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WRECKAGE of Pandemic History:

Lessons Learned, Communities Built, and Stories Told

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REACTING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC'S STORY AS AN EDUCATOR, researcher, spouse of a frontline worker, and mother whose children asked, "Will daddy ever come home?" became a way of life. Little did we know, our names were being written into the history of a pandemic that few would have ever imagined confronting in our lifetime.

Flashback: March 15, 2020

Driving on the steadfast lanes of New York State's I-87, COVID-19 dominated our family conversation. In comprehending that ominous, red, ball-shaped virus with pin-like tendrils, our inquisitive youngsters posed questions, but we had no answers. Little did we know, the crimson-colored virus was staying, clutching the world in its jaws—clenching deeper and deeper, but bringing social issues of racial inequity and partisan politics to the surface.

Monday, March 16, 2020: A Historic Morning

New York City Public Schools transitioned to remote learning; Teachers College, Columbia University closed its doors and asked faculty and students to embrace distance learning. Our collective future as a family now largely affected, the children's schooling experiences, my academic life, and my husband's work as an ICU physician in a public hospital were factors that forced us to face our unknown fears. Our story of living in distance and isolation was just beginning.

A Coping Journey Begins

As days went by, the tensions of the unknown continued to escalate; we struggled. Perhaps as a means to cope, our dear friend, Nana Mary in Sydney, Australia, suggested we engage in collective artmaking using a word to which we could relate from the pandemic's evolving lexicon. Our survival journey began with the word "mask." As a family, using newspapers and poetry, we adopted collage making as our evening ritual. The children and Nana Mary alternated the words using the headlines from *The New York Times* and our favorite magazine, *The New Yorker*. This became a visual conversation among us and Nana Mary. Later, my mother from New York and a dear friend from Minneapolis joined us. A conversation from different perspectives of lived experiences continued to take form as a blog (https://samratami.wixsite.com/website). This collective blog became a site as we faced the reality of witnessing and encountering changes of historic proportions buried within the time capsule of COVID-19, subsequently becoming an inspiration for this special issue. As educators, we become a vital part of these historical stories, which we continue writing and collecting as the pandemic tightens its grip.

August 15, 2021: Reflections in Isolation

Walking through Abraham Lincoln's birthplace in Hodgenville, Kentucky, I read Lincoln's quote on a postcard at the gift shop: "History is not history unless it is the truth." The words instantaneously echoed with the theme of this special issue, "Reflections in Isolation as History in the Making." COVID-19 has transformed the way we think about pedagogy and ways of being. While things may remain tentative, and the new normal ambiguous, life continues. Reflecting on Lincoln's quote, turning to the practice of documenting uncertain history as it happens so that future generations can better understand the unprecedented times faced becomes increasingly significant. Here, I am drawn to Anthea M. Hartig's phrase: "We are [indeed] in the gristmill of history" (as cited in Dickson, 2020, para. 6).

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and endemic systemic racism, we faced bracing interruption, disruption, fear, innumerable losses, and new uncertainties, which we will confront for years to come. We created new customs: the 7 pm clapping for frontline workers, teaching remotely using Zoom, visiting a virtual museum with friends, different generations waving at each other across windows and garden fences, sitting on the couch being glued to Netflix, the harrowing frostiness of bidding adieu to a loved one through a screen held up by an ICU physician, and keeping a journal of experiences, to name a few. We have mustered resources and pooled sustenance, formed newfangled practices to check in on our neighbors, family, and friends for enduring in altered conditions. We have stroked the strain of the pandemic, the resulting unemployment, a series of continuing political hullabaloo, a climate crisis, and mass lobbying against racial injustices and anti-Black police violence. We have come together under the tremendous burden of extraordinary circumstances. Yet, amid all of this, several of us have turned to art and stories as a form of history in the making, a history framed and unframed within the dark truths of our lived experiences.

The various stories about experiencing distance and isolation are narratives of resilience, community building, and the restorative power of artmaking, representing the inner strength of the authors and their commitment as educators.

What is a lived experience? Recognizing fresh promises within ordinary experiences, educational theorists D. Jean Clandinin and Jerry Rosiek (2007) ask that we lend a listening ear to the stories people tell. Spoken recollections and reflections frame narrative research, which highlights what we can learn about history and society through lived experiences (Chase, 2011). Making sense of the present moment through storytelling and documenting history as it happens is the heartbeat of one's coping mechanism. The articles presented in this issue of *Art Education* connect us as a community of practice at a time marked by withdrawal and isolation. The various stories about experiencing distance and isolation are narratives of resilience, community building, and the restorative power of artmaking, representing the inner strength of the authors and their commitment as educators.

Sarah Ackermann and **Trina Harlow** retell a story that unfolded in a Facebook group during the pandemic. They compare art teachers to superheroes, proudly wearing their capes and helping to rescue their comrades from the dastardly villain dominating classrooms. The authors explain that as we live through the pandemic's collective trauma, we must continue anchoring ourselves in creative expression, developing applicable and flexible curricula. Paramount in reframing our roles as practitioners, they call for creating an equitable community of practice and engaging art education experiences to help those who are feeling powerless to feel more prepared should another sequel occur. **Amber Tackett** emphasizes her reflexive practice and the interconnectedness of student experiences and the learning taking place in the classroom. This, she argues, can establish authentic and empowered learning

What would happen if we as artists and art educators utilize the countless ambiguities of this critical moment as an opportunity to press the reset button and furnish our communities, where we are "creatively response-able" once the shock and virulency of COVID-19 have passed?

for students while framing their positionality using knowledge of self and the world. **Megan Broughton** and **Chris Thorson** tell the Oxbow School's pandemic story, recounting a complex turmoil of changes where faculty and students tried to maintain an interconnected semester experience. After losing their physical school community and sense of normalcy in the pandemic's clutches, they created digital zines titled *Quaranzines*, which showcased student works from several assignments done during quarantine. This collective experience afforded some semblance of closure and showed the community's collective resilience through creative expression. Drawing parallels between her teaching experience and participating in a synchronous online basketry conference, **Christina Bain** shares new openings for learning, relating with others, and accepting failure as an indispensable part of learning. These authors embody a reality of action and resilience that they eloquently frame throughout their lived experiences. As educators we associate with these narratives—we connect to comparable experiences in our own classrooms and envision potentials for actions while finding the right currency of words for doing the work (Goodall, 2008). Generating empathy, these stories allow us to frame and reframe meanings within one's own teaching practice while navigating fractured living histories.

Surviving isolation and confronting remote learning, **Kelly Hanning** reveals a compelling personal story of wrestling with her own identity, pondering on building nurturing and sustaining relationships through creative vulnerability. Hanning sees herself as a digital relationship builder while scaffolding meaningful creative experiences in a virtual environment. **Jane Brumfield Montero** exemplifies the dire need to foster student alliances in the absence of face-to-face education, highlighting the merit of upholding frequent and meaningful student interactions, which can reduce loneliness during remote learning. Enthused by Thompson Walker's (2012) novel *The Age of Miracles*, **Carissa DiCindio** recognizes similarities between the slowing of the Earth's rotation in the novel and the slowing down of life during the pandemic, emphasizing the inevitability of consequential human connections during catastrophic events. DiCindio describes her experiences working with students in an undergraduate art museum education online course, highlighting the potential of creating online learning communities and building "digital relationships" through VoiceThread, a participatory presentation program to create online museum tours. Reflecting on a collaborative postal collage-making project that cultivated individual and communal experiences, **Kristin Vanderlip Taylor** argues that bolstering relationships and building leadership competence through synergistic art projects serves as a vehicle for broadening connections and commonalities. Seen collectively, the accounts presented by these authors echo Herman's (2016) view that

> shifting our perspective lets us see things for the first time or see things anew. The process can help us find both tiny details and earth-shattering, paradigm-shifting ideas, and you can use that information to solve problems and uncover new possibilities. (p. 143)

Juggling the challenges of being a new mother amid the mayhem of quarantining, **Tara Carpenter Estrada** uses images and words to create a daily work of art that is a meditation on something that she is grateful for. Reflecting on the cultural climate of 2020, **Adam Zucker** speaks to a need for motivating and empowering individual and collective voices using social distancing as an art movement with an educational intent. Resonating with Joseph Beuys's concept of social sculpture, John Dewey's philosophy of learning via experience, and Paulo Freire's (1970) and bell hooks's (1994) models of critical thinking, Zucker calls for a liberation from negative social, cultural, and emotional forces of the pandemic. He further elaborates how an artist works to reframe the conditions, thinking, and structures that contextualize and inform our lives. **James Haywood Rolling, Jr.** asks what would happen if we as artists and art educators utilize the countless ambiguities of this critical moment as an opportunity to press the reset button and furnish our communities, where we are "creatively response-able" once the shock and virulency of COVID-19 have passed. Rolling argues that revisiting our creative practices calls for the restoration of relational connections, a collective common heartbeat, and shared collective breath. **Jessica Hamlin**, **Caitlin Gibbons**, and **Alexis Lambrou**'s conversational instructional resource locates urgent concerns and questions about reaching students during online learning while confronting the pandemic, which exposed

stark inequalities across race, class, and gender demographics that continue to plague education. These conversations offer a public commitment to promote community and the enormous possibilities that art offers to open spaces for sharing our unique truths while building meaningful connections and a sense of solidarity with others.

Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis's well-timed and much-needed commentary delivers a critical (un)learning space for confronting disease—both the physical disease of COVID-19 and the symbolic disease of racism. Using "dis-ease(ing)" as a framework, the author questions the historical construction and dissemination of racialized narratives of political cartoons as a visual site associating Asian Americans with diseases. Bae-Dimitriadis explicitly argues for an alternative, antiracist visual rhetoric that has the impending potential to turn the "dis-ease" of racial toxicity toward social healing and equity.

Flash Forward: Continued Fear of the Future?

Reading through the empathetic and powerful stories in this issue while adding them to the time capsule of COVID-19 and art education, I could not resist pulling apart the words "immunity" and "resistance." I see these words as important concepts emerging within our teaching and surviving vocabulary. *Immunity*, originating from the Latin word *immūnitās* and French *immunité*, is a legal term used to describe exemption from tax and jurisdiction. The word *resistance* derives from the Latin verb *resistere*, which means "holding back." The interplay of the two words seems to converge on meanings whereby *immunity* might refer to an internal, individual self-aware state of mind, while *resistance* can describe a capacity to respond to external challenges through critical and creative actions. Both terms describe human dispositions that resonate with the stories told, communities built, and lessons learned from the stories presented in this special issue that unequivocally celebrates the significance of art. ■

—Ami Kantawala

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Weaving Connections Through Basket Making

Christina Bain

Figure 1. University of Texas at Austin art education faculty (left to right): Christina Bain, Dawn Stienecker, Betsy Murphy, and Donalyn Heise show their completed flock baskets.



What will each of us remember about life during a global pandemic? News of racial unrest, political protests, natural disasters, and skyrocketing COVID-19 rates gripped our attention. At work, I helped my department pivot to a predominantly online learning environment. At home, I quietly grieved over the death of my mother, as well as the passing of many others I had never met. During this tumultuous time, I drew solace from home improvement projects, gardening, and quilting. While I found these activities therapeutic, this article describes how developing a new skill in basket making went beyond simply serving as a welcome distraction for me; it provided new learning opportunities, connecting with others, and building resilience.

Before COVID-19: Learning Together

For many years, I had a secret desire to learn basket making, yet never seemed to have the time. After mentioning this interest to my colleagues, we enrolled in a class taught by basketry artist Danielle Anderson.[1] As our baskets slowly took shape in her studio (Figure 1), I recall many things about that unusually chilly afternoon: the distinct smell of the wet reed, fearing I would be unable to create anything that remotely resembled a basket, making mistakes and struggling to fix them, admiring my colleagues' work, a feeling of accomplishment upon completing my colorful basket, and a room filled with laughter and conversation.



Figure 2. Ardia surrounded by her baskets.
Photo courtesy of Danielle Anderson.



Figure 3. Danielle and Ardia weaving together.
Photo courtesy of Danielle Anderson.

Vygotsky (1978) contended that learning is socially constructed, and through human connection we learn about, from, and with one another. Due to our social interactions that day, I believe that each of us gained something more valuable than a basketry lesson. As Danielle explained weaving terminology and patiently demonstrated her craft, she also shared anecdotes about her family and weaving experiences. We learned that she created her first basket at the tender age of 6, under the supervision of her beloved grandmother, Ardia (Figures 2 and 3). She reminisced:

> One day Granny spied one of the most difficult baskets you can make and said, "I think I can figure that out," and she did! People came to her house from all over Kentucky to take her classes. Now I'm following in her footsteps. (personal communication, January 20, 2020)

Life events often inspire Danielle's basket designs. For example, she created the "I Remember" basket as a tribute to Ardia's passing.

Indeed, storytelling is an important vehicle for understanding ourselves and others. As we narrate our own stories, the listener and teller may find common ground or shared connections (McLean & Pasupathi, 2011). As we worked on our baskets side by side that wintery day, talking about our families drew my colleagues and me closer together. Little did we know at that time how dramatically our world was about to change.

Weaving During COVID-19: New Connections

Over one, under one, over one, under one. Repeat.

When COVID-19 caused life as we once knew it to come to a screeching halt, I was hesitant to attempt weaving without the camaraderie of classmates and the support of an instructor. Would I crash and burn on my own? My first solo weaving adventure was the snack basket (Figure 4). This kit requires no special tools,



Figure 4. Snack basket.

When COVID-19 caused life as we once knew it to come to a screeching halt, I was hesitant to attempt weaving without the camaraderie of classmates and the support of an instructor.

I quickly recognized how my participation in this online class connected to many of my past and present experiences as an art educator.

includes all precut materials, written directions, and a link to a video with step-by-step directions conarrated by Danielle and her 8-year-old daughter, Lillie. Although I missed the social experience of weaving with others, hearing Danielle's Kentucky accent and observing Lillie's excitement as she created her basket was *almost* like being in the room with them. The unexpected benefits of asynchronous learning were that I could proceed at my own pace and rewind the video multiple times to grasp each step thoroughly. Through Danielle's ongoing mentorship, I have become part of a larger weaving community as she has introduced me to learning opportunities through books, suppliers, professional weaving organizations, online weaving groups, and conferences.

Learning Synchronously Online

Due to ongoing public health and safety concerns, the Kentucky Basketry Association (KBA) scheduled their fall 2020 conference virtually. For the first time in the organization's history, the instructors conducted synchronous online workshops through Zoom. My instructor, Linda Scherz of Adirondack Basketry, asked participants to familiarize themselves with supplies and instructions before our meeting. To maximize our weaving time together, she also requested that we assemble the base and spokes of our basket (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Basket preparation for KBA conference.

During the online KBA weaving conference, I quickly recognized how my participation in this online class connected to many of my past and present experiences as an art educator.

1. *The early finisher.* Despite Linda's directions for each student to preassemble the base and spokes of their basket, one student came to class with her basket nearly completed. "I don't like getting behind, so I decided to do a little more." However, by rushing ahead, this student was unable to implement helpful tips that Linda demonstrated during class. How many times have we encountered the student who wants to finish first, no matter what?
2. *Does not follow directions.* I have to give Linda major props for her patience with another student. While written directions clearly stated that 36 spokes, or a number divisible by 3, was required, one student clearly missed the memo. "I don't know why my basket doesn't look right. Could it be because I only have 34 spokes?" I stifled a laugh while thinking about my own experiences with past and present students who neglect to follow directions.
3. *Use the mute button.* Although the KBA offered a helpful technology training workshop before the conference, some participants were novice Zoomers and had not yet discovered the power of the mute button. This is a handy feature to use so classmates will not overhear your personal conversations or become distracted if you talk to yourself during class. We heard one student verbalize her weaving progress as she said, "Over one, and the next goes under. The next goes over and now under…" How many times have we been in recent meetings and asked a colleague or student, "Could someone please mute/unmute themselves?"

R & R: Reflection and Resilience

I wonder what role basket making will play in my life after we enter a post-COVID-19 world? At this point, I have only scratched the surface of this craft. I imagine that my weaving journey will lead me to discover new artists, designs, and materials. As I look forward to sharing my interest in basketry with future students, I am equally excited about looking back to better understand the multifaceted role of basketry in diverse cultures. For now, I reflect on how the process and products that I have created during this time are meaningful to me. For example:

- Creating baskets is *therapeutic*. Weaving is a form of mindfulness that quiets my daily digital overload (Figure 6).
- Baskets are *useful*. Instead of having a pile of mail covering my counter, I can organize clutter with an object that I have created (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Completed fall basket from KBA virtual conference.

- Baskets are *beautiful*. I am drawn to the color, texture, and pattern baskets add to our lives and our homes (Figures 8 and 9).
- Baskets *connect people* across time and space. I created the baskets in Figures 10 and 11 as gifts for family members. Will my daughter and great-niece pass these objects on someday to other people in their lives? If so, what stories might they share about me?



Figure 8. My first three baskets.



Figure 9. Colorful basket.



Figure 7. Mail basket.



Figure 10. Double wine basket for my daughter.



Figure 11. Basket for baby Augusta.

The unexpected benefits of asynchronous learning were that I could proceed at my own pace and rewind the video multiple times to grasp each step thoroughly.

- Weaving reminds me that *failure is an important part of learning*. Not all of my weaving attempts have been successful. Figure 12 demonstrates an epic failure; however, these frustrations help me appreciate the process of slowing down, problem solving, and seeking mentorship.



Figure 12. Basket disaster.

Research suggests that the ability to assign meaning to experience contributes to the development of effective coping strategies, which is especially important in promoting growth and resiliency (Flach, 1988; Mancini & Bonanno, 2006). Pushing this idea a step further, Heise (2014) believes that art, which is inherently a meaning-making process, can be used to foster resiliency.[2] Basket making has helped me weave my way through this troubling time. ■

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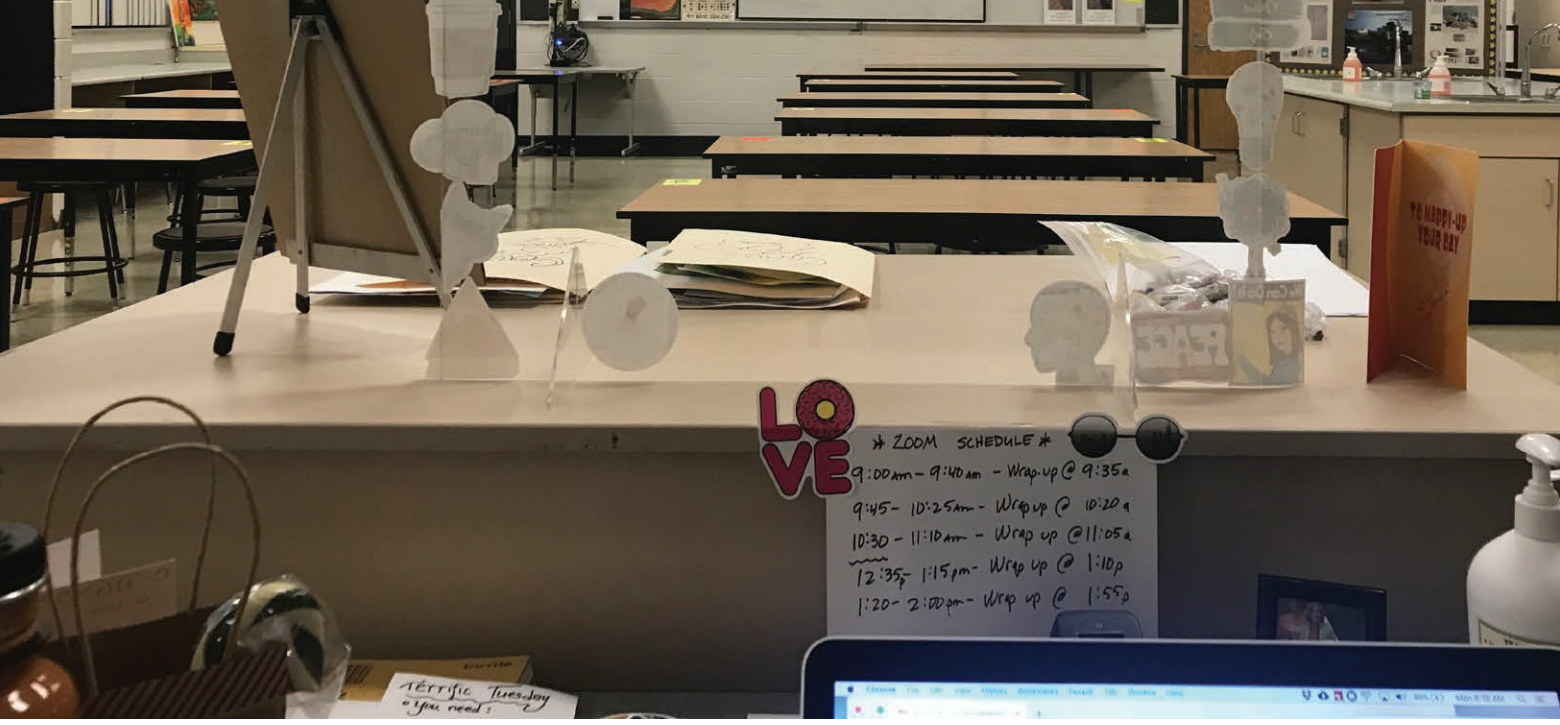
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Endnotes

[1] To view a list of Danielle Anderson's baskets, classes, and kits, see https://danisuecreations.com.

[2] For art lessons designed to foster resilience, see *Healing Through Creativity* by Donalyn Heise and Adrienne Hunter at https://www.artandwriting.org/static/b8f6fc4fed80081554468504327 3b6e7/Healing_Creativity_ART_2020_FINAL.pdf.



Creating Student Relationships: From "Best Practices" to "Next Practices" in a Virtual Classroom

Jane Brumfield Montero

In the early evening of Friday, March 13, 2020, school district superintendents across the country aired recorded messages such as this:

> Good evening, parents, students, and staff. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, our school district will be closed for the next two weeks, followed by one week of our originally planned spring break. Updated information on our return to school will be shared in the coming weeks. Stay safe and stay indoors.

Unglazed clay projects, half-painted cardboard sculptures, and printmaking assignments froze inside the art room I have called home since 2002. My mind raced with initial thoughts about how my students would be able to finish their work before the official end of the third quarter. As that first weekend blended into the next week, little more was known about when or *if* we would return to our buildings at all. An official announcement came 2 weeks later, stating we were not returning for the rest of the school year.

Reflecting on those early days filled with so many unknowns, the world as we knew it was put on immediate hold. Online staff meetings cropped up overnight, and emails arrived with expectations for delivering our curriculum as required. While educators were expected to become online teaching experts, students and parents were supposed to understand and embrace learning virtually—all with little or no training. Fisher and Frey (2020) noted, "An important takeaway [was] understanding that families [had] a limited capacity to support their children when school [was] at home" (p. 342). Everyone raced to create new ways of teaching and engaging students in the learning process. Aparicio et al. (2016) claimed, "Learning is a cognitive process for achieving knowledge, and technology is an enabler of the learning process, meaning that technology is used like any other tool in the education praxis" (p. 292). Even so, the sudden isolation of teaching remotely was real, and everyone was scared.

Unglazed clay projects, half-painted cardboard sculptures, and printmaking assignments froze inside the art room I have called home since 2002.

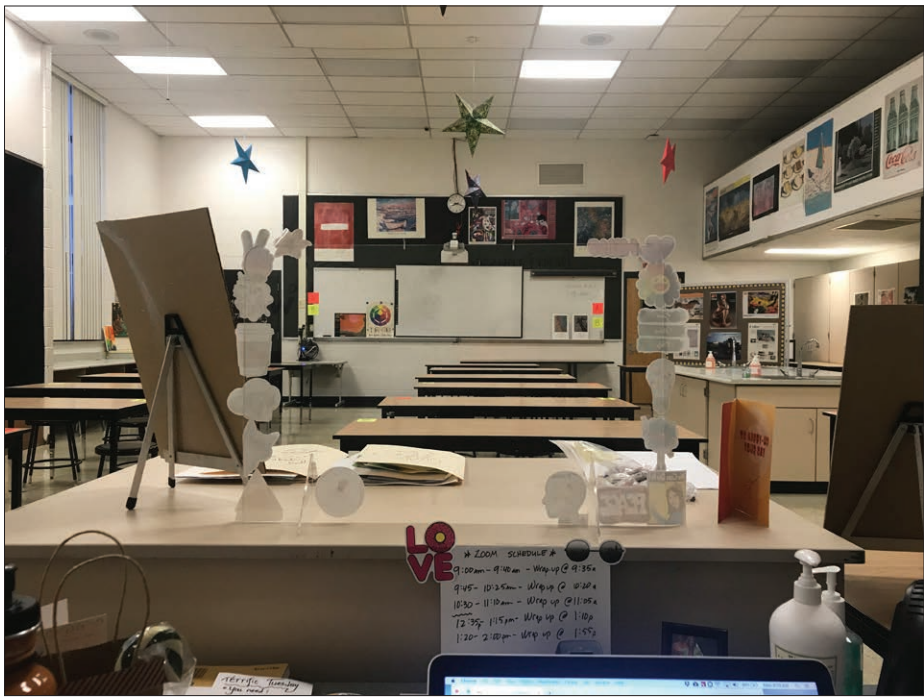


Figure 1. View of Zooming from an empty art room.

Art education was particularly at risk because students did not have any art supplies at home. However, we transformed our curriculum, adjusted our expectations, and tried our best to teach art despite the isolation. I struggled to communicate with students and reassure them that art classes would go on even though the art room was closed. The four walls of my classroom, which had protected me over the years, were still there, but students were not (Figure 1). According to Levinson et al. (2020), "High-quality learning is inherently relational and social, not individual and teacher-centered" (p. 982). Fatigue, depression, and fear crept in even though we did our best to persevere. We stayed hopeful that all would be well as we headed toward the end of the school year.

Encompassing Isolation

Despite school being closed, I found a way to break through the sense of isolation I felt by starting a virtual Sketch Club. After 1 day of sharing the news to join this club, 65 students signed up. By the end of the school year, there were 72 members. Before COVID-19, this club averaged 12 students who met once a week before school for 30 minutes to sketch on their own. This new virtual club was a huge success as students rapidly submitted pencil sketches, iPad drawings, and photos of their work. I provided general themes, such as animal week, common household objects, draw a scene looking out your window, and cartoon character drawings. Some students responded to these themes, but students often submitted sketches based on their own ideas. The quality of these drawings ranged from extremely detailed iPad sketches to pencil and crayon drawings on notebook paper. I believe the success of this club was due to the open-ended freedom students experienced without being graded on required assignments. The club provided a safe and welcoming space for students to express their feelings during the pandemic.

Whenever students submitted sketches, I gave feedback and received responses of "Thanks!" and "I'm glad you like my work." I found that this virtual communication opened the door for developing relationships even though we were not physically in school. We had discussions via email, and students encouraged each other to keep up the good work! This was exciting and changed how I had initially felt about teaching in isolation. I was amazed at how the Sketch Club generated student involvement and noted that peer interaction drove students to keep working on their sketching ability. Students asked each other what iPad apps they were using or how they could shade an animal so realistically. These conversations promoted a sense of community and belonging. My feelings of isolation lessened due to the relationships being formed with these Sketch Club students.

As the weeks continued, I was overjoyed to see what students were creating (Figure 2). My goal shifted from assessing their work to developing relationships with students. I commented privately about their drawings that showed detail, texture, form, and other elements of art. Their work initiated discussions, but it was these newly formed relationships that meant the most to me. Herman (2017) claimed, "Shifting our perspective lets us see things for the first time.… The process can help us find both tiny details and earth-shattering, paradigm-shifting ideas, and you can use that

While educators were expected to become online teaching experts, students and parents were supposed to understand and embrace learning virtually—all with little or no training.

information to solve problems and uncover new possibilities" (p. 143). I cherished this new learning community. When the school year finally came to an end, students asked if we could continue the virtual club during the summer. Not only did it remain throughout the summer months, but our Virtual Art Club continued throughout the 2020–2021 school year.

Moving Forward

Six months after the original school closure, health experts and government officials advocated for a safe return to schools in the fall of 2020. Levinson et al. (2020) stated, "Children miss out on essential academic and social–emotional learning, formative relationships with peers and adults, opportunities for play, and other developmental necessities when they are kept at home" (p. 981). Having spent the summer months experimenting with technology to engage students in the virtual art room, I found Jamboard to be promising. Google Slides and Google Draw also sparked my interest in adding digital art to my art curriculum. "Art transports us away from our everyday life to rethink how we see and perceive and communicate" (Herman, 2017, p. 12). The traditional art curriculum slowly evolved to incorporate digital design tools.

The new school year started with virtual instruction as the pandemic was still surging out of control. However, changes were made regarding student accountability and attendance. Students were expected to attend Zoom meetings and submit assignments each week. My district held parent webinars outlining the new procedures and expectations for online learning success. When we returned to a hybrid model of face-to-face instruction in early October, students attended school twice a week; however, Special Area content was taught virtually to students on non–school building days. Fisher and Frey (2020) noted, "In the initial rush to move to online, we learned that there were far too many independent tasks that stalled student learning. Without the interactions with teachers and peers, families struggled to fill in the instructional gaps" (p. 344).

The four walls of my classroom, which had protected me over the years, were still there, but students were not.

The Virtual Art Club has continued to grow and currently has 95 members. In addition to holding weekly "Drop Everything and Draw" 30-minute Zoom meetings, I reached out to the Mott Children's Hospital at the University of Michigan to see if the



Figure 2. Sharing student work during weekly virtual club meetings.



Figure 3. Examples of student discussions and sharing using Jamboard for online communication.

Virtual Art Club students could send their artwork to cheer up young patients. Additionally, we have sent drawings to local senior residential facilities to be shared on television monitors. I also monitor the Google Classroom, where students post artwork and engage in discussions about their art.

Along with the Virtual Art Club, I teach live Zoom meetings daily with homeroom classes based on a 7-week rotation schedule. Through the use of Jamboard and other online technology, a culture of community has been fostered (Figure 3). Students show up and are excited to create art with me. Attendance and artwork submission are incredibly high, and I feel less isolated due to the virtual relationships I have with students. Teaching art virtually is still not the ideal way to work with students; however, by engaging in two-way conversations, offering suggestions on how to improve their work, and being supportive with each other, the stress of isolation has been lowered.

Pandemic teaching is not truly indicative of e-learning. According to Aparicio et al. (2016), "the e-learning systems' theoretical framework contains the three main components of information systems. These components are people, technologies,

My goal shifted from assessing their work to developing relationships with students.

and services.… E-learning services integrate all the activities corresponding to pedagogical models and to instructional strategies" (p. 301). Yet despite access to technology, relationships have remained the key component of my personal success.

Beyond Isolation

Reflecting on teaching art traditionally, four main studio structures come to mind: (1) the teacher presents information via demonstration, (2) students focus on artmaking, (3) the teacher and students engage in discussions about their work and make observations about others' artworks, and (4) students show their art by sharing work in class or have art exhibits in the building or the community (Hogan et al., 2018). While the studio changed location from school to home, the actual creative processes did not (Figure 4). The ability to connect with students has remained intact, and in my situation has even strengthened. Through this isolation, I have found the need for conversations apparent when I Zoom with students; some students stay on until the very last second, saying goodbye to me.

Looking back on March 2020, there were so many unknowns. I believed I would still be able to deliver high-level content, and students would be engaged; I hoped I would still be teaching art, and that students would have supplies. However, while I maintained rigorous content, students did not submit assignments. Because assignments were not graded nor required to be submitted, students did not do their work. Students' difficulty completing art at home was a real problem, so I changed my lessons to be more choice based. Regardless of my attempt to draw students in, they simply did not submit assignments.

Teaching art as I have for 31 years changed under these pandemic conditions. What emerged was a new way of teaching online. This new framework for instruction still follows the four essential ingredients of the Teaching for Understanding framework as outlined by Ritchhart (2015): (1) generative topics focusing on big ideas worth understanding, (2) understanding goals by identifying a small set of specific goals, (3) performances of understanding for students to use their skills and knowledge in new ways, and (4) ongoing feedback by communicating frequently.

As the 1-year anniversary of the pandemic school closure arrives, I am in awe of all that we have accomplished in 365 days. We have created a new language of learning with such terminology

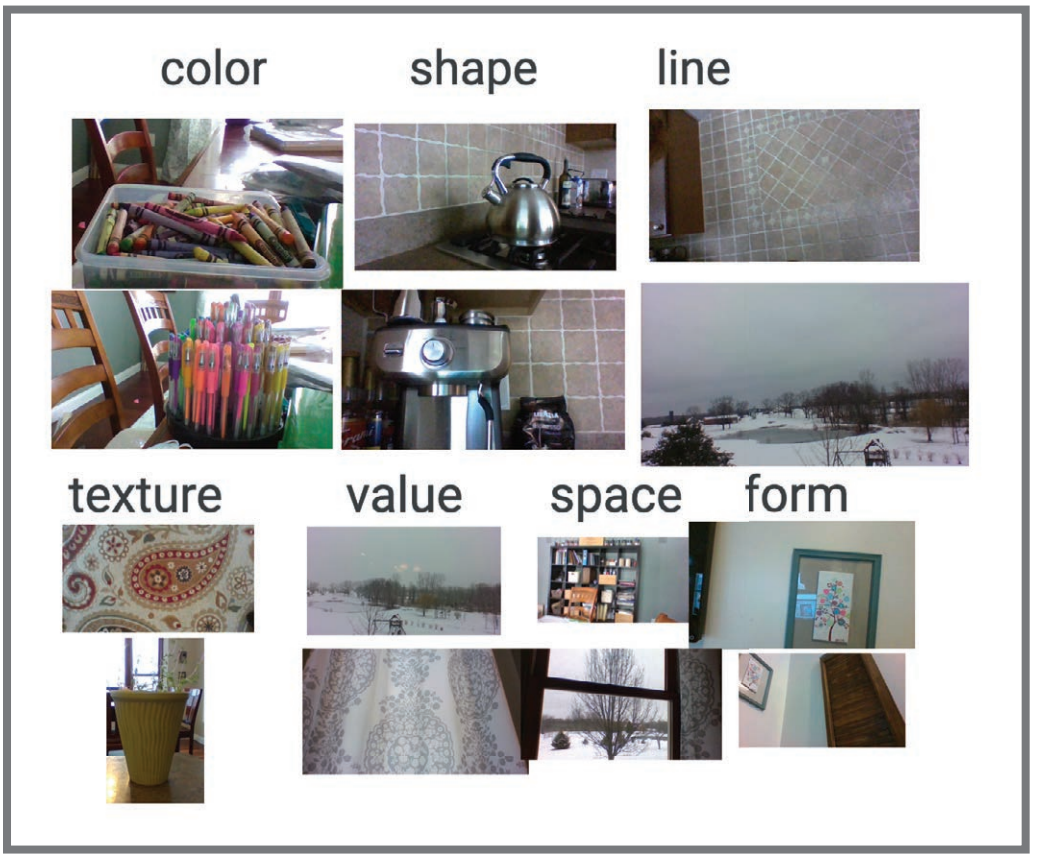


Figure 4. Student results of elements of art using Google Chromebooks.

As much as I long for teaching students face-to-face in the actual art room at school, I will always look back on this year of isolation as an opportunity to expand our teaching practices.

as virtual instruction, asynchronous and synchronous learning, hybrid models, and face-to-face delivery. How we have pivoted our instruction has brought to light ways of learning that I hope we retain in the future. As much as I long for teaching students face-to-face in the actual art room at school, I will always look back on this year of isolation as an opportunity to expand our teaching practices. I look forward to bridging the technology gap and blending the best of this pandemic year with the future classroom environment. Regardless of all the difficulties this pandemic has brought to us, we can hold our heads up high, knowing we have done our best to educate our students and provide a place for their creativity to blossom. ■

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Figure 1. *225 Days* (detail), 2020. Mixed media, approximately 90 × 60 in. Photo by the artist.

A Practice of Gratitude

Tara Carpenter Estrada

A New Practice

I started an artistic gratitude practice in March before the pandemic shut everything down, but after the birth of my daughter. Every day I write something that I am grateful for, and I randomly select two art supplies from a mason jar. Then, I make a postcard-sized artwork using those supplies and my gratitude journal as a prompt. They have become the documentation of my life during the pandemic: sheltering in place with my little family while taking care of a newborn and figuring out online teaching and working. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

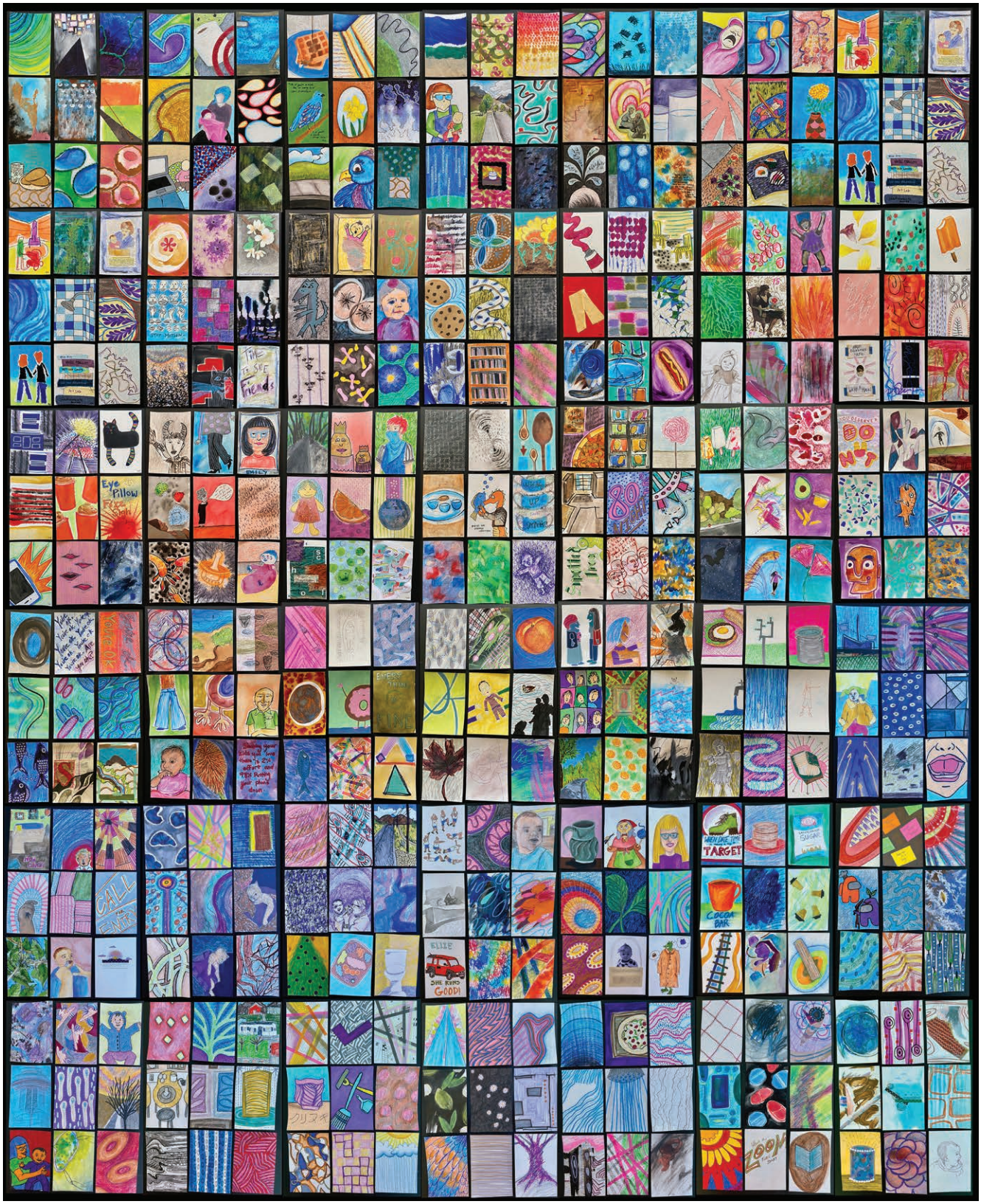


Figure 2. *A Year of Gratitude*, 2021. Mixed media, approximately 100 × 90 in. Photo by the artist.

What matters is making and moving forward, starting over each day and trying again.

Some cards take minutes, some an hour or more. Having this practice helps me remember to make time for art throughout the day. The time I give becomes an opportunity to meditate on what I am grateful for, even in this challenging, sleepless, and scary time. The randomness of material combinations has forced me to consider new ways of working and to leave my artistic comfort zone. I permit myself to make unsuccessful art and work in any style that suits the materials, my time, or my inclination. Sometimes I like what the card looks like. Sometimes, not so much. What matters is making and moving forward, starting over each day and trying again.

While this practice has been deeply personal for me, I believe it has broader applications for art education that could be adapted to art classrooms. This article will explore this project's connection to gratitude and art therapy, and it will share ideas that can be utilized in the classroom.

Gratitude as More Than a Feeling

Gratitude is key to experiencing joy in everyday life (Brown, 2017). People are happier when they refocus their attention on what they do have instead of ruminating on what they lack (Howells, 2012). Gratitude changes our awareness of the external world and thus our responses to it (Autry, 2012). Gratitude can also help to combat what Brown (2017) described as "foreboding joy," or the inclination for people to pull back from joy because of a fear that something will go wrong (p. 145).

However, to improve quality of life, gratitude must be more than just a feeling or an attitude (Autry, 2012; Brown, 2018; Howells, 2012). Instead, it must be a habit developed with regular daily practice. Examples of gratitude practices include using a dedicated gratitude sketchbook, sharing with a trusted friend or family member, keeping a journal, using a running digital note, taking voice memos, and meditating.

Many of my gratitude cards have been about family, friends, and colleagues. Perhaps because interaction is so limited right now, the time I spend with people becomes more meaningful. This practice helps me appreciate the connections I have rather than ruminating on how much I miss prepandemic interactions. Figures 3a–c are examples of cards focused on people.

Art Therapy

This gratitude practice has functioned as art therapy for me. Art therapy has a lot in common with art education; however, it also differs in some important ways. In art therapy, learning to work with materials and to develop artistic skills is in the service of the primary focus, which is working through internal stimuli. The emphasis in art therapy is on depicting inner experiences, emotions, and thoughts. So, while people who engage in art therapy may learn artistic skills and techniques, that development is secondary to their emotional development (Malchiodi, 2007).

Because of the internal focus, in art therapy, the process is far more important than the product, and the pleasure and



Figure 3. (a) *April 28th, Planting Marigolds With Em*, 2020. Gouache and scrapbooking paper; (b) *April 26th, Chance Meeting With Friend*, 2020. Spray paint and marker; (c) *March 24th, Working With Colleagues Over Zoom*, 2020. Paint marker and oil pastel. Photos by the artist.

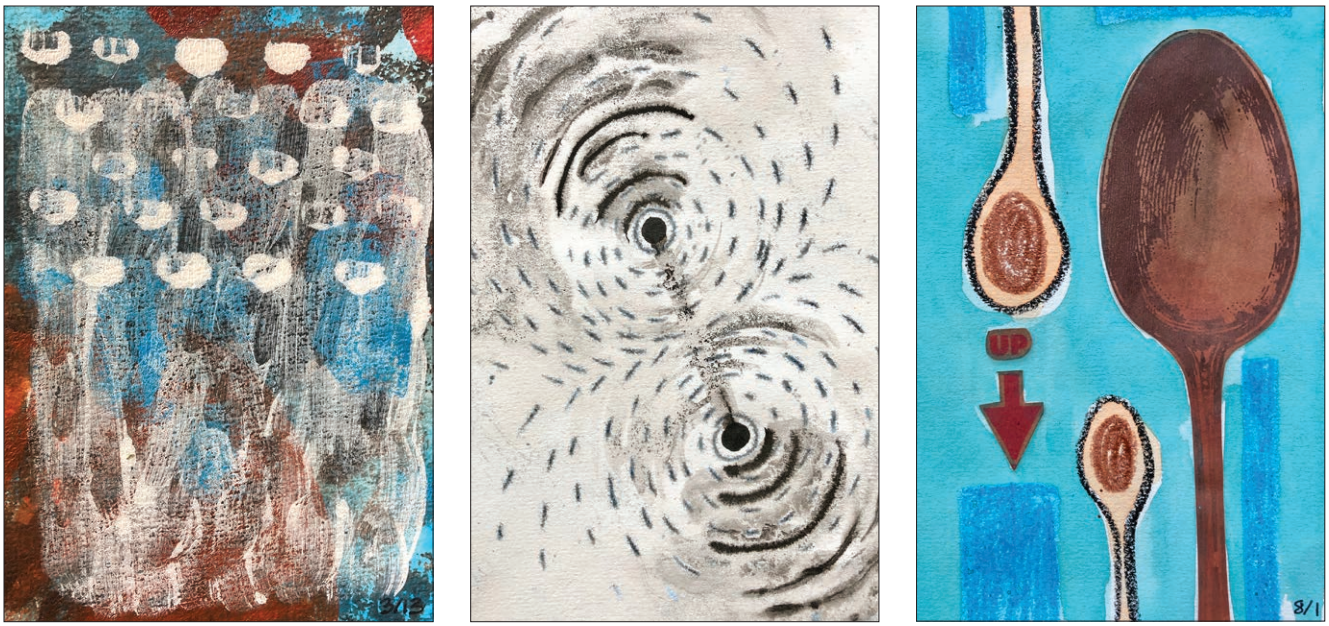


Figure 4. (a) *March 13th, Unexpected Pizza*, 2020. Acrylic with Gelli plate; (b) *July 31st, Balancing With My Husband*, 2020. Oil pastels and ink; (c) *August 1st, She Made Breakfast*, 2020. Painted paper, crayon, and watercolor. Photos by the artist.

gratification that someone gains from making the art are more important than how the final image looks (Malchiodi, 2007). Stated simply, the goal of art therapy is not to make great art. Instead, art therapy "embraces the idea that all art expression is acceptable" (Malchiodi, 2007, p. 18).

Experiences with art can be comforting and calming for individuals, decreasing anxiety and fear (Malchiodi, 2014). By expressing visually what cannot be said in words, patients gain the opportunity to see and know themselves from a new perspective (Rubin, 2016). As they give artistic form to their feelings, people can gain a better understanding of themselves, and this, in turn, will help them to be more active participants in shaping their lives (Rubin, 2011).

I have found my practice therapeutic both because artmaking is calming, and it allows me time to sit with and explore my feelings. Finding things to be grateful for even on difficult days helps me view my life from a different perspective. Figures 4a–c are some examples of pieces that I approached in a process-driven way—focusing on positive emotions while playing with materials.

Ideas for the Classroom

There are many ways that gratitude and art therapy concepts could be integrated into our classrooms to support the emotional well-being of students.

1. We could discuss the psychological benefits of gratitude with our students. Howells (2012) listed several, including "a greater sense of wellbeing, increased optimism, a tendency to exercise more often, a decrease in depression, a greater sense of connectedness, a greater ability to deal with adversity, improved relationships, and greater joy and satisfaction" (p. 19).
2. We could invite students to incorporate a practice of gratitude into their own lives, brainstorming with them authentic ways that they might do this. A gratitude project could be offered as an option for an assignment or extra credit.
3. We could express gratitude to our students for the way that they add value to our class and meaning to our lives.
4. We could be humble in sharing our failings at being grateful. "This will enable our students to let themselves off the hook when they find it difficult to practise gratitude" (Howells, 2012, p. 132).
5. Because artmaking has the potential to be calming and comforting for students dealing with anxiety in life outside the classroom, we could consider how we can make our classroom a comforting place for students to practice in.
6. We could structure some assignments to place more emphasis on expression and experimentation. We could discuss how

This practice helps me appreciate the connections I have rather than ruminating on how much I miss prepandemic interactions.

Incorporating gratitude and art therapy practices in our teaching could create a more caring environment in our classrooms.

the process of making art can be gratifying and pleasurable, modeling our own enjoyment of trying new processes.

7. We could plan some assignments that give students "the freedom to make something and not worry too much about whether the final product meets the criteria of art" (Estrada, 2019, p. 175).
8. By structuring reflection into projects, we could encourage students to see artmaking as a way of investigating and perhaps even changing their perspectives.

Caring for Our Students

Andrea O'Reilly (2020) called the challenge of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic "trying to function in the unfunctionable" (p. 7). Although we do not know everything going on in our students' lives, it's a safe bet that everything is not OK right now.

Art educators are uniquely positioned to help students develop "healthy, lifelong strategies for dealing with pain and tragedy" (Heise, 2014, p. 27). In their recent article, "Responding to the Challenge to Care: Suggestions for Art Education Curricula," Broome et al. (2019) advocated for fostering caring relationships and experiences and argued that this can contribute to the "potential for a more peaceful society" (p. 36). Incorporating gratitude and art therapy practices in our teaching could create a more caring environment in our classrooms. It could help us and our students better cope with the societal and individual challenges we face right now. ■

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Reflections on Distance Learning and Quarantine in Spring 2020: The Oxbow School's Pandemic Story

Megan Broughton and Chris Thorson

LOCATED IN NAPA, CALIFORNIA, THE OXBOW SCHOOL is a 1-semester boarding program for visual arts, critical inquiry, self-discovery, and community. Each semester, we welcome a new group of approximately 45 high school juniors, seniors, and gap-year students to engage in our interdisciplinary core curriculum designed to pique individual interests and curiosities while encouraging creative and intellectual risk-taking experiential learning.

Our pandemic story concentrates on a series of assignments designed to help students cope with the transition to emergency online instruction amid isolation and uncertainty. The images illustrating this article are excerpted from Oxbow's *Quaranzines*, two online publications that celebrated student work and reflections from these aforementioned assignments. Curated by Oxbow faculty, the publications were playful takes on the zine (short for "magazine") art form and its ethos of do-it-yourself publishing and self-aware content. Our digital zines shared students' philosophies for coping via creativity, vulnerability, and humor. Every student was included, and images in this article are shared with permission.

Coping With Loss, Planning for Connection

On March 13, 2020, halfway through their semester, Oxbow's students hurriedly packed their dorm rooms as the need to evacuate campus became imminent. During the weeklong spring break, which followed student departures, faculty redesigned art and academic coursework for virtual classrooms. Oxbow's pedagogy embraces an exploratory and experimental approach to artmaking, and this ethos proved key to engaging our students in emergency online instruction. Our newly designed assignments very intentionally did not require art studios or in-person technical instruction. To promote equity, students were encouraged to use

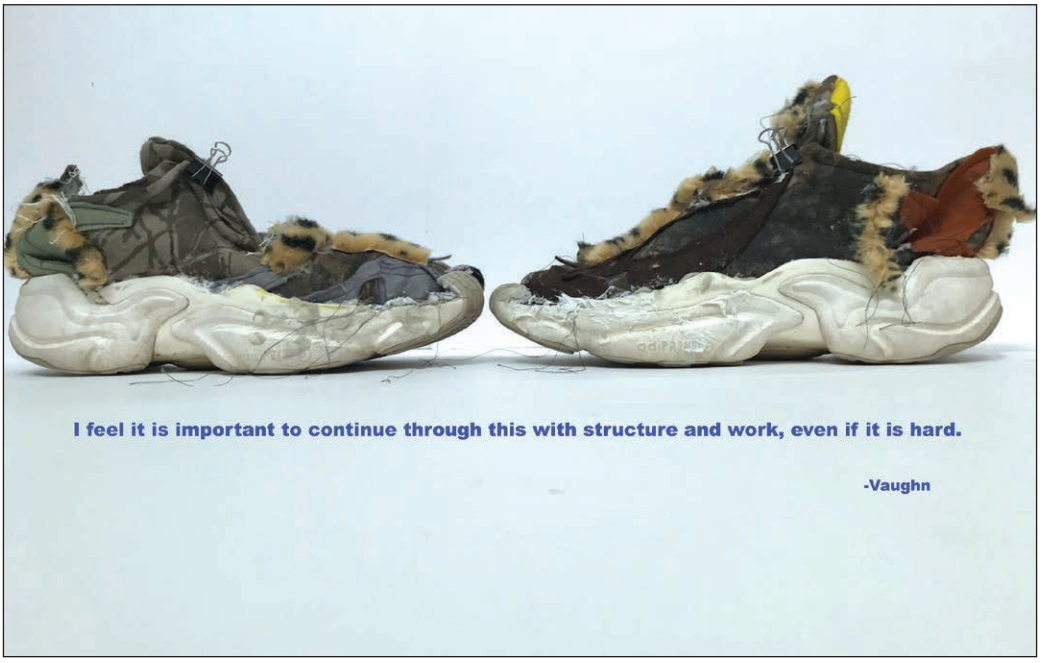


Figure 1. Sample page from *Quaranzine*: quotation and "Who Are You…?" project by Vaughn.

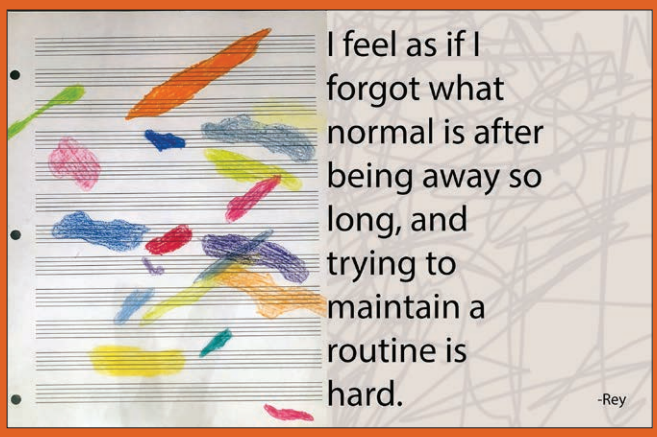
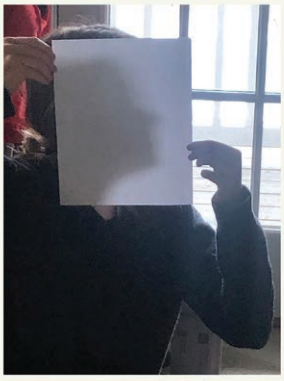


Figure 2. *Quaranzine*: quotation and "Time Based Drawing With Light and Shadow" project by Rey.



Instead of trying to push away my current emotions,
I have realized that incorporating them into my art will help me to stay connected to working on my piece, as well as help me cope with the emotions themselves.

- Katie

Figure 3. *Quaranzine*: quotation and "Time Based Drawing With Light and Shadow" project by Katie.

their powers of observation and imagination coupled with freely available resources. The assignments aimed to show that anything and everything became a medium for making art with a simple perceptual shift. Students were sheltering in place under differing circumstances, so we avoided normative language such as "parents" or "home" in our written assignments and did not assume that all students had access to the outdoors. For the first phase of emergency distance learning, the art faculty crafted a series of four projects that were deliberately rooted in the current moment of isolation and lockdown.

Situating Ourselves Together Within New Models of Time

The first assignment, "The View From My Window," designed by our New Media teacher, invited students to use a window as a real-life viewfinder and consider occurrences within this frame as dynamic and engaging subject matter, thereby transforming a physical limitation into a conceptual possibility. Using the free app Stop Motion Studio, students created short animation clips to test various methods and imagery, then selected one final clip to contribute to a collaborative film montage that created a new, shared "home" that collapsed the distance between us.

After screening the film on Zoom, students discussed its formal components, asked questions about each other, and began to discover possibilities within their limitations. Our hope for this project was to situate everyone in their new locations by taking a collective breath and reset to acknowledge our new reality, appreciate what we could, and begin reconnecting with one another.

The next assignment, "Time Based Drawing With Light and Shadow," was designed by our printmaking teacher and inspired by time-dependent printmaking processes. Meant to unify everyone by working with the sun as a universal light source, the project encouraged a deliberate slowing down. Watching a shadow tremble

Oxbow's pedagogy embraces an exploratory and experimental approach to artmaking, and this ethos proved key to engaging our students in emergency online instruction.

Without explicitly stating so, we had all engaged in a strengths-based pedagogy well-suited for 45 different needs and environments during a time of great turmoil that demanded constant reconsideration and adjustment.

and glisten as it traveled over a wall or floor became an antidote to global chaos. Students observed the shadows in their domestic spaces and used unconventional materials to create experimental drawings by tracing the shadows in timed increments to record the sun's passage. The process of tracing launched further explorations with line, shape, texture, materials, and composition. Because many students were spending most of their time in one space and experiencing frustration from being so confined, we asked them to consider their spaces literally in a new light and examine the intricacies. (Examples of student works from this assignment are featured in Figures 2 and 3.)

Repurposing Reality and Considering Self-Reliance

Time, the everyday, play, and discovery became central to the art curriculum. Notably, the "Everyday Sculpture" assignment prompted students to test the sculptural potential within domestic space while also considering "balance, humor, narrative, and function" alongside formal elements, such as color, shape, and texture. Designed by our painting teacher, this project unfolded into an understated delve into absurdity, encouraging students to turn a world already on its head upside down once again to achieve a "new" normal. Fabulous discoveries ensued, including a monumentally photographed bobby pin sculpture and precariously balanced hammers with delicate objects as counterweights. In Oxbow's art studios, students would have been constantly testing materials and processing complex research through their hands while making art. In the absence of that, it was essential to develop a commonplace materiality to exercise experimentation and resourcefulness. (An example of student work from this assignment is featured in Figure 4.)

After several assignments exploring the exterior world and its phenomena, students turned the process of exploration and discovery inward. Our new curriculum concluded with a two-part project titled "Who Are You, and What Have You Got to Work With?," shaped by our sculpture teacher. Students created lists of their materials and resources: 100 material items, 20 nonmaterial resources such as light or sensations, and 10 inner resources "to draw upon" such as perseverance or imagination. Finally, students listed 10 sources of support (with many citing pets, but also friends and teachers). The assignment then pivoted to students utilizing selections from their lists to create self-portraits in situ and in time. Some of the resulting artworks felt imbued with the uncertainty of the present moment amid a global pandemic, while others pointed toward discovery of the self, drawing ties between childhood and current lives, and many posed questions about the future. (Examples of this assignment are featured in Figures 1 and 5.)

The hope for "Who Are You…?" (and the deliberate order of assignments leading up to this one) was for students to rely on their immediate resources—very specifically, their unique inner resources—to sustain them. Oxbow students frequently

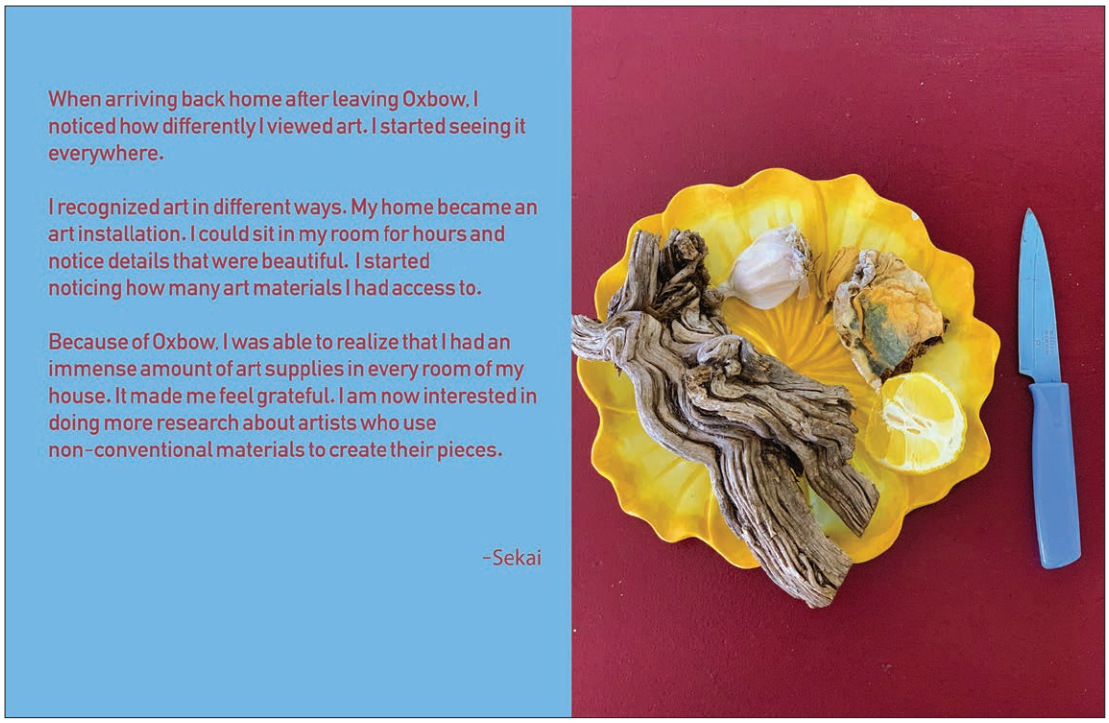


Figure 4. *Quaranzine*: quotation and "Everyday Sculpture" project by Sekai.

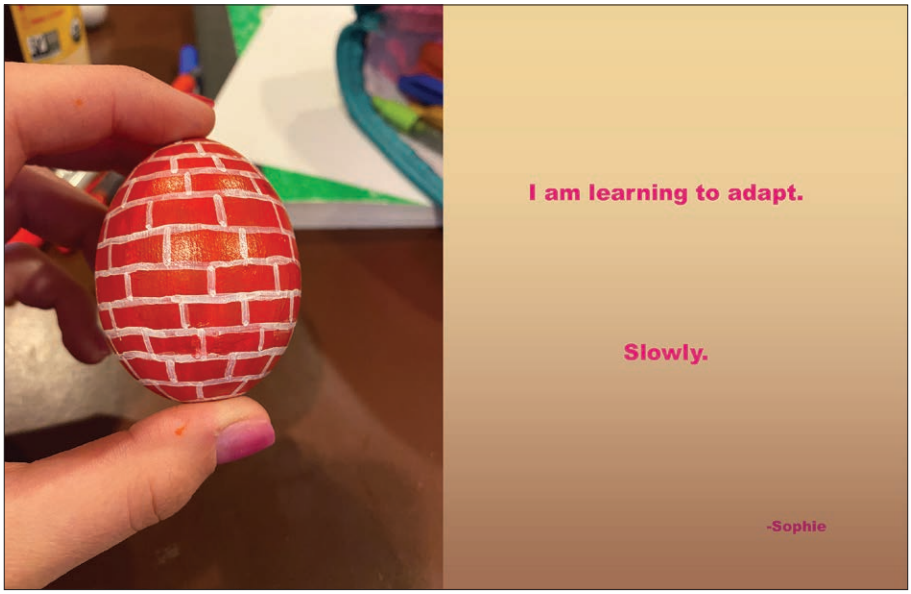


Figure 5. *Quaranzine*: quotation and "Who Are You…?" project by Sophie E.

pair their strengths (technical ability, creative thinking) with the tender areas of their lives, and we faculty support students wrestling with difficult subject matter through conversations and communicating with parents, guardians, and counselors as needed. Because our students were no longer on campus, they needed to support themselves more independently than they might while at Oxbow, and so our approach was geared toward activating all available resources. By this point, students had recognized and acknowledged their own inner supports, which enabled them to operate more independently as well as better support each other. Without explicitly stating so, we had all engaged in a strengths-based pedagogy well-suited for 45 different needs and environments during a time of great turmoil that demanded constant reconsideration and adjustment.

Reimagining Student Fulfillment and Celebration

Although virtual communication was often cumbersome, student artwork proved to be a very rewarding form of communication and connection. Students readily shared their art in virtual classrooms and continually proved that creativity could tame the chaos, lift spirits, and transform limitation into possibility. Continuing to create was our most effective source of inspiration and motivation, as was sharing this with others.

Oxbow's digital *Quaranzines* revealed students' invention, introspection, and wisdom, presenting their artwork in a way that was both intimate and widely accessible. After our whirlwind loss of physical community and all sense of normalcy, the *Quarazines* attempted to provide a semblance of closure to several chaotic weeks through which our community had shown great resilience.

Students readily shared their art in virtual classrooms and continually proved that creativity could tame the chaos, lift spirits, and transform limitation into possibility.

The zines consisted of student works from "Time Based Drawing With Light and Shadow," "Everyday Sculpture," and "Who Are You…?" Because "View From My Window" is a time-based and collaborative project not easily represented in one image, it is not included in the zine but can be viewed in entirety in the "News and Notes" section of the school's website,[1] along with all emergency online instruction assignments and both *Quaranzine* publications.

Through the remainder of the semester, our students successfully engaged in a "Final Project," the culminating experience of the Oxbow curriculum, which is modeled after an artist's journey pursuing a line of inquiry through research and creative work. Students' remote, independent, and self-driven work was possible because they had actively cultivated self-reliance, communication, and a supportive culture with peers and faculty mentors. Teaching and learning is a reciprocal relationship, which extends to teachers' ability to support what they ask students to do. Care was at the heart of our faculty's approach, and this meant welcoming student feedback and responding to their needs by making adjustments in class structure, deadlines, and discussions. Emergency online instruction demanded that our school community embrace fluidity while honoring each other and taking the time to be thoughtful. At Oxbow, we often liken a semester program to "planting the seeds" for growth, much of which lies beyond the scope of our program. However, in many ways, quarantine conditions helped these seeds sprout quickly in unexpected and inventive ways. Even in harsh conditions, creativity, curiosity, and community blossomed. ■

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[1] http://www.oxbowschool.org

THE BATTLE OF COVID-19:

Art Teachers as Indestructible Force

Sarah Ackermann
and
Trina Harlow

Some compare teachers to superheroes. This problematic comparison forges unrealistic expectations for teachers (Spencer, 2019), but at this moment, it seems fitting, as thousands of art teachers rally together for the good of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is their story.

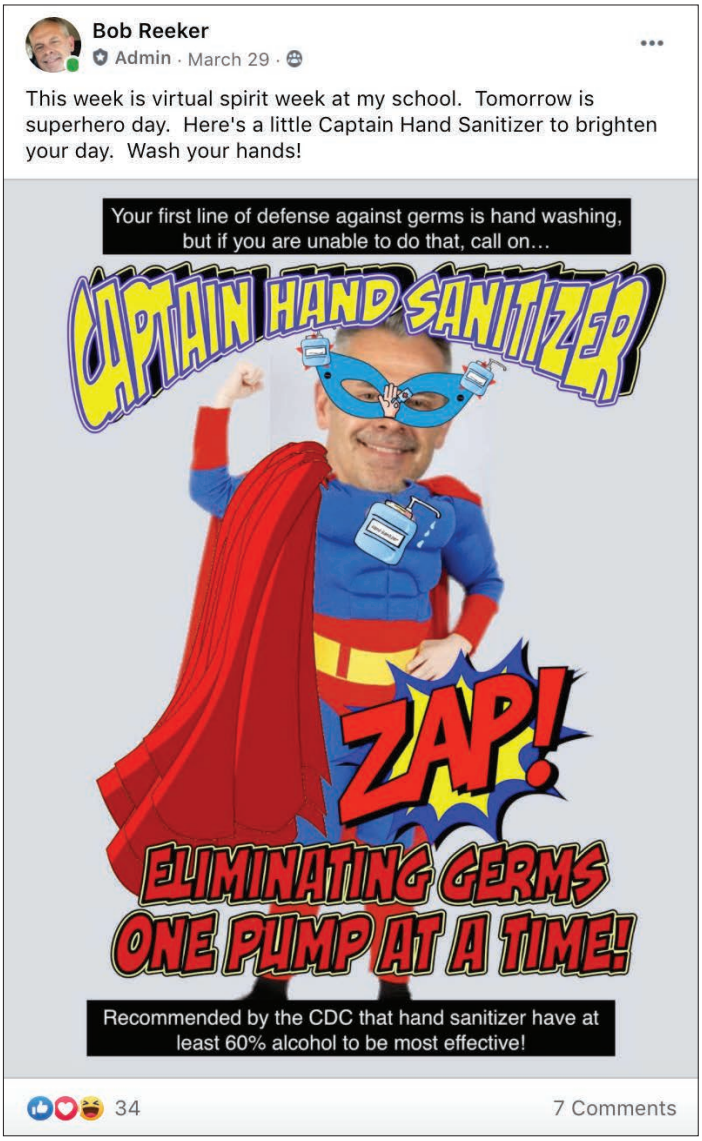


Figure 1. Bob Reeker, group leader, inspiring the group.

The Villain

The nemesis was COVID-19. By March 2020, schools were closing. Everyone looked to the sky, hoping to see Superman swoop down for the rescue. Instead, the virus paralyzed the country, and the educational system had to make swift and immediate changes.

The Heroes

Teachers waved white flags while shifting to remote learning. Teaching strategies needed to conform to students in no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech situations. Curricula needed to be flexible but engaging. Teachers and students craved strategies for de-stressing. In response to these needs, the Online Art Teachers (K–12) Facebook group (OATK12; Figure 2) was formed as a service project on March 11, 2020, by Trina Harlow, art professor and coordinator for a university art education program. Harlow assembled a team of six leaders, which has since grown to 11. Leaders serve in state, regional, national, and international roles, in addition to OATK12. Codirector Bob Reeker (Figure 1) has been a longtime figure in the National Art Education Association. While monitoring the Facebook page, leaders maintain a website and Google Drive, and they host digital events, including conferences.

Membership includes art teachers primarily, but also generalists. Many joined for helpful curricular ideas. Others joined for a sense of community. All 50 states and nearly 120 countries are represented. By April 28, the group had more than 10,000 members. The group leaders celebrated with a photo (Figure 3). By November, the group had exceeded 18,000. These heroes proudly wore their art teacher capes as they helped rescue comrades from the dastardly villain taking over classrooms.

The nemesis was COVID-19. By March 2020, schools were closing.

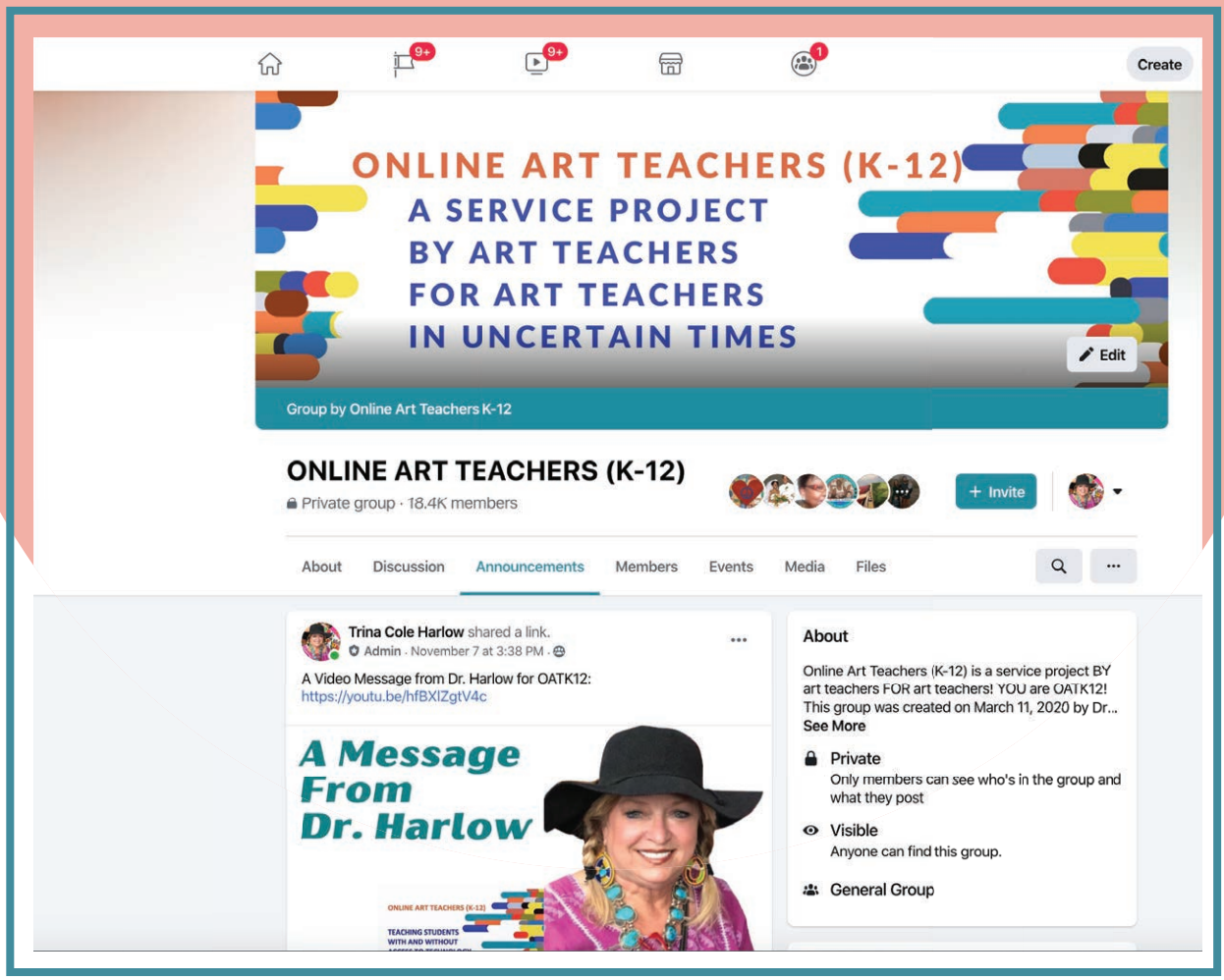


Figure 2. OATK12 Facebook page.



Figure 3. Leaders celebrating 10,000 members.

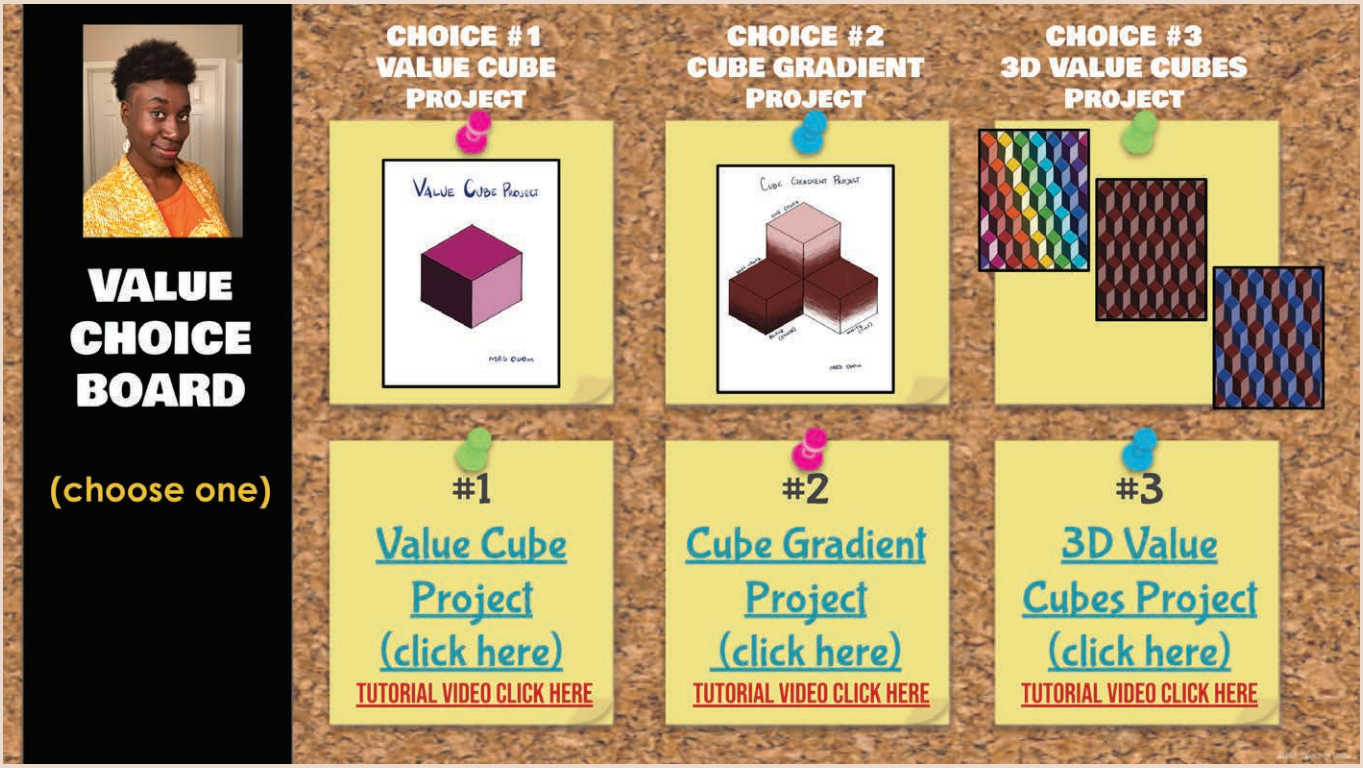


Figure 4. Choice board by Sasha Odom.

Leaders watched in awe as members rose to the occasion, offering ideas for the unique challenges associated with at-home learning. Leaders noticed the following patterns in page posts.

Choose Your Own Adventure

While art teachers faced down the virus, the tactile nature of art education posed seemingly insurmountable challenges. Hardships involved students' inability to access art materials and lack of internet or technology at large.

The pandemic reawakened the choice movement, which builds understanding through self-directed inquiry (Douglas & Jacquith, 2009). Leslie Gates (2016) defined choice-based education as granting students the freedom to execute ideas with their interests in mind. Choice categories include process, subject matter, and thematic possibilities. Group members shared carefully created choice boards, slide presentations, and teacher web pages. Figure 4 is just one example. Choice boards encouraged the use of household items or objects found in nature. Many superhero teachers reported that choice boards would now forever be a part of their teacher toolboxes.



Figure 5. Holly Kincaid, group leader, recreates works of art.

The pandemic reawakened the choice movement, which builds understanding through self-directed inquiry.

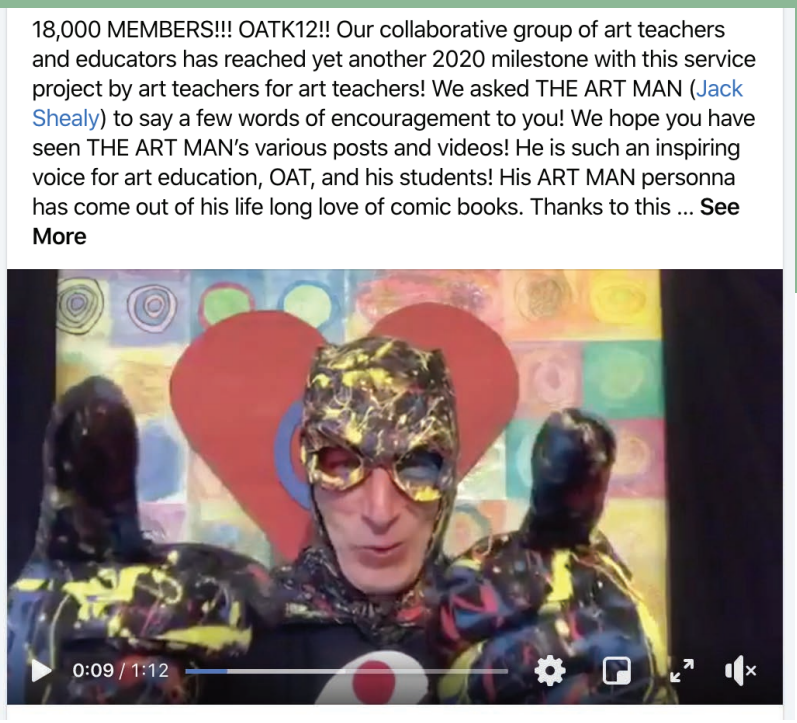


Figure 6. Art Man (Jack Shealy) inspiring members.

Put On a Masterful Disguise

As teachers transformed curricula, incorporating more choice, they physically transformed themselves as well. A popular lesson was inspired by challenges posed by museums to recreate famous artworks. Like Holly Kincaid (Figure 5), members disguised themselves and encouraged students to play along—often with a pandemic theme. Raisa Bruner (2020) shared that "this intensive form of expression is a whole new world of creative labor. In the middle of global uncertainty, it's even become an important anchor for some" (para. 1). This activity offered a way to process the changes teachers and students were experiencing because of COVID-19.

Recharge Your Superhero Battery

Yet, among creative and inspiring posts, teachers expressed an urgency for students to share their feelings. Katy Farber (2020) wrote that "we are living through a slow-motion collective trauma" and individuals are "checking in with each other and talking about isolation, emotions, and how we're coping" (para. 9). Farber (2020) described this desire for connection further as an "openness our society has resisted for decades" (para. 9). Members exchanged reflective prompts on the page, allowing students time to explore complex emotions. Teachers quickly learned that in order for students to focus on their creative abilities, they had to address emotions in their lessons.

Resolutions for Art Education

Amelia Kraehe (2020) described the work of art educators during this time as "previously inconceivable" and "herculean" (p. 4). Group members like Art Man, featured in Figure 6, served as an example of the herculean spirit of the group at large. The pandemic pushed practitioners in unimaginable ways while writing new plots for the future of art education. We propose several resolutions, as evidenced by OATK12.

Resolution 1: Technology Training and Access

The first resolution involves enhanced technology training and access for all. During this time, many reported that they were now not only art teachers but also information technology supports. For those versed in technology, the shift to remote learning was less painful. Others pleaded for help with video recording, editing, and learning management software. Employing widespread learning management systems and other tech tools in traditional learning situations could help equip teachers and learners for future shifts to remote learning.

Nicole Gaudiano (2020) warned of a "long-term gap between the haves and have nots in public education" (para. 4). Issues facing teachers and students during COVID-19 were documented within the group, including reports that less affluent, less digitally connected students were left behind. The International Commission on the Futures of Education (2020) provided the following recommendations:

> Make free and open source technologies available to teachers and students. Open educational resources and open access digital tools must be supported. Education cannot thrive with ready-made content built outside of the pedagogical space and outside of human relationships between teachers and students. (p. 6)

Technology access and training must be supported so that art education can continue for all, during national emergencies and otherwise.

The heroes in this story supported one another through COVID-19 with incredible strength and generosity, as evidenced in the OATK12 community.

Resolution 2: Advocacy

Another implication concerns the charge to advocate. Leaders fielded reports of frustrated families, being furloughed, and more. In the beginning, teachers reported enhanced appreciation from families, administrators, and so on. However, over time, teachers questioned whether they would have a lasting voice in education and working conditions at large (García, 2020).

This crisis provided an "opportunity to bridge the gap between the strong appreciation, in theory, and the challenging working conditions for teachers, in practice" (García, 2020, para. 8). Educators can help further convey the healing power of the arts to administrators and parents. By utilizing and referencing resources such as the National Art Education Association's (n.d.) Remote Learning Toolkit and Americans for the Arts's (n.d.) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resource and Response Center, group members grappled with current challenges and found the strength to advocate for themselves and their programs.

Resolution 3: Choice

With the emergence of choice as a strong curricular approach during COVID-19, art education at large should further examine the use of choice-based instruction (Purtee & Sands, 2018). Practitioners who become versed in choice during nonemergency instruction, with less structured plans for activities and experiences, can help students work with more self-efficacy and self-moderation (Harlow, 2020).

Providing students choice in how and what they create can help combat some of the adverse effects of the pandemic, including "difficulty concentrating, boredom, irritability, restlessness, loneliness, discomfort, and expression of worries" (Capurso et al., 2020, p. 65). Choice boards that explore coping strategies and help build resilience can help reduce posttraumatic stress and other critical outcomes (Capurso et al., 2020).

The Coda

The heroes in this story supported one another through COVID-19 with incredible strength and generosity, as evidenced in the OATK12 community. They circumnavigated instructional concerns. They developed relevant and flexible curricula. They helped those who felt powerless. Still, the fight goes on. Should a sequel occur, the field would do well to lend more significant attention to technology training and access, advocacy, and choice-based approaches. These considerations are paramount for us to truly prevail and create more equitable and engaging art education experiences. ■

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Pandemic Reflections:

Cultivating Authentic Learning Through Reflection in Art Class

Amber Tackett

During the global pandemic, I found myself with more time to create a painting I envisioned during a trip to Israel in February 2020. As I painted, I reflected on my pedagogical practice. I realized the need to create opportunities for authentic learning or students' construction of knowledge through reflecting on relevant life experiences and real-world issues (Gnezda, 2009). During this challenging year of a pandemic, social unrest, and isolation, I realized I needed to focus on three pedagogical practices to promote more authentic learning in my classes:

1. sharing my creative process and how it reflects my experiences,
2. empowering student voices through higher order–thinking questions to connect their experiences to the unit's topic, and
3. encouraging students to create art that profoundly connects to their experiences.



Figure 1. Amber Tackett, *Suffer the Little Children: Israel's Apartheid*, 2020. Oil on canvas.

ONE MOVING EXAMPLE was a student who decided to draw herself as a faint outline in the window of her house because "we couldn't leave our houses at the start of the quarantine."

While visiting Israel and Palestine, I witnessed the prejudice and segregation Palestinians endure. I have known for years about the turmoil between Palestinians and Israelis. Nevertheless, I was unprepared for the stark reality of the isolation that so many Palestinians face in their daily lives. The group I traveled with visited the Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center in Bethlehem, where we listened to the plight of many Palestinians who desperately want peace but are growing weary in their segregation. That trip inspired my painting, *Suffer the Little Children: Israel's Apartheid* (Figure 1). The painting reveals the glaring difference between the new Israeli settlements built against international law in Palestinian-occupied areas and the less-than-stellar living conditions of many houses within the walled-in regions of Palestine. Palestinians are also highly restricted in traveling beyond the confines of their walled cities.

With a new focus on these three practices, I shared my painting with my Art 1 students at the end of a unit on interpreting art. Before providing any contextual information about the painting, I asked my students to answer three questions. What do you think the subject matter of this painting is, and why? What details in the artwork do you want to know more about? How does the image make you feel? For the second question, most students asked, "Why is there a wall?" After explaining my painting and its subject matter, I asked students to reflect on how the information made them feel and if it changed their minds from their initial interpretations of the artwork. Most students noted they were unaware of the situation in Palestine. One student summed up her reaction: "Now that I know the background, it makes me feel a feeling of sadness and emotion towards the citizens who cannot travel from the land behind the wall" (personal communication, December 4, 2020). Giving students space to reflect on art helps them connect what they see externally to what they know internally (Yancey, 2016). Millman (2010) suggested that reflection can "allow students to examine their feelings and thoughts and to analyze their new knowledge" (p. 24).

Stewart (2009) asserted that "art education is empowering students to own their own ideas, develop their own voices and to listen to the ideas of others" (p. 16). Her prescription for cultivating student empowerment is through "processes of questions and answers" (p. 15). Lampert (2006) also affirmed that "developing thoughtful rejoinders to open-ended questions, and considering the varied responses of fellow classmates enables students to reconcile and link the new ideas of classmates with their own existing thoughts on content issues" (p. 47). Thus, higher order questions can lead to authentic learning.

When discussing art movements in my art one classes, I continued encouraging students to reflect on their experiential connections. In a lesson on the Great Migration series by Jacob Lawrence, I inquired about students' emotional reactions to the series. One student replied, "I feel uneasy. I feel that his paintings are racist because the Black people have no faces" (personal

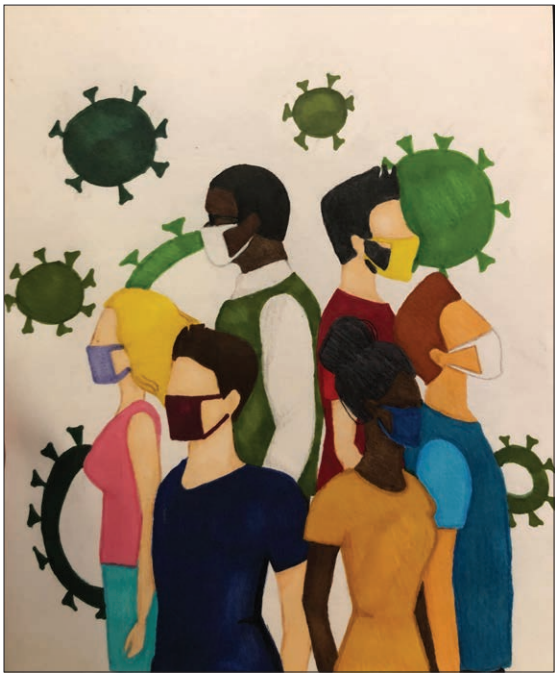


Figure 2. Student drawing, *The COVID-19 Pandemic Changed the Way We Live Our Daily Lives*, 2021. Marker on paper.

Figure 3. Student drawing, *The Black Girls That Matter*, 2021. Colored pencil on paper.

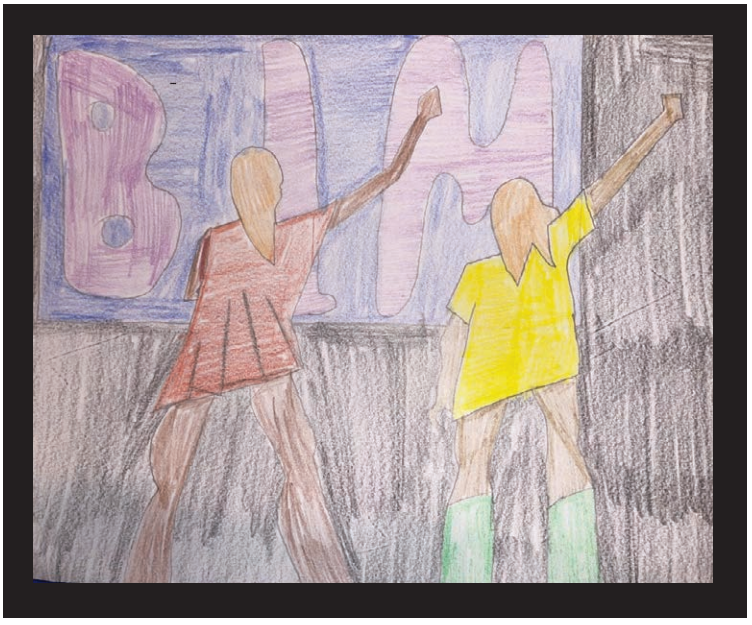




Figure 4. Student drawing, *Stuck Inside*, 2020. Pencil on paper.



Figure 5. Student drawing, *Tears for Liberty*, 2020. Graphite on canvas paper.

communication, October 19, 2020). His statement led me to ask if they perceived any correlation between the depiction of Black people in Lawrence's paintings and current events or their personal experiences. Students drew various connections to the Black Lives Matter movement, police brutality, immigration, unemployment, and diverse experiences of prejudice and inequality. Next, I showed Helen Zughaib's series, *Syrian Migration*, and discussed how she modeled Lawrence's work to convey a contemporary event. I then challenged them to create an artwork connected to their personal experiences over the past year, using Lawrence's series as inspiration (Figures 2 and 3).

According to Gnezda (2009), "Art in the adult world is often created as a meaningful response to personal and cultural experience," and "students, like adult artists, should have opportunities to deal with their potent experiences through the sensory, creative, and manipulative process that is art" (p. 49). When students create art that constructs meaning from their experiences, it can "enrich their knowledge of themselves in relation to the world" (Gnezda, 2009, p. 49). During my Drawing and Painting course this school year, I shared *Suffer the Little Children: Israel's Apartheid*. I explained my inspiration and why I felt personally moved by the isolation I witnessed while in Israel and Palestine. We discussed how the global pandemic has made people feel isolated—especially poignant because this discussion occurred virtually. I then asked students to reflect on and create an artwork about isolation through a series of questions: What was the event or moment you felt or witnessed isolation? How did the experience make you feel? In what ways could you represent or symbolize your experience of isolation? How could your choice of media best reflect that experience? In their initial idea development, students answered the questions in writing and drew a series of sketches. After discussing their ideas with them, students began working on their final artworks.

A few students represented the isolation from the pandemic. One moving example was a student who decided to draw herself as a faint outline in the window of her house because "we couldn't leave our houses at the start of the quarantine" (Figure 4; personal communication, December 4, 2020). A couple represented isolation of others, such as the separation of children from their parents at the U.S.–Mexico border (Figure 5), while the majority represented very personal experiences with isolation.

One student reflected on her experience being hospitalized with a severe health condition: "I sat in a hospital bed, 4 hours away from my family, my friends, my home. I was poked and prodded and I was tired and scared. I fought harder than I ever have to go home" (Figure 6; personal communication, December 4, 2020). Another student represented the internal struggles with feeling different from her peers:

> This illustration is designed to depict anyone, not just me, who has experienced the feeling of otherworldliness. At times, I feel so different and alienated from others. It is like being locked away in a bubble, separated from everything, so far away from all others. (Figure 7; personal communication, December 4, 2020)

After showing their work in a critique, I asked students to reflect on their peers' work. One responded,

> I realized that there is not just one form of isolation, but both mental and physical isolation. I was shown that everyone goes through hard periods differently than others. Sometimes isolation can be a good thing. I would've never understood their experience of isolation until I saw and heard what meaning their artwork had. (personal communication, December 7, 2020)



Figure 6. Student painting, *Hospital Isolation*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas panel.

Gnezda (2009) stated, "By teaching artmaking that asks our students to deal creatively with their authentic experiences, we help them to make constructions—both cognitive and concrete—of their knowledge about self and world" (p. 49). Rather than just creating lessons that result in cookie-cutter art, art educators should create lessons that promote more authentic learning



Figure 7. Student drawing, *Otherworldliness*, 2020. Charcoal on paper.

THROUGH TEACHERS SHARING THEIR APPROACH to artmaking, encouraging students to formulate their voice through reflective questions, and empowering students to create artwork that connects to their experiences, students will discover they are not isolated from the universal human experience.

because it fosters students' engagement and helps them formulate their positionality in the world. Through teachers sharing their approach to artmaking, encouraging students to formulate their voice through reflective questions, and empowering students to create artwork that connects to their experiences, students will discover they are not isolated from the universal human experience. ■

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Collaborative Postal Collages:

Staying Connected Through the Distance

Kristin Vanderlip Taylor



Figure 1. Art Education Club collaborative collage artmaking event, February 2020. Photo courtesy of the author.

NEAR THE END OF FEBRUARY 2020, our university Art Education Club officers introduced members to a collaborative collage artmaking project, inspired by Marty McCutcheon's *Check It Out* project, described as a

> "library style" round-robin collaborative collage project.… Participants "borrow" works-in-progress… and independently contribute to that progress. The person who works on a collage in its first stage will complete that collage in its final stage, after three others have made contributions. (Round Table Collaboration, 2020a, para. 1)

Club members—preservice art education students, mentor art teachers, and higher education faculty—had recently voted to meet more than once a month for artmaking opportunities. These new events were organized around creating work together to promote individual and collaborative experiences while strengthening relationships and building leadership capacity. With 18 club members, partners, friends, and children in attendance at our February artmaking evening, the energy level was high, and participants shared ideas and stories, creating a lively environment and excitement about exchanging projects (Figure 1).

The plan was to leave with someone else's collage, adding to it over the month, bringing it to the next meeting scheduled for the end of March, viewing works in progress, and exchanging them for another collage to contribute to. Little did we know there would be no in-person meeting the following month—or for an undetermined period of time to come!

As reports and guidelines about COVID-19 rapidly changed the world, the phrase "socially distanced" surfaced everywhere. However, in a press briefing, the World Health Organization (2020) quickly reframed the need for *physical* distancing instead to curb the transmission of COVID-19, highlighting the importance of staying socially connected through technology and other means to support mental health during this time of physical separation. Knowing from personal conversations that stress levels were high and many students felt isolated or disconnected from classmates and instructors, club officers and I discussed how we might support

Little did we know there would be no in-person meeting the following month—or for an undetermined period of time to come!



Figure 2. S. Thomas, J. Skinner, and J. Zuniga, *Urban Sprawl*, 2020. Mixed media collage. Photo courtesy of S. Thomas.

and connect members beyond just another virtual meeting, which has been known to lead to technological exhaustion, often called "Zoom fatigue" (Wiederhold, 2020).

Physically Distanced While Socially Connected Through Art

Blatt-Gross (2017) noted, "The process of making art might play a constructive role in establishing a sense of community cohesion. Collective artmaking offers a vehicle through which joint endeavors can facilitate connections and commonalities" (p. 52). Not wanting to lose momentum, we quickly adapted the collaborative collage project to work within new shelter-in-place parameters, utilizing McCutcheon's original "circular and sequential" mail-art collaboration, the *Postal Collage Project* (Round Table Collaboration, 2020b) as a reference for restructuring our in-person exchange. In this iteration, 11 participants (seven preservice students, two mentor high school art teachers, a club member's nephew who is an artist with autism, and me as faculty club advisor) engaged in a collaborative collage exchange via the U.S. Postal Service, working in groups with three or four members. Each person originated a new collage or chose one to add to from our February meeting. Each collage was forwarded via mail to the next person in the group for additions until collages returned to the creator/initiator, concluding the project. Once collages were returned, they were photographed (Figures 2, 3, and 4) and shared via our university art gallery social media sites.

Positive Responses to the Postal Collage Project

This opportunity to make art together, although physically distanced, connected participants in unexpected ways during this time of isolation. Eight participants shared responses to the experience. J. Zuniga noted,

> Collaborating with other artists was great. I'm really hard on myself whenever I try to create something. Voicing some thoughts and receiving positive feedback from members helped me feel supported. They reminded me that this was supposed to be fun and not cause stress. (personal communication, November 6, 2020)

C. White Anderson reflected on the comfort and positive sense of accountability she felt, explaining that

> using a visual language for communication during a pandemic gave me a sense of freedom and safety within the confining walls of my "shelter in place" home where I knew someone was counting on my voice as a valuable addition to our collage community. (personal communication, October 25, 2020)

Others commented on the artmaking process and the transformation of collages as teammates added on, one participant sharing, "I learned more about my group mates. My collage came back to me surprisingly different [from] what I was looking for but I loved it" (N. Rostamian, personal communication, October 25, 2020), and another stating, "It was interesting to see what I started through the eyes of two different artist[s]" (anonymous, personal communication, October 29, 2020). The two mentor art teachers both shared positive personal and professional outcomes. One commented that the experience "got [her] to make art on [her] own after doing the group project" and "made [her] enjoy the opportunity to collaborate more" (J. Perry-Martin, personal communication, October 26, 2020), while another shared,

> I felt a part of something. Everything else in life right now is so isolating. Knowing these artists were in a similar boat, but carving out time for fostering our own creativity was a really positive reminder. I had so much fun I started carving out more time to make my own art. This helped me get a good rhythm and enthusiasm going before school started. I was certainly able to translate that enthusiasm into my classes. (S. Thomas, personal communication, November 8, 2020)

Limitations of the Project and/or Process

While most participants communicated that they enjoyed the postal collage exchange, several challenges were noted, including access to materials, time to contribute, communication about the timeline and process, and a lack of notes about intended themes for each collage. Regarding this last comment, S. Thomas suggested,

> It would be really helpful if there were some kind of statement, or feedback from the originator as to their overall idea/theme. I worried about straying too far from what was given. Worried that something pretty might have been what they wanted so I had better stay away from humor or controversy. I didn't know the artists so I didn't feel comfortable adding my usual style to anything except my own work. (personal communication, November 8, 2020)

This opportunity to make art together, although physically distanced, connected participants in unexpected ways during this time of isolation.



Figure 3. N. Rostamian, A. Mercado, and A. Aleman, *Transformation*, 2020. Mixed media collage. Photo courtesy of N. Rostamian.

Working from home after leaving our classrooms and workspaces abruptly, some participants did not have access to materials and tools they might have used otherwise. Time, a concern for many under typical circumstances, became an obstacle as well, as we all navigated the near-instantaneous shift to working and learning in an online world. There were challenges in communication about the process, as some participants were unsure if everyone needed to create a new collage or work from someone else's, delaying the exchange timeline for some groups. One participant noted a desire to connect online with other participants to "not feel so isolated" (J. Skinner, personal communication, November 7, 2020).

Moving Forward: Recommendations for Future Collaborations

Feedback provided by participants identifies clear suggestions for anyone wishing to implement this project:

1. Ensure all participants have access to materials, or provide suggestions for commonly available materials.
2. Extend timelines and establish clear benchmarks with email reminders for stages of the project.
3. Ask all collage originators to create an artist statement in the beginning, clarifying themes of the work and/or a vision for contributions.
4. Provide opportunities for participants to meet online during the process to build community and share ideas.

By addressing these recommendations, participants may feel better supported with materials, time management, clarification of ideas, and connections with others, the last of which was the intention of the project during this time of physical distance. Moving forward, we hope our next project will produce more opportunities for participants to connect and clarify ideas, strengthening our community through collaborative artmaking while remaining physically apart. ■



Figure 4. C. White Anderson, K. V. Taylor, J. Perry-Martin, and S. Patakian, *Cycles*, 2020. Mixed media collage. Photo courtesy of C. White Anderson.

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RESILIENCE AFTER ISOLATION:

The Restorative Power of the Arts Revisited

James Haywood Rolling, Jr.

ISOLATION DISTORTS PERSPECTIVE and can alter the course of human social history. Personally, I have not seen a play on Broadway, a new film in a movie theater, or works of art in a crowded gallery since before the pandemic shutdowns and forced isolation. I desperately miss those connections with an audience engaged in the collective emotional response at the heart of any aesthetic encounter. Isolated, we can quickly lose heart and our sense of connection with one another. Human beings are social creatures with a powerful and complex integrative structure which, like the heart muscle, is at its strongest whenever our various chambers, valves, inflows, and outflows pulse together as one.

Nevertheless, we are vulnerable to falling out of rhythm. COVID-19 is just one of the disruptions we did not invent ourselves. Still, whenever the pulses of contemporary societies and nations grow out of sync with one another, our shared breath becomes erratic, and we are capable of destroying not only ourselves but our neighbors and natural habitats as well. A few years ago, I encountered a brief video on Vimeo about the strange thing that happens to astronauts as they view Earth through a spaceship window for the very first time. These select astronauts experience what is called "the overview effect," wherein it becomes suddenly obvious that the entire planet, and every human breathing on its surface, is one vast unified living system (Rolling, 2013b, p. 72).

Standing on Earth's surface, we are fettered not only by gravity but by the boundaries of our senses, our localities, and our inherited philosophies and worldviews. In stark contrast, any view from an orbiting space station window or capsule provides a clarifying overview of our interactive planetary ecosystems—with only the thinnest layer of fragile atmosphere protecting us all from cosmic oblivion. Any personal doubts about how changes in the environment on one part of the planet can affect the climate on another part of the planet suddenly disappear.

Unfortunately, most of us will never gain the perspective of "the overview effect" by becoming astronauts or viewing Earth from beyond its atmosphere. And yet, unless we find a shared big-picture perspective that galvanizes a collective awareness that we are all in this together, our ability to behave accordingly often fails to coalesce (Rolling, 2013b). Consequently, it is all too easy to destroy much more of our habitat and communal relationships than any collaborative solution can remedy long before we learn to get a handle on our worst misbehaviors.

The misbehavior that is bound to have the most enduring consequences is our failure to consistently behave together to achieve the greater common good. Each person, nation, or subculture stubbornly maintains self-interests as an overriding priority. We find it difficult to hold the big picture in mind. Toward that aim, the remainder of this article is written to provide the catalyst for a viral "overview effect," expanding our collective perspective beyond prior limitations and finding our way to the altruism that will ultimately sustain us. In this article, I will present an overview of how even though isolation distorts perspective, rediscovering our connections is restorative.

Finding Our Way Back

Last year, near the close of one of the most turbulent and dangerous years in the history of our nation, I was asked to curate the 2021 Myers Art Prize, a juried art competition open to all students currently enrolled in the Art and Art Education Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. This year's theme was resilience. According to its etymology, this word was originally a scientific term, taken from the Latin verb *salire*, to jump, and first used in English by the early scientific methodologist Francis Bacon. The "resilience" of a material is its ability to return to its original shape after being compressed, or stretched, or otherwise traumatized in its basic constitution. We have all experienced trauma at some point in our lives, and trauma undeniably changes things as we have known them. Part of our contemporary experience now includes a once-in-a-century global pandemic, and the collective trauma of this past year and a half has not yet been told. Nonetheless, our creativity continues to sustain us. We remain resilient, even when it seems we have lost ourselves.

Finding our way back from crisis or trauma requires paradigm shifts. A paradigm is defined as "a body of beliefs and values, laws, and practices which govern a community" (Carroll, 1997, p. 171). Scientific historian Thomas S. Kuhn (1962/1996) postulated that paradigms develop because of their success in representing the prevailing understandings, shared beliefs, and research solutions of a community of practitioners. However, when "new information cannot be integrated into the existing paradigm or when problems persist which cannot be resolved" (Carroll, 1997, p. 174), a new paradigm is likely to arise to replace it. Make no mistake about it—a crisis or trauma rewires prior thinking and responses. Likewise, finding a way back to our prior sense of ourselves also requires a remapping. The governing maps a community of practitioners relies upon to navigate their field typically undergo numerous revisions over time. Relinquishing the will to care for those more vulnerable in our communities is a natural consequence of our isolation. We have lost the big picture—that isolation is not our natural state and that we must breathe and behave together if we are to survive.

At the end of the day, the loss of a paradigm is *not* the equivalent of a paradise lost. Arguably, the shedding of old paradigms is actually the beginning of a reconciliation with new and revelatory data necessitating models for resilience, well-being, and a rebooted society. According to Richard Purtill (1970), "From its origins, science has tried to give a simple and unified account of the world" (p. 304). Yet, before science was systematically organizing the known world (Meadows, 2008), the arts were methodically applied toward doing the same, albeit differently. Arts-based methods have long been used to render an enduring and communicable sense of the world and how we are to function *meaningfully* in it if we are to persist as a species. When a paradigm is lost, whether to ignorance or resistance, it can sometimes be replaced and renewed by the methods and practices that preceded it.

What if we as artists and art educators utilize the many uncertainties of this critical moment as an opportunity to press the reset button and equip our communities to be more "creatively response-able" than ever before, after both the novelty and virulence of this new coronavirus has passed? There is an art to any form of cartography, even if the course being charted is a course from where we currently are as a community of practitioners, to whatever comes next. Resilience means that what comes next is somewhere we have been before. When I was a young student in the High School of Art & Design in New York City, I sometimes chose to give my art away. It is important to note how out of character this was for me. I am a methodical art maker, and I invest a lot of time in my work. To this day, I am quite content if my work stays in my studio and surrounds me. I have rarely even sold my art. So for me to give something that I made away, it had to strike me that someone else *needed* it more than I did (Rolling, 2013a).

Doing this—practicing art as an altruistic exercise—restores perspective as if we were astronauts in orbit, viewing Earth as a single system for the very first time. Revisiting our creative practices invites the restoration of our relational connections, our collective heartbeat, our shared breath. We need the big picture again and more than ever before. Our arts practices arguably serve no other purpose than the common good, generating what philosopher Jacques Derrida (1976) defined as a surplus, "a plenitude enriching another plenitude" (p. 144). The history-making creation of these surplus energies, designs, and ideas (Bataille, 1949/1991)—whether our feet are planted solidly on the ground, or we are engaged in some overdue high-level, blue-sky thinking—allows us not only to be less isolated but to reconnect, whether in galleries, theaters, or ad hoc performance spaces, as more human than ever before. ■

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Artfully Learning to Transcend Isolation

Adam Zucker

Engaging in art, whether via creating, teaching, viewing, or discussing, is a socially conscious and embodied action. Therefore, in the wake of numerous art museums, schools, and the culture at large temporarily shutting down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my colleagues and I were in uncharted territory. Our thoughts and actions shifted to maintaining and growing our practices in light of the significant disruptions related to the global health crisis, as well as the social and environmental injustices that have major implications for our communities. Before our collective quarantine, loneliness was already on the rise, with an overwhelming number of individuals experiencing relationships that they considered unmeaningful (Novotney, 2019). Although the past year has been very trying, I have experienced a silver lining, which is the solace and wisdom of a broad network of educators and artists worldwide. In the extended time I am spending online, I have discovered unique opportunities to collaboratively learn, develop craft, and share resources that are helpful to overcome the isolation of physical distancing. I have also adjusted my art and pedagogical methodologies to incorporate digital media and virtual platforms to share my work and find inspiration from others who are writing, creating, and teaching online.

As I was gaining experience in the classroom, I launched *Artfully Learning*, a blog that explores contemporary art examples that have symbolic learning capabilities inside and outside the classroom. This project's initial impetus was to find my comfort zone in approaching topics related to teaching and learning. However, it has evolved into a resource that helps a variety of individuals think about integrating contemporary art practices into their curriculum. So, when the pandemic became an omnipresent force in our lives, I knew I had a platform to contribute to the discourse of navigating the realities of remote art education.

I have come to realize that social distancing can be an art movement and an educational experience. The nature of social distancing is to exhibit empathy to collectively minimize the risk of people becoming sick. We are keeping a physical distance because we care about ourselves and value others. Wearing masks, crafting our own forms of personal protective equipment, and making sure to keep at least 6 feet apart when interacting with others has become a performative and artistic action. I envision it as a type of relational artwork that explores avenues for social, cultural, and political change through collaborations with other individuals, communities (including our classrooms), and institutions (including our schools). As an educator and artist, I am inspired by Joseph Beuys's (as cited in White, 2014) concept of social sculpture, John Dewey's (1938) philosophy of learning via experience, and Paulo Freire's (1970) and bell hooks's (1994) models of critical thinking as a way to become liberated from negative social, cultural, and emotional forces. Each of these influences reflects how an artist works to "transform and reshape the conditions, thinking, and structures that shape and inform our lives" (Beuys, as cited in White, 2014, p. 91). Freire (1970) succinctly reflected our current moment and how we can transcend feelings and experiences in isolation:

> Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from [people]. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without [people], but [people] in their relations with the world. (p. 71)

Thankfully, digital media offers us various resources for connecting and collaborating with our peers while observing and enacting physical distancing. The most rewarding thing about being an education blogger is seeing people reading, sharing, and citing my work as a resource to inspire their academic, professional, and/or personal development. *Artfully Learning* has been linked on professional development forums and school resource platforms, and I could not be more honored to know that educators are sharing my writing and resources with their colleagues and students. I get feedback from teachers, graduate students, and professional artists, and I have consulted with them during classroom visits, studio visits, and workshops (Figure 1). Now that virtual conversations have taken precedence, I have been able to expand my network and have started collaborating on art education and mental health–related endeavors with an artist from the United Kingdom. We are currently developing a platform that will support mental health communities through art-centered projects and the presentation of artists exploring mental health conditions.



Figure 1. The author presenting one of his mixed-media artworks during a virtual studio visit and workshop on mental health and art education, 2020. Screenshot from Google Meet. Courtesy of the author.

My favorite aspect of education is that it never ceases to make an impact on our lives. The same can be said about art and visual culture. We have a holistic desire to learn, develop new skills, and make our mark on the world around us. How we share the excitement around our thirst for knowledge, and how we work creatively and compassionately with others will determine our path as a society. Educational programming and curricula need to be fluid and accessible to reflect the diversity of the communities and student bodies they serve. All students should have access to resources that nourish the mind, body, and spirit. The arts do this by giving students a means for personal expression and fostering a sense of self and collective values. Everyone has the ability to think and perform artfully, despite their technical skills. The arts strengthen our ability to be open-minded and make judgments in the absence of clear-cut solutions. Eisner (2004) asserted that the arts teach us to be flexible and adapt to situations by allowing creative and social processes to take precedence over any predetermined notions of product. In this day and age of unknowns and uncertainties, it is the critical and creative thinking we acquire from art education that will keep us innovating and responding to problems in an empathetic manner. Artists have answered the call by making and donating masks for essential workers and leading therapeutic artmaking workshops for remote participants.

Being critical thinkers, astute observers, and empathic responders is as important as ever. The arts teach us to employ these social, emotional, and cognitive facets and project them into the world. Although we might not be able to meet face-to-face due to our adherence to quarantines and physical distancing, digital communication methods can have a similar and even greater impact on our understanding of one another. Under quarantine, I have actually been more social and eager to participate in activities and collaborative endeavors. Digital communication has enabled me to broaden my relationships with artists and educators whom I have not had a chance to meet in person. These bonds and relationships will be even stronger when we can safely congregate once more. ■

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Evolving Identities Within COVID Culture

Kelly Hanning



Figure 1. Kelly Hanning, *Evolving My Identity*, 2020. Linoleum print, 24 × 36 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Living through COVID-19 while teaching art online has encouraged me to reflect on my purpose as an art educator.

As a lifelong artist, I have always used art as a platform to share my story: my struggles, triumphs, anxieties, and individual experience. Using art as a platform to amplify my voice inspired me to become an art educator, showing my students that art can be a powerful platform for *their* stories as well. My passion for art education has evolved into a large part of my human identity, relying on a symbiotic relationship between me, my students, and our artwork. However, while navigating online teaching and learning, I have become increasingly aware of scaffolding for individual creative vulnerability while digitally maintaining relationships. Creative vulnerability refers to a student's comfort level in expressing personal thoughts or feelings through artwork and sharing such work with peers. According to Cathy A. Malchiodi (2005), "self-expression is used as a container for feelings and perceptions that may deepen into greater self-understanding or may be transformed, resulting in emotional reparation, resolution of conflicts, and a sense of well-being" (p. 9). Creative vulnerability is an important aspect of teaching art that must be acknowledged in the era of online learning and postpandemic childhood experience, as it has the power to help students cope with and confront their ever-changing emotional landscapes.

Due to the physical disconnect between my students and me, I am grappling with my identity as an art educator. Building positive and sustaining relationships in the art room has always been part of my teaching philosophy, but sustaining these relationships through a computer screen is a new challenge for which I am developing satisfying solutions. According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, learning has its basis in interacting with other people. In other words, students learn best when interacting with teachers and peers and will need simulated collaboration to attain quality learning during remote teaching. While simulated collaboration may limit learning in that students will not physically be working face-to-face, it allows for greater flexibility within students' lives and allows for a more student-centered approach to scheduling cooperative work time at their own pace.

Although technology allows educators to reach and teach students from a distance, I am struggling to engage *every* student. When students do not participate, my art educator identity fades, creating yet another teaching obstacle. Along with other art educators, I have had to resort to new ways of maintaining relationships within our art educator identities through video posts, Twitter and Instagram feeds, and even mailing out hand-decorated postcards to students. For example, a Massachusetts art educator, Christine Doherty, created a YouTube channel for her class while using online platforms that allow students to continue sharing and talking about their artwork, similar to in-person art classes. During her live video instruction time, students can use the chat box to type an "h" (for "hand"), indicating they want to share their work. When chosen to share, students hold their work close to the screen for other students to see. According to Doherty, "a huge piece of art is not just the creating process, but also the

sharing process" (as cited in Lee, 2020, para. 8). Allowing students to create and share is vital for pandemic learning and must be modeled throughout teaching sessions to build teacher–student and peer–peer digital relationships while recovering personal art educator identities.

Similarly, I am reclaiming my art educator identity and connecting with students by creating and sharing artwork that visually communicates *my* particular experience and emotional processing within COVID culture. According to Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve *with* help and encouragement from a teacher varies and necessitates explicit scaffolding so that students can achieve creative goals. Therefore, by modeling specific ways to use art as a vehicle for self-expression and visual communication, students will feel more comfortable and inspired to share *their* voices through art. For example, this relief print (Figure 1) communicates those feelings as a melting version of myself. My hands are seen holding the liquefied identity, representing a sense of newfound control amid the feelings of loss and confusion.

Art education's role in pandemic learning is to foster a learning community that enables students to use creativity and artmaking processes to positively cope with the pandemic, teaching students resiliency in ways that only the arts can support. According to the Institute for Arts Education and STEAM, establishing a community within the classroom encourages a growth mindset (Gidcumb, 2017). Psychologist Carol Dweck (2015) explained,

> In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. (p. 11)

By applying a growth mindset to the virtual classroom, I am modeling creative vulnerability within the context of our classroom community. While digitally creating a space where students feel safe to develop and share their thoughts without judgment, I continue to prompt students to share their COVID culture experiences in artistic ways to amplify and validate their voices. For example, students have created comic strips, digital scrapbooks, and postquarantine maps to communicate personal experience. As a result of these virtual teaching experiences, I have taken on the role of "digital relationship builder" by mimicking in-person interactions, like sharing my *own* artwork through online platforms, resulting in higher responses from students while video chatting and sharing our work in real time.

Despite the fact that educators have described our new role as "virtual" or "remote" teachers, I have gained comfort while evolving into a digital relationship builder. For example, I started writing art-themed songs and posting them online for my students to view for "Friday Fun." A Friday Fun song consists of about 1 minute of my singing and guitar playing, based on a different art topic each week. Although I am not a professional singer, it helps students see creativity differently and allows us to connect by commenting on the video and adding their written responses. During a class Zoom meeting, one student mentioned, "Your Friday Fun songs are very special to me, Mrs. Hanning" (C. Palermo, personal communication, May 11, 2020). This shows that students value personal connection within online learning. Additionally, sending students online messages, scheduling one-on-one video chats, and validating student experience are important ways to create relationships. Recommendations for fellow practitioners include digital message boards, providing consistent feedback while valuing student social–emotional growth, and scheduling remote meeting times with small groups of students to create deeper connections and build stronger relationships. Although most teachers are already using these communication methods, I found that it helps to incorporate student voice within these communications. For example, when critiquing work in a Zoom meeting or hosting breakout rooms for discussion, students are given a choice between two or three prompts. The student chooses which prompt they relate to the most and expands from there. This method requires the student to become an active participant, keeping them authentically engaged for more extended periods. It is time to begin letting go of what I *thought* my identity was as the traditional "art teacher" and fully embrace the role of virtual relationship builder while facilitating authentic creativity remotely. ■

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Expressions of Care in an Art Museum Education Course During COVID-19:

Moving to an Online Class Format

Carissa DiCindio

When The University of Arizona moved classes online due to COVID-19 after spring break, I was caught off guard. I first made plans to teach my art museum education courses virtually for a few weeks, later understanding that we could not meet in person again (Figure 1). Additionally, our class lost physical access to the university art museum, which closed with the university. For the remainder of the semester, the 18 students in my undergraduate art museum education course met online for only a few classes, working asynchronously and responding to each other through a discussion board between these meetings.

Because students were disappointed that they could not give tours in the museum as planned, we shifted online to VoiceThread to create tours remotely. VoiceThread is a participatory presentation program that allows the designer to upload images, audio, and videos, and record themselves interacting with content



Figure 1. Students plan for in-person tours at the University of Arizona Museum of Art.

(Brunvand & Byrd, 2011; Kirby & Hulan, 2016). Likewise, participants can use text, video, and audio recordings to respond to the presentations.

Students created tours for their classmates that focused on a single work of art or groups of related works, designed to take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Moving to this format meant tours lost the immediacy of in-person experiences and responses in real time, but there was still an opportunity for engagement. I encouraged students to create tours using the interactive techniques on which we focused during the semester, including dialogic inquiry (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011; Hubard, 2010, 2015), activity-based teaching (Kai-Kee et al., 2020), and exploration (DiCindio, 2020). Students incorporated these concepts into tours by designing interactions, such as conversations, responsive drawings, guided meditation, poetry, and short stories. The activities were experimental, and the format of VoiceThread made it easy for students to adjust initial designs and make revisions. Students learned that these online tours did not inhibit opportunities for engagement and brought new possibilities, including getting close to images of art, drawing on top of the images with VoiceThread tools, and easily incorporating other forms of media. Participants in tours could rewind if they missed a detail, take breaks, and add to their responses.

Similar to findings from recent studies (Delmas, 2017; Kirby & Hulan, 2016), this assignment demonstrated the potential for building community in online learning environments through VoiceThread. Students could see and hear classmates, and learn more about each other through asynchronous interactions; they shared interests, observations, and stories while participating in tours. Students demonstrated an understanding of the assignment and activities, but they also found ways to connect personally.

Challenges of Shifting Online

Although the discussion board ran smoothly due to students' familiarity with it, VoiceThread brought challenges as students converted physical tours online. I designed an example, wrote instructions to offer structure and guidelines to the assignment, and sought support through the university for technical questions and formatting issues. VoiceThread projects were accessed through a website, which can be inequitable to students unexpectedly working from home without the internet or a strong connection. Because the assignment was asynchronous, students could work on assignments when they could connect to Wi-Fi, and the university offered internet resources for students close to campus.

Building Relationships During COVID-19

During these first weeks of online classes, the novel *The Age of Miracles* (Thompson Walker, 2012) came to mind. The book begins on the day when scientists announce Earth is turning slightly more slowly in its rotation, called "the slowing." Because the entire planet experiences this event, there is nowhere to escape it. The story is told by Julia, who turns 12 at the time of the slowing. People around Julia react to the slowing in different ways; while some hoard supplies, try to flee, or deny its existence, others focus on caring for one another.

There are parallels—and indeed differences—between recent events and those in this novel. However, I connected to this story through similarities to the pandemic and because, despite how life quickly changed, human relationships persisted and grew during this time through acts of kindness. The novel is about human connections just as much as it is about a catastrophic event. It is a story of Julia's relationships, ones she builds and loses during this time. As Julia told it, "And it seems to me now that the slowing triggered certain other changes too, less visible at first but deeper. It disrupted certain subtler trajectories: the tracks of friendships, for example; the paths toward and away from love" (Thompson Walker, 2012, p. 33).

Remaining a Community Online

Online, students found in-between moments to show expressions of care by checking in with each other, offering encouraging words and stories about their experiences during this time of isolation. They checked in with me, too, suggesting television shows and books and sharing art made during quarantine. We found opportunities to visit virtual museums together. They were patient as we experimented with new online challenges.

Returning to a school year that looks different, I am encouraged that we can have meaningful experiences even when physically apart, and I realize I need to make room for these in-between moments in my courses. I think of bell hooks's (1994) words: "As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence" (p. 8). University classes will look different, but I believe these connections will continue. ■

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Portraits Across the Distance:



Figure 1. Josué Rivas, *Portrait of Xiuhtezcatl Martinez*, 2020.

Connecting and Collaborating Through Film and Photography in a Pandemic

Jessica Hamlin, Caitlin Gibbons, and Alexis Lambrou

The Pandemic Hits New York City

When talking with New York City educators about the circumstances of teaching during the upheavals wrought by COVID-19, common terms get repeated: "brutal," "chaotic," "confusing," "traumatic," "disorienting," "sad," and "lonely." While art education often includes digital tools and platforms, and many educators explore and produce digital media to engage student learners, the new realities of remote teaching left many teachers outside of familiar teaching methods and comfort zones. On top of the immediate concerns and questions about how to reach students and shift learning online, the pandemic exposed stark inequalities across race, class, and gender demographics that have always plagued education (García & Weiss, 2020; Harwin & Furuya, 2020; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Underneath the headlines about the additional stress, anxiety, and educational losses in terms of equity and academic measures, there is a quieter story of the isolation, anxiety, and resiliency of teacher and student learners during this time (Kurtz et al., 2021; Loades et al., 2020; Minahan, 2020). Through creative forms of reflection, collaboration, and production, the arts provide



Figure 2. Jessica Chou, *Portraits From Quarantine*, 2020.

a unique space to reveal, address, and reimagine the realities of living through a pandemic for students. This instructional resource is written as a conversation between two teachers and an academic colleague who realized a shared commitment to fostering community and student collaboration through digital media at the height of the 2020–2021 pandemic. Written as an interview/dialogue, the three educators initially met in the graduate program in Art + Education at New York University (NYU) and have continued to stay in touch to share practices, challenges, and friendship.

Caitlin Gibbons teaches media and filmmaking at Digital Art & Cinema Technology High School, a public high school serving predominantly Black and Latinx students (49% and 37%, respectively), with 81% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, in Brooklyn, New York (InsideSchools.org, n.d.-b). Alexis Lambrou teaches photography and media literacy at Bard High School Early College Manhattan (BHSEC), which has a student population that includes 27% Asian, 13% Black, 20% Latinx, and 38% White, with 41% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (InsideSchools.org, n.d.-a). Located in lower Manhattan, BHSEC is considered a "screened school" that requires specialized application materials and encourages accepted students to earn a tuition-free associate's degree during their junior and senior year. Jessica Hamlin is a clinical faculty member of the Art + Education program at NYU, which has a focus on contemporary art, social justice education, and critical multiculturalism. In the early months of the pandemic and as the virus continued to require social isolation and quarantine, educators across the country were focused on their students' lack of connection and feelings of isolation and disenfranchisement as they were disconnected from school campuses and peers. During a conversation among NYU Art + Education alumni, Jessica suggested to Caitlin and Alexis that they share their experiences of teaching during the pandemic because each were facilitating experiences with digital media that prioritized student voice, opportunities to visualize their unique realities, and connect with others who were experiencing related yet distinct pandemic realities. Both educators were enacting forms of collaboration that "create a culture of caring" (Delacruz, 2009, p. 1) that felt timely and important to share with other educators.

"It all just got pulled out from under us…"

Jessica: How did you each experience the beginning of the pandemic with your students?

Caitlin: In April 2020, I was noticing the extreme depression most of my students were experiencing. Our school has a robust film program, and before quarantine, my sophomore class was just about to start production on their final spring films. When the world turned, that opportunity was pulled out from under us as our equipment became inaccessible due to the lockdown order. Attendance rates for remote learning were drastically dropping, cameras went from on to off, students stopped communicating, and the overall can-do enthusiasm present in March had disappeared.

Around this time, I started attending the "Educator Coffee Hour" hosted by the nonprofit Photoville and met fellow art educator Brenna McLaughlin, who teaches photography at another high school in New York City. We gelled instantly and found many parallels in our teaching experiences. As our conversations evolved, it became clear that our interest in collaborating could also inspire student collaboration and connection. We were interested in collaboration as a form of "working simultaneously on the same problem and moving into a new space of understanding together" and as a space where students turn "their attention to the invisible constructs that govern their lives and see themselves reflected

Figure 3. Jackie Russo, *Isolation Portraits*, 2020.



back through the person with whom they are working" (Newman, 2020, p. 791).

We decided on a video project to bring together our photo and video classes from different school and quarantine contexts. The project, *Quarantine Diaries*, asked students, on a volunteer basis, to document their experiences in isolation using smartphone filmmaking techniques. Our goal was to facilitate creative opportunities for students to utilize media to work together as "networked collaborators" (Freire & McCarthy, 2014, p. 29) to rebuild community and help us and our students feel a little less lonely.



Figure 4. Josué Rivas, *Portrait of Eryn Wise*, 2020.

Alexis: At the end of the 2020 school year, I thought about what the fall would look like if we were to remain fully remote. I wanted to design a curriculum for my 10th, 11th, and 12th graders to provide space for connection and possibility that was also joyful and engaging. Given that we were still teaching online, I wanted to make the curriculum relevant to our current social and political moment and was also thinking about creative digital collaboration as a strategy (Freire & McCarthy, 2014; Newman, 2020) and "a space for playful experimentation, alternative thinking, and radical transformation" (Hamlin & Fusaro, 2018, p. 12). I was seeing a lot of photographers making beautiful portraits over platforms like Zoom, FaceTime, and WhatsApp. I thought this method of making long-distance portraits was an important opportunity for students to harness the digital platforms we had become tethered to in the pandemic while gaining inspiration from contemporary artists who were experiencing and documenting the pandemic from unique perspectives with the same tools.

Quarantine Diaries and Video Portraits: A Collaboration Between Students and Schools

Jessica: So, how did you begin? Where did you start?

Caitlin: As Brenna and I entered our virtual collaboration, we decided to create student groups that would allow for maximum comfort while also promoting new connections between our students. We created groups of four students that would include a pair from each school. We matched students based on personal technologies they had access to—smartphones, iPads, etc.—and similar artistic interests and goals. This allowed for more support and problem solving when using the phone as a tool in the filmmaking process. We then created a set of prompts for students to start their documentation and exchange. In their groups, students chose one prompt and sent weekly video messages to each other. Some examples of prompts included "show and describe the view from your window," "film your morning routine," "share your favorite part of the day," "film or photograph what's bringing you joy," and "what you miss." Brenna and I also participated and sent each other video messages, which helped us define our class sequencing, model the creative process, and discover technological challenges.

After building initial connections with weekly video prompts, we talked about shot composition, lighting, and framing. We slowed down the technical film work substantially and recorded our live sessions so that students could access the information when needed. Slowing down the curriculum also allowed for more practice with concepts and more reflection and revision of their work.

Alexis: In contrast to Caitlin's long-term collaboration, I wanted to create a project that was short in scope and low stakes. *Long Distance Portraits* began as a series of mini-portrait experiments for students to connect with one another in class by making portraits of each other over Zoom. Students built on that experience by connecting with loved ones and taking long-distance portraits outside our student pairings. Some students made portraits of family members they did not get to see very often because they are essential workers; some collaborated with their siblings, others chose friends in their neighborhood whom they were still unable to see in person. In our class, students see each other every day on Zoom, but only from the shoulders up, so I asked students to make portraits that represented a new perspective, something different from how we see each other every day. Students were encouraged to experiment, play, get weird, and most importantly, find joy in the process, to find the passion and excitement that bell hooks (1994) talks about in *Teaching to Transgress*, as a form of liberatory pedagogy during an exceptionally constrained and oppressive time.

We started the project by discussing the creative and technical aspects of portraiture. How is making a long-distance portrait similar and different from making a portrait of someone in front of you? A certain amount of direction is often given by the photographer to the person who is being portrayed. What could that direction look like over Zoom, FaceTime, or WhatsApp? Should you instruct your subject to stand near the window or illuminate their face with a flashlight? In small groups, students discussed these questions and then worked with a partner of their

choice to try out their ideas. We also reviewed the foundations of composition, lighting, capturing moments, and symbolism—all concepts covered throughout the semester.

Inspiring Students: Sharing Portraiture From the Pandemic

Jessica: During this period of the pandemic, there was an amazing proliferation of creative work being shared online. Exhibitions moved from galleries and museums to virtual spaces, artists moved their work onto social media, and people who simply had extra time and creative energy on their hands shared their creations across the internet. It seemed that everyone was sharing and populating the internet with performance art,

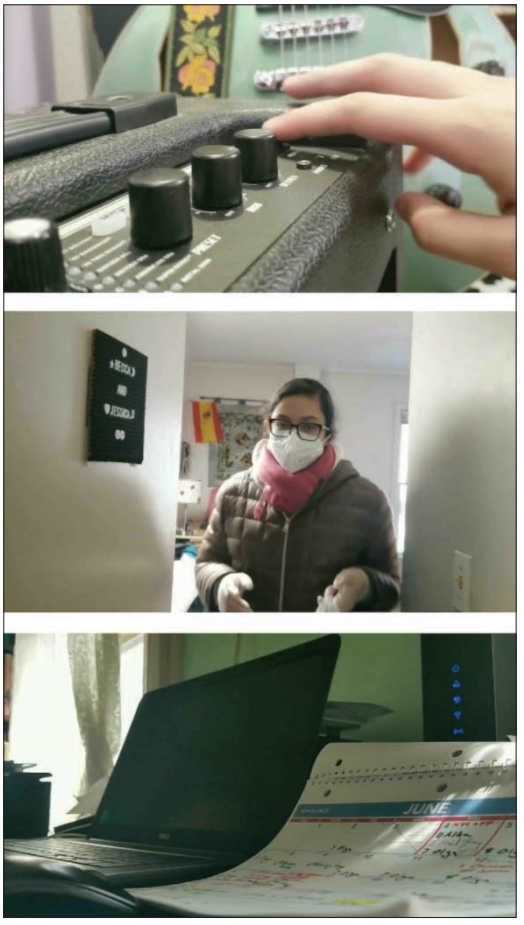


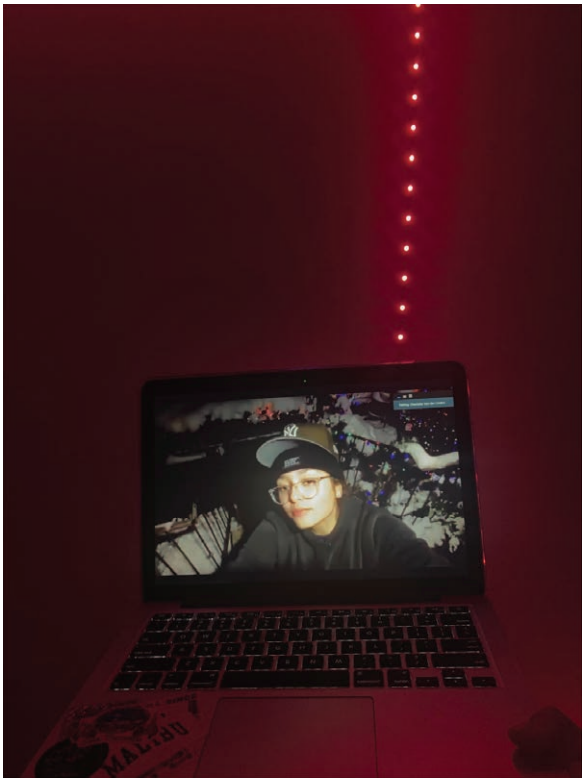
Figure 5. Student film stills from *Days in Quarantine*, 2020. 18 × 36 cm. Image caption: "Through quarantine, like many people, I have struggled with finding things to pass the time. Though I have had a more forgiving schedule because of the stay at home order, I found myself repeating days over and over doing the same activities. In this film, I want to show what a normal day in these uncertain times looked like for my family as we got stuck in the same monotonous routine. Creating this project and participating has shown me how to be versatile and use what I have at hand to create something as well as how to work with my peers to make art. I created this film by using my phone to shoot video and sound editing software to write an original score for my work."



Figure 6. Student film stills from *A Time in Quarantine*, 2020. 18 × 36 cm. Image caption: "My film captured me doing everyday things at the expense of quarantine as a high school student. I was inspired to create the video through a film collaboration our school did with Art and Design High School. I started recording myself throughout the days, weeks, and eventually months, and in the end I took the most interesting content and edited it into a sequence. My film is paired with the song, Nights by Frank Ocean, which sets the tone of the film. Studying film this year, specifically cinematography, has made me think differently, more creatively, and has helped me overall in school. This process also created an interesting digital journal that I enjoy reflecting on."

creative challenges, self-portraits, and found fashion. Many of these creative projects were based on repurposing materials and stretching the boundaries of what media could do and how it could communicate. Who were the artists you were looking at, and how did you connect their work to your students and digital projects?

Alexis: Inspired by the abundance of photography being shared online, it was my hope that students would find inspiration from seeing other young artists who look like them harnessing the confines of quarantine for creative expression. We looked at a variety of examples of photographers making long-distance portraits, including Josué Rivas's collaborative black-and-white portraits.[1] Rivas reached out to his community of Indigenous



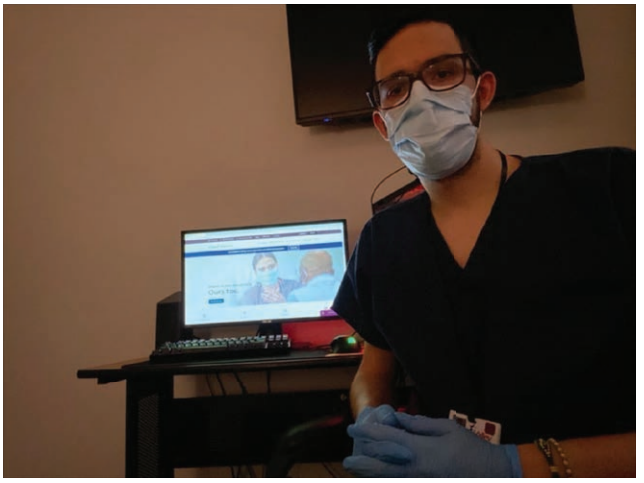


Figure 8. *Long Distance Portrait*, 2020.

Figure 7. *Long Distance Portrait*, 2020. Image caption: "This is my friend. We both really like the snow, and we especially love winter at night. So we both went outside around 9pm and took pictures with the snow. I decided to take a picture of my computer because the [LED] lights in my room kind of reminds me of the christmas spirit as do the lights in the background of [her] picture."

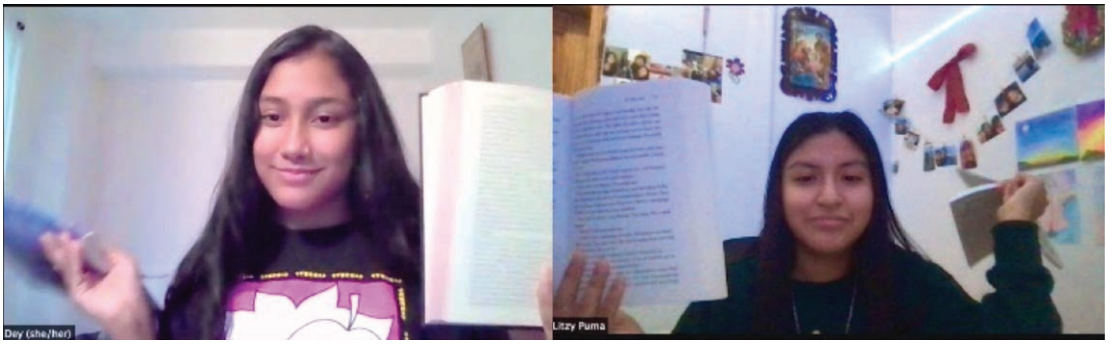


Figure 9. *Long Distance Portrait*, 2020.

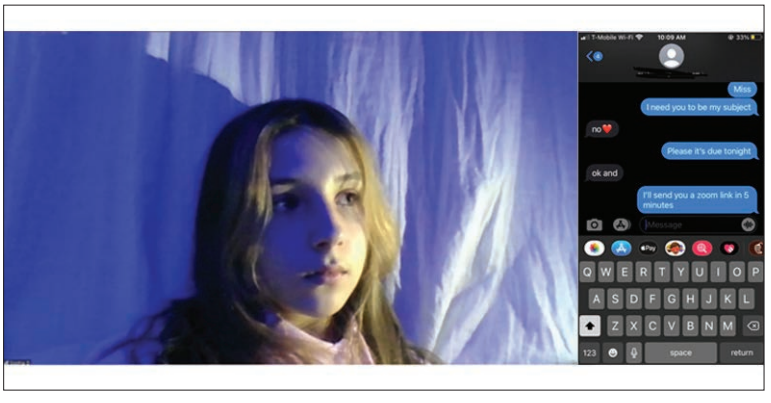


Figure 10. *Long Distance Portrait*, 2020. Image caption: "This is my very kind younger sister instantly agreeing and helping me in my photography assignment. In this photo, she is in front of a white curtain with a cool blue light in the room, and a split light from the flash of a phone. She says, 'I should have never agreed to do this.'"

elders and artists to ask them about how they could build solidarity in a time of social distancing. His portraits juxtapose screenshots from their video conversations with their text exchanges. "'I was in a bit of a panic, to be honest,' he [Rivas] says. So he reached out to his elders for help" (Hartigan, 2020, paras. 6 and 7; Figures 1 and 4). Taiwanese American photographer Jessica Chou makes portraits that are natural and candid as if she was physically in the room with her subjects (Figure 2).[2] In contrast, Mexican American photographer Jackie Russo's *Isolation Portraits*[3] were created using computers set up in her home to mimic a formal

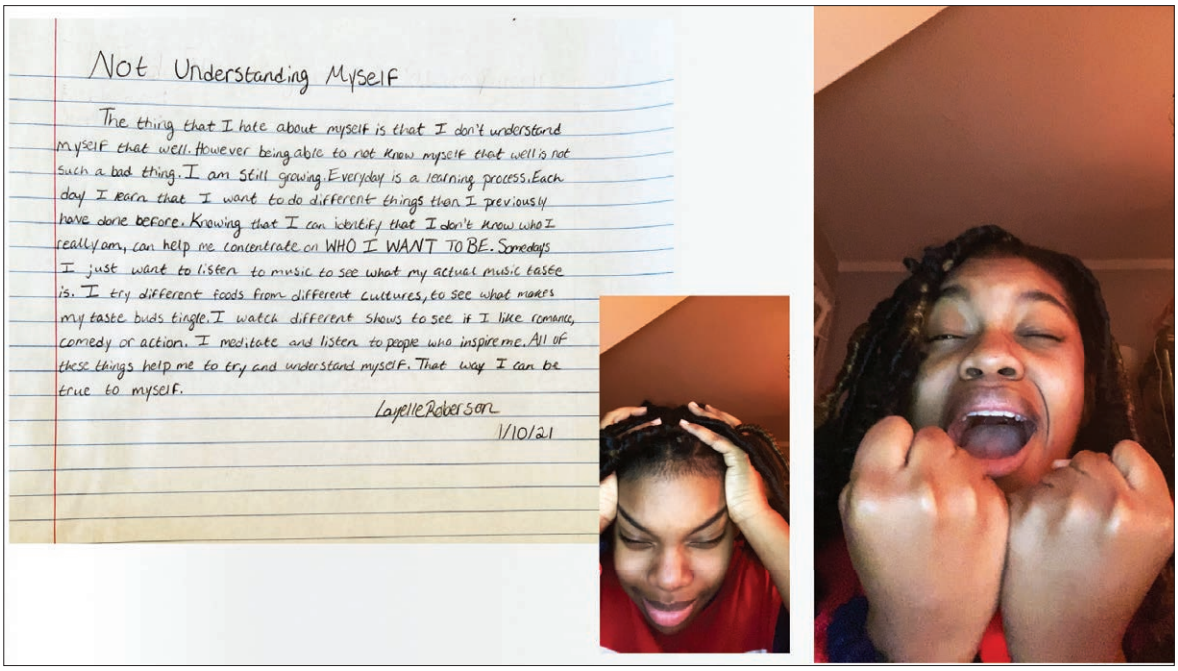


Figure 11. Student portrait, *10 Things I Hate About Myself*, 2021.

portrait session with subjects from across the world (Figure 3). We discussed the power dynamics at play in making portraits and how Josué Rivas includes text message exchanges with the people he's photographing. Looking at his work reinforced the idea that portraits can be coauthored, and that the person in front of the lens has just as much agency as the person behind the lens. Through this conversation, students became more aware of the how they could engage others with their cameras, which helped set them up to become more thoughtful photographers and collaborators.

Caitlin: Modeling and sharing our work for this project with our students was instrumental in the creation process, but we also showed the work of artists, including the work of Josué Rivas, as well as Japanese photographer Haruka Sakaguchi (n.d.), whose documentary work is rooted in cultural identity and sense of place. I shared images from Sakaguchi's quarantine diary series. Posted on Instagram, this work featured a series of self-portraits taken daily as she remained isolated in her New York City apartment. Students analyzed this work, and how Sakaguchi used documentary photography with social media to address mental health and wellness during the pandemic. As we discussed this work in class, students personally connected to her authenticity and vulnerability, which led students to open up about their own mental health struggles. Observing Sakaguchi's process also led to conversations about the power of authentic documentation.

Collaboration as Process and Destination

Jessica: Even though these portraits are about isolation, they are really about the desire for communication and connection. Some are also very creative about building opportunities for collaboration, even when alone. How did you build from these ideas about collaboration in your teaching?

Caitlin: I found that collaborating with a like-minded teacher was as much of an anchor for my teaching and artistic practice as it was for my students. While it was easy to get initial student buy-in, connecting virtually was a slow process that took a few weeks to develop. Some students were hesitant to share their videos, and we had to focus on creating a space of connection and support first before creating an environment to share student work. We intended to use media as a way of building what Delacruz (2009) described as the "conditions in the classroom that may lead to more caring societies, by giving prominence and time to conversations that matter" (pp. 13–14). We did this by reframing the idea of practice and encouraging students to love their practice more than their fear of failure; to simply try something new and discuss it together as collaborators and peers bound together by a shared experience of difficult circumstances.

Throughout the project, I witnessed my students change and share deeply personal messages and astounding stories. The project ended in June 2020 with a mini-film festival to showcase their work with both of our school communities (Figures 5 and 6). Even more incredible is that many of these students are still collaborating across their different school contexts. A student from each of our schools formed a partnership and art collective inspired by their original collaboration. Their club includes students from across our school communities and focuses on making visual resources accessible (including artwork and films) for students who have access to the arts in their high schools and hosts accountability groups for creating work.

Alexis: With my students at Bard, the "long-distance portrait" project (Figures 7–10) created opportunities for students to adapt collaborative strategies from this shorter project to create final projects for the semester developed around a theme of their choice. One student had people in her community reflect on their favorite places to be during quarantine, while another student asked her friends to reflect on things about which they felt insecure and encouraged them to see them through a positive lens (Figure 11). Videoconferencing is not a new technology, but it offers possibilities to push photography in playful and exciting ways. There is freedom in being able to connect with people no matter where they are. One 10th grader shared,

> One of the most challenging parts for me when trying to put this project together was the directions I had to give people to capture the right photograph.… The best part of this project was being able to see the different places and things people enjoyed during the lockdown.

What started as a necessity to connect and find joy during the pandemic has encouraged me to think more broadly about collaborative relationships and how we can work together in virtual and real space. Distance is no longer a limitation dictating who can visit your classroom and how you can make collaborative images.

Moving Back to the Classroom: Learning Collaboratively for the Future

Jessica: One thing that is clear to me after hearing about your experiences is that you both centered artmaking around rituals rooted in joy and collaboration that were essential lifelines for you and your students. By partnering with your students and assigning accessible, imaginative, and meaningful image-making projects, you were able to virtually recreate the need for authenticity and experimentation that felt urgent and unnourished in a time of uncertainty and stress. I love how you facilitated collaborative experiences that were intentionally designed to promote creativity, honesty, and autonomy that strengthened your students' relationship-building skills and dispelled common power dynamics in media (and classroom interactions). We often think of the person with the camera or the person leading a class as the person who is in charge, who is the one in control. Instead of thinking of technology and media (web conferencing, photography, film, social media) as tools for simply capturing reality, both projects focused on media as a tool for engagement, interaction, caring, connecting, and communication. These ideas are not specific to virtual learning nor the unique situation of teaching during a pandemic.

Caitlin: As we head back to the physical spaces of our classrooms and school communities post pandemic, I plan to bring these learnings with me and encourage other educators to use media skills and tools as a way to encourage collaboration and community building that meet students where they are while offering a space for self-representation and being seen.

Alexis: Inspired by the values and ethics reflected in Josué Rivas's portraits—which served as opportunities to develop communities of care that build resilience and self-determination in the spirit of greater connectedness, and the responsibilities implied in creating community with others—I want to continue to orient my use of media in the art classroom as a commitment to joy and play that reimagines our world and allows us to be a little less lonely.

We offer these commitments to other educators as we emerge from a difficult year and remain hopeful about the potential of art to open spaces for sharing our unique truths while building meaningful connections and a sense of solidarity with others. ■

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Antiracist Visual Critique:

Dis-ease(ing) of the Mythmaking of Asian Immigrants in Political Cartoons

Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis

How has (visual) language reinforced the disease of dis-ease in racism against Asian Americans? The virus of COVID-19 is no longer on single demand of physical immunity, yet ideological immunity to the virus of racial hatred. In particular, former president Trump's rhetoricization of COVID-19 as the "Chinese Virus" has fueled xenophobic resentment toward Chinese people and their descendants and has caused a surge of racial attacks on Asian Americans. The use of linguistic personification as a marker of mythmaking has thus done more than make the unfamiliar virus more familiar—it has shaped a worldview that classifies Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans as carriers and spreaders of the virus. However, this kind of rhetoric is not new. Rather, it is a continuation of anti-Asian rhetoric from the past that symbolically dehumanizes and excludes Asian immigrants from the U.S. social and political system. In what follows, I reflect this doubly entangled anti-Asian racism with disease in relation to the (visual) rhetorical violence of Whiteness, which has long contested, exploited, and suppressed Asian immigrants' contributions to the stolen Indigenous land known as America. In doing so, I demonstrate how, in this context, the physical disease of COVID-19 and the symbolic disease of racism have been combined to spread further *dis-ease*.

Several contemporary artists have used the term dis-ease, four of whom formed an ongoing collaborative project in 2018 commissioned by the Welcome Trust in the United Kingdom before the COVID-19 outbreak (Ghani, n.d.). Hailing from four different cities, the project centers on the themes of migration and mobility in relation to disease for the purpose of raising awareness around pandemic preparedness. The artists use this term as a metaphor to describe how illness can affect people who are sick, how it can determine whether and when to connect public health to climate change and urban planning, and how it can lock people into militarized national security paradigms.

Expanding and situating this term in a Native American context, the term *dis-ease* has also appeared in an art exhibition titled Reflecting Dis-Ease: *Eh Ateh Pahinink Ahkosiwin*—Rethinking Pandemics Through an Indigenous Lens in 2020 by a group of Indigenous artists (MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2020). This exhibition re/members historical memories of *dis-ease* through COVID-19 as a "troubling mirror" (para. 4) of colonial histories wherein European contact had far-reaching and devastating impacts on Indigenous communities via transmittable diseases, viruses, and bacteria. In focusing on "the damaged psyches, relationships, and livelihoods" (para. 1) on Turtle Island, beyond the merely "sick bodies" (para. 1), this exhibition examines the ongoing virulent code of racial violence purported by European colonialism. The project especially does so through Indigenous worldviews to get at the deeper roots of Western dis-ease.

Inspired by these uses of *dis-ease*—especially that of the aforementioned Indigenous artists—I propose the idea of disease as dis-ease to the context of social illness, particularly regarding the anti-Black and anti-Asian racism resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. I specifically respond to the recent spate of pandemic-induced racial hatred against Asians and the dis-ease(ing) of racism as a historical, visual, anti-Asian rhetoric that frames immigration in terms of disease. I conclude by illustrating how this



Figure 1. *The Mongolian Octopus—His Grip on Australia* (Source: Pryor, 1886). Screenshot. The fair use policy.

framework facilitates comprehension of the larger sociopolitical scope in which racial bodies under duress are impacted by White supremacy.

I offer the genre of the political cartoon as a site of visual rhetoric that promotes the dis-ease(ing) of Asian racialization. In this context, the production of a historical visual rhetoric describes not only how Asians have been viewed in the United States, but also, more importantly, how White supremacy intentionally constructs and naturalizes Asian people and cultures as inferior. Political cartoons as a site of mythmaking serve an important function in truth telling through their recasting of historic political events and moments as part of a commemorative national narrative that shapes perception according to a dominant script (Caufield, 2008; Medhurst & DeSousa, 1981; Vanaik et al., 2018). These cartoons act as representations of popular perceptions of events by using a variety of references to other popular images and events to persuade viewers to certain ideological stances, whether positive or negative (Medhurst & DeSousa, 1981). However, such visual commentary involves subjective framing that can distort perception and render a subject as an object (Barthes, 1957/1972). Political cartoons are thus never neutral and do not communicate objective accounts of events. Instead, they offer an enchantment of narrative possibility through what Baudrillard (1988) has called *simulacrum*, the truth that conceals that there is no original. As such, political cartoons function as a site of dominant narrative enchantment by way of mythmaking and do so by associating images of the minoritized with racial inferiority (Vanaik et al., 2018). Such a referential play of the narrative, however, is the truth that masks there is no such original image of Asian as inferior and dangerous.

As previously mentioned, the current racialized associations of Asians with disease is not new. Since the 19th century, the satirical mythmaking machine of U.S. political cartoons has been a contested site of visual culture where the collective memories of racialized imperatives against Asians have been weaponized to purvey the dis-ease of racial violence. Anti-Chinese cartoons have particularly typified the American political climate for decades, effectively scapegoating Chinese American immigrants and producing the federal Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1924 that barred Chinese immigration to America (Figure 1). Tracing the immigration history of Asian Americans reveals how the public narrative on anti-Chinese sentiment on the West Coast during the 1870s and 1880s has resulted in restrictions on Chinese immigration into the United States. Among the many racist narratives against Asians—particularly Chinese people—Trauner (1978) has illustrated the role of American public health policy in initiating sanitary reform as a primary method of preventing epidemic disease, particularly in ways that have socially and medically threatened Chinese immigrants' well-being. To rationalize the failure of its sanitary program, the U.S. Public Health Department traced all epidemic outbreaks to living conditions among the Chinese. This medical narrative constructed Chinese immigrants as a threat to hygiene and sanitation laws, alleging that they produced and spread disease and were, therefore, a danger to the nation's welfare (Trauner, 1978).

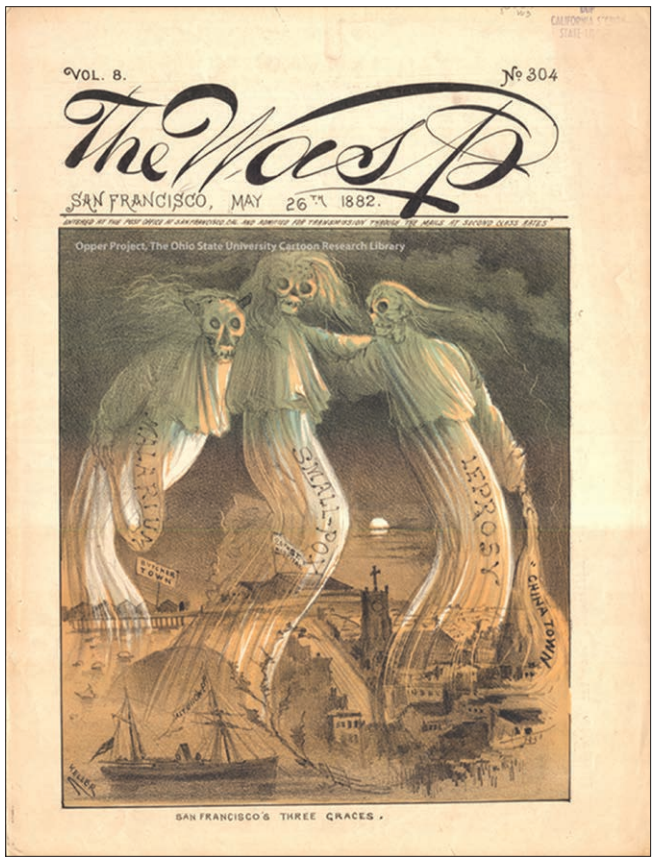


Figure 2. *San Francisco's Three Graces* (Source: Keller, 1882). Screenshot. The fair use policy.

In such a political climate, political cartoons of the 19th century facilitated a medical narrative steeped in racist, xenophobic rhetoric to rationalize societal hatred and fear of Chinese Americans. One example of this is the cartoon *San Francisco's Three Graces* (Keller, 1882), shown in Figure 2. The cartoon was illustrated by George Frederick Keller and appeared on the cover of *The Wasp* on May 26, 1882. Borrowing from the popularly accepted narrative of the three graces (Brightness, Joyfulness, and Bloom) of Greek mythology, the cartoon represents three ghosts named Malarium, Smallpox, and Leprosy. The ghosts hold a bag named "China Town" that rises above the city of San Francisco to promote the racially inflected myth that diseases were pervasive in Chinatown. The image of the ghosts' occupation of the city evokes fear and danger and resulted in White Americans accusing immigrants (particularly Chinese immigrants) of spreading disease through unsanitary living conditions. In this way, the narrative furthers a larger colonial conception of Western colonial superiority by employing the virtue of Greek mythology's three graces as its origin and base, a move meant to associate the image of the three ghosts with the diseases and vices of the East. This medical narrative of anti-Asian and disease is thus grounded in the mythological tension between good and evil within a "White racial frame" (Feagin, 2013, p. 3) that intersects with a "colonial frame" to claim there is no middle ground between virtue and vice.

The rhetorical association of Asians with disease has also been established within the binary of good versus evil, a factor that is also apparent in anti-Asian rhetoric of the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, such a binary co-opts into the rhetoric of war in a way to make combating against the foreign virus necessary. This rhetoric necessitates elevating heroes and demonizing the enemy. In a critique of the dominant narrative of the COVID-19 pandemic, Christoyannopoulos (2020) has indicated the evocation of "images of war [conjuring] up distorted myths and narratives of a heroic past national glory and military campaigns" (para. 5). Kin Cheung (2021) has further critiqued the use of the war metaphor and military language in responding to COVID-19, particularly regarding how the virus has been aligned with an image of Asian immigrants as an alien force of evil set on attacking the United States. He argues that this mythmaking reduces the pandemic to a simple story of "a heroic struggle against an alien evil" (p. 64), in which the Asian body is depicted as an alien enemy carrier of the virus to America. As demonstrated in both the aforementioned medical and war narratives, this racial logic dehumanizes Asian immigrant bodies and collapses them into a single despised minority (Lee, 2015) alongside BIPOC communities.[1]

As such, reproduction of the visual rhetoric of political cartoons reveals and naturalizes racist premises and propositions of Whiteness in that the "vision of the White eye [is the only eye] through which they [racial minorities] are seen" (Hall, 1981, p. 91).

Recommendations

In examining visual rhetoric as a means of constructing the Asian body as inhuman via a fixation on disease, antiracist visual critique recommends art educators pay critical attention to the context and framing of non-White bodies as "abject, threatening, and Other" and "White bodies as good, beautiful, and innocent" (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2018, p. 9). Doing so can reveal how racial logics have functioned to continuously assert and secure White as the center of power that determines, speaks for, and depicts others. To convert such dis-ease to ease, art educators must carefully consider alternative metaphors and narratives that equip students with antiracist, nonhierarchical, and nonoppositional views of minoritized groups. It is especially important that these narratives and metaphors subvert and revise the binaries of White/non-White, Good/Evil, and Superior/Inferior to recognize and center minoritized perspectives and voices. As the rise of antiracist visual rhetoric by contemporary Asian artists continues, I envision and propose that an alternative, antiracist visual rhetoric has the potential to turn the dis-ease of the racial contagion toward social healing and equity. ■

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Writer's Corner

Your Voice, Your Words: Inclusive, Antibias, and Antiracist Writing

Ami Kantawala, Senior Editor

For educators, our words are our currency. We live in the world of words, don't we? Hence, we value words for their meaning and nuances, which gives us a view of the world. Well beyond their immediate and lexical meaning, words have suggestive power (wa Thiong'o, 1986).

As art educators, it is increasingly relevant to stand up for the importance of the arts within the school curriculum. In a world where we are continuing to advocate for equity in education, art educators have a lot to share to be that agent of change. In that vein, the craft of writing becomes an essential tool in an art teacher's toolbox—no matter where you teach. I would like to offer some suggestions on inclusive, antibias, and antiracist writing.

Ibram X. Kendi (2019) pushes us to be self-reflexive and take that responsibility to be antiracist through "persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination" (p. 23). We then anchor ourselves in the principles of being antiracist and defining the kind of educators we want to be through our writing. This work requires radical reorientation of our consciousness (Kendi, 2019).

What is inclusive and antiracist writing?

Language is a powerful tool, as it is a system of representation that generates meanings about our world (Hall, 1997). As Stuart Hall (1997) said: "We use signs and symbols—whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects—to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings" (p. 1). The words we use can either perpetuate or shape our cultural and social realities.

Paying attention to the ways language can be and has been inadvertently used to exclude certain groups of people is the crux of inclusive writing. Often this is done out of habit and the assumptions we hold. The first step to think about writing in an inclusive way is an intentional shift in how we might think about practices, concepts, people, and groups that are marginalized. In other words, build a vocabulary that does not demean, exclude, stereotype, or trivialize people based on their membership in a specific group—but more importantly, learn how a person would like to be identified in terms of racial identity, gender, and sexuality, and use the appropriate identity descriptors and pronouns.

What are the guiding principles of inclusive, antibias, and antiracist writing?

Assumptions. We hold certain assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic class, and religion. Question them. Read and listen to those perspectives and practices that are different from yours and reach out for support when not sure.

Language and Sexuality. Categorizing people based on their actual or assumed sexual orientation is discriminatory and offensive. The acronym LGBTQ+ is constantly developing and includes a wide variety of gender and sexual identities. Using gender-neutral and gender-inclusive pronouns is a crucial way to signal courtesy and acceptance. (See the resources section for a guide to gender identity terms.)

Understanding Race and Racialization. Racialization is a historically contingent process through which racial meanings are constructed that define or redefine relationships, social and cultural practices, individuals or groups, and public and private spaces (Kosek, 2009). The term is widely used as a means to emphasize that race is a social, economic, political, and psychological process that must be explained and understood, rather than a biological one determined by one's inherent characteristics, argue Omi and Winant (2014). Racialization stigmatizes specific racialized groups while privileging Whiteness and perpetuating stereotypes. This is a form of discrimination and should be avoided in writing. For example, using capitalization while writing about Black, White, Asian, and other marginalized groups demonstrates the author's understanding of the contested and constructed nature of these words. As Marc Lacey, *New York Times* national editor, noted, "The capitalization of that one letter is the difference between a color and a culture" (as cited in Coleman, 2020, para. 7).

Language and Culture. Language, argues Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), has a dual character—not only it is a means of communication, but a carrier of culture. Hence, being cognizant of culturally inclusive language by using words and concepts that encompass all cultural, ethnic, Indigenous, and religious groups is essential. For example, not all South Asians eat curry, and not all those who eat curry might be South Asians.

Language and Disability. *Disability* is a broad term that is defined in both legal and scientific ways and encompasses physical, psychological, intellectual, and socioemotional impairments (World Health Organization, 2001; World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Members of various groups of people with disabilities have specific ways of referring to themselves that they would prefer for others to implement. By adopting these disability language choices, one honors and respects their preferences as well as offers solidarity. For example, instead of saying "a blind person," say "an individual with visual impairment."

The goal of inclusive writing is focused on making our voice relevant—those like us as well as different from us, which then allows for respecting our wide audience. Reflect on the notion of the use of language and think of these guidelines as an invitation to reexamine your choice of words and assumptions to bring greater attentiveness and commitment to the use of language. These guidelines are not inclusive or exclusive, but rather a beginning to create conditions for inclusive, antibias, and antiracist writing to empower your own teaching and learning as you continue your journey toward a racially just pedagogy while maintaining the integrity of all individuals as human beings.

Suggestions and resources (not exclusive)

- Racial Equity Tools website: https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary
- Gender identity and sexual orientation: https://www.glsen.org
- Bias-free language: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language
- Further reading:

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