis (Sen 2006). Therefore, I welcome healthy arguments examining contemporary art education. Arguments about what to teach and why tend to get quite emotional. Educational structures, though, favour rationality as their foundational premise. Therefore, I present my case using a rational argumentative rhetoric.

Considering the role and function of art education leads me back to the perceived and desired roles and functions of educational institutions. An understanding that education is for the public good demands clarification of who constitutes the public and how 'public good' is defined. Art education's history of changing paradigms (Efland 1989), the increased focus on different types of learners as well as possible content (Bresler 2007), amendments of professional standards (National Art Education Association 2014), and increasing re-imaginings of traditional educational institutions (Silova et al. 2020) points to any definition of 'public good' from an educational perspective being a variable factor. Thus, as education's understanding of public good changes with the reality of globalization, human and non-human ecological and technological shifts, so must art education adapt accordingly, else we render ourselves dysfunctional and obsolete.

The art world canonically spotlighted white males because of the mores and laws of the past, and the global dominance of European culture. Though societies have always been diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and belief systems, hegemonic systems did not reflect this. This axiom holds true for the art world as well. Experiments such as American abstraction, conceptual art and electronic media in artmaking, and multiculturalism and visual culture studies in art education have sought to remedy this and to reflect sociocultural and political changes indicative of a pluriverse (Escobar 2018), acknowledging the existence of multiple worldviews that are interconnected. Such recognition of diversity in contemporary art and society suggests postmodernism as a logical choice with which to approach art education. While earlier this was an optional approach, recent events demonstrate an urgent need to shift out of a mindset that accepts the inclusion of diverse approaches only as long as they stay marginal to the already-established centre.

The increase in research focused on plurality is unsettling because its purpose is to remove the central dominants that many are used to considering as the foundations of art, society and civilization. Recently accelerated dissemination of such research marks a move to normalize the pluriverse, rather than to accept obligatory nods to its existence. Becoming unsettled involves becoming vulnerable; however, art educators should recognize that the decentring occurring in our field is not necessarily a toppling of the system, but rather a re-settling of it in patterns that allow for more even distribution of its component parts.

Regarding resistance to increased focus on social justice art education, I argue that it is an unavoidable paradigm shift in education, like the inclusion of technology in teaching. Teaching and working online during the pandemic is exhausting and uncomfortable and calls for a steep learning curve for many, but it is the need of the day and a working solution to the conditions we find ourselves in. Learning and using paradigmatic tools are responsible responses to current conditions, not subject to personal agendas. Furthermore, there is a false dichotomy in placing a valuing of aesthetics and arts methods in opposition to social justice-oriented approaches in art education. A well-rounded art education practice, like a nutritious diet, must balance realistic reflections of sociocultural and political contexts, with conceptual strength, technical skill, and discussions on various aesthetic systems. Every lesson may not have each of these components, but it all needs to be addressed, for the social body to survive and strengthen holistically. The proliferation of research and its dissemination, on what social justice, community engagement, conceptual art, social practice and like paradigms mean, and how to teach to them, along with more established areas of content, media and sites of practice, reflects the current state of human society, and to the purposes to which we teach: to prepare arts professionals who are also thoughtful human beings. Postmodernism recognizes that knowledge evolves; similarly, post-structuralism does not do away with structure, but acknowledges that structures shift and change. This is consistent with the understanding that knowledge, science, art and human purpose all evolve to remain relevant across space and time. Institutions and teachers need to buy in for diversity, equity, inclusion and access to go from being a movement to becoming reality.

Disruption of any system is uncomfortable for those who are secure within it, but a vital relief for those who are in positions of discomfort. As an art educator I have to be aware of who is in my class, what comforts and discomforts are affecting them in the art world and beyond, and as artists, what their work will create and disrupt. Based on this reasoning, I highly value, and advocate for greater engagements with postmodern and social justice art education and the strategies they offer. The enactment of this discourse, much like the evolution of American art itself, is a proof that disruption can be creative, productive and a process of civility.

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Three approaches in art education

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
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art education history
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politics
curriculum

One of the first activities in my pre-service art education class is to ask my students to draw a picture of the ideal art classroom, stipulating that they should include students and a teacher within a classroom environment. Based on these drawings, students discuss their ideal art classroom, from which I learn their beliefs and views on art education. Some students see children's creativity, motivation and growth as the primary goal of art education, while others focus on teaching the value and knowledge of art as a discipline and cultural heritage. Only a small number of students share the belief that teaching art is to help students develop their sense of place in society and address social issues and concerns, providing voices to underrepresented and minority groups and criticizing social inequities. The first approach is called learner-centred, the second the discipline-centred approach and the third the society-centred approach. Most of my students' drawings show one of the three approaches, which can be applied to an art teacher's philosophy statement, as well as in art lesson unit analysis. This categorization can be extended to museum and community settings. For example, the learner-centred approach in the museum resonates with visitor-centred programmes; the discipline-centred approach is reflected in object-centred tours, guides and activities; and the society-centred approach fosters community-centred programmes to meet the needs of the community.

I also share several movie clips in my classroom to discuss the role and significance of art education, since popular culture, such as films, television dramas, and cartoons have also illustrated these approaches featuring teachers, students and schools. The documentary film, *Waiting for 'Superman'* (Guggenheim 2010) explains that American public schools were criticized for their students' low test scores, while private charter schools were praised as an alternative education system for children. The film's criteria of educational success were standardized test scores that measure academic knowledge, implying a discipline-centred approach. John Keating in *Dead Poets Society* (Weir 1989) acts as a learner-centred teacher who encourages students to rebel against authorities and seek freedom and originality against established traditions. A writing teacher, Erin Gruwell, in *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese 2007), inspires academically challenged students in her class to learn tolerance and pursue a college degree. Glenn Holland was featured as a high-school music teacher in *Mr. Holland's Opus* (Herek 1995), who mentored a clarinet student to regain her confidence and voice in music. The history of advocating for and implementing one of the three views is not just prevalent in the discourse of our field, but also appears in history, reading and math theories and curriculum, demonstrating that educators, curriculum developers and other stakeholders embrace or dispute and argue one of the three (Schiro 2013).

Among the three approaches, I strongly argue for the social reconstructive approach for several reasons, even though each of the approaches has its own values in student learning. First, sheltering students through valuing the traditional discipline of art as a cultural heritage seems neutral, but only serves the dominant ethnic group. The dominant pedagogy reflects only one race or ethnic group's accomplishment, not equally valuing other groups of people. If an educator wants to see social changes, this needs to be addressed in school before students are sent into the world without critical consciousness or praxis (Freire 1993). When minority or non-white students address their voices or identities, they often need to borrow the language of the oppressor or dominant groups. There is also a danger of perpetuating the status quo, cultural assimilation that hinders progress towards diversity, equity and inclusion, if we neglect significant issues in our society.

Second, we should represent contemporary art in our art curriculum. The contemporary art world no longer represents or repeats the history of one group. Many artists from various backgrounds share their experiences and views, allowing us to question what we take for granted. From the perspective of an art educator from an immigrant and minority group, I believe that students need to speak and have their voices heard through their artworks, which benefits students from both minority and dominant groups. Teaching Black, Mexican and immigrant art and history supports and values these students' artistic accomplishments while helping the dominant group reflect on systematic oppression and hidden bias with a critically reflexive lens. Students also learn a way of positionality, addressing social identities. Art educators should help students find their voices to represent and serve the marginalized and minority groups of people through art-making and visual culture inquiries.

Third, it seems safe to avoid these difficult topics, but we should embrace them. One of the challenges we all face in our society is the lack of civilized discourse. Divisions between people leads to decreased tolerance and more violence against other races and ethnic groups. If we do not address these issues and engage students with civic discourse and artistic productions in school, we will continue to face crises and violent actions and conflicts (Rolling 2020). But why do this in art education? Of course, other subjects deal with this concern. However, we cannot delegate this mission to other subjects, such as social studies and history, as it is the responsibility of all educators to challenge the history and culture of the dominant group as valuable and objective knowledge in schools.

Resonating with the recommendation of Banks' (2009) multicultural and ethnic studies, art can address the topic of civilized discourse from a holistic and critical lens. We should form our curriculum by addressing students' critical issues and concerns. We can also create a safe space for all students to see and care for diversity and social justice in the classroom. When students are confused, disoriented or misinformed, with biased opinions and views, art can provide voices, perspectives and outlooks towards civilized discourse and future actions.

My training in art and art history in college in the early 1990s started with Western canon art and history. I was required to learn them to understand what art is without questioning why I had to study them. It was given to me and other students as value-free and objective knowledge in human history. Now more educators, including myself, understand who constructs this knowledge and how this knowledge is established in the hierarchical and pedagogical structure. Our students should learn that knowledge is not objective, but an arbitrary social construction. So, rather than focusing on why we should teach about social justice or practices, we must ask why our curriculum still reflects the narrow Western view of art, to begin engaging students with our society's real issues.

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Digital media and social justice in a socially distanced era

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
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art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

The struggle for social justice and equality has once again come to the fore in the United States, made even more visible and pressing by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter, gender equality movements and topics that might once have been thought of as non-political, such as the wearing of protective facemasks to protect from airborne viruses, have been drawn into partisan political debate and represent factionalized positions. In this short article, I will argue that art educators working in a variety of spaces can speak to both of these pressing issues and respond in a sensitive and responsible manner using relevant examples of digital visual art.

The political nature of art education, and education in general, has been discussed and debated for some time now. These issues have been brought to the forefront through the visual-culture-based art educational approaches that were first introduced in the field of US art education in the late 1990s (Duncum 2009).

The COVID-19 global pandemic has changed approaches to education in swift and profound ways, and issues of social and racial justice and police brutality brought to worldwide consciousness by the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor have forced many art educators to rethink how race and privilege intersect with pedagogy and practice (Rolling 2020). Art educators are restructuring methods of interaction and engagement to incorporate social distancing and virtual instruction, and they are critically examining the relationship between their practices and social justice. Many are undoubtedly concerned with the history of oppression of Black and Brown people in the United States that continues in the present, and how this influences art educational practices. These issues are opening up space for long-neglected conversations to be had. Now that distance education is more common than ever due to the pandemic, it is time for art educators to embrace art that addresses racial injustice and oppression, that is also made to be viewed online, from a distance: art that is 'born digital' (see Patton and Knochel 2017).

Digital art has always been multifaceted. The term fails to grasp the multitudinous styles and approaches represented by artists working with digital technologies. There have been various terms used to describe these varied approaches: computer art, interactive art, multimedia art, hypertextual art, new media art, net.art, and post-internet art, to name but a few. In order to explore the nexus of race and distance that has been identified previously, I will focus on net.art in this article. Net.art is made using digital tools and techniques, viewed through digital screens and projectors, and shared on digital platforms. As such it might be the best example of art that is made to be viewed at a distance.

The beginnings of net.art can be traced back to the early 1990s, when the World Wide Web was starting to open up to a wider audience. The term itself is credited to Slovenian artist Vuk Cosic, who reported that it was the result of a computer glitch (Cosic 2002). Early examples of net.art were primarily text-based, due to the data limitations of the early Web (http://www.easylife.org/netart/). As home computers became more powerful, net.art began to incorporate images, eventually incorporating video. With the rise of mobile computing came the ability for place-based visualizations, usually in the form of augmented reality such as *Pokémon GO*, which ties the gamer to their surroundings using GPS.

Net.art tends to be made by artists who identify as white. This is not remarkable, considering that an estimated 85 per cent of artists represented in US museums are white (Kinsella 2019), but it does challenge the idea that the internet was conceived of as a space for personal freedom and increased social representation (Barbrook and Cameron 2001). While this disparity does exist, there have been a number of important net.art works made by People of Color. Keith and Mendhi Obadike are new media artists who speak to aspects of race as it serves to reaffirm power and privilege on the internet. They have archived their twenty years of net.art at http://www.blacknetart.com.

Another relevant example of digital visual art that is designed to be viewed online is that of Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz. Raimundi-Ortiz uses YouTube as a platform for video art that speaks to gender and racial representation in the art world. Her performance persona Chuleta is her performative outlet for reflections on current topics in the gallery-based contemporary art system. Her work can be found at Https://www.raimundiart.com.

A third example of contemporary digital art that speaks to these issues is that created by Jennifer Chan. Chan is considered a post-digital artist, which is a term that indicates that the artwork treats the internet as a medium that can be appropriated, remixed and combined with any number of other media, including those that might be considered traditional. Chan explores issues of consumerism and race through a variety of contemporary artistic practices. Her work 'addresses gender and race politics in reaction to the media's promise of happiness', as seen at http://jennifer-chan.com/recent/.

These artists are only a small sampling of the important work that is being done by contemporary digital visual artists, that critiques racism through the medium of digital technology. Organizations such as Rhizome have spoken out on the potential for new media works of art to counter prevailing media forms of representation; they have also published a guide for activists using digital media as a space of resistance. Art educators who are currently looking for ways to open up important conversations about race at the same time that they are challenged by the lack of face-to-face interactions might find excellent opportunities for these discussions in digital visual art.

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ENID ZIMMERMAN
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Considering the disciplinary content of art education

ABSTRACT

From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education, as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?

KEYWORDS
social justice
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

There has been a tension over the years in art education between social justice and political positions and more established content that focuses on development of art skills and abilities. A view of art education research and practice that I find relevant can accommodate both social justice and more traditional subject matter together as both views can play important roles in bringing about unity and understanding in these difficult times. Conceptions of how art is viewed in a culture are constantly changing based on what influences art in that context, understanding historical backgrounds of various subcultures, knowledge of those who create art, how status quo and change take place, interactions of art with environmental needs and resources, and financial and cultural support for the arts within a culture all play a part. Included in how art is viewed are also the personal, political, spiritual and social functions of art such as for healing, celebration, social protest, personal transformation, meditation and play as well as discussions of racism, sexism and inequity and how art is used as a means of social action and protest. It is important that students learn to be reflective decision-makers where their ideas and values can be freely discussed, from considering their local communities to an understanding of being part of a worldwide art community.

Development of students' individual responses and thinking skills, therefore, can lead them to become knowledgeable makers of artworks that are culturally relevant and responsive to local needs while at the same time recognizing that they are citizens of a national and global world. Equality for all persons regardless of race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or socio-economic status should be underlying principles of this process. How these principles are enacted may vary from culture to culture, from person to person and from community to community (Clark and Zimmerman 2000).

Students can learn to perceive and interpret images by discussing and conducting research about formal attributes, techniques and subject matter that develop their critical thinking skills. In some cultures, conformity and traditional means of expression may be valued more than changing societal norms. In other settings, new ways of thinking can be fostered in which innovative art forms, designs and concepts focus on how individuals can become change agents. Ways to support students can include learning about artists and art works that are alike or different from their own backgrounds and communities. They can experience collective art making, democratizing social change and honouring diversity, including gender fluidity and disabilities, and how these intersect with other identities such as race and class. When students' own artistic heritages, and those of their local communities, are celebrated, students, parents, teachers and community members can endorse valuing the traditions of their own heritages and those of others. They can begin to understand what art is, why it is made, differences in human experiences and the variety of contexts in which art has been made and continues to be created (Manifold et al. 2019).

Students' readiness for art learning at individual levels of development, as well as their engagement in art learning processes and creating art products, should be taken into account in an all-inclusive art education programme. Art education provides a means for media exploration, applying ideas to personal and social relevance, and making choices about creative ends and means that include selecting, adapting and constructing. To accomplish this, students can construct tools of inquiry from practices that include ways of learning about art history, theory and criticism in tandem with studio activities. Units of instruction can emphasize integrative arts experiences through studying issues of tolerance, caring, rejection of prejudice and empathy, and studying ritual and storytelling in traditional and contemporary arts. Strategies may include having students practise problem-finding as well as problem-solving techniques, how to use familiar and unfamiliar materials that lead to new possibilities, experience both structured and divergent tasks as knowledge and information needed for skill building, and at the same time engage in projects that nurture self-expression. Student progress can be enhanced by art learning in educational settings including schools, museums, community centres and society, with supportive administrative climates and mechanisms as well as materials, equipment, resources and time allocated for art study, discussion and art making.

Art students can be encouraged to find and solve concerns in ways that take into account their visual and verbal skills and abilities. Educators can support students' bodies of work that evolve over time through employing self-directed learning that supports developing skills, understandings and knowledge that are needed for self-expression and creativity. Art students of all ages and levels of ability are entitled to develop their own bodies of work, become enlightened through critical thinking, reference the world of visual art historically and in contemporary times, employing creative art processes and expressing verbally and visually their reactions to the world about them (Zimmerman 2014). Technology offers opportunities to overcome geographical, language and cultural boundaries that may exist in this process, and can play an important role in facilitating communication through collaboration and cooperation, both individually and in groups, helping students negotiate meaning about art and its place in their lives as they develop the skills necessary to express themselves. These views of art education's disciplinary content can expand how art education can play important roles in bringing about understanding, not only within students' own cultures and communities, but by recognizing practices, skills and expectations of those from other backgrounds as well.

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Question Two

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

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TERRY BARRETT
The Ohio State University

Art is

ABSTRACT

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

KEYWORDS
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James Baldwin recalled standing on a street corner with the Black painter Beauford Delaney waiting for a light to change in New York. The painter told the writer: 'Look'. Baldwin did, but only saw a puddle. Delaney said, 'look again'. This time Baldwin saw oil on the water and the city reflected in the puddle. Baldwin later revealed:

> It was a great revelation to me. I can't explain it. He taught me how to see, and how to trust what I saw. Painters have often taught writers how to see. And once you've had that experience, you see differently.
> (Popova 2016: n.pag.)

Delaney had introduced Baldwin to what we might call an aesthetic experience and Baldwin told of its power and his gratitude.

Art is a form of visual expression that offers experiences of life and the world through the hearts and minds of artists (Dewey 1934). Huey Copeland (2018), art historian and critical theorist, wrote, 'art is a mode of sensuous human expression that means'. Aesthetic experiences cannot enrich those who are not to open to them. Artworks do not mean unless people interpret them. Without interpretations, artworks are not artworks at all (Danto 1981). To interpret a work of art is to seek meaning from it, to consider what it is about, what it might reveal about life, what it expresses, implies, suggests, evokes in me and encourages me to do.

Artists want their work to be interpreted, to mean and to cause change. A maker of tough social images said,

> I'm excited when my work is talked about in a serious manner – not because it's the work of Carrie Mae Weems, but because I think there's something that's important that's going on in the work that needs to be talked about, finally, legitimately, thoroughly.
>
> (Barrett 2021: n.pag.)

Cindy Sherman, known for the theoretical implications of her work, said she wants emotional responses from viewers, hoping for 'that choked-up feeling in your throat which maybe comes from despair or teary-eyed sentimentality: conveying intangible emotions' (Yates 2020: n.pag.).

When Olafur Eliasson attached an electric fan by its cord to the high ceiling of a museum atrium so it swung erratically and irregularly over visitors' heads, one viewer, taking this minimalistic piece personally, said:

> *Ventilator* is like my personality – no direction of its own – moved by the whims and wishes of others, sometimes noisily and sometimes quietly, but never stopping. Always responding to people, events, tasks, and my own inner drive to please, appease, keep peace, keep up appearances, and keep a sense of accomplishment.
>
> (Barrett 2014: n.pag.)

In an interpretive response to some modernist works, an anonymous observer wrote:

> Magritte's works seem to me to be of someone looking in on life from the outside, not as a participant. As a widow, I often feel this way. It's sometimes hard to make myself participate. It's often simpler to stay inside, behind walls, behind a curtain, isolated. Life should not be a picture you view. You must put yourself in the picture.
>
> (Barrett 2014: 237)

Teaching people to be open to aesthetic wonders, and to be intellectually and emotionally responsive to works of art, is the most important thing I can do as an art educator. When people in art rooms or galleries share their responses to works with one another, they begin to form communities of understanding in which they can learn about the works, life and one another.

When I teach the making of art, I remind learners to be aware that they are engaged in persuasive meaning-making with materials. Their peers then view the new works and attend to their implications by slowly looking, talking and writing (Feldman 1973). Learning to generate meanings from works is more valuable than statements of how 'good' it is or how it could be better, despite what we tend to teach in studio critiques (Barrett 2020).

The artworks available to me are too many to deal with in a lifetime. I select works for teaching according to the imagined interests of viewers and concerns of my own. Art can be beautiful or ugly, reassuring or confounding, abject or appealing, and not every piece is apt for every viewer. I oppose censorship in favour of careful selections of what to show to whom. I am guided to what is considered worth seeing by an interactive community of artists, curators, historians, critics, teachers, collectors and other informed members of art communities. To name something *art* is not a mere and superfluous subjective declaration, it is an intersubjective consensus arrived at by sincere and knowledgeable people who can guide me in selecting artworks for different audiences.

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Lobbying for art education as a civic engagement for change

ABSTRACT

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

KEYWORDS
social justice
art endorsement
policy
lobbying for art education
civic engagement
curriculum

Before we are able to define the roles of *art* and *artist* in society, the relevant issue of the steady decline of art education programmes must be addressed. This phenomenon has impacted the quality of the art teaching in PreK–8 and an appreciation for what art education can offer to every student. Due to budget shortfalls, many states have loosened qualification guidelines, removing mandatory art endorsement when hiring art teachers (Carey et al. 1995; Sparks et al. 2015; National Center for Education Statistics 2021). The impact of these policies is cumulative and toxic. Like a domino effect, the resulting cascade is the disappearance of art education majors in higher education, the questionable quality of PreK–8 art instruction and the abandonment of art classes in elementary schools, all minimalizing art as a critical component in curricula and diminishing the importance of art education as a profession.

This shifting focus has led to the elimination of art pedagogy courses in teacher preparation programmes. Many states include one integrated art curriculum course as the only required art background for PreK–8 teacher certification. As an instructor for such a course, I am aware that many classroom teachers, with little art background, can become potential art specialists in some school districts. Although integrating arts with other subjects can diversify the application of art in regular classrooms, it is alarming how minimal art and studio requirements for teachers are towards the quality of PreK–8 art teaching in public schools.

While many educators believe that art is essential, the harsh reality is that influential shapers in educational policy often are not familiar with the field of art education (Darras 2019). Certainly, advocating for making connections between art theories and practices is important. However, I believe strongly that civic responsibility needs to be a vital mission for the National Art Education Association. It is known that lobbying tactics have a profound impact in shaping organized interests and gaining traction and support for policy-makers (Hojnacki and Kimball 1999). Actively participating and advocating for art education in regional, national and congressional sectors are effective means to ensure art education maintains a strong presence at the legislative level. Proactively building a lobbying team to formulate combined strategies, including grassroot-contacts, and establishing legislative allies can positively enable coalitions that affirm preferences for effective and compelling policies for art education research and practice. Once we have achieved this, then we can define *art* and *artist* more broadly.

Living in a primarily science-driven and agriculturally based town, art has not been recognized as an important aspect of education in my local community. To make art more visible, I believe proactively establishing rapport beyond the classroom is essential. In the past fifteen years, I founded an annual cultural arts festival that highlights my background as an Asian American in our region; I also have served as city art commissioner to create and facilitate opportunities in the arts through bringing public art, mapping art walks and making design decisions through urban planning for my community (Cooper 2018), and I continued to advocate for a place for the arts by serving on planning committees for one STEAM-based middle school and one K–12 virtual school. Most of the time, I am the only person on a board who has an art background. Through collaborative processes, I have learned to navigate various municipal divisions, understand complex systems in city development and realize how important it is to be a public voice for the arts. My experience represents just one person's journey in striving to create sustainable positive changes in communities by bringing arts into peoples' daily lives and making community leaders aware of the necessity of including art and artists in students' education.

Social practices and civic engagement for art education are essential in an era of uncertainty that is filled with political tensions (Lawton 2019). As a field, we cannot rely only on grassroots art activism to voice awareness in the communities. There must be coherent and organized efforts to reimagine the landscape of art education through civic engagements, to address the roles of art and artists in our communities and beyond. A profound impact may still be possible with timely lobbying efforts that aim at vigorously advocating, strengthening, developing and affirming art education-related policies that secure the place of art education in all elementary schools. Then, the pluralistic vibrancy about the discussions of representations of art and artists can be addressed so that art education can continue to flourish in PreK–8 schools for generations to come.

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The lamentable consequences of blurring the boundaries

ABSTRACT

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

KEYWORDS
definition of art
'fine' vs. 'decorative' art
blurring the boundaries
Kenneth Lansing
art history
visual culture
art and politics
abstract art

The notion of 'blurring the boundaries' pervades the contemporary artworld. Virtually every prior distinction – from that between the fine and decorative arts, or crafts, to that between art and life itself – has been rejected. In critical discourse, the phrase is invariably applied approvingly, as if it represented a cultural advance. Louis Torres and I (Torres and Kamhi 2000) have long argued otherwise, however. In our view, the breakdown of distinctions has resulted in total incoherence – both in artistic practice and in writing and thinking about art, and hence in art education (Kamhi 2020b).

KENNETH LANSING'S PRUDENT CAVEAT

To my knowledge, the only prominent art educator who has argued against this breakdown is Kenneth M. Lansing (1971). He has rightly insisted that art 'can and must be defined if we are to make any sense of what we do in the classroom' (Lansing 2004: para. 7). Otherwise, '[w]ho is to say what students must know and be able to do in art' (para. 4)? Without a definition, he argued, an art teacher is comparable to an aeronautical engineering instructor who does not know what an aeroplane is. He rejected the prevailing claim that art, by its very nature, cannot be defined. And he offered the following definition, based on generally accepted 'paradigmatic examples': 'Visual art is the skillful presentation of concepts and/or emotions (ideas and feelings) in a form that is structurally (compositionally) satisfying and coherent' (para. 7).

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Paradigmatic examples of the visual fine arts have traditionally consisted of skilfully wrought imagery in two or three dimensions (loosely termed *painting* and *sculpture*), dealing with things of human significance (Barasch 1985: xi–xii). Why imagery? Because it is the most direct and effective way to convey ideas in purely visual terms.

Moreover, the fine arts were conceptually distinguished from the decorative arts (Seckelson 2008). Contrary to feminist claims, that distinction was not due to arbitrary 'privileging' by a male-dominated artworld. It was grounded in functional differences discernible not only in western antiquity but in traditional cultures the world over (Halliwell 2002: 7–8; Kamhi 2014: 23–32). As clearly identified in the eighteenth century, the distinction is this: the fine arts serve a purely psychological function (*Cambridge Dictionary* 2021), while the decorative arts and crafts are aesthetically enhanced objects that serve a primarily physical function; they combine 'pleasure and utility' (Batteux [1746] 2015: 3).

The invention of abstract painting and sculpture in the early twentieth century gravely subverted the seminal conception of fine art as essentially mimetic. By mid-century, with the artworld ascendancy of Abstract Expressionism, philosophers concluded that art could no longer be defined. In so doing, however, they glossed over crucial facts about abstract art and its practitioners. Both the pioneers of abstraction and their successors deeply feared that in the absence of imagery their work would be seen as merely 'decorative', and not meaningful (Kandinsky [1911] 1977: 47; Blotkamp 1995: 80, 113, 204; Auther 2004), as indeed it is by most viewers (Torres and Kamhi 2000: 163–68). From the beginning, abstract artists tried to compensate with words to convey their intended meaning (Kamhi 2020a: 131).

Cognitive science clearly indicates why abstract art is fundamentally unintelligible. The basic units of cognition are not isolated lines, colours and shapes but, rather, integrated percepts of real-world entities (Edelman 2004: 35–36). While regarded by some as a sign of cultural progress and sophistication, abstract art intended as anything more than merely 'decorative' is, in effect, retrograde from a neurological perspective (Sacks 1990: 17).

The artworld ascendancy of so dubious an art genre provoked an equally dubious reaction in the endless inventions of postmodernism. From 'pop art' to 'installations' and 'conceptual art', these anti-art forms predominate in the contemporary artworld and gain increasing attention in art education, despite the public's largely negative response to them (Millán 2016; Torres and Kamhi 2004). Like abstract work, they too require reams of verbiage to convey their intended meaning. In contrast, remember when a picture was 'worth a thousand words'?

ART EDUCATION CONSEQUENCES OF NOT DEFINING ART

In Lansing's view (2004), the failure to identify the essential nature of art has greatly debased studio work, by reducing the teaching of technical fundamentals in studio courses. Since the reigning 'institutional' theory accepts virtually anything as art, how can one say what skills are needed? Tellingly, a visual arts skill-based interest group has recently been formed in the National Art Education Association. Is it not ironic that a special focus group is needed for what should be a central purpose of the organization?

The open-ended view of art has also led to increasingly meaningless verbiage in art education. Lansing pithily observed: 'Trying to make sense of written and oral presentations in our profession is like swimming in a sea of molasses' (2004: addendum). He also asked, quite provocatively: 'Is it possible that some people are not really teaching art, although they purport to be doing so?' (2004: Addendum) My answer is a resounding Yes!

To restore the teaching of *art* to *art* education would entail understanding why the work of artists such as Elizabeth Catlett, Charles White and Augusta Savage, for example, stands head and shoulders above that of contemporary artworld stars like Jean-Michel Basquiat, Chris Ofili, Michael Ray Charles, Alma Thomas or Kerry James Marshall. That would be a salutary beginning.

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Literacy and art education

ABSTRACT

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

KEYWORDS
social justice
conversations
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

With the pandemic, the political turmoil, and racial and gender inequities highlighted, education has been continuously discussed almost every day in the media. Many are grateful for teachers who educate their little humans. The arts too have been televised and embraced, making this a perfect time to reconsider our educational objectives, definition of arts education and pedagogy. What has worked within our educational system and what does not need to be examined and addressed. Also why, we as art educators seem to be still engrained with the need to defend the reasons the arts are offered. In 1996 I interviewed Paulo Freire and wrote about my journey in art education and critical pedagogy. In the light of all of this I felt that it was appropriate to bring forward some of his points.

Freire considered the arts and education as a cultural community action for freedom; an act of knowing and reflecting critically on the process. Freire maintained that in order to become educated, it is necessary for learners to acquire a new vision of the world, which is based on a critical awareness of social inequities (Freire 1978: 72). The act of knowing is based on dialogues between community, teachers, and students. The arts are a means to confront issues in languages that are understood by the community, as we witnessed during the early stages of the pandemic.

Freire believed that literacy/education implies discussion of the whole education field in society. It does not make sense to discuss literacy in a society

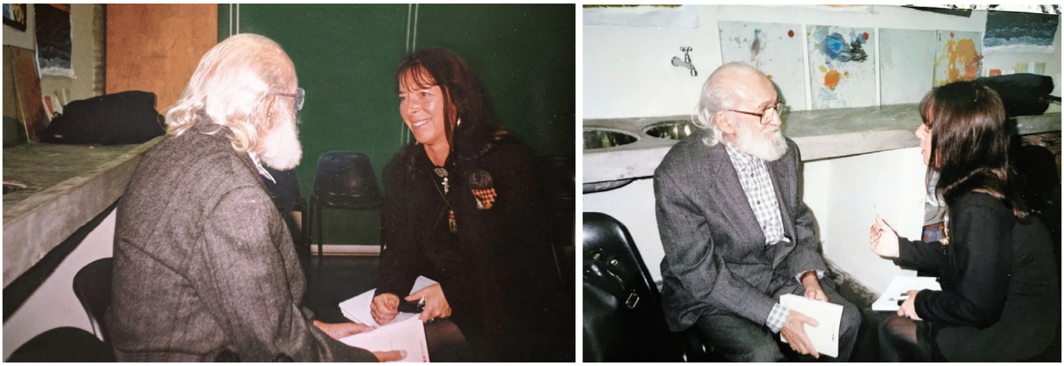

Figure 1: Photograph of Paulo Freire and myself during the interview.

whose form of education is selective and elitist in character. Freire recommended exploring issues, ideas, values, concepts and hopes which characterize an epoch, as well as obstacles which impede humans' fulfilment.

In 1996, while on a research trip in Brazil to study, I had the opportunity to attend a conference that Freire was presenting, and I was given time to speak with him privately.

He smiled, patted my hand, and asked me if I spoke Portuguese because he preferred to speak in his language. I admitted that my Portuguese was at a two-year-old level. He laughed and decided that it would probably be best if he continued to speak English. He stated, 'many times people assume I have the answers, but I do not--only the energy to explore' (Ballengee Morris 1998: 110).

Back in my seat, the conference began with a working people's chorus. The content of the songs was culturally and politically influenced by the community and the audience responded with approval. At times, I felt that I was attending a church service because of the confirmation and affirmation that many of the teachers were experiencing.

When Freire walked in, everyone stood, applauded, and greeted him. The ovation lasted for over thirty minutes. He did not seem to notice the mass but greeted individuals with a smile, a handshake, or a hug and a kiss. The physical manifestation of mutual admiration was contagious. Freire delivered his presentation which included his educational and political history and what he perceived as the pedagogical concerns of the time:

> Democracy is hard because it demands tolerance. To live democratically demands and makes us go beyond words and to leave are differences which is so hard to face. To change is difficult but possible. It is my advantage to be seventy-five years of age and it is possible of having no fear in speaking because of the experience I've accumulated. I remember when I was discussing with a street sweeper about culture and the worker said 'Oh my God, I'll go into the workplace with my head up high because I know who I am. This is the way we change things – not with guns. To change with guns gives power to the gun not with the people'. Everything is about people. Reality is the reason for reality. We have no time to think about change – we have to do it. The neo-liberal ideology is perverse, and I'm astonished with the number of educators

> and fellow students after the fall of the Berlin Wall, pervert themselves and start to become pragmatic educators [strongly stated]. For me the dream is fundamental, utopia didn’t die, history didn’t die because if history is dying what we have is eternity of the present and the present is Capitalism, Capitalist. And to be politically conscious today is even more important than that of the 1960s. Do you believe or not? The neo-liberalist arrived at the university, they are the postmodern fatalist, and they are who we have to fight against. It is important [necessary] to continue to fight for the people. The globalization of the economy will be able to generate a new world-wide dimension. Even being this way, I cannot accept quietly the perversity of the neo-liberal theology that imprisons people and makes the poor miserable. This theology is fatalism. With the same energy – only a little tired at seventy-five, I’m still fighting today. So fight. Don’t stop the fight because the motionless will get to you.
>
> (Ballengee Morris 1998: 99.)

Freire expressed that true power is not in a few, but in the mass called democracy. It is through the cultures and the arts of the people that the mass will understand the importance of education, and possibly we are there now.

As I read and write about current educational issues and reformation that includes aspects of integration, critical theory, and collaboration, I conclude that it is very important for art educators to look outside of their own countries, to find and explore culturally significant reformation approaches. Across the globe children’s literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially their mothers. These are our realities and possibly integration, collaboration, community-based and arts centred programmes that encourage critical thinking, cultural identity, cultural embracement, and multiple ways of expressing and listening (or understanding) are the pathways towards literacy. Freire embodied his theory. As Freire expressed during our interview, ‘Education is a process that requires collaboration, democracy requires patience, and life requires both’.

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Rethinking artistic method

ABSTRACT

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

KEYWORDS
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I define myself as a creativity educator, drawing upon the nature of both the artistic method and the scientific method as human 'making' practices at their most fundamental – making meaningful sense of all we are and all we know. Meaning is what makes sense. In other words, meaning is a contraption for the conveyance of sense, a mobile transport structure for some idea or script or value pertaining to persons, places or things that constitute a key element of the overall identity of the meaning-maker. What is *meant* is conveyed as 'a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory – in one way or another, unclear' (Taylor 1976: 153); meaning therefore requires an interpretation if sense is to be made of it, and as such is ever subject to reinterpretation. The vehicle of conveyance may be as complicated as a novel, as embodied as a choreographed dance, or as simple as a crayon scribble. The interpretation or reinterpretation requires only an audience.

According to Richard Purtill, 'From its origins, science has tried to give a simple and unified account of the world' (Purtill 1970: 304). Here is it helpful to note Brent Wilson's definition of research 'as *re-search*, to search again, to take a closer second look [...] [which] implies finding evidence about the way things were in the past, how they are presently, and even about how they might be in the future' (Wilson 1997: 1, original emphasis). Research invites reinterpretation. Second and third looks are a common occurrence, inviting a heterodoxy of initial stances and new perspectives about the known, the unknown, and the newly discovered. Yes, doctors do research, but so do children. Yes, scientists do research, but so do artists, writers, performers and designers.

Art's work is just as methodical as scientific methods, each born of the same basic human impulse to aggregate 'an organized account of whatever knowledge we can obtain about the universe', which has been posited as the basic purpose of effective scientific practices (Purtill 1970: 306). A work of art is like a theory. A theory is a set of interrelated constructs represented in a distinguishable manner or form, the major function of which is to describe, explain, and/or interpret the variables and variability of a phenomenon or experience within the world (Rolling 2013). Ultimately, a theory is a representative construction – or re-construction – of experience so that others may also acknowledge and understand that experience. Theoretical reconstructions of experience may be conceptual, transcribed or physically manufactured.

Artists and designers, like scientists, 'invent their conceptions [...] in order to *re*construct, in a convenient way, what they represent in the real world' (Halloun 2007: 657, original emphasis). To build a theory is to build a model – or basic approximation – of life forms, material properties, objects, phenomena, systems, relationships, and/or events that presently exist, once existed, or are conjectured to exist in the world as we know it. Ultimately, a theory, whether artistic or scientific, is a representative construction – or re-construction – of either lived experience, systematic discovery, or preliminary speculation so that others may also comprehend and make use of that particular experience, material encounter, experiment or analogy (Rolling 2013). If theories are models, the theoretical re-constructions we make of *a priori* experience or *a posteriori* predicted outcomes may be conceptual, transcribed in a symbolic or mathematical language, or physically assembled. Hence, a story is a model. A hypothesis is a model. A work of art is model. So is a memory or a metaphor. Models are the stuff paradigms are made of.

Like scientists, an artist's conceptions of life forms, materials, objects, phenomena, systems, relationships and/or events are determined by models. According to Halloun's (2007) article footnotes, a paradigmatic model is 'a conceptual system that governs explicitly a person's conscious experience in a given situation' as follows:

1. It determines the conditions that trigger every voluntary activity in the experience.
2. It sets forth standards, rules and guidelines for choosing and processing all that is necessary for the reification and continuous evaluation of the activity. This includes selection and analysis of empirical data when the experience is with physical realities.
3. It provides necessary conceptions, conceptual tools and methodology for conducting the activity and for refining the paradigm subsequently.
4. It supplies appropriate mnemonics for consciously retrieving necessary means and method from memory (Halloun 2007: 692).
5. Human beings generate models because of their utility in making knowledge visible, adding newfound perspectives. Models coalesce and simplify our recollection of valued understandings or observations, making it easier to negotiate divergent bodies of knowledge in a complex world wherein new information cannot always 'be integrated into the existing paradigm' and problems sometimes emerge or 'persist which cannot be resolved (Carroll 1997: 174). In such cases, new models for negotiating both the

> known and unknown surrounding the human experience can arise to supplant or replace paradigmatic models that are becoming obsolete or ineffective in the making or translation of knowledge.

In summary, by recognizing that the definition of art encompasses creative activity, meaning-making activity, and research activity all at once, we remove it from its trivializing contemporary pigeon-hole 'as nice but not necessary' (Eisner 2002: xi). Consequently, the artist's practice is better understood as equal parts creator, meaning-maker and researcher, while the arts educator is never less than a fundamental contributor to both individual learning and sociocultural development.

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Art education and art world

ABSTRACT

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

KEYWORDS
social justice
conversations
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

I came to art education as a second act in my career. The first act was as a card-carrying member of *art world* (Becker 1982): the network of prestigious contemporary museums, high-priced galleries and international art fairs. When I was 40, I had risen rapidly through the ranks of art world to be appointed the Elise Haas deputy director of Curatorial Affairs for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). In that role, I oversaw an operational budget of over $3 million and supervised a staff of 40, encompassing all programmatic aspects of the museum: curation, education, conservation, publication and registration. My first task upon arrival was salvaging a floundering Helen Levitt retrospective that had drifted into disarray due to missteps by the curators at both SFMOMA and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Dressing down the curatorial staff of the Met in my first week on the job was a confirmation that I had arrived as certified player in art world. It was beguiling.

During my year at SFMOMA, we mounted the first one-person museum exhibition for an unknown Los Angeles artist named Matthew Barney. We also arranged for the first museum exhibition of Jeff Koons's *Made in Heaven* suite. At the time, Koons was a pariah for this new work that appropriated the visual language of hard-core pornography. No museum in New York City would touch this stuff with a ten-foot pole. By the time the Barney and Koons exhibitions closed, the careers of these two artists were rocketing to new heights.

But I did not last long on those Olympian peaks. What I was seeing made be uneasy, and I was not clever enough to do a better job of hiding my disdain. The whispers began that I was not a true believer. There were suspicions that even though I had admission to the inner sanctum, I doubted art world. Discussions began about how to politely usher me out the door. I was told that I could move into the directorship of a small regional Midwestern art museum, a win–win for everybody. They would set it up. I declined. There was this fellow Elliot Eisner down the road at Stanford University whom my friend Danielle Rice, director of education at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, had told me to check out. I did that. Elliot and I were intrigued with each other. I realized that it was time to get my master's degree, and a master's morphed into a doctorate.

When I began my studies at Stanford, I fully intended to go back to art world. After graduation, armed with my new magical academic powers, I would bust art world up like a superhero. Then, several years into my programme of study, Elliot sat me down in his office and asked why – as we were in a school of education – had I shown no curiosity about what happened in K–12 schools? I was dumbstruck. What on earth would schools have to do with my participation in art world? He asked if I would consider going over to Gunn High School to observe a class by the art department head, John Robinson. He would set it up.

I went, and it was a revelation. Robinson, whom I later learned was regarded as Mr California Art Education, would routinely teach three combined classes in one period with over 40 students spread out over a honeycomb of three different rooms. More significantly, as he moved through these spaces, he was personifying many of my nascent ideas for busting up *art world*. In an epiphany, I realized that my problem with art world was I wanted to infuse it with ideas that Robinson embodied in his pedagogy and curriculum. I wanted art world to be more like the high school art classrooms that I had previously spurned. As a result, I had been banging my head against a wall trying to turn museums into something they never wanted to be. I realized I could work with high school art teachers who were already marching, or who were eager to march, to a different beat. I wound up spending three years observing John Robinson teach. Later, when I moved into academia at the University of Georgia, an extraordinary cohort of elementary art educators showed me how they could bust up art world, too.

The problem with an institutional view of art is that institutions traffic in cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). The whole idea of an institution is that an art object is precious: it is worthy of collecting, it is worthy of exhibition. And that gives it value. The contemporary art world is essentially stock speculation. Like with the Matthew Barney and Jeff Koons exhibitions that I oversaw, you win big if you can buy low and sell high. Of course, knowing a trick or two about how to manipulate markets helps assure a regular payday (and making payroll for your staff by Friday). I knew the tricks; I knew the game. So did Barney and Koons. And Tim Rollins was maybe the best player I ever met.

The art teachers whom I admire do not deal in cultural capital. They engage students in inquiry. They promote asking not just why, but why not. As Maxine Greene (2001) phrased it, they invite students to imagine worlds as they otherwise might be: alternative selves inhabiting alternative futures. Art is a process of inquiry into these imaginative possibilities: an artist possesses the methodological tools to systematically sustain inspired investigations. Art educator Jorge Lucero pleads, 'for art's sake stop making art' (2018: 200). Walk away from art world and the institutional definitions of art. Art education does not need to play that game.

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Activating a/r/tographic propositions: Walking with art education

ABSTRACT

For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define 'art' and 'artist'? Some critics argue that, in today's art world, the 'institutional' definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?

KEYWORDS

a/r/tographic propositions
walking
knowledge creation
sociomateriality
transnational
mapping practices

The invitation to engage in a conversation about the pulse of art education today, with a look to the future and in reference to the past, presents a time capsule moment. In our response, we activate the notion of a/r/tographic propositions as a method of proceeding-in, in light of the tensionality of protracted debates about art and artist that continue to linger, and educational climates that can delimit the diversity, inclusivity and equality of ideas, and in so doing, the fullness of learning and teaching potential in our field.

As lively thinkers, a/r/tographers have long advocated for broad definitions of art and artist in a sustained call for a participatory orientation concerning the arts as research (see Irwin 2013). Such reconceptualization presses institutional protocols to move towards more horizontal (rather than hierarchical) modes of thinking–making–doing. Every encounter with art arguably holds conditions of our histories, and amplifies our relationality, suggesting art is an unfolding concept of living inquiry, where an artist can be a disposition as well as an embodiment. Such thought-movements cultivate practices beyond mastery models and technical skills to another kind of artful proficiency shaped by continually crafting characteristics of vitality – an embrace of imaginative, speculative, compositional, rhetorical and evermore expansive qualities of art and artist. In a curriculum of propositions, we invite courageous experiments, activate acts and actions, pose difficult questions and assert that the undertaking – and the intimacy of that process – is the moment of knowledge creation.

Building upon the rhythm of our a/r/tographic pasts (see Irwin 2006; Springgay et al. 2005), in a current research project we have continued to invoke a vernacular mode of inquiry: walking to explore the pedagogic implications of movement with/in physical and social contexts (see mapping a/r/tography project at https://artography.edcp.educ.ubc.ca). Our engagements provide a platform upon which to rethink the paradoxical and transformative potential of pedagogy as a public right, and how our attention is becoming more sensitive to emergent, transnational and transcultural practices that evoke a wider spectrum of unconventional, disruptive and innovative approaches to art and to the role of artist. Undertaking such inquiry brings multiple fields together with art education and fosters conversations beyond the standardization of studio classrooms. Given the focus on art, artist and issues of credible definitions posed in this challenge, we outline two exemplars of practice that demonstrate another form of critical commentary, informed by sociomateriality as a cornerstone of sustainable modes of visual art curriculum and instruction.

Our first example comes from an a/r/tographic study group of Lee et al. (2019) who explore propositions (Truman and Springgay 2016) as conceptual methods that create situations for new learning potentials. Propositions afford opportunities to move and be moved by the vitality of living inquiry enacted within a community of inquirers. The study group explore three walking propositions that inspire thinking deeply about being present. Lee et al. suggest: (1) 'Go for a walk outside, find an object and do something with it'; (2) 'Walk around your neighbourhood with another. When you find unfamiliar ground, pause and ground yourself'; and (3) 'Follow one another in a line without stopping or speaking' (2019: 681). Together, these propositions explore the potential of particular contemplative meditative actions like kicking a rock and following one another in a line. Paying attention to the impact of our immediate actions on objects (like a rock) or in relation to others (like spacing ourselves in a meditative line) invites us to explore what it means to be present in our own interiority. Walking in response to these propositions and coming to think deeply about the impact of being present to presence, became important to the team as a community of a/r/tographers-in-practice.

In another example, public art became a catalyst moment for international graduate students who set propositions to walk in homelands. Shaped by trait a/r/tographic renderings, the team explored how underlying geomorphic energies connect the sensorial, the body, with discrete physical landscapes in Lebanon, Iran, Colombia and Canada (Sinner et al. forthcoming). As a series of singular, site-specific inquiries, as artists we stepped from material practice to attend to how we generated conjunctive spaces to embrace our hyphenated-*and* across continents. From statutes to graffiti to meditative moments, public art broadly defined stratified understandings of the encounter and complexified meaning-making. In doing so, we highlighted the axis of the affect and natural forces to articulate our response-ability as teachers, and we speculated on the potential development of the oeuvre of transnational a/r/tography.

With this brief treatise, we introduce how a/r/tographic propositions can serve as openings and why the artfulness of immersive mapping practices moves to questions of *when* is art and *when* is the artist – questions posed many times in the past that move beyond institutionalized definitions (Sinner 2019). And to all our relations in art education, we invite you to walk-and-talk with us in this open exchange.

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Concluding Remarks

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MARY ANN STANKIEWICZ
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Timeless or timely? Contemporary snapshots of art education

KEYWORDS
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conversations
art education history
visual culture
politics
curriculum

What challenges face art education today? Dustin Garnet asked almost two dozen active and retired visual art educators four questions informed by a long and sometimes heated discussion on NAEA's members-only online professional community, *Collaborate* (Multiple Contributors 2018). Expanding that conversation with the intention of countering professional amnesia, Garnet offers snapshots of contemporary perspectives on and experiences in art education so that future art educators will understand something of the current state of the field. His project resonates with the work of past editors and authors who captured historical moments in curated compilations, starting with Isaac Edwards Clarke in the late nineteenth century (Efland and Soucy 1991). Commissioned by the federal government, Clarke's four-volume report was heavy with data and opinion. Garnet, on the other hand, allows his contributors their own voices; he neither editorializes nor categorizes their responses.

If the brief essays in this issue of *Visual Inquiry* are characterized as snapshots, we might think of Clarke's report as a unique, difficult to replicate daguerreotype depicting the state of art teaching at the time. The metal plate was inflexible and heavy; the process more scientific than expressive; the stiffly posed subject remained immobile while the shutter was open. The sharply focused, highly detailed daguerreotype implied objective vision, that anyone present in the photographer's studio would have perceived the same timeless vision.

Throughout the twentieth century, irregularly issued reports provided steppingstones through changing currents of art education. James Parton Haney (1908) convened a symposium to describe the condition of art education in American public schools to delegates attending an international conference. From 1909 to 1932, the US government commissioned art educators to gather data and report on the condition of art education. Individual authors prepared their reports in different ways; Royal Bailey Farnum surveyed art teachers and supervisors to add breadth to his four reports (Stankiewicz 2014). The National Society for the Study of Education (1941) published yearbooks reporting the state of art education just before and during the years after the Second World War (Hastie 1965). The National Art Education Association established commissions to study the field during the 1960s and 1970s (Hausman 1965; Dorn 1977).

We might compare these federal and association-sponsored reports to yearbooks: annual publications that either commemorate a school year or document facts and statistics. School yearbooks reveal institutional histories through posed group and individual photos with some informal photos of students' daily lives. The students who constitute the editorial staff generally choose an overarching theme, guided (and sometimes censored) by one or more faculty members. Sections represent various aspects of schooling: academics, extracurricular activities, sports, faculty, students grouped by class, and staff (perhaps even including the cafeteria ladies).

Reports from the last century were prepared by a hierarchy of leaders in the field, most of whom were higher education faculty, state art directors, or art supervisors in urban districts. Unlike the essays Garnet has curated, these reports featured predominantly male voices speaking with institutional authority. The online conversation that motivated Garnet's project began at a grassroots level with one art teacher asking why he should not cancel his NAEA membership because the association's publications did not seem to serve his professional needs. The comments on *Collaborate* were not edited or censored; the forum offered open access to NAEA members at all levels. In his analysis in this issue, Jorge Lucero suggests the multi-voice conversation might have been published in its entirety to encourage further discussion.

The essays Garnet has curated might be compared to digital selfies. Less formal than daguerreotypes or professionally produced senior class pictures, selfies are casual self-portraits taken with digital cameras or smartphones held at arm's length and frequently shared on social media. These digital photos are up close representations that give the photographer/subject control over their self-presentation. Garnet's respondents were equally divided between White and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of colour) persons with the majority female. A dozen respondents revealed personal experiences and interests in their essays, either learning/teaching experiences or areas of concentration within art education. Their diverse voices share persuasive stories, the types of narratives and counternarratives about everyday experience told from the perspectives of people from non-dominant groups that have the potential deepen understanding of race, racism and power (Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

As Garnet phrases them in his editorial, his four questions skew towards calling out either–or responses. How do you balance contemporary or traditional approaches to artists and artmaking? Does social justice art education distract from disciplinary content? Do you accept an institutional definition of 'art' or define the term another way? Should art educators today distinguish fine arts from applied arts? Questions that evoke forced choices might be interpreted as reflections of the currently polarized American landscape, both political and intellectual.

These questions are not new to art educators, although the digital medium may give them a sense of freshness. In her biography of Manuel Barkan, Mary Zahner summarized similar questions asked in his 1951 doctoral dissertation:

> Should art education concentrate on contemporary or classical art? Should art education seek to develop aesthetic or social value? Should it teach skills or encourage free expression? Should art education aim at personality development or aesthetic refinement? Should art activities be conducted on an individual or social level?
>
> Zahner (2003: 35)

Although offered four questions, the invited respondents chose to answer just two. A dozen people responded to the second question about a place for social justice education and politics in art education vs. disciplinary content. Just seven writers chose to discuss the third question on defining art and artist, several of them around an institutional definition. Readers might ask themselves: does this assemblage of art educators lean into teaching contemporary art, which might only be identified as art because of recognition within an artworld, with the goal of enabling learners to contribute to a more just and equal society? Or, do these professionals embrace approaches to defining and teaching visual arts which might be traced back to the early twentieth century and interpreted to assert that art should provide an escape from the stresses, tensions and trials of life today? Should art education in the first quarter of the twenty-first century be timely or timeless?

The prevailing stance towards question 2, on the place of social justice education and politics in art education, is that education *is* political. Most respondents favour teaching contemporary art to enable learners to contribute to a more just and equal society. On the other hand, a minority cluster around the belief, stated by David Pariser, that sociopolitical commentary aimed at securing social justice is peripheral to studying art. Pariser concludes that art teachers should enable students to love, practice and consume visual arts not become political activists. A third position, found in Enid Zimmerman's and Terry Barrett's essays, argues for balance among the multiple dimensions and functions of art.

Although the questions art educators debate today may be similar to those asked seven decades ago, change is a constant – society changes, cultures change, even dominant groups can change, albeit slowly. The arts change in response to these and other changes, such as the introduction of new technologies. Historians reinterpret past ideas and events in light of their individual experiences and understandings; they use knowledge of broader sociopolitical contexts to construct new narratives and counter inaccuracies in old narratives. Historians of art education often question taken-for-granted, socially constructed beliefs and institutions (Stankiewicz 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2020).

In spite of pervasive change, we might ask if certain human values should be constant – respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings, or as some might put it: all living beings? Is there a distinction between my responsibilities as a caring human being who values the worth and dignity of every other human being, and my duties as an art educator? Art education is a moral enterprise; we want to teach others about human-made visual phenomena because we believe the understandings they will gain are beneficial, good for them to possess and use in their lives. How might these art educators have responded if Garnet's questions had addressed potential functions of art in human lives rather than definitions and curricular content? What should art learners understand through the visual arts in order to live complete and flourishing lives with agency and dignity? How might these understandings benefit their communities, society and culture? These pragmatic questions – both practical and philosophical – might have been asked by Clarke in the nineteenth century, or by Royal Bailey Farnum, Manuel Barkan or others in the twentieth century. Garnet's project offers a base for continuing to ask these perennial questions in the twenty-first century.

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Echoes toward a vibrant future

When reading this collection of twenty responsive essays, I experienced numerous echoes from the past reverberate inside me. The first set of echoes occurred because, with nearly five decades of active residence in the field of art education, I have benefitted from personal interaction with many of the writers whose work is included here. Some of these individuals were students in classes I taught, others former colleagues, some served on professional committees with me, and many I have listened to and had thoughtful conversations with at art education conferences over the years. One writer was a professor I took a class from in my first year of graduate school. The life echoes of these writers resounded not only through their ideas shared in these varied and pithy essays, but also in my memory of highly engaged and instructive conversations with these individuals over the years. For submitting these reflective writings about the present and future of art education the field thanks you, and so do I.

A second set of echoes reverberated for me as I spent time with these responsive and energized writings. These soundings drew me back 25 years to a book I first encountered soon after it was published in 1995, Suzi Gablik's *Conversations Before the End of Time*. For this book, Gablik conducted extended conversations with nearly twenty individuals active within and outside the artworld at that time, including artists, art critics, arts activists, and environmental advocates and authorities, in which she engaged in a variety of discussions loosely centred around the nature and practice of art near the end of the twentieth century. Although Gablik wrote about conditions in the artworld

25 years ago, her words and those of her interviewees echo many of the quandaries and struggles present in our worlds of art and art education today, as evidenced by the range of diverse points of view brought together in the twenty assembled responses published here. Gablik wrote in her Introduction to this volume:

> One of the key points of contention in the culture war is the issue of intellectual and aesthetic merit. This is the painful edge that is still unprocessed, where all the heat is to be found. Because much of the art being made today focuses on social problems rather than on 'self-expression', the broader context of political, social and environmental life is often the artist's work arena, rather than the more traditional withdrawal behind closed doors in the studio.
>
> (1995: 31)

Many of the same spirited oppositional conversations Gablik and her discussants identified in the artworld 25 years ago are manifested in our current conversations within art education.

Some art educators may see this continued dialogue from the 1990s as reflective of a field that is either two decades behind the time in its conversation, or one making little headway in its discussion to identify meaningful purpose and direction today. This may be the case, but I do not think so. Instead, I regard the present-day energized conversations taking place in art education as reflective of a field continuing to sort through dynamic and ongoing – yet still timely – core issues that remain at play in art and art education. Doing so continues to remind us that art education is worthy of our earnest debate and struggle, and that our field is better because of it. I summed it this way in an earlier writing:

> Rather than fretfully wring our hands in response to contentious quarrels in art education [...], it is in our best interest to embrace and appreciate the diversity and vitality of such critical conversation. Engaging in this spirited dialogue […] is a clear indication that we care deeply about the field of art education and our place and actions within it.
>
> (Bolin 2020: 45)

Art education without polemics is worrisome to me. I say this because, as a historian of art education, I have seen that 'feelings of tension, discomfort, and even discord have been a large part of our condition in art education for the past 200 years' (Congdon et al. 2008: 10). If such diverse and energetic dialogue were to vanish, what then of art education? If art educators do not carry on animated debate of essential issues – and particularly if their silence is brought on by an armistice of weariness even when we find ourselves at odds with others regarding these essential issues in art education – then we as a field have succumbed to atrophy by apathy. Robust diverse conversation brings vitality to art education and helps to elucidate the terrain and enlarge the prospects of our field – pushing and expanding its edges – thus embracing a wide range of viewpoints that energize and enlarge the recognition and possibilities of what may be considered art education now and in the future.

In this time of acknowledged diverse and often contentious viewpoints, Gablik furnishes useful insight to help us navigate well our pathways through these complex and frequently heated discussions. To help mediate this struggle, Gablik provides worthwhile advice I encourage us all to heed in our impassioned interactions with others:

> I hope the practice of dialogue may become more widely recognized for the special sort of harmonics that it offers: a latticework of thoughts and points of view that interweave and complement each other. Allowing the truth of the subject to emerge not from any one point of view but from many makes any entrenched position open to question: it will always be destabilized by another perspective. For this reason the very process of dialogue can, of itself, transform the world view of self-assured individualism and radical self-sufficiency.
>
> (1995: 35–36)

Gablik's focus on how we might benefit from thoughtful and complementary dialogue when engaging competing issues generated a number of questions as I read these diverse essays: how do we most profitably facilitate the dynamics of diversity – as reflected in these writings as a whole – for the growth of ourselves and the betterment of our field? What features of my own belief system do I regard as negotiable and which are not? Why is this so? How do we each transact our interactions in a compatible manner and be open to consider and perhaps embrace features of viewpoints not our own? Such questions may not have easy and immediate responses, but a striving to answer them is beneficial for each of us individually and for the field as a whole.

A third set of echoes resounded during my reading of these twenty juxtaposed responses. Travelling through the passioned writings of these nearly two dozen art educators, the echoes I encountered drew me back (as echoes do) through a range of art education literature over time. The contemporary writings here, especially those contemplating times in art education beyond our own, conjured for me echoes of considerations about the future of art education that I and others engaged in previously (e.g. Bolin 2020; Clapp 2010; Congdon et al. 2008). What I wrote more than a decade ago has resonance still today:

> We reside in a period when art education is being called into question. The field is buffeted about, both from the inside, from art educators themselves, as well as from the outside, through social and educational conditions that appear to work against art education. Yet, in this era, questions emerge: Does this internal and external provocation encountered by the field signal the impending end of art education and thus the initiation of a post art education world? Or, does this stormy condition indicate a reemergence of wonderings, musings, and actions within art education that are redirecting and actually revitalizing the field?
>
> (Congdon et al. 2008: 8)

I believe it to be the latter.

Pausing to reflect on these twenty compiled essays, especially those directed towards envisioning a future for art education, I recalled an echo from a more distant past in our field. In the final chapter to his 1955 volume *Growth of Art in American Schools*, titled 'Art education: The shape of things to come', Frederick M. Logan wrote:

> The artist, teacher, and art student must grow up to the fact that visual arts, like every other form of human expression, can be and should be used to create important ideas, ideas which often may be fresh enough and so vigorously expressed as to arouse intense opposition. Art is no more conformist than is atomic power. Art education, if it deserves the name, is bound to create some intellectual and emotional seething, and an examination of personal and social values, as part of the privilege of personal expression and the attainment of a craftsman's skills.
>
> (1955: 252)

The past is present here. Logan's belief that visual artists have the ability and responsibility to create important fresh ideas often 'so vigorously expressed as to arouse intense opposition' (1955: 252), and that art education of consequence generates 'intellectual and emotional seething' – words written more than 65 years ago – provide a resonant shout that continues to echo within our field today and pulses mightily through the writings of these twenty respondents delivered here.

The polyphonic voices of these twenty essays capture the dynamic diversity and intense complexity of art education today. The assembled resounding presence of these responses will furnish a generative source of echoes in the future, as readers in times beyond us now look back at them for insight into the past of art education and use them as a foundation from which to build innovative speculation and vibrant direction in establishing their own future of art education.

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