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Hunting for Hunster: A Portrait of Thomas Watson Hunster, Art Education Pioneer in the District of Columbia

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Published histories of American art education seldom include the stories and accomplishments of Black art educators. There is a need to research, teach, and publish these histories to provide a more inclusive and equitable picture of American art education and to encourage more people of color to consider careers in the field. Using primary and secondary sources analyzed and interpreted through the portraiture method paired with Critical Race Theory as a conceptual lens, this article examines the professional life of Thomas Watson Hunster (1851-1929), founder of art education programs for Black K-16 learners in Washington, DC.

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Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/usae.

“History is the result of a process of selection in which some facts are chosen and others ignored” (Stankiewicz, 1997, p. 58). Similarly, the histories of Black American art educators are often neglected and unpublished. This article examines the following questions: What is the history of art education in segregated schools? What historical models can we look to as examples? How do these histories compare with contemporary art education practices? Why are these untold stories and subjects relevant to the history and teaching of art education? These questions are examined through a portrait of Black art educator Thomas Watson Hunster (1851-1929). Hunster established and directed a rigorous art education program for the Black public schools in Washington, DC, from 1875–1922. His name appears repeatedly in texts about the history of education in Washington, DC, as both a competent and prolific artist and dedicated, innovative educator. I learned about Hunster through a connection in our histories.

His story paints an inspiring picture of an artist/educator who overcame racist practices in art and education to develop quality art experiences and opportunities for Black learners. To best understand Hunster’s impact, an examination of public education for Black students prior to his arrival in the nation’s capital provides context for Black educators’ vision of racial and cultural uplift through educational excellence. Hunster’s portrait is drawn using primary and secondary sources analyzed and interpreted through the portraiture method paired with Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a conceptual framework.

Historical Overview of Segregated Public Schools in Washington, DC

After the abolition of slavery in Washington, DC, on April 16, 1862, Congress passed legislation establishing a Board of Trustees for Colored Schools in the District of Columbia and levied a tax on Black residents toward the establishment of a separate public school system for children ages 6-17 (Goodwin, 1870). Congress based the tax funding formula on decennial census data. Board appointments and control fell under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior until 1871. The Washington, DC, White public school system, established in 1804, fell under the control

TABLE XIII.—Teachers, Residences, Salaries, &c.—Third District.

Grammar	1	Mrs. Mary A. S.	Howard University	Westchester, Pa.	Sept. 1, 1889	\$500
Intermediate	1	Amelia Holmes	1013 10th street northwest	Michigan State Normal School	March 15, 1870	650
Do	2	Grace A. Dwyer	101 7th street southeast	Washington, D. C.	Oct. 14, 1867	500
Secondary	1	Mrs. Christiana Butcher	E street, bet. 8th and 9th, southwest	Washington, D. C.	Sept. 16, 1868	650
Do	2	Lucy E. Moten	725 8th Street north west	Washington, D. C.	Jan. 2, 1870	650
Do	3	Laura H. Irvelde	4th street, above Boundary, northwest	Philadelphia, Pa.	Sept. 1, 1870	650
Primary	1	H. Romelia Jennings	1815 Q street northwest	Monroe, Wis.	Sept. 23, 1869	650
Do	2	Marcellina Wood	413 B street southeast	Washington, D. C.	Sept. 1, 1870	650
Do	3	Mary C. Kelly	321 12th street northwest	Burlington, N. J.	May 1, 1869	600
Do	4	Mrs. Clara K. Collins	4th street, above Boundary, northwest	Oberlin, Ohio	Sept. 1, 1871	550
Do	5	Mrs. Eliza A. Chambers	1004 D street northeast	Burlington, N. J.	Sept. 1, 1871	550
Do	6	Lydia L. Lewis, acting	1623 16th street northwest	Washington, D. C.	Oct. 26, 1871	400
Do	7	Mrs. Martha E. Tucker	418 H street northeast	Washington, D. C.	Sept. 1, 1871	450
Do	8	Ida G. Curry	922 16th street northwest	Washington, D. C.	Sept. 1, 1871	650

SUPERINTENDENT'S

Figure 1. Teacher’s residences, salaries, and start dates. Report of the Board of Education, District of Columbia (1871–1920).

of local government officials through a Board of Trustees headed by President Thomas Jefferson (Goodwin, 1870).

By 1868, the Board of Trustees for the Colored Schools hired Superintendent George F. T. Cook, and 50 teachers, purchased property, rented and built schoolhouses, and bought furniture and educational materials. Of the 50 teachers hired, 25 were White and 25 were Black (Goodwin, 1870), including my great-great grandmother (see Figure 1), Christiana Butcher (1850-1939). Federal oversight ensured local politicians disseminated the funds earmarked for the Black public schools to its Board of Trustees. Wages for female teachers were the same, but male teachers earned more, and White males teaching in the White public schools made more than their male counterparts in the Black public schools (Goodwin, 1870, p. 281). Teachers in both systems were held to the same professional qualifications and labor standards. In 1871 Congress established a unified, locally controlled Board of Education for the dual school system. This Board comprised three Black and six White trustees. The composition of the Board remained constant and alliances were often race based. "When [policy] votes occurred along racial lines, White board members enjoyed a six-to-three majority. Black members... had to convince at least two of their White colleagues to vote with them in order to pass bills that benefited the Colored School Division" (Roe, 2004, p. 29).

During these early years, new schools in the dual system were built by the same builder, and often designed by the same architect (Report of the Board of Education, District of Columbia, 1871-1872). Curriculum and textbooks were the same with the exception of drawing. While art teachers did not yet exist in either system, classroom teachers in the White schools set aside instructional time for drawing exercises using William Bartholomew's Progressive Drawing Cards (Report of the Board of Education, District of Columbia,

1871-1872, pp. 235-241). Additionally, White children received diplomas, medals, and annual rewards. In the 1871-1872 annual report Cook calls for a system to acknowledge Black students' achievements, citing recognition as a powerful incentive for educational excellence (Report of the Board of Education, District of Columbia, 1871-1872, p. 34).

Instruction in the Black public high school, the first in the country, was excellent and it "became one of the best academic high schools in the nation, black or white" (Roe, 2004, p. 29). Most of the Black teachers there held advanced degrees from Oberlin, Harvard, Amherst, and other institutions that admitted Black scholars (Wormley, 1932). One principal was the first Black graduate of Harvard University. "Over the high school's first eighty years, these teachers developed generations of highly educated, high-achieving African Americans, groundbreakers in politics, the arts, science, law, medicine, the military, civil service, and education" (Stewart, 2013, p. xiii). Because Black teachers were paid equably, many educated Black professionals, prohibited by Jim Crow laws from gaining entry into their chosen fields, became educators in the Black public schools, Miner Normal School, and Howard University. Black students and preservice educators received an outstanding education in Washington, DC, segregated schools, but not without a constant struggle for curricular autonomy, equitable resources, and recognition.

In 1900 the Board of Education reorganized and instead of two separate but equal superintendents, the superintendent for the Black schools was reduced to an assistant reporting to the White superintendent (Stewart, 2013, p. 37). Hunster, formerly director of Drawing, became assistant director of Drawing. Thus Black leaders began to lose control over their schools. This change in leadership ushered in an era of apathy toward the needs of Black students that continued through desegregation.

The decennial census formula proved to be problematic as Blacks from the South migrated

in great numbers to Washington, DC, for better educational and job opportunities (Roe, 2004). Despite the overcrowding and a decreasing White school population, school board officials declined to build new schools for Black students (Roe, 2004). By the 1970s after decades of underfunding and tracking Black students into non-academic programs, educational excellence in Washington, DC, public schools deteriorated (Stewart, 2013). Extensive and detailed records are available on the history and progress of District of Columbia public schools at the Sumner School Museum and Archives in Washington, DC.

The Beginnings of Art Education in Washington, DC, Public Schools

In 1870 the Massachusetts legislature passed the landmark Drawing Act, authorizing public schools to include drawing in the curriculum. In the 1871-1872 annual report, Superintendent Cook suggests that drawing become part of the school curriculum, citing the Honorable B. G. Northrup, secretary of the State Board of Education in Hartford, CT,

Skill in drawing has an intrinsic and practical value.... The delineation of objects by the art of design is fitted to form the habit of accurate observation; so that the mind will obtain and retain clear and exact perceptions of things.... The eye may be and ought to be educated as well as the ear. (Northrup as cited in Cook, 1875-1876, p. 24)

At the opening dedication ceremony for the Sumner School September 2, 1872, Board of Trustee member and chairman of the [school] Building Committee, William H. A. Wormley, stated,

This building... stands here today to testify to my earnestness for the elevation of my race... within the confines of a new and beautiful school building pupils will be inspired to draw pictures for the decoration of their own ceilings and grow flowers for their parlors, and thus be educated to make

use of the hours heretofore given to idleness and vice, and so often thrown away during the school-days of childhood. (Report of the Board of Education, District of Columbia, 1871-1872, p. 85)

Cook hired the first drawing teacher for Black public schools during the 1872-1873 school year. Drawing as a regular course of study in Washington, DC, began in the White public schools during the 1874-1875 school year, two years *after* its introduction in the Black public schools (Hart & Ryder, 1875, p. 203). The structure of the White art education program was similar to that of the Black public schools; however, the Committee on Drawing and Penmanship arranged drawing instruction for White normal school students, assisted with annual drawing examinations, and the distribution of prizes for exemplary work. The drawing teacher for the Black schools instructed classroom teachers once per week and visited all the schools to supervise instruction. There is no mention of the Committee providing any support for the drawing program in the Black public schools.

In September 1875, Thomas Hunster was the third art educator hired for the Washington, DC, Black public schools in as many years (Cook, 1875-1876, p. 181). Superintendent Cook and the Black members of the Board of Trustees delineate their vision for the cultural education of Black students in their actions and speech. Hunster's hire underscored their commitment to the cultural, moral, and economic development of Black Washingtonians. Examining the history of art education programs in segregated school systems through portraiture and CRT provides a fuller picture of American art education and the role race continues to play in the profession.

Portraiture and Critical Race Theory in Historical Research

Portraiture, an educational research method developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986), uses narrative to create "a full picture or portrait

of an event or person that tells as much about the subject as it does the researcher, or portraitist” (Chapman, 2007, p. 157). “In portraiture the voice of the researcher is everywhere... overarching and undergirding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors and echoing through the central themes” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 85). The more detailed the portrait the more universal human themes are brought to light. The researcher creates “life-drawings” of the subject being researched exposing their bare essence, a view from beneath rather than on the surface (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 5). Portraiture is a paradoxical method, a means of “embracing contradictions, the ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 9). The portraiture method initially developed for living subjects and adapted for this historical portrait, uses analysis and interpretation of primary and secondary archival sources to develop the narrative.

Critical Race Theory connects, broadens, and extends the field of critical theory, “a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of People of Color” (Solorzano, 1997, p. 6). In educational research, a CRT lens is used to highlight race as a focal point in comprehending and changing the educational system (Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, 1997). CRT examines the ways in which people of color confront and overcome barriers to find a measure of success for themselves and others (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Critical Race Theory theorists (Davis, 1989; Lawrence, 1987) contend that racism encompasses at least four factors:

- (1) It has micro and macro components;

- (2) It takes on institutional and individual forms;
- (3) It has conscious and unconscious elements;
- (4) It has a cumulative impact on both the individual and group. (Solorzano, 1997, p. 6)

These four factors comprise the CRT conceptual framework used in this research.

Story is the common denominator connecting portraiture and CRT. Portraiture allows the researcher to create a detailed rendering of the researched through examination of the interactions and contexts particular to the individual, unveiling common human themes of experience. CRT as a conceptual framework examines the contexts, sociopolitical events, personal histories, and legal tenets that impact a participant’s narrative. The “researcher connects participants’ experiential knowledge as racialized subjects to the multiple ways in which people of color understand, and navigate their communities, schools and professional lives” (Chapman, 2007, p. 157).

Portraiture and CRT share a number of features that make the two a viable pair for conducting research... in combination, portraiture and CRT allow researchers to evoke the personal, the professional, and the political to illuminate issues of race, class, and gender in education research and to create possibilities for urban school reform as social action. (Chapman, 2007, p. 156)

My adaptation of this pairing suggests a hybrid research method, *Critical Portraiture*. Critical Portraiture aligns with Chapman’s (2007) conception, highlighting the self-determination and resiliency of educators like Hunster in shaping curriculum to develop racial and cultural pride.

The five essential features of Critical Portraiture are:

- (1) Context: framing the setting of the portrait, when and where—historical and geographical; CRT factors 1-4;

- (2) Voice: expressing a point of view—of both the subject and the researcher (autobiography), interpretation, assumptions; CRT factors 1, 2, 4;
- (3) Relationship: empathetic regard, individuality, contrast, connection, position of researcher to researched; CRT factor 3;
- (4) Emergent themes: searching for patterns and naming convergences, connections between historical and contemporary art pedagogies and philosophies; CRT factors 1-4;
- (5) Aesthetic whole: assembling all the features of portraiture and the CRT conceptual framework listed above using archival sources to interpret, analyze and compose the portrait. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997)

The following sections detail how the five features constituting Critical Portraiture are used to interpret Hunster's impact on art education in Washington, DC, and analyze the transformational effect of his teaching.

Context: Framing the Terrain

Hunster was born free in Cincinnati, OH, in 1851. Census records from 1860 list his father William as a barber, born in Alabama. His mother, Jerusha, was born in Pennsylvania. Most likely they lived in Ohio because they had relatives there. Also, Ohio was a safe haven for runaway slaves and freedmen, offering Blacks opportunities for educational and occupational advancement. Hunster attended the preparatory school at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, OH (Board of Education Minutes, July 5, 1922). Educational reformer and drawing advocate Horace Mann (1796-1859) was the first president of Antioch College. Students had a required work component, reflecting a pedagogical approach that classroom learning should be connected to real-world experience (Antioch College, 2015, para. 1). The archives at Antioch College mention a branch of the Hunster family, well known in Yellow Springs as proprietors of the Union Hotel. "The Hunsters boarded Antioch

students through the nineteenth century and many of their descendants attended the college" (Sanders, 2011, para. 3). These Hunsters were likely related to Thomas.

Although they were well liked, occasionally the Hunsters fell victim to racist micro aggressions. White student Nellie Van Mater's journal recounts her disgust over a racist act several of her schoolmates perpetrated on Fanny Hunster (Sanders, 2011, para. 4). More than likely Thomas Hunster also experienced racism as a young student there.

Hunster matriculated in the academic curriculum (Course Rosters and Catalog, Antioch College, 1867-1869). Even with Horace Mann's leadership, art was not offered at Antioch, making Hunster's art education a mystery. Census records from 1870 list him at 18 as a journeyman painter in Springfield, OH. Perhaps this was how he met Antioch's work requirement. But who trained him? Analysis and interpretation of primary and secondary sources suggest he may have apprenticed with Silas Jerome Uhl (1841-1916), a well-known artist from Ohio. The 1870 census lists 28-year-old Uhl as a painter in Springfield, OH. Uhl served in the Union Army during the Civil War and studied art in Europe in the 1880s. In the 1890s he moved to Washington, DC, and opened a studio there where he painted several notables, including Grover Cleveland (Haverstock, Vance, Meggitt, & Weidman, 2000, pp. 870-880).

The work of Jerome Uhl... had a direct bearing on that of Hunster. Uhl and Hunster had been boyhood friends in Ohio and became later daily associates when Uhl came to Washington, DC... Hunster... was the model for Uhl's painting, *The Viking* (1887) which hung formerly in the Corcoran Art Gallery. (Wormley, 1951, p. 6)

Hunster traveled to Washington, DC, to raise money to study art in Paris. He accepted a temporary position to teach drawing, but never left, making a career of art education (Board of Education Minutes, July 5, 1922).

While he never made it to Paris, his artwork eventually did. Hunster's ambition to become an artist seems improbable. There were only a handful of successful Black artists at the time, most notably landscape painter Robert Scott Duncanson (1821-1872), active in Cincinnati after 1840. "Cincinnati was a major regional art center where landscape painting flourished because of the city's cultural opportunities and Ohio's appealingly unspoiled terrain" (Hartigan, n.d., para. 2). As an emerging artist Hunster probably encountered Duncanson's work. As an educator his progressive pedagogical philosophy was surely shaped by Horace Mann's legacy at Antioch College.

Voice: As Autobiography, Expressing a Point of View

One feature of voice in portraiture is autobiography, whereby the portraitist "brings her own history—familial, cultural, ideological, and educational—to the inquiry" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 95). Interwoven in this portrait are connections to my autobiographical narrative. As a fifth-generation educator in Washington, DC, and product of its public schools, I have a long history with public education in the city. My research began with an investigation into the education of teachers in my family.

I remembered an oil painting of my great grandmother (see Figure 2) Jennie Jones Butcher (1877-1960) painted in 1900 by Thomas Watson Hunster, her art teacher at the M Street High School between 1891-1895. Researching the painting, undated and unsigned, led me to Hunster and his role developing art education for Black students. "The fact that most of his work is undated and unsigned indicates that he painted for his own development and for the sheer love of art" (Wormley, 1951, p. 7). Members of my family, taught by Hunster, passed down the story of the painting. Looking at it one notes the eyes appear slightly misaligned, but the level of detail in the fabric of her dress, flesh tone, and coiffure—which he changed slightly,

are realistically accurate. The painting and reference photograph he used (see Figure 3) provided the impetus for this portraiture research.

My request for an image of the painting led to further information on Hunster and a surprising familial tie. In addition to the photograph of the painting, my cousin sent a photograph of Hunster's home/studio, located in the same Maryland County I live in (see Figure 4). Even more enlightening was the knowledge another cousin owns the home, listed on the Maryland Trust for Historic Properties. Hunster built his home/studio on land purchased from his former student and assistant, William Stanton Wormley (Pearl, 1996). He and his wife never had children of their own. My cousin's grandmother, Miriam Hunster Wormley Lewis, was Hunster's goddaughter and she inherited their home, eventually passing it to my cousin. Uncovering these connecting threads in our histories increased my



Figure 2. Portrait of Jennie Jones Butcher by Thomas W. Hunster, circa 1900 (Author Family Archive).



Figure 3. Photograph of Jennie J. Butcher, circa 1900 (Author Family Archive).



Figure 4. Hunster's home/studio, circa 1946 (Author Family Archive).

curiosity about Hunster and led me to search for a photograph of him.

As an artist, I create portraits, including a few of myself. Although he painted a few portraits, ironically no self-portraits of Hunster are known to exist. My family recalls photographs of Hunster, but they were lost. Jerome Uhl's painting of him is privately owned and its current disposition unknown. Despite years of

service to the public schools none of the archives I researched have an image of him.

Relationship: Position of Researcher to Researched

Through Critical Portraiture a research relationship is constructed between portraitist and subject, "fundamental to self-understanding... and to the development of knowledge" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 136). One aspect of the research relationship is empathetic regard, [as a racialized subject]—imagining what it would feel like to walk in Hunster's shoes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As a Black woman artist/educator and former director of an art education program, I can empathize with Hunster's responsibilities: developing curriculum, professional development programs, sustaining quality, and ensuring continued success.

Additionally, being the only full-time art educator of color at my various institutions, I understand the importance of being a role model and providing a Black perspective to White students and colleagues. Paradoxically, Hunster did the same, but in a segregated system, providing perspective on the artistic capabilities of Blacks for those outside of the system. These commonalities between Hunster and myself made me curious about other connections we might share, such as maintaining a personal art practice and designing art education curriculum relevant to students' lives.

Like me, Hunster believed in further developing as an artist, continuing to paint primarily landscapes (see Figure 5) and for a brief time concentrating on portraits to improve his attention to detail. Jennie's portrait was one of several he completed during this brief period. He later returned to landscape and still life painting. "The concentration required of portraiture strengthened his later landscapes show[ing] a much more confident touch, a more certain clarity, and a greater emphasis upon detail" (Wormley, 1951, p. 6). Balancing artmaking and teaching can be challenging,



Figure 5. *View of a Valley* by Thomas W. Hunster, circa 1900-1910 (Swann Galleries).

but continuing to make and exhibit art and improve as an artist adds to an artist/educator's abilities to competently guide learners in their artistic development.

Hunster was a prolific painter, exhibiting his work through various artist societies in Washington, DC. However, there is no evidence of Hunster selling or having an interest in selling his work; art for him was above mundane monetary affairs (Wormley, 1951).

In 1900 he created nine dioramas modeled in clay "depicting the progress of Blacks from 1865 to 1900. Moving from a life of deprivation attendant on emancipation, the scenes concluded in a model of the M Street School, symbol of the ideal in black education" (Cosentino & Glassie, 1983, p. 172). This diorama was part of the *Exposition Des Negres d'Amerique* exhibit at the Paris World's Fair

in 1900. "His artwork attracted the attention of artists and scientists by the exquisite finish and truth for detail that marked the work" (Wormley, 1951, p. 3). Although well received, Assistant Commissioner Woodard's comments on the exhibition reflect the unconscious racism Hunster and his fellow exhibitors had to contend with. "[It] will show other nations that we know how to solve the Negro problem upon intelligent, civilized lines. Some foreigners think we have nothing for the Negro but the bludgeon and the revolver" (as cited in Cosentino & Glassie, 1983, pp. 172-177). Hunster also participated in the 1907 Jamestown, VA, Tercentennial Exposition, where his work was again well received.

As an educator he believed art should be relevant to students' lives and displayed for others to interact with. Hunster consistently exhibited student work to high praise. As a college art educator I held annual exhibitions of K-12 student work including art created by their student teacher, providing a support structure for the artist-teacher and the art program in the school community.

In his 1919 annual report Hunster emphasized the importance of figurative art to career development. He challenged students to draw themselves engaged in occupations or trades as well as leisure activities of interest to them. Students learned figure drawing in a way that was personally meaningful (p. 262).

G. Smith Wormley (1932) describes Hunster's teaching methods as constructivist, a "blending of the cultural with the practical" (p. 132). This reflects his education at Antioch College and aligns with John Dewey's (1859-1952) philosophy of learning by doing. Wormley (1932) credits Hunster over any other Washington, DC, educator of his time with providing both inspirational and constructive contributions. Hunster not only established a fine arts program for the Black public schools, but also introduced the industrial and manual arts. The 1904-1905 Annual Report of the Board of Education for Washington, DC, Public Schools praises Hunster for the high status drawing occupied in the public schools. He is described as naturally gifted and hard working, building an



Figure 6. Free hand drawing at Armstrong Manual Training High School, circa 1905-1915 (Summer School Museum and Archives).

art program unparalleled elsewhere (p. 132). Hunster introduced industrial drawing to the curriculum for both boys and girls in 1877-1878, *eight years* before it was introduced in the White public schools in Washington, DC (Hunster, June 30, 1896, p.196). He was highly influential in the construction of Armstrong Manual Training High School (see [Figure 6](#)) for Black students that opened in 1902 (Roe, 2004). It was Hunster's idea for students to make drawings of their designs in the classroom to use for reference in the shop, "long before the shop appeared in the system to make realization possible" (Wormley, 1932, p. 133).

Hunster believed that drawing from observation and viewing professional works of art was key to an effective art curriculum. In his annual report to the Board of Education he states,

It is to be regretted that all pupils, especially those showing exceptional ability, cannot have the benefit of seeing and studying good examples of fine, applied, and commercial art, assembled in convenient centers to be visited occasionally for general instruction through short lectures and demonstrations. (Hunster, June 30, 1918, p. 309)

Black Washingtonians did not have access to arts and cultural institutions. The Corcoran Gallery and College, while open to women, was not open to Blacks. The only art instruction available to them outside of the public schools was at Howard University whose art department opened in 1922 (Consentino & Glassie, 1983, p. 170). To compensate, Hunster created a museum in the normal school building in 1917-1918 containing exhibits to be used by pre/in-service teachers (Hunster, June 30, 1919, p. 263).

The impact of institutional racism in Washington, DC, had a cumulative effect on individual artists as well as school children. Black artists denied membership in local artist societies and mentorship from skilled artists teaching in institutions like the Corcoran had few outlets for further development, exhibition, and critique of their work. Black school children with exceptional skill and talent did not have exposure to original artworks or training beyond the public school art program, denying them the opportunity to develop and pursue careers as artists. Given these inequitable conditions it is not surprising that few Black artists made Washington, DC, their home. While there were Black artists in the city, few received recognition and their works, with a few exceptions, are relatively unknown (Consentino & Glassie, 1983, p. 170). The Emergent Themes section explores Hunster's pedagogical innovations and philosophies interpreting them in comparison to those of his time and to current art education philosophies.

Emergent Themes: Art Pedagogies and Philosophies

“The development of emergent themes reflects the portraitist’s first efforts to bring interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order to the collection of data” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 185). The research question, “How do these histories compare with contemporary art education practices?” guides this section. In his 1876 *Report of the Superintendent*, Cook notes Hunster’s appointment as special drawing teacher tasked with developing and administering the drawing curriculum for the Black public schools (p. 181). This entailed teaching drawing at the secondary level, weekly instruction in drawing with two cohorts of normal school students, and on occasion supervising drawing in the elementary grades.

Hunster developed a curriculum for each grade level. Students received Walter Smith’s manuals on drawing in 1875, the same year they were widely published by Louis Prang (Cook, 1875-76, p. 181). At the end of the school year Hunster organized the first public exhibition of drawing ever held in Washington, DC, Black public schools. “All available space in the main hall and in every schoolroom of this building was occupied by the hundreds of specimens from the different grades of schools... the work as a whole was very creditable” (Cook, 1876, p. 181). The exhibition became an annual event promoted and praised in Washington’s newspapers of the time: *The Washington Bee*, *The Evening Star*, and *The Washington Times*.¹

By 1891 Hunster regretted using the drawing manuals, stating that they hampered creativity by encouraging pupils to copy rather than observe and think critically. He also felt the books gave the teachers few opportunities to develop original ideas. “To correct this mistake, the drawing books now used should be withdrawn and blank books substituted” (Hunster, June 30, 1891, p. 179). The focus on drawing from observation, and critical thinking combined

with practical manual training reflects Hunster’s innovative ideas and awareness of progressive art education trends. “The work in the grades has been given by a course of study similar to work in other schools throughout the country. The aim has been to keep in line with progressive ideas” (Hunster, June 30, 1910, p. 233). John D. Runkle of MIT proposed that manual training be part of the general curriculum as early as 1876 (Efland, 1990, p. 165). Hunster began including manual training in his art classes in 1876-1877. The ongoing debate between W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington (1895-1903) on the merits of academic versus manual education for Blacks probably also influenced Hunster’s thinking. He felt both were equally important in art education.

In 1897, Hunster introduced Prang colors to teachers and students in the elementary grades. “Its [color] value is not confined to creating new interest in what may be termed drawing exercises, but to all kinds of object work, both natural and manufactured, thus helping the teachers in their regular studies” (Hunster, June 30, 1897, p. 297). Hunster organized a collection of birds, insects, plants, and other subjects in one of the high school drawing rooms to serve as models for nature study. This indicates he may have been aware of the writings of H. H. Straight and Francis Wayland Parker (1883) “correlating the subjects of study with the observations of natural phenomena that children could see for themselves” (Efland, 1990, p. 167).

Hunster expanded the curriculum beyond drawing to material work that included clay, stick-laying, paper folding, and paper cutting. “The material works seem to interest and benefit the pupils more than the drawing alone. The teachers seem to realize the value of object lessons, and hence they do not rely on blackboard illustrations as much as they did in the past” (Hunster, 1892, p. 208). Hunster built the art curriculum around the foundational principles of art espoused by Prang, “representation, construction and decoration” (Hunster, 1915, p. 259).

He also made efforts to integrate art with other subjects. "A new feature that attracted attention and was received by the regular teachers with appreciation was the correlation of drawing with geography" (Hunster, 1916, pp. 262-263). This was accomplished through drawings of public buildings such as the Monument, White House, and U.S. Capitol. The next school year included landscaping lessons connected to gardens. Students studied average city lots, house ground plans, paths, out buildings, methods of planting flowers and vegetables, and illustrated what they learned in paintings (Hunster, 1917, p. 267).

It is desirable that drawing, as a classroom study, should correlate, as much as possible, with the regular work, but there must always be a just appreciation of the relative value of two or more subjects in the merging process. The primary values of one subject may be absorbed in its development by sacrificing the other, instead of being mutually beneficial. (Hunster, 1917, p. 267)

Hunster created detailed instruction plans for each lesson and gave these to classroom teachers with encouragement to create their own similar lessons. He relied on the classroom teachers he trained to teach art lessons to elementary students and lamented the lack of quality art instruction in the lower grades. "The fact that a pupil who cannot draw at all can enter the high school gives this subject a disadvantage that others do not have" (Hunster, 1892, p. 209). Hunster believed in high quality instruction at all levels. He encouraged pupils to use art as a form of self-expression, critical thought, and self-empowerment (Hunster, 1918). Many of his pedagogical practices and philosophies are in use today. The emphasis on critical thinking, relevance, art integration, and self-empowerment continue to be hallmarks of quality art education programming.

Aesthetic Whole: Shaping the Story

The aesthetic whole brings together all parts of the portrait; highlighting the "way... relationships are created and sustained in a particular context, or the way the researcher's voice interprets and constructs the emergent themes" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 243). Despite Hunster's lack of experience, Superintendent Cook "was so impressed by the seriousness, the acumen, and the progressive ideas of this aspiring young artist that he persuaded him to undertake the development of an art department in the [colored] public schools" (Wormley, 1951, p. 1). Analysis and interpretation of Hunster's annual reports align with Cook's assessment of him. Hunster instituted many curriculum innovations, like industrial drawing and manual training, before his White counterparts, and often on the heels of progressive educators like Walter Smith, Louis Prang, John Runkle, Francis Wayland Parker, and John Dewey. This leads me to conclude that he was aware of the art education theories of his time. He trained artist/educators like Alma Thomas, who went on to teach in Washington, DC, public schools and garner national prominence in the art world.

Hunster's influence was broad and deep. His legacy, obscured over the course of time, profoundly impacted the quality and direction of art education in Washington, DC. Many of his ideas and methods, as previously described, are practiced today. He tirelessly strove for improvement and quality, taught special courses for gifted students, and held Saturday art seminars in his home for art educators (Wormley, 1951, p. 4). Although Jim Crow legislation created a hostile environment for Blacks, educators like Hunster continued to build quality educational programming advancing art education for Black students in a relatively short time.

Wormley (1951) describes Hunster as "a reticent man insofar as desiring public acclaim for his creative work" (p. 5). As both artist and educator, Hunster had a "meticulous regard for exactness and propriety, [the] severe emphasis upon detail and standard, and the insistence upon stern

discipline which characterized the man and teacher" (p. 6). "Considering his lack of formal training and the enormous social, cultural, and economic limitations of his time, Thomas W. Hunster was an artist of undeniable talent and of historical significance" (p. 7) whose story needs to be told.

Conclusion

Why is Hunster's story relevant to the history of art education? Given continued racial unrest, events leading to Black Lives Matter protests, and increased demands to hire faculty members of color on White college campuses across our nation, the histories of Black art educators and other minorities are important to research, teach, and publish. More diversity and inclusion is needed (Acuff, Hiram, & Nangah, 2012). I remind my students that their job is to affirm their learners, teach them about artists and art professionals that look like them, help them appreciate art, and see possibilities for themselves in the art world as adults. My job is to affirm all my students, including those pre/in-service art educators of color in my classes who also need to see themselves reflected in the field of art education.

Art educators need a more comprehensive understanding of the history of art education in order to shape a more inclusive future for the field. For Black art educators, seeing ourselves in history as contributors to the growth and development of art education is key to positive self-identity, empowerment, and our sense of place within the art/education world.

As a Black artist/educator I see the lack of Black pre/in-service art teachers as unsettling. If our young people seldom learn about or encounter art teacher role models who look like them or share similar racial, ethnic, and cultural understandings, how can we expect them to enter the profession? If our White pre/in-service educators seldom encounter Black art educators how will they learn to sensitively teach, encourage, and affirm their Black students? Where is the color in art education? And, what is the history of Black art educators and art education programs? Contemplating these questions led to this Critical Portraiture research and provided me with a means to reflect on my own experiences as a Black artist/educator within a historical and contemporary context.

This portrait of Thomas Watson Hunster demonstrates the significant contributions of Black art educators to the field despite barriers created by racist practices, which continue today. Hunster's methods—blending fine art with practical training, arts integration, personal relevance, critical thinking, and empowerment through art-making—show his awareness of progressive pedagogies and mirror contemporary practices. Examining the history of segregated schools provides a more inclusive picture of American art education and the accomplishments of Blacks and others in art/education worlds that marginalize and exclude them. Critical Portraiture research is one way to educate about the contributions of others to the profession through their efforts to confront and overcome racial, ethnic, and cultural barriers—creating a path toward educational transformation.

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ENDNOTE

- ¹ The papers mentioned here were accessed from this Library of Congress site: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>