

Claiming Creative Space: Bridging the Divide between Art Practice and Art Education

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ART EDUCATOR ADRIFT: ART DEPARTMENT VS. EDUCATION SCHOOL

In a survey of art education programs, Galbraith and Grauer (2004) observed that teacher educators are often afforded less status than their colleagues in other subject areas within the hierarchical structures of universities and colleges. Although teaching is a central part of being a professor, the activity and study of teaching may be seen as secondary and less valuable than research into what are regarded as more academic subject areas of higher education. As an undergraduate, I remember my surprise when advisors from my majors in Art and English politely urged me away from my passion for K–12 education, nudging me instead toward areas like graphic design or literary analysis. For me, teaching felt accessible, warm, and alive, but I worried that I might miss out on the full richness and precision of the arts and humanities.

As I progressed in my career, like Eisner, I thought a great deal about overlapping and separate spaces in Art and in Education. Dashing between daily appointments as a new assistant professor, I did not want to miss matters of pedagogy and policy in the education meetings, nor could I bear to overlook explorations of craft, aesthetics, and art history during

art department gatherings. I sometimes have felt like an outsider in both spaces, and certainly the double duty of commitments in two academic units made for a daunting schedule during my pre-tenure years.

Nonetheless, over time I've located collaborators from the arts and humanities as well as from education who inspire me—informing and affirming the duality of my work. Working collaboratively in research and publication, I often draw on procedures from different disciplinary arenas. For example, formal educational research interviews with child and adult students require institutional ethics board review and consent forms for participants. In contrast, writing about an artist may often be a more organic process of conversation or historical research in which few artist colleagues would expect to utilize such protocols.

The interdisciplinarity and ambiguity of arts education runs even deeper than these contrasts of academic code switching and variances in discourse and representation. Arts educators must each learn and re-learn to communicate with shifting and overlapping groups of makers, thinkers, parents, students, and other educators on an ongoing basis. On the one hand, flexibility and versatility of practice is part of the beauty and generativity of the arts. On the other, I still contend with a lurking uncertainty about my own claims to expertise within art and teacher education, as these are hybrid, interdisciplinary, and ever-changing subjects of making, teaching, and writing.

It is often my sense that in order to be whole, I need to juggle both artist and teacher roles. But I sometimes feel fragmented in doing so. During graduate work in the field of art education, some mentors warned me against being spread too thin, while others encouraged me to guard myself from “putting all my eggs in one basket.” The latter phrase and predicament seemed particularly poignant in terms of sustaining myself professionally. There are myriad considerations (or containers) for an art educator. How much time should go into curriculum building versus one's own artistic work? What topics are most relevant to pursue in research and teaching? And which theories and approaches will be of most value to one's field?

Responding to these and more personal considerations of social and family commitment at that time, I began to weave hundreds of tiny baskets from colorful recycled telephone wire and fill them with collections of tiny beads, fibers, and ceramic forms. The crafting of this web of baskets metaphorically reflected my attempts to make a meaningful constellation out of so many possibilities in art education, and to keep several interests

in mind and in hand. Rather than accept the art and craft of making as a small part of the already crowded life of an art educator, I have continued to seek ways to integrate my making, teaching, and writing.

Like many of my students, I am fascinated by, if not fixated on, the generative predicaments that abound in arts teaching and pull us in various directions. Amongst these challenges, I have located a sort of safe haven, or safe interdisciplinary space for myself (as a teacher educator) and for my students (as pre-service teachers) within my university's *Exploring the Arts* courses, which include an array of elective and required offerings for educators in and outside of the arts.

These *Exploring the Arts* courses are required graduate level electives for Art Education and Educational Theatre programs, designed by my mentor, Dr Diane Caracciolo with the support of arts colleagues. The conception of these courses was inspired by Caracciolo's experiences teaching in the arts while a graduate student at Adelphi University. Current Arts Education Masters students select three of these courses as part of their certification program. In addition, the *Exploring* courses are open to graduate students from English Education, Social Studies Education, Science Education, Mathematics Education, and Elementary Education as electives. Since joining the arts education faculty, I have observed content within the collection of *Exploring the Arts* courses shift and grow each semester in concert with the needs and skills of arts faculty and graduate students at our institution. For example, my recent course offerings in *Exploring the Arts* include curricula suited to my interdisciplinary research in aesthetic inquiry, teaching artist experiences in book arts, and a blend of research and hands-on studio work through zines (a kind of handmade magazine) and feminist teaching: topics I will address more thoroughly in future sections of this chapter.

In *Exploring the Arts* courses, my colleagues (other practicing artists) and I have aimed to bridge the divide between education courses that may lack deep artistry and studio courses that may neglect deeper inquiry into the art of teaching and teaching in the arts. Disciplinary boundaries between the arts and other areas of education need not separate us. Instead, they can yield to collaborations, so that connections can be made between practitioners as they build curriculum and programs inspired by museums, performances, and studio practice. These courses embrace the model of arts-based instruction proposed by Davis (2005) as a celebratory approach to the arts in education, utilizing art as both a central subject and an overarching framework for other learning, as I will explain within the following sections on arts teaching and interdisciplinary learning.

SPACES TO EXPLORE THE ARTS

My teaching experiences with artists and educators within the *Exploring the Arts* series include courses such as “Teaching & Learning Aesthetics,” “Museums for Classroom Teachers,” “Art & Special Needs,” and “Women, Literature & the Arts.” These courses aim to respond to pre-service educators’ changing needs and interests around topics including special needs learning, community arts, digital arts resources, and identity. The courses are designed to give voice to a growing community of artists and creative educators as they claim spaces for the arts in their own classrooms.

These arts education spaces necessarily lie somewhere between art-making and art-teaching in the curricula: between handmade craft and digital creativity, and between arts education histories and fresh innovations in arts education. As digital media have increased in local Long Island and New York City art rooms and homes, so too have select online and multimedia spaces and roles in these courses. Education researchers Liz Campbell and Kerry Ballast assert that, “when a teacher imagines the vastness of information and the sea of people who are accessible literally at the fingertips of digital natives, possibilities are endless” (2011, p. 18). It has been further suggested that for young people, “artistic, media, and technological connections form the basis for a complex set of contemporary practices, expanding what it means to be truly fluent in today’s multimedia landscape well beyond traditional forms of print literacy” (Kafai & Peppler, 2009, p. 49). I find that questions raised by digital media are frequently at the center of how we define arts learning and teach visual art—particularly in terms of visual culture studies.

Visual Culture (the analysis of the visual images that surround us) has been applied to reading images from advertisement, news media, and the Internet (Duncum, 2002; Freedman, 2003). What is known as Material Culture Studies broaden and deepen this visual inquiry by probing histories, cultures, and artifacts (Ulbricht, 2007). Following the Discipline-Based Art Education efforts of the 1980s that attempted to codify visual art as an academic discipline (Dobbs, 1992), Visual and Material Culture Studies can serve to make art education more of an overarching habit of mind—an approach to knowing and thinking about visual artifacts and spaces throughout our lives. One intriguing testament to the utility of Visual and Material Culture studies in re-defining knowledge and history through artifacts can be found in a remarkable high school student’s

Internet research into the historic claim that nineteenth-century accounts of discriminatory “No Irish Need Apply” signs posted in the USA were greatly exaggerated and nearly non-existent.

High school student Rebecca Fried scanned databases of newspaper periodicals and employment advertisements of the time to find numerous signs, effectively using the digital archives and visual resources of our technological landscape to prove an historian’s thesis false (Bier, 2015). Keeping in mind the potential of such archives and resources, we may want to include digital resources in the arts drawn from organizations such as the Association of Teaching Artists (<http://www.teachingartists.com/resourcesforta.htm>) or the National Art Education Association (<http://www.arteducators.org>). But we will also want to help students to craft and make thoughtful use of select digital sites in their own future classrooms. To achieve this courses must include both rich digital learning community spaces and in-depth workshop spaces in real time. In this way, educators build constellation-like networks and hands-on frameworks for teaching the arts.

In terms of the production aspect of art education, a growing global interest in hearkening back to the handmade and to crafts has simultaneously brought more soft fiber, fabric, and clay into the hands of pre-service teachers in graduate classrooms such as *Exploring the Arts*. Ceramics and craft teachers frequently express concern over students’ inability to crochet or model clay, because those adult students have scarcely ever worked with their hands in a direct engagement with tactile art media. We must search for new applications and tools with which to engage the materials of the arts, working with handmade craft objects together in on-campus classes, and weaving threads of ideas online through social media vehicles such as class blogs.

EXPLORING THE ARTS COURSES’ HISTORY

The *Exploring* courses particularly acknowledge the blending of past and present through place and the local histories and spaces of philosophers of arts-rich, hands-on education. A primary example comes from Grace Stanistreet, an author of children’s poetry (1930) who introduced multiple domains in arts education through Adelphi University’s Children’s Centre for the Creative Arts. This site of intergenerational and interdisciplinary arts education brought arts education to local children through the teaching of artists and graduate students between the 1930s and 1980s.

The Children's Centre for the Creative Arts' multi-arts outgrowth came from several key influences, including Ruth St. Denis's Dance program at the university. Kitta Brown, a former student of Jaques Delacroze, emphasized music education known as eurhythmics, which is a movement-based performance art. In addition, Grace Stanistreet's Adelphi College Theatre influenced the Centre's work in dramatic arts through theatrical productions by children. Deidre DuPree, a founding member of the Michael Chekhov Acting Company, also brought experimental theatre approaches in rhythm and movement for children. Finally, visual arts were added to the roster of arts experiences children enjoyed at Adelphi University's campus. Drama, music, dance, and the visual arts were explored each weekend, and the creative process was understood to be equally as important as the finished product. Modeling this multi-arts approach, Adelphi's *Exploring the Arts* series includes several domains of art and delves into the associated creative practices.

With the closing of the Centre in the mid-1980s (A Legacy n.d.) due to a lack of campus space and finances, the synthesis of many different arts domains remained strong in the philosophy of the School of Education's *Exploring the Arts* elective series in Theatre, Visual Art, and Creativity. Further, traces of the subjects and approaches of visiting artists and Adelphi graduate students in education remained as strands within arts education coursework for future graduate students in Visual Art Education, Educational Theatre, and other areas of education. For example, a popular course continues to investigate eurhythmics—the approach to expressive movement—bringing students from theatre and visual art into an interdisciplinary arena they typically have not encountered before. Through eurhythmic exercises matching moods and tones of music and sounds of speech to gestural movement exercises, graduate students can add to their repertoire of arts activities for young people that combine aesthetics with performance, music, and movement.

Another course in the *Exploring* series on storytelling and creative voice acknowledges traditions of storytelling from many cultures and showcases the tales and legends of students from many countries. This is done through an Adelphi storytelling festival as well as class exercises on visualization and spoken word art for teaching. These rituals echo the sort of intergenerational salon of artists and educators that worked creatively with and alongside children from the Centre. Meanwhile, other contemporary *Exploring* courses still include guest visiting artists and community arts programs for children and adolescents. In ways such as these, the foundations of the past provide scaffolding for our new interdisciplinary initiatives.

EXPLORING THE ARTS THROUGH MAXINE GREENE'S AESTHETICS

As a key historic thread in arts education, aesthetic inquiry (focusing on appreciation and interpretation) has gained a prominent place in New York art education programs such as the *Exploring* courses because of the influence of the late philosopher Maxine Greene and her legendary Lincoln Center Institutes in which classroom teachers had transformative arts encounters (2001). As a student in one of her last Teachers College graduate courses on aesthetics, I was inspired by Greene's passion for painting, pedagogy, and politics. Now a professor, I employ Greene's work to inspire *Exploring the Arts* students with rich analyses of masterpieces, stirring questions about the nature of art, beauty, and society, and rousing calls for "wide-awakeness": the act of becoming through creative thought, action, and consciousness (Greene, 2001).

These issues are all at the core of learning in the arts. We examine Greene's lectures alongside resources such as Alan Lightman's 1993 book: *Einstein's Dreams*, which re-imagines and illustrates the powerful imagination of Albert Einstein with flowing, evocative imagery. We visit New York City's museums as Greene managed with strength and flourish even when wheelchair-bound, and which my students sometimes find a daunting, if rewarding trip from Long Island. There, we examine Greene's questions around politics and poverty in concert with the paintings about which she wrote so passionately.

In contrast, Galbraith and Grauer (2004) noted in their research of visual art education programs at the undergraduate and graduate level that few college curricula include substantial aesthetic inquiry. My graduate students sometimes arrive reflecting this deficit and questioning why seemingly archaic aesthetic philosophy (focused on issues such as defining beauty in art) is necessary course content for teachers. But after encountering Greene (2001) they often depart making deeper connections between art, the senses, and the inner worlds of the child. Rather than dismiss the study of beauty as a specialized or antiquated inquiry, we can study contemporary approaches to aesthetic education for the introduction it provides to crucial connections to the senses, current events, and individual life experience.

REGGIO, WALDORF, AND FROEBELIAN ART EDUCATION

Philosophical histories and traditions of early childhood sensory art experiences strongly influence contemporary *Exploring the Arts* coursework through ongoing community collaborations. Inspired by Adelphi's 2008

renovation of its existing Early Learning Center (ELC) as a new, arts-rich pre-kindergarten facility, I along with other professors have added related course content in early childhood art education. The Adelphi center derives some influence from the philosophies of Reggio Emilia, a small town in northern Italy in which a unique and now popular arts-rich approach to early childhood learning was developed by local parents in collaboration with the late educator Loris Malaguzzi (Edwards et al., 2011).

The Early Learning Center's Director, Laura Ludlam, recounts that the center was both re-modeled and re-named after Alice Brown, an Adelphi alumna, toured Reggio Emilia and brought back principles of the philosophy such as carefully documenting and respectfully displaying student work and encouraging children's exploration of objects from nature through classroom studios and play spaces (Ludlam, personal communication, June 23, 2015). Blending local influences and resources such as the ELC in my teaching, I include discussions and activities that compare approaches to early childhood art education. For example, my students discuss the relative implications of different drawing and painting materials and of projects from various teaching models, so that they can both conceptualize and analyze each approach in action during their pre-service fieldwork with the ELC and other sites.

As there is in the professional sector for which students are being prepared, there is room set aside for variation in both the teaching and learning approaches in the *Exploring* courses. For example, while one art education program or professor may emphasize visual culture or art history, another favors craft and maker spaces. By featuring a variety, *Exploring* courses can juxtapose several different philosophies meaningfully and allow students to deepen inquiries that relate to their own eclectic needs, interests, and artistic backgrounds in relation to their current and future students.

One student may wish to arrange her future classroom like a Reggio atelier, utilizing natural wood furniture and clear storage containers for collections of art supplies and inspirational materials from nature. Another might prefer to curate a carefully arranged art supply storage area that allows thoughtful demonstrations of a focused array of wet-on-wet painting techniques through a Waldorf-inspired teaching approach. Waldorf education is meant to teach the "head, heart, and hands" of young people and is derived from the theories of Austrian scientist and philosopher Rudolph Steiner (1861–1925), with art curriculum including traditional handcraft of clay, wood, fiber/weaving, and painting (Barnes, 1991, p. 52). Thanks to our neighboring Waldorf school hosts, student teachers

can focus their clinical/student teaching experiences on Steiner's philosophies through venues like on-site weaving projects. Rather than privilege one teaching approach over another as a matter of deference to a particular professor, mentor teacher, or school site, the *Exploring the Arts* students explore and celebrate the differences and commonalities of an integrated arts education.

My university's history in art education and early childhood learning also reflects strong connections to contemporary theories of art-making, early childhood education, and creative play. In the late 1800s, Adelphi University held a Normal School for Kindergarten Teachers (then referred to as "Kindergartners") with a curriculum derived from Froebelian philosophy of early childhood learning through playful exploration of the colors, shapes, and textures of simple objects. The Normal School for Kindergarten Teachers led to the development of the Normal School for Art Teachers (Adelphi College Announcements, 1908). Froebel's theories reflected his strong belief that the children's development be facilitated through creative activity (Downs, 1978).

Within Adelphi's archives and special library collections that highlight Frederick Froebel's influence, his local followers provide us with compelling descriptions of his approach and persona:

A tall, spare man, with long gray hair, was leading a troop of village children between the ages of three and eight ... He then opened a large closet containing his play-materials, and gave some explanation of their educational aim ... I retain the memory of only one sentence: "Man is a creative being". (Von Marenholtz-Bülow, 1877, pp. 1-3)

Froebel offers art educators a great deal of practical context, for he worked closely with children developing his philosophy through creativity and practice. Froebel's hands-on legacy anticipates contemporary interest in creative play and the pedagogy of "learning playfully" (Liebschner, 2001). For teachers starting out in the field in *Exploring* classes, Froebel provides a powerful, hands-on, and responsive vision of teaching.

Art educator and researcher Diane Jaquith (2011) has observed that building children's creative skills involves a full process of "inquiry, critical thinking, creative thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and connections" (p. 14). Froebel's theories of education utilized creative skills within instruction not just to form artists, but also to awaken children's perception and their other senses (Bowen, 1901). In many ways, the

accessibility and possibility of creativity and play in education is reflected in the *Exploring the Arts* courses today, encouraging arts educators to investigate, play, and create alongside young people.

When *Exploring* students visit the university archives, they not only see journals and books written by local contemporaries of Froebel, but they can also carefully handle original and reproductions of what Froebel called Gifts (or *Spielgaben*[playgifts]) used by teachers and young people in the past. These educational materials include balls, cubes, spheres, and other objects meant to introduce young children to artistic principles such as color, shape, symmetry, and proportion through early play. Their manipulation leads to weaving, drawing, and painting explorations. In *Exploring* courses, we consider how we will craft our own classroom materials and practices, creating and arranging Gift-like manipulatives for seeing and creating. Froebelian teaching also anticipates object-based teaching and exploratory arts learning with its beautiful, colorful, elemental forms for children. By playing with a brilliant red sphere made of yarn, young people can experience color and shape directly and compare it to other forms in daily life—such as a red rubber ball or the bright flowers of an Ashoka tree that they might later depict in a painting.

BRINGING EDUCATION THEORY TO THE STUDIO

It is not only the value of teaching out of a theory that the Gifts in Adelphi Froebel archives underscore, but also the unlikely influence of educational philosophy on contemporary art. This theme becomes a valuable curricular topic in arts education. The influence of Froebel's Gifts and Occupations (skill-building interactions with materials) within the early creative learning experience has been noted in artists' work such as Joan Miro's exploration of tactility, Johannes Itten's valuing of play and improvisation, and New York sculptor Kiki Smith's childhood investigations of geometry with her artist parents (Hansen, 2003). More specifically, Froebel's Occupations had clear influence on Bauhaus exercises of artistic design for adults. Artists and educators may find rich inspirations within the recent work of artist Eamon O'Kane, whose contemporary installations beautifully document and re-imagine Froebel's Gifts, Occupations, and influences in colorful studio spaces of line, color, and shape that he designed and created (<http://rare-gallery.com/artists/eamon-okane/>).

I have adapted many of my own processfolios interpreting arts education theory into artistic form from my experiences as a former student within

Harvard University's Arts in Education (AIE) program into *Exploring* assignments. AIE Program founder Jessica Davis (2008) defines the processfolio structure in contrast with a traditional portfolio: a processfolio is meant not to contain isolated, completed projects; but rather serves as a collection of incomplete works, drafts, and sketches that show process and progress. These processfolios inspired inquiry-based art projects for my own *Exploring* students to make philosophy and theory visual in their own ways, exploring how education can both inspire and become inspired by art.

I often ask students to create altered books that investigate chosen theories of artistic development, for I find that this book arts format encourages them to engage with sometimes opaque texts and theorists artistically by painting, collaging, or annotating questions and responses directly on the page. Indeed, the altered book genre stands as a powerful invitation for the artist to change, enhance, and/or illustrate a text artistically. This approach has been a particularly engaging way to bring my students into the act of reading and commenting on arts education theory. As one example, a recent student hollowed out three discarded library books' pages into niches that she filled with representative art materials from three different educational philosophies, summarized with handmade book jackets she also designed.

The influence of education on studio art can also be observed in other teacher education program curricula. The art education program at University of British Columbia encourages teacher candidates to investigate the turn to education by various contemporary artists, curators, and others in the field of art (May et al., 2014). This trend of seeking pedagogical influences on art affirms the connection between art and education for teacher candidates, as well as the value of education to the art world. The analysis of educational theory's impact on art may breathe life into philosophical discourse in education by making it visible, tangible, and even beautiful.

However, making art in a way that is playful, theoretical, philosophical, and educative takes time to practice, space to inhabit, and care to craft—all relating to the experience of learning in the art studio. The *Exploring the Arts* series must include workshop style structures to investigate projects, sites, and concepts intensively during the summer or weekend sessions. Because the arts can be immersive experiences, the artificial stopping point of a two-hour graduate course can literally truncate the experience that a play, musical performance, or artistic piece demands of participants. Responsively, longer workshop sessions in the summer or weekends within

art studios and other arts settings enable more meaningful work with local K–12 students and guest artists and authors.

Besides temporal considerations, these hands-on workshops can lend accessibility to the arts experience, challenging even reluctant teachers in training to make, to express, to try. This engaging experience in turn, can guide them in working with a variety of learners (including reluctant ones with difficult art education histories) in their classrooms. It has been noted that there are beloved arts teachers and dreaded “dragon teachers” that each play into the ethos of fairy tales and monstrous myths of learning (Smith-Shank, 2014). *Exploring the Arts* courses strive to inform art teacher identities as leaders and to do so through analyses of local educational philosophers with an emphasis on the imagination, on arts everywhere, on celebrating art wherever and how ever we may find it and create it.

AUTHENTIC ARTISTIC ASSESSMENT AND ACADEMIC (DIS)CONNECTIONS

Whether art teachers are beloved by their students or not, in some New York City and Long Island school districts, art teachers may be assessed not by their students’ performance in art, but through mandated exams in non-arts subjects like Mathematics or Science. Increasingly, we must grapple with how we are to understand and measure arts education alongside academic subjects. *Exploring the Arts* alumni, now in the field as art teachers, bemoan the implementation of seemingly meaningless art teacher assessments comprised of tedious tasks that can even impede their students’ arts learning.

Advancing the notion that art education assessment itself is completely inoperable, Common Core has been critiqued for videotaping Teacher Performance exams, and other assessment initiatives that keep art teachers extraordinarily nervous on the job and thankful even tenuously to hold any school position at all (Kalin & Barney, 2014). When art educators are judged by students’ academic improvements in non-arts-based tests, the message seems to be that art is a handmaiden to other subjects and external learning goals. As an example, New York City art teacher Jake Jacobs found his teacher rating had dropped from “effective” to “developing” on the basis of students’ unrelated mathematics subject scores (qtd. in Strauss, 2015). Alternatively, art learning is (mis)understood though equally challenging pre- and postassessments that reduce the experience

to a single performance of learning designed more to measure rote memorization of vocabulary than more meaningful understanding and growth. The oversimplification or reduction of arts learning to the acquisition of vocabulary is a poor fit for more open-ended arts learning.

Researcher Jill Palumbo (2014) observes the common scenario of visual art teachers having few or even no arts colleagues in their schools, and thus remaining uncertain about the standards by which their efforts will be measured let alone whether that assessment will be performed by administrators unfamiliar with arts disciplines. Her research survey of visual art educators affirms that, unsurprisingly, a large majority of teachers would prefer to be evaluated by individuals who are knowledgeable about art. Since an art teacher may teach the visual arts alone in her school, it behooves her to forge connections among arts educators and teaching artists in other domains such as music, dance, or drama. Together, arts educators can advocate more effectively and, with an eye to assessment, articulate what outcomes are shared across their respective areas of arts learning.

I have witnessed some of these partnerships begin in *Exploring the Arts* courses. For example, a dancer might exhibit her handmade costumes and sketchbooks of choreography alongside visual artists' paintings and pottery, forging a close partnership and dialogues of form and expression that are artistic as well as pedagogical. The dancer might also invite us to document her dance via visual forms such as film, photography, and gesture drawings in handmade books. By sharing our crafts and our education experiences, we can amass a network of unique information about and for the arts.

I began such interdisciplinary exchanges as a master's student in Harvard's Arts in Education program with Processfolio Art Exhibitions not only with fellow visual artists but also dancers, musicians, and actors. I continue many of the conversations that began there collaborating with actors, singers, filmmakers, and other artists who are students and fellow professors. Working among my own students, I notice that, since arts educators engage with every age group, they have observations across the entire spectrum of the development of creativity. These understandings are unique to the arts, and I believe they could one day revitalize assessment itself. For example, the Teacher Performance Assessments for student teacher candidates in both Theatre and Visual Art involve analysis of works of art. Such arts-based criteria could be utilized as a multi-arts standard not only to evaluate arts student teachers, but also to examine the impact of arts educators employed in the schools. In addition, the effect of the arts on other subject learning (such as aiding related analysis

in language arts, or enhancing understanding of symmetry in mathematics) could be more meaningfully measured in this way.

Further, academic teachers outside the arts are also often powerful allies for teaching artists and art teachers. I've met several classroom generalist teachers at the elementary level who ask to attend the *Exploring the Arts* courses as part of their professional development or informally, as guests, because they have no full-time arts educators at their schools and they want to provide more arts engagement for their students. At the same time, classroom teachers can serve as experts on classroom teaching and non-arts subjects, so that *Exploring* students have access to rich voices from the field as part of the teaching conversation in their *Exploring the Arts* courses. By working with classroom teachers under these circumstances and through other collaborations, I have found that increased arts education exposure typically compels a range of educators to advocate for an increase in the integrated arts instruction that students deserve.

At the opposite extreme, my art student teachers report that they are being asked (or mandated) both to collaborate across academic disciplines such as English, mathematics, science, and history, and to simultaneously create interdisciplinary content across arts domains such as music, dance, and theatre. They feel inspired but often stretched too thin, reporting, as I remember from my own K–12 teaching, the ways in which their multifaceted role becomes somewhat diminished to that of art supply managers—providers of crayons and markers for academic posters. We must counter this tendency for art to become a mere tool or vehicle for the delivery of more valued academic content. I sympathize with art teachers' difficulties distinguishing between interdisciplinary inquiry among several equally valued subjects and a sort of slip of status as an extraneous supplement to more important learning. *Exploring* courses can be a helpful starting place for visual arts educators to bring other arts domains into their teaching, through investigations of areas like storytelling, movement, and drama.

Truly interdisciplinary arts education uniquely provides many entry points to arts learning, while also generating some fresh insights into academic subjects. It is worth the effort to introduce the accessibility of the arts to classroom and other academic teachers, but we must resist tendencies to see the arts as decorative extras or empty vessels for non-arts content. I recently taught Poetry at a New York public school in Queens where there was no full time art teacher. My role as an artist was assessed (and justified) as purely in service of English Language Arts learning, rather than as dedicated in any way to the arts. This arts education predicament is

sadly common, as New York Department of Education Comptroller Scott Stringer notes: “We’ve spent so much time over the past 10 years teaching to the test, and lost in the shuffle were arts teachers, arts curriculum, and arts space” (qtd. in Yee, 2014). To best serve interdisciplinary learning, we must begin by recognizing all disciplines that we share with students as linked forms of knowledge. Respecting the arts as bona fide disciplines in the schools necessitates the preservation and cultivation of practitioners, materials, and spaces for education in the arts.

ARTS ACROSS ACADEMIC CURRICULA/CURRICULA ACROSS THE ARTS

Within mathematics and science education, STEM and STEAM (acronyms for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics *plus* Art) approaches to art education often center on areas like robotics, fabrication (such as 3-D printing), and other technological areas that are currently of interest. STEAM has therefore been recognized as a sort of temporary reprieve for the elimination of arts electives in schools (Wynn & Harris, 2012). Although STEAM resources and events such as Maker Faires (sponsored by *Make Magazine* to celebrate arts and science projects) throughout the country do sometimes involve a few artists and designers and do explore the arts innovatively, artistic creation is definitely considered secondary to the creative impulses related to science and technology.

Doodlebots (small robots that perform drawing programs) and 3-D printers may take the place of a living, breathing artist within these settings. So too, Maker Spaces (creative spaces in which technological resources are featured) can be viewed as a substitute, rather than a supplement for the robust art studio. Further, the flashy kits of Maker initiatives can unfortunately be used in many art classrooms to mimic the oft-criticized “cookie-cutter” approaches to art-making, with a series of instructions and little open-ended learning and making. Greater future emphasis on the arts element of STEAM may help in generating more compelling, collaborative, interdisciplinary content than these short-cuts allow.

Emphasizing artists and artistry, the *Exploring the Arts* series investigates math and science through arts-centered experiences. One colleague is a painting professor who works from his color theory texts and studio painting expertise to relate to optics and science education. Such courses help students engage with art for its authentic connections to problem solving, play, and the sensory rich learning associated with the sciences.

Much of my teaching of *Exploring the Arts* focuses on the creative potential of writing with art-making, special education in the arts, and theatre education. The description through art of observations of the world is central to the development of early language fluency. Children who tell stories about works of art will also represent those works of art in their own drawings (Mulcahey, 2009). In addition, researchers have explored how children can engage with visual arts activities to help them focus during storytelling times (Kneller & Boyd, 2008). I have combined storytelling and drawing prompts in my *Exploring* classroom as a way to help adult students experience how younger students can focus and recall key events from a narrative. It is also advantageous to make several art materials available to students during the planning stages of the writing of their own stories. This is especially effective with reluctant, beginning writers (Dunn & Finley, 2010).

Art can be a crucial tool in facilitating the amazing discovery of making a mark in one's world through symbols, sounds, words, and stories. Collaborations between pre-service art teachers in *Exploring* courses and pre-service literacy specialists bring book arts projects into a sort of dialogue with literacy curricula for educators and young people. I have observed how books can create open-ended yet specialized space for educators to create and document alongside younger artists and writers in *Exploring the Arts*. In Reggio Emilia-inspired schools such as the aforementioned Early Learning Center on Adelphi's campus, the philosophy of documenting student work is clearly visible on the walls, with photographs and careful descriptions of student learning (Wurm & Genishi, 2005).

I began creating artist books while I was an Arts in Education graduate student at Harvard. Over time, I have added to my repertoire of book forms and explored with my students how we might use them in teaching. A one-page folded book can be used nicely as a routine, reproducible newsletter of weekly learning highlights. A long accordion book might be spread along a table where students and parents can view and discuss the photographs of a long-term project and read descriptions of the process. A large step book with staggered pages can become a familiar format for teachers to use to point out different parts of the daily schedule, or steps of a project or a recipe, with a distinct page, color, word, and picture to highlight sequential activities.

Utilizing these book arts projects, I've been pleased to observe my P-12 students take active, playful, and creative approaches to reading and writing. They were often eager to write with flourish on colorful paper, to read

aloud performatively, or to stop and appreciate a good story with excellent connoisseurship of what a quality tale might look and sound like. Early childhood educators, art educators, and artists have redefined literacy, for they “have recognized that the arts draw upon a range of modalities, such as speech, image, sound, movement, and gesture, to create multimodal forms of meaning” (Wright, 2010, p. 2). The visual arts are commonly a part of students’ development of literacy from the creation of early drawings with a sort of running verbal narrative commentary (Hurwitz & Day, 2011). As teaching artists and art educators, we can encourage and extend this interdisciplinary arts learning through the book arts by emphasizing the exploration of personal stories and illustrations on hand-crafted pages.

In our increasingly standardized educational climate, the practices of the artist book offer beauty in the ordinary. Through such authentic, accessible, and aesthetic resources, students and educators can discover, develop, and share their own gifts in art and literary expression. With their blending of craft, tradition, and innovation, the book arts genre typifies the sort of arts learning projects that make *Exploring the Arts* useful interdisciplinary coursework for educators.

EXPLORATIONS OF GENDER EXPERIENCES AND ARTIST IDENTITIES

Other book art projects in *Exploring the Arts* reach out to adolescent learners and investigate gender identity in the arts, for example, through a course on *Women in Art & Literature*. In this *Exploring* course on writing and gender, the making and researching of zines (handmade magazines) proves useful to an exploration of youth culture and activism. Zines have been defined as at “the intersection of art, protest, confession, and theory” (Bleyer, 2004, p. 49). In his survey of zines, Duncombe (1997) categorizes them as “noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves” (p. 6). Zinesters (who make zines) in this subcultural genre create an array of materials within a rich lineage of artists in the handmade book arts genre, including but not limited to: personal chapbooks (pamphlet poetry anthologies), diaries, commentaries, editorials, rants, news, and recipe collections.

In theorizing, creating, and distributing zines with *Exploring* students, one of the most exciting creative aspects is the personal construction of the zine format. Each student must make individual artistic design choices

about the inclusion of comics, poetry, rants, collages, and other parts of the zine. For art educators, the zine framework of images and text cultivates “storytelling, self-expression, teacher identity construction, and collaboration” (Klein, 2010, p. 42). The zine format is particularly generative because it offers an inventive framework for documenting, illustrating, and reflecting upon issues of teaching for educators, and then used to explore learning experiences for K–12 students.

Zines have also changed the way I read, write, and make art with my students. They inspired the creation of a zine and altered book library with pre-service teachers and colleagues at my institution through *Exploring* courses. This library includes beautiful handmade book objects of many shapes and sizes that address interdisciplinary teaching issues between the arts and other subjects. The zine genre demonstrates powerful and accessible means by which art education projects and provocations can sustain and enliven active learning through creative self-publishing. Productive arts spaces afforded by zines establish makers as observers, storytellers, reporters, artists, and individuals who perhaps operate on the margins, but are sorely needed in those margins. The zine is a metaphor for the sort of space *Exploring the Arts* creates, extending from the personal creative sphere to the public learning laboratory.

EXPLORING THE ARTS OF/IN THE FUTURE

Extending the metaphor of the book, we may read, record, and reconcile arts education in many ways. In recent years, arts researchers have envisioned the state and structure of education in the arts as a palimpsest (Powell, 2008), a fairy tale (Buda et al., 2012), and a handmaiden to other subjects (Keifer-Boyd & Smith-Shank, 2006). Arts education is certainly in a state of uncertainty, if not crisis. Others in this volume have noted President Barack Obama’s controversial suggestion that college graduates consider vocational programs in lieu of areas like art history (Remarks, 2013). Although he subsequently offered an apology to art historians who had reacted negatively to his statements (Sanchez, 2014), Obama’s original sentiment reflects the ways in which the arts can be seen and understood as both elitist and extraneous by the public and by policy makers.

Our society and its educational goals have become too specialized and grimly occupation-focused in ways that do not serve the passions or talents of young people entering their professions. As a more personal example: during the opening class session of my first doctoral art education course, one

professor sensitively told us that she understood the plight of art teachers who dearly wished to be accomplished, specialized artists and only entered the interdisciplinary field of art education because they had not succeeded in the arts. I was surprised and stunned to see nodding faces around me. What about those of us who sincerely wished both to teach and to perform or produce art, not out of default or deferred dreams, but out of desire?

As arts educators, we need to re-define ourselves and our work with contemporary approaches that encourage other artists and educators to recognize the proud history of arts education. We sacrifice much when we neglect our place in the compelling traditions of past art educators and philosophies. Arts electives like the *Exploring the Arts* series encourage practitioners in academic education specialties such as Math Education, Science Education, English Education, and History Education to review the historic and contemporary roles of the arts as ways of seeing and thinking and to consider them as connective subjects. There is great value in the interactive conversations that extend from the studio to the classroom and include educators from within the arts and beyond. As we celebrate our influential history in education as artists, art educators must claim space at the table for today's educational discussions among academic subjects. The US Senate has recently passed the 2015 Every Child Achieves Act (S. 1177) which specifically names individual arts domains as core academic subjects, and may help counter the exclusion of the arts that emerged in the era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Although NCLB did mention the arts among core subjects, its rather exclusive emphasis on English and Math inevitably resulted in widespread reduction or elimination of arts instruction from the school day (Sabol, 2010).

As models of arts education, programs like *Exploring the Arts* stand for a powerful renaissance-like model of the artist as an intelligent, interdisciplinary, and multidimensional figure at the center of learning and growth. Rather than speaking only to the visual arts educator or theatre educator, these courses acknowledge core connections among teaching artists and art educators from many domains. Importantly, they also cultivate these connections and multidomain artistic communities by creating space for a dancer to make books by hand, for a painter to explore creative movement, and for a musician to learn the art of storytelling. These courses combine the practice of the arts with curricular explorations in ways that demonstrate the value of arts education to the fields of both art and education.

Perhaps the solution to larger arts educator struggles for space and voice lie in our modeling of ourselves as contemporary renaissance people. What if we aimed to embrace the multifaceted and lifelong endeavor of becoming arts educators, not only as artist-educators, but as multi-arts educators who can explore ideas fluidly across the disciplines of art? We might then examine not only the classic model provided by the scientist/artist Leonardo Da Vinci, but also the work of professional contemporary artists like Imogen Heap who is a successful and eclectic mid-career poet, musician, engineer, and inventor. Heap collaborates across visual and performing arts through a variety of classical and contemporary genres and stands out as the first female recording artist to win a Grammy Award for engineering her own album in 2010. Her work utilizes process-based video blogs including audio and visual contributions from her listening community, a dazzling blend of classical orchestral instrumentals and samples of experimental every day sounds (from her rustling bed sheets to the crackling of a campfire), and the recent landmark use of musical gloves that amplify and record sound, thus creating music based solely on hand gesture.

Another renaissance arts figure to consider in this light is Tom Phillips: a portrait painter, opera composer, and poet who is perhaps best known for his iconic 1966–2012 altered book series entitled *A Humument* (a treated Victorian novel). Phillips is distinguished not only as an extraordinary and prolific artist, but also as an engaging educator. In his teaching, Phillips introduced musician Brian Eno to ideas inspiring Eno's seminal development of ambient music. It is this particular kind of collaborative, interdisciplinary, arts-based teaching practice that we strive to cultivate in *Exploring the Arts*. Drawing from the influence of such eclectically classical yet contemporary artists, we may all truly dig in and explore the arts; promoting the works and messages of dancers, performers, and painters around us who provoke young people to perceive, think, act, and create passionately from deeper and richer spaces.

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