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## Recognizing Art as a Semiotic Mode: Revelations of an Adolescent Mind

Catherine Elizabeth Deaton

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RECOGNIZING ART AS A SEMIOTIC MODE: REVELATIONS OF AN ADOLESCENT  
MIND

by

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## ABSTRACT

The following gallery is predicated on the belief that a complete high school curriculum must be responsive to the needs of students as they navigate the stresses of living in isolation during a pandemic and always. High school students with minimal directions or guidance were charged with submitting a photo of a piece of art they had constructed to capture their perceptions of living through the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Many of the participants were students who had quit completing regular school work during the school closure of 2020 but chose to participate in this project as a way to express themselves. The results give a candid view of how these students give purpose to the process of creating art as they construct and convey a sense of “being in the world.” The results will be used to create a curriculum that will better invite high school students to engage in a high school art class. The stories and art collected also serve to build the gallery you are about to tour. At this gallery our core beliefs are that students must be taught more than just standards, students deserve a supportive environment that fosters growth for all, and that students should participate in learning that focuses on personal connections.

**Key Words:** Visual arts, Declining enrollment, Public school

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## FOREWARD: INVITATION

I invite everyone who enters here expecting to find five traditional chapters to imagine something different, something new. Welcome to my virtual gallery. Imagine.

This gallery is new, yet it wears the façade of an institution that has weathered the storms of history that culminate with the imagery of the art within. The walls are darkly wooden, capturing a sense of the aristocracy with which art is often associated. Feet clatter and squeak across polished marbled floors dappled in grays and whites. Tall bronze doors instill a remembrance of the first official building one ever enters, a courthouse, a college, maybe a bank, but the doors feel of importance. Something valuable lies within. What that is shall be discovered.

Greetings are offered by a desk busy with docents ready to take a coat, offer a map, and promote the most recent audio tour. There is a row of beautifully carved lockers waiting to hold possessions and free the owner of their weight and responsibility. A glimpse is captured of an open coffered atrium flooded with light from an oculus at the top. This beam of light illuminates a gently cascading fountain whose splashes and drips ease even the tensest of shoulders. The room is filled with benches and art beckoning all who enter, but you notice a small group gathering to right organized by the docent beginning a tour of the esteemed permanent collection.

In this room of marble and wood containing the permanent collection, the greats of art stand before viewers frozen in reverence and awe. Brushstrokes, ambitions, and voices from centuries ago ring out through this room reminding participants that art is a

unifying constant throughout our human history. Religion, wars, dreams, politics, and myths are all displayed in a visual collection that represents...us. Humanity, at its best and its worst all trapped within these gilded frames.

Beyond this room is a hall busy with a variety of workers answering calls, typing feverishly, and inspired by artistic purpose. This hallway is long and peppered with art but that is not what catches the pedestrian's attention. The floors that were once squeaky, have gone silent. The walls that were once dark, have opened up. The next room is full of bright white walls, skylights, and clean lines. The entrance to room one which has a focus on "living" lifts spirits and breathes connections. The past is gone and now is a present that is filled with diaphanous light. The walls bear works unrecognized- yet familiar that speak to viewers in a personal way with imagery that is comforting like a cup of coffee on a rainy afternoon. For some of these works' gallery-goers will stop and visit. Others are casually passed by, but each one resonates with its humanity and humility. Moving from this room to the next brings tears, joy, hope, anguish, and a feeling of the need to connect as you enter room two which covers the act of "feeling." The weight of this room is heavy. From here step into room three, a room based on "actions" that inspire its inhabitants. A sense of pulling, an invitation, to take a stand, to make a change. This room forces viewers forward and out into the world with a sense of newfound purpose in their existence.

At this point viewers must ask themselves a series of questions: Do I stay or do I go? Am I done? Have I allowed myself the time I needed? Did I miss anything? Then a beam of light pulls in even the most resolute of viewers. The atrium with its many benches has been rediscovered, and now it is understood why it was not previously

accessible. Galleries often have spaces for reflection. The purpose of art at its core is to move those who make and view it; however, being moved can be a laborious task. These purposeful places of introspection and solace allow the viewer a space to feel, to embrace, and to understand all they have just experienced. Processing is just as vital as viewing when understanding oneself. Time spent bathed in light. Surrounded by sound. The gallery visitor experiences a restful moment for mind and body and moves on once at peace.

Visitors collect belongings and turn in keys. Hours have been spent experiencing what it is to exist, to be in the world (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 2013). Not wanting to lose that feeling many stop by the gift shop, picking up a memento of the movement just experienced. Passing back through those tall bronze doors, viewers are not the same as they entered. They are different. They have seen and felt the world in a new way thanks to the creations of others. And in seeing the world differently they position themselves differently within it. They understand. They appreciate. They value art. As they button their coats and cascade down the steps into the cold gray outside, they give you a glance letting you know your turn to evolve is next.

New gallery visitors are greeted by a friendly smile as you purchase your ticket at the window. The woman inside says warmly “Welcome to our gallery. We hope you will enjoy your experience. Step right this way to begin your tour.”

CHAPTER 1: WELCOME TO OUR GALLERY!

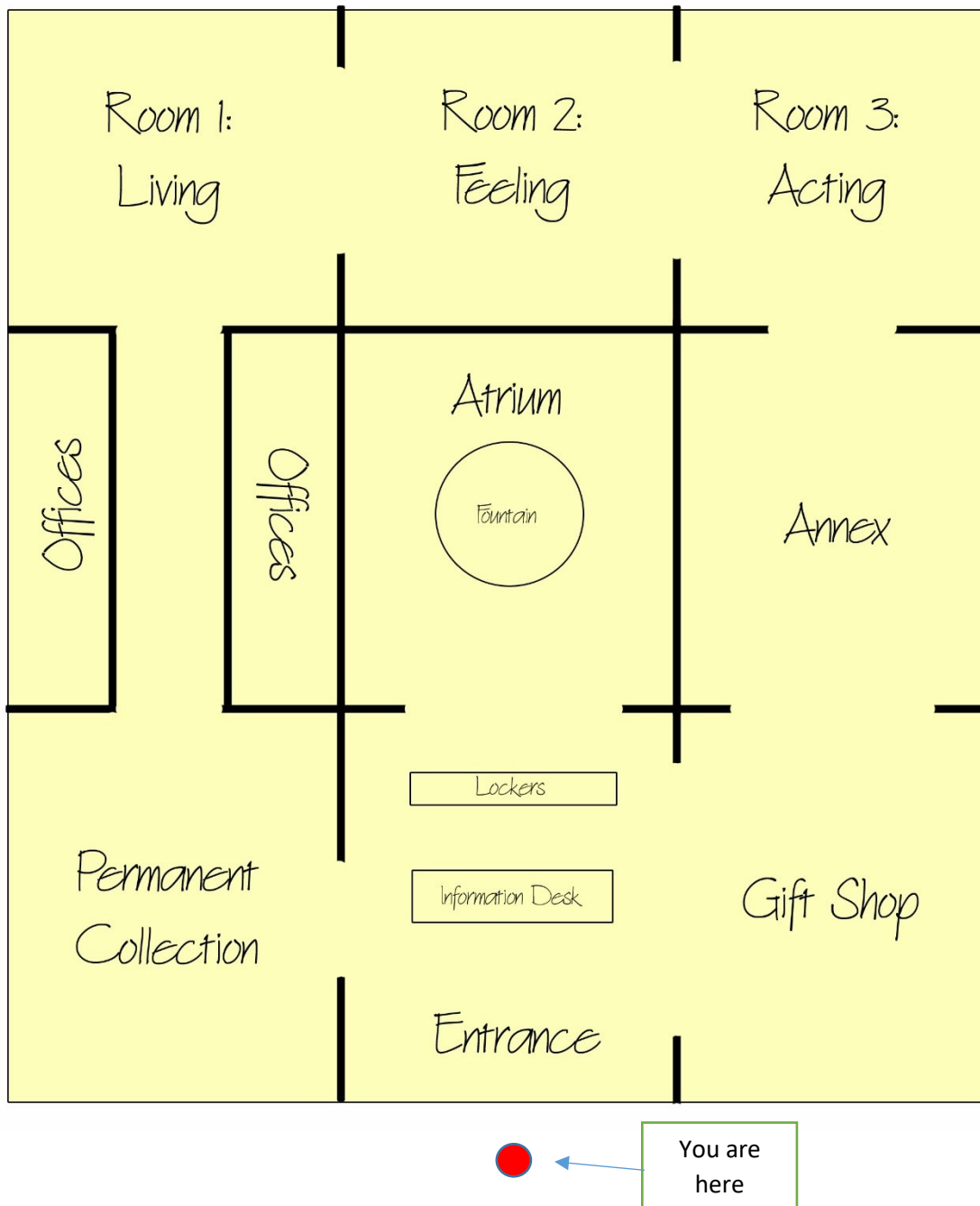


Figure1.1 Beginning your tour

## Meet the Curator

Welcome! Can everyone in the group see and hear me? Great! We are so glad to have you at our gallery today. I am sure many of you are thinking “Isn’t this supposed to be a dissertation?” You are right. It is. Dissertations in their traditional format follow a rather prescriptive format. One selects a problem and a topic to address in the study, reviews literature on the topic, determines methodology, then analyzes collected data, and ends with a conclusion. A theoretical framework holds all of this information together in a nice and scientifically logical package and becomes a lens for coding and analysis. This dissertation differs not in content, but in the packaging. Within this work the reader will still find research questions, theoretical frames, methodology, literature reviews, data collection, and conclusions. However, unlike the typical dissertation, instead of a five-chapter format I have presented the work to you through the lens of a fine art gallery. I will walk you through this gallery as though you are on a guided tour following a docent.

Before we embark I would like to pose a few questions by Michael Foucault (2020) that reads,

What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life? (p. 1).

In response to this query I ask you: Why should the action-based dissertation not also be a work of art as a form of representing life?

As this dissertation is in fact action-based I feel it appropriate to defend why and how this is true. Action based research requires the identification of a problem of practice and then an action taken by a researcher to remedy it (Herr & Anderson, 2015). My problem of practice is a lack of value in the arts as a valid and necessary means of communication in society. This dissertation will explore why and how the arts can and should be valued in society. In particular this work hopes to heal the lack of value of value in art by promoting it as a valid and necessary mode of communication in the public education system for adolescences looking to position themselves within the world. The data revealing this problem and its solution comes in the narrative form of stories and works of art submitted by participants. The action aspect comes in whether we chose to listen to these voices out cry for more creative outlets in our learning systems and more appreciation for the arts in society at large. I myself have implemented the revelations from this study to transform the visual arts program at the site of the study to reflect the ways the arts can be used as a form of advocacy, a form of understanding oneself, and a form of representing life.

On this theme of life being a form of art, I propose the idea of art as a semiotic mode. Since the beginning of our species, art has been a necessary means of communication and progress. Art, music, dance, textiles, food, and stories have been created to define and record our identity on this planet. Communication through art is one of the special attributes that define our existence (Ghosh, 2014). These methods, or “modes” become communication channels that a culture recognizes (Kress, 2010). Kress (2010) even stated “Image has been a part of our human culture longer than script-though the difference between the two is not at all clear-cut” (p. 5). While these modes have



always existed, their validation as a legitimized form of communication, especially in education, is still in question in favor of modes leaning more towards science and math. To lend further credence to this usage of modes, multimodality is a theory that considers the varying modes that people use to communicate with each other and to express themselves (Kress, 2010). Why are these modes necessary? As Kress (2010) stated “The world of communication has changed and is changing still; and the reasons for that lie in a vast web of intertwined social, economic, cultural, and technological changes (p. 5). The emphasis of modes lies not in the difference of the modes, but rather in their use. For this work we will examine images and art as a mode for creating meaning, what Kress called social semiotics. This dissertation will recognize and defend art as a semiotic mode used by adolescences to form meaning and purpose.

At this time, I will defend why modes are needed at all. In an age of multimedia and technology, Kress (2010) argues language is far from the only form of communication that carries meaning. Modes are necessary for social semiotics because of the abandonment of older social relations, forms, structures, and views. This is especially relevant in the time of a pandemic where all vestiges of normalcy had to be abandoned in the name of preserving public health. In modern terms, modes in technology are used to form “mind tools.” Jonassen (1999) stated that “Mind tools are computer applications that, when used by learners to represent what they know, necessarily engage them in critical thinking about the content they are studying” (Para 1). In this dissertation the use of art as a mode or “mind tool” becomes increasingly important in education based on the proposed emphases of engaging participants and students in that which they are experiencing. What participants were experiencing at the

time of this study was the phenomenon of isolation caused by a global pandemic. In this study participant engagement allowed learning to become something students were a part of, instead of learning being something that happens to them while they were forced to stay at home.

If we are to accept art as a mode of engagement in learning we then have to consider how to make sense of art as individuals in the system of learning in the public education system. To do this, communication about how these modes function is tantamount to experiencing the modes themselves. Art is a visual language. Art is a series of symbols and elements that weave together to transmit a message or feeling. For this transmission to be meaningful, one must consider the role of semiotics in communication. Semiotics is the use of symbols and signs to transmit thoughts and interpretations in a path to forming meaning (Kress, 2010). These symbols and signs develop understanding of the tensions that drive us to act and seek answers about what it means to be alive. These symbols are the backgrounds of love and death, anxiety and guilt, self and others, which accompany the act of existence seen in visual tangible forms (Heidegger et al, 2013). These acts and these tensions are all a pursuit towards understanding being. In helping students in the public education system understand their sense of beings, educators maximize learning relevancy.

What you are about to see in this gallery will examine the modes we as humans use to communicate, and how artists of those modes define our perceptions of time and being. In particular I utilize Heidegger's phenomenological tenets of lived experiences, temporality and the care of structure, and exposing meaning of the everyday ordinary human existence otherwise known as "Dasein" to bolster the revelations of this gallery

(Horrikan-Kelly, Millar & Dowling, 2016). The meaning I gained from these tenets is used to solidify and validate the role of visual art in the public education system and in the everyday lives of adolescents. This will be done through a qualitative phenomenological narrative inquiry approach allowing the story of what role art plays in society and why it should be valued in education to emerge through the voices of the participants.

Embodying these perceptions of being are the submitted works of artists throughout our nation during the SARS-COVID-2 pandemic of 2020. These artists ranged in ages from four to ninety-one years old and voluntarily participated in this study. Works were chosen based on their clarity of design and artist descriptions. This phenomenon had a dramatic impact on education worldwide. The work of art you see at in the entrance to our gallery in figure 1.2 is the studio where local student contributors should have been making art. On the left we see a photograph taken two days before the school closure of the studio being used for a student led community paint night. The room was full of people laughing, listening to music, making art, eating food, and enjoying their evening. None of us would have imagined within 48 hours we would have to abandon the very things that brought us joy. On the right of figure 1.2 is an image of the same studio on what should have been the first day of school for the 2020-2021 school year. Instead of a room full of anxious, but eager students wearing their newest clothes and sporting book bags with the tags still on, the studio is empty. It is dark and silent. The desks still stand ready to be used and placed in socially-distanced order per state guidelines as though no one told them they would not be needed. Even once

students do return it will be on a modified schedule and at half capacity. For many of these desks, they will have to continue their wait for a purpose.

On this tour, I will be your guide as we explore art as a semiotic mode used to construct and transform knowledge regarding art's role in education as the featured artists explore their "being in the world" through visual means during a pandemic. All person's touring the gallery are required to wear facemasks while in the gallery. If you do not have one, we can provide one for you free of charge. There will be mask breaks on this tour if you need one. As we go through the gallery, please stay in a single file line and six feet apart to maintain social distancing. Now step this way, please and let's begin our tour.

### **Information Desk**

The mission of this gallery is to present viewers with a deeper understanding of the role art plays in our society and our development as a species while fostering the understanding of art in education at the highest possible museum and scholarly standards (National Gallery of Art, 2020). Viewers are defined as all persons with a particular plea to academics for reform. The voices captured and presented in this gallery represent the action taken to change the narrative of art in education. The vision, or aim, of this gallery is to reform current narratives on art in education to allow for a reconstruction of visual art's place in our society, beginning with its prioritization in our schools. The works submitted by individuals are accompanied by their own artist's statements to allow the participants voices to be considered without interpretation. The gallery-imposed considerations that follow each work have been validated with the artists themselves.

As we begin our tour I want to state that the current narrative of art education shows the arts as mere decoration on the institution of learning. The pursuit of art is sometimes dismissed as cute, nice, and can be seen highlighted in school offerings to show the site's so-called diverse offerings. Arthur Efland describes art in public schools as the "school art style" in which art is made in a cookie cutter fashion where everyone gets a gold star whether they have mastered artistic and aesthetic technique or not (Efland, 2002). Since the 1970's, Efland and other art theorist and educators have spent decades trying to dismantle the school art style in favor of art as valid form of production and meaning (Efland,1990), yet in 2020 art is still considered an elective, something one takes purely for pleasure but without merit. At times the arts become a placeholder for wayward students with nowhere else to belong. This gallery will attempt to showcase art as a mode of communication, a mode of understanding, and a way of understanding being and time. Art in this gallery must be recognized as a semiotic mode transmitting contributor's priorities, perceptions, and feelings of existence. The piece depicted in figure 1.4 is a beautiful addition we just acquired this week. The work stated we must "water our own gardens." This gallery will attempt to "water the garden" of education to allow valuing of the arts to flourish and grow.

I myself, am a 14-year veteran high school art teacher. I am also an aspiring scholar working to change the perception of art in public schools. What does this gallery address specifically? I will tell you!

The research questions addressed by this gallery are:

1. Given the threat of declining enrollment in high school art courses: What appeals to students about the visual arts?

2. When given minimal instructions/expectations, how do people of different ages use art to position their being in the world, both literally and abstractly, and how might the answer influence the curriculum of the high school art class?
3. How might art be validated as a mode and a means of constructing and transforming knowledge on par with all other “core” classes so that secondary arts programs can be better supported and maintained?

On the back of your brochure you will find a list of definitions for the language and terms used in this museum. For those of you not familiar with arts education, some of the terms used in the gallery's descriptions may be confusing. Often, the gallery will use acronyms to save wall space. Please feel free to use this key at any time, and if you need my help let me know!

We are a gallery rooted in the concept of using art as a semiotic mode of communication to understanding being. To understand “being” this gallery uses existential philosophical approaches to inquire into that of being human which requires a look into more than just thinking. It requires us to consider the acts of living, feeling, and acting (Sartre, 1968). These three themes, or codes, were the recurring themes revealed in the artwork submitted by participants as they related to this concept of “being.” This gallery explains “being” based on the views of Heidegger (2008) who stated:

It is said that “Being” is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it. In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has

taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method (p. 21).

For our purposes in this gallery, being will relate to how individuals position themselves within the world. Heidegger referred to this concept as “Dasein” and explains that being-in-the-world requires us to consider formal existential expressions as a mode of existence (Heidegger et al., 2013). There for the acts of living, feeling, and acting define existence as “being.” These existential codes provide the framework for all artifacts on display here in the gallery to frame our participants since of “being-in-the-world.” Follow me please...

### **Definitions**

**Advanced Placement Courses:** Courses offered by the College Board that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school. Completion of courses and scores of three or higher on a College Board administered exam result in three college credit hours. They also carry a heavy-weight in regards to GPA.

**Fine Arts Courses:** Courses that focus on forms of various art production and can include chorus, band, theater, visual arts, and orchestra.

**GPA:** Grade Point Averages. Used for college admissions. Classes with honors or AP weight result in higher student GPAs.

**Visual Art Courses:** Courses that focus on the study and production of visual-based art forms.

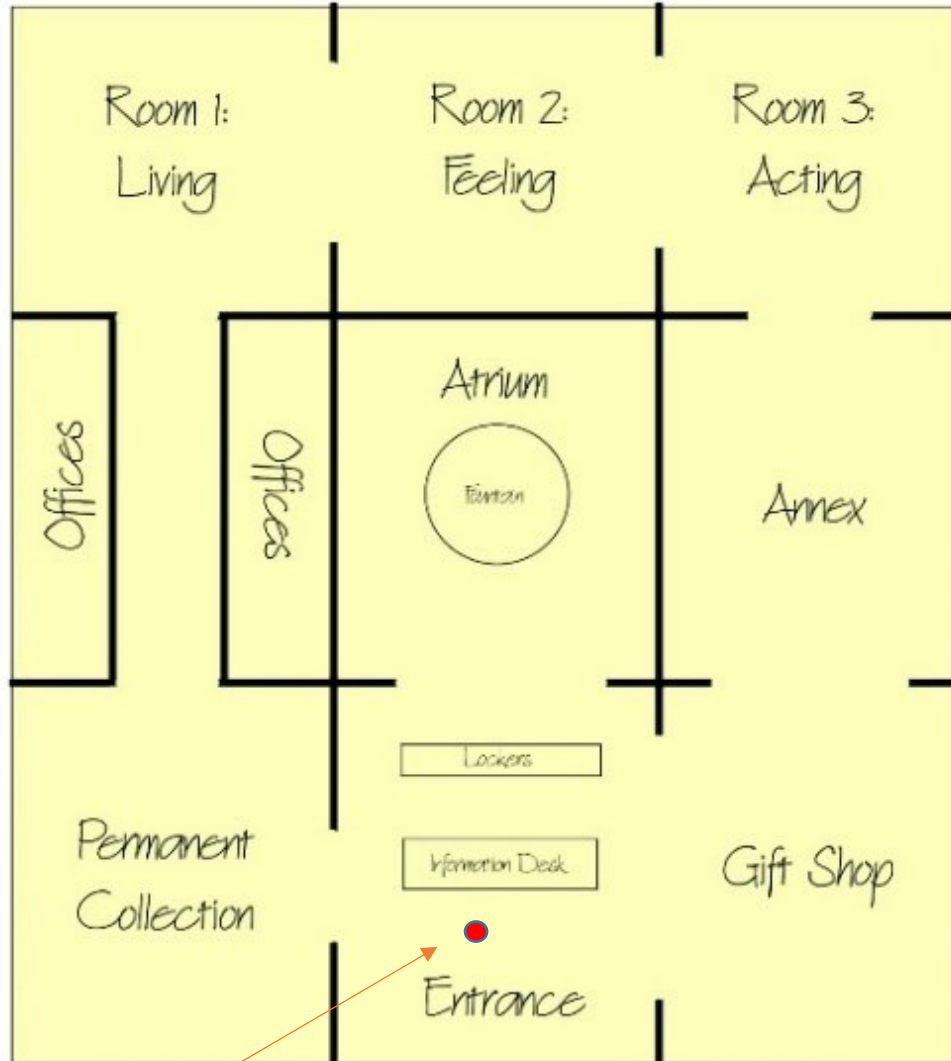
Before COVID  
March 11th 2020  
School Closure: March 13th 2020

After COVID  
August 24th, 2020  
The first day of remote instruction



Figure 1.2 Before and After COVID





You are here

Figure 1.3 Entrance



Figure 1.4 Coral's Art "Coral 1. I made this art to represent myself through this pandemic because I found myself having to "water my own garden." I was no longer receiving validation from school or dance or anywhere else, so I almost felt useless. Also, during quarantine I painted one of my walls with chalkboard paint and drew a similar flower pattern on my wall. 2. Making this allowed me to express a lot of pent up feelings I've been almost unknowingly holding in all of quarantine."

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE



Figure 2.1 Permanent Collection

## Permanent Collection

I know you are all anxious to see the gallery, but first let's explore the Permanent Collection. These works are the "Old Guard" of the gallery. They represent the past of a gallery. Exhibitions will come and go but these works will persist. Often these works are revered for their tradition and longevity. In this gallery they will represent where education and the visual art's relationship stands currently. Examining this relationship will allow us to understand the current problem of practice: a lack of value in the arts in public education.

What was once the revered study of great minds during the renaissance by artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo DaVinci has become the watered-down "easy A" of schedule fillers in public education. Art itself only makes headlines if it is mocking collectors at large auction houses. I feel art speaks to the soul and allows the mind to wander and wonder. From the early days of simply capturing the human experience on cave walls by our hominid ancestors, art has been a visual communication allowing our species to build connections with each other and our environment. In ancient civilizations art was a capstone in society used to transmit messages and ideas (Zelanski & Fisher, 2011). During the Baroque and Neoclassical ages, art was only for the elite. Those talented and trained in the arts would be sought after and admired and, those possessing said art used it to show their status and power (Wilder, 2007).

The industrial revolution changed more than just how products were made, it changed how people worked and what people valued. Consumers needed as much of a product, as fast as possible, and at the lowest cost. This idea trickled into education in creating an assembly line of learning (Senge et al, 2012). One-room schoolhouses

became crowded classrooms to serve entire cities. With the implementation of high stakes testing and school accountability to ensure the masses were receiving a relatively equal learning experience, education turned away from feelings and exploration of the self and relied on rote memorization of agreed-upon knowledge to guide the instruction of our youth. Art became seen as a hobby: a Saturday television show. And with that, a field that once inspired nations became an elective for but a handful of eccentric idealists. In an age of standardization, we stripped our youth of the very thing that makes us unique: creativity.

My addition to this narrative reflects this constant pull by education to strip youth of their creative and exploratory mentalities that children naturally possess. I created the piece in figure 2.2 above years ago, but I find its relevance still resonates today. In this way I am not that different from my participants and all students who should be exposed to art as a means of meaning-making. My reflexivity towards this topic began long before my career. Since you are my guests today, let me tell a few personal things about me that I seldom often share, but I want you to understand why this gallery is so important to me. I often struggled in school, but loved learning. In third grade I was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, a term now met with a sigh by most educators due to its overuse and parent's willingness to use it to explain any number of poor behaviors.

For me, it meant I struggled to sit still and my mind was, and is, never in one place. This was not conducive when many classes were lecture based and required a child's attention for an hour or more without breaks. I was also diagnosed with dysgraphia, something I could not spell until middle school (what cruel irony). Similar to

dyslexia, instead of jumbling letters, I jumble orders. I struggle to put things in order, I struggle to remember orders, and I struggle to follow sequences. Unlucky for me, most of the educational assessment methods are sequence-based. Matching items, bubbling Scantrons in order, memorizing lists, following formulas, etc. are all capstones of the traditional learning process. I never stood a chance at finding success in education. But then there was that handy dandy creative of side of my brain. I could not write in order how DNA replicates, but I could draw a perfect diagram of it doing so. I could not follow a math formula but, I can perfectly execute a still life with the very shapes whose volumes still eludes me. In my weakness I found my strength: being creative and artistic. Through art, I found my voice, my passion, and my way to connect with images what my brain struggles to say with words. Art was key to finding worth in a system that did not work for me. I am not alone. Our education system is full of students just like me, students for whom the system of sequences, rote memorization, and lectures do not work. In the 2018-2019 school year, there were 7.1 million of us to be exact (Students with Disabilities, 2020).

Trying to feel wanted and worthy in a system that constantly reinforces your struggles can feel very isolating. In the following work, in figure 2.3 the artist felt alone, like a single flower in a field, much like a child with learning disabilities in a “separate-setting test site.” I have been that single flower. Oh, you have too? It is not easy to be that lone flower, the one who does not fit into the box of prescriptive learning and formulas, the one who cannot pass a test but knows in their soul that they have more to offer than any multiple-choice assessment could ever show. Many of us have been alone in the field of educational existence. This symbolic work speaks to those of us who have

had to reach for the sun in our own ways. Allie is a quiet student who rarely speaks, keeps to herself, and is often alone. She does not care for school and only sees it as a means to an end yet every semester she takes art. It is her outlet, her escape from the rest of school. How many more lone flowers are there in our current education system?

At a job fair I attended during the senior year of my undergraduate degree in art education, I got my first glimpse of how very little art is valued in education. Every county in North Carolina, where I live, was present. As I went table to table, representatives greeted me with open arms and goody bags praising their county for being the best the state had to offer, until they found out I was an art education major. One table laughed and took back the goody-bag they handed me. One table said, “Oh bless your heart” and turned to talk to someone else. One woman giggled sorrowfully and said “Oh darlin’ we certainly don’t need any of those, meaning art teachers. Feeling dismissed by others that do not understand your passions, as I did at this fair, is exactly what many students in our educational system feel. The work in figure 2.4 shows a student feeling empty during the pandemic as if the world were standing still around him. How many of our students feel the same when sitting in classrooms that do not meet their personal or educational needs? Students that may feel learning itself is “empty.”

The production of art by humans predates written and even, perhaps, spoken language systems. Art was our species' original form of communication and understanding. The BBC covered a story on the discovery of new cave paintings, which have dated the existence of art as long ago as 40,000 B.C.E. Ghosh (2014) stated

Art and the ability to think of abstract concepts is what distinguishes our species from other animals - capabilities that also led us to use fire, develop the wheel,

and come up with the other technologies that have made our kind so successful.

Its emergence, therefore, marks one of the key moments when our species became truly human (para. 4).

Despite this hallmark of our species, the arts have always been dying (Efland, 1990). In the last four years, I have seen several arts positions and programs cut in my district. One visual art position that was eliminated was my own. I was reassigned to a brand new state-of-the-art high school that I had helped design and it has been a wonderful opportunity but, I cannot stop wondering how my prior school, which had held two full-time visual arts positions for almost 30 years, was suddenly down to one? The answer is a lack of enrollment in the visual arts due to a systemic lack of value in the arts.

This next piece, figure 2.5, was also a part of our recent acquirement, and I had a chance to ask the artist a bit more about it. The artist explains the piece reflects how boring and unconnected she felt toward school before the quarantine. School overwhelmed and stressed her tremendously. Once school was taken away she began to find happiness and peace. She could spend her time doing the things she enjoyed, so the quarantine was a much-needed relief from a system that was not working for her. I probed her further and asked why she did not enjoy school. She said she had no say in her education. She was a helpless bystander in a thing called “learning.” So how can we give students a voice, an outlet, and a path to including themselves in their education? I hope this gallery will show you just that. As we move through the permanent collection, let me explain how galleries acquire works of art on display. Step this way.





Figure 2.2 Catherine's Art



Figure 2.3 Allie's Art "Allie 2020 paint. This is the way I feel in quarantine I miss the outside and the single flower is how I feel being all alone in my house."

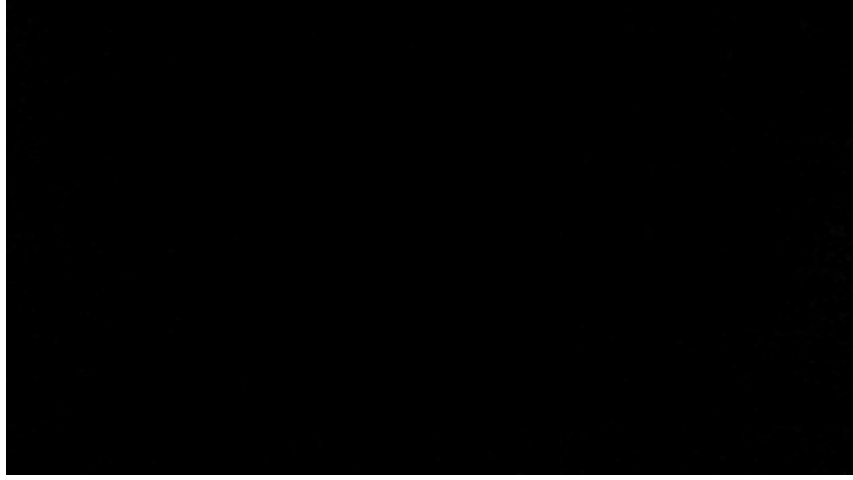


Figure 2.4 Jaylen's Art "Jaylen. Winston-Salem. I chose this photo of mine to represent my feelings because I felt empty, lonely, I felt as if the world wasn't moving around me. taking this photo and sharing it allowed me to express what I felt and without a doubt some other people felt, I believe everyone's opinion matters and everyone's voice should be heard to make this experience through this time a better experience"

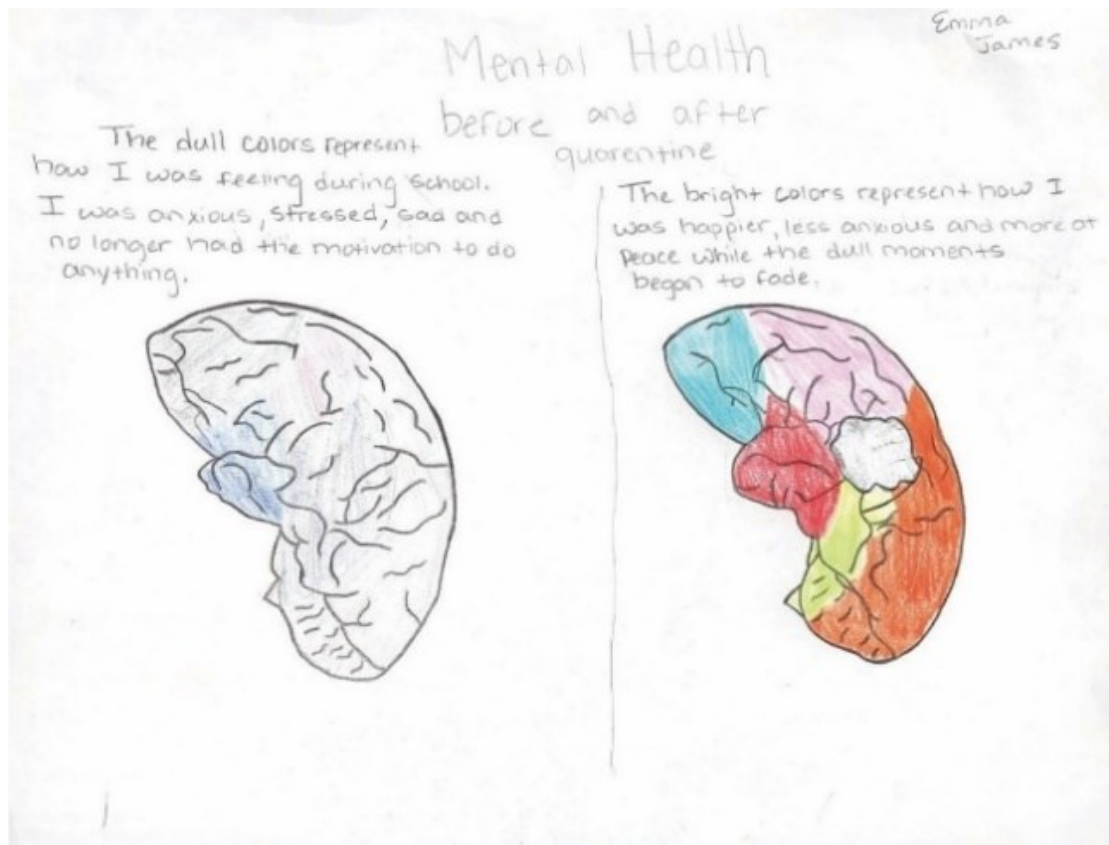


Figure 2.5 Emma's Art "Emma. I chose this art to represent myself during the pandemic because, I think many people's mental health was affected in many ways and many people had to adapt to a different living style. This allowed me to express how I felt during both times during the pandemic and before the pandemic."

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW



Figure 3.2 Administrative Office

## **Provenance**

The provenance of art is the story of where the work of art originated. Provenance lends itself to understanding the being of a work of art in a gallery and not just unto itself. While the artist's intent and purpose are valuable every created work arose from a linguistic exchange of ideas that over time builds on the existence of the work itself.

While we walk, let me tell you a story of how this gallery came to be. I was enrolled in the Curriculum and Instruction Educational Doctorate program during the SARS-COVID-2 pandemic, otherwise known as the "Coronavirus." I was living and working in North Carolina at the time as practicing high school art teacher and was finalizing my first three chapters when the outbreak began. I was to begin collecting data and conduct my actual research on March 18, 2020 yet on March 13 Governor Cooper of North Carolina temporarily closed public schools statewide. On April 24 he closed them for the remainder of the school year (Hui, 2020). My research came to a standstill. At my site, an average of only 20% of students continued to work remotely. With a lack of access to the internet, a lack of access to technology, and a lack of access to food, shelter, and safety in our community many students chose to take their third-quarter grade and be done. Without a way to hold students accountable, schools lost their leverage to provide incentives for students to continue to work. Our only offer was better college acceptance in the future for those who wanted higher grade point average (GPA). In a county where according to Open Data Network (2018) only 17% of students will graduate from a four-year college or university, this was not the enticing carrot to dangle in front of students.

While struggling through this loss of normalcy I corresponded with my advising professor in desperation, and slight panic, of how to complete my research. How do I determine why and how art can be valued when very few of my students continue to interact with me? My advisor, Dr. Lilly, in his usual calming and inspirational manner tasked me with putting the teacher as researcher aside for a moment, and let the artist as an educator come forward. For years I had been trained to conduct educational research in a prescriptive format within the prescriptive system of public education. As a teacher, I am always happy to follow the rules. Yet this pandemic swept away every ounce of normalcy, rules, and prescriptions and replaced it with uncertainty. A new normal had to be formed to keep everyday life, and this study moving forward. That new normal centered on art to sustain humanity. I hope the new future will as well. Books to be read, shows to be watched, art to be made were all sought out to pass time while we had to stay at home. When the world stopped, society turned to art for comfort. By the end of march most of the United States was under a mandatory stay-at-home order (Moreland, et al, 2020).

This pandemic will have a severe impact on our generation. These times are uncertain and scary, even for those not facing a dissertation defense. When I was working on this gallery Dr. Lilly recommended finding out what students were experiencing during this pandemic. I decided to create the “Art through the Eyes of a Pandemic” community art project which is the gallery you are now touring. In this project, I frankly told my students I was struggling. I had to postpone my wedding, I had to completely change my teaching in a single day, my dissertation research was up in the

air, I was stuck at home, and everyday life was becoming unimaginable. I turned to my art to cope. I asked them to do the same.

Using constructivist epistemology, I asked my students to make any art in any way that captured their experience during this pandemic. Constructivism was used as it allowed students to explore the idea of the pandemic on their own terms and in their own ways. In constructivist epistemology teachers provide the situation for learning, but students produce and attain the knowledge (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2001). After sending this task to my students I decided to share it with my friends. I thought if students could see professionals and community members produce art work they might be inspired. From there I decided to share it on social media and let the entire community participate. What resulted was a snapshot of how many people using visual art to cope and find hope in a time of tremendous loss. Art was a mode to define time and existence. From this, I was able to find my answer to why art matters, why we need the arts as a society, and how to promote art in the schools. This project was even featured on the local news drawing in even more participation (WMFYnews2, 2020). We ended up with submissions from all over the United States. As I read the artist's comments with the works I realized the narrative I so desperately sought was emerging before me in visual and linguistic mediums that could be examined and analyzed to reconstruct art's place in education. Levitan et al (2020) would describe this as an accidental ethnography. Levitan (2020) elaborates on the concept of accidental research and stated "we define 'accidental' as post hoc practitioner data and experiences that can be used as research data not collected within a planned research study" (p. 337). The gallery which began as an outreach would become my study in a far more impactful way than my original study.



The implications of the stories presented here could be used to enrich art programs in schools and improve the perceptions of art in society.

I was amazed at the connection of ideas and values observed in both the community art and the accompanying artist statements. Common themes, common wants, and common needs all came together in a series of artifacts that illuminated the plight of the arts in education and the arts in society during a pandemic. The provenance of this gallery then arose as a response to a nation under siege. It is our community's visions, struggles, and fears. It is social semiotics in a visual form. The next work in figure 3.2 is one of my favorites. I have known this artist for years. She is German but immigrated to the United States a few years ago. Look at the symbolism of her work to show the past and present colliding in a fatal resemblance of pandemics both past and present. This work embodies the very essence of this gallery. Much like this work, this gallery is a collision of past ideas of art with modern understandings of visual expressions being used to reform educational practices.

This work is warning of us to not repeat our mistakes in how we handle a pandemic. The same could be said about education as well. Let us move on down this hallway. Please stay to the right to observe social distancing.

### **Dealers**

If you follow me this way, we'll pass some of our administrative offices. If their doors are open, wave to our staff! They love seeing visitors. Acquiring art is a long and delicate process that begins with art dealers. Dealer's present works to directors or curators who have it authenticated by registrars. Dealers in this work are peer-reviewed authors, students, and community artists. The collection of literary works is presented

within the rooms of this gallery to buttress the works and place them within the context of understanding time and being as posed by Heidegger. This phenomenon of “World-Embeddedness” allows one to place themselves and others in orders that reflect values and beliefs (Heidegger et al, 2013). The artifacts come together to embed art in a central role in our society. The next piece, figure 3.3 shows this idea of art reflecting values and beliefs in an interesting way. I find the imagery provided and the artist's statement to be an interesting culmination of this individual as a whole. The art shows horses, mermaids, and stars. This seems like a delightful collection of a young girl living life, yet as we see in her statement, they are not just playful outlets, but serious contemplations of time and patience. She also explores how these artistic experiences have led her to religious revelations that require introspection and semiotic understanding.

### **Registrar**

The registrar of a gallery deals with the inventory of a gallery. I acted as the registrar in this process to determine what works needed noting and which did not. We are now passing my office. I apologize for the mess. I am preparing for an upcoming exhibition. The materials I chose for this collection came from noted educational theorists. I sought out current research on the phenomenon of a lack of enrollment in the arts, the perceived role of the arts in education, and how the arts help individuals make sense of their surroundings.

Let us step this way and browse our reading section. Here we have a selection of literature that frames our museum. The reading nook was a donation by the Lilly family. We are very grateful for these donors as this literature deeply supports the works showcased.

The theorists who most informed this gallery were Elliot Eisner, Maxine Green, and Arthur Efland. All of these theorists promote creativity, art, and expression in the classroom. Eisner (2011) promoted ideals of educating the whole child. Maxine Green (2017) promoted the use of creative thinking to enhance our democracy. Arthur Efland (2002) promoted the arts as a way to enhance children's cognitive abilities. Additional support is provided by Gloria Ladson Billings (2014) and Geneva Gay (2002) to add culturally responsive teaching and critical awareness to the art curriculum and education at large.

Another theory informing this gallery is my constructivist epistemology. Constructivism emerged in the 1920s when educator Jean Piaget promoted the allowance of students to develop their own knowledge. Instead of providing students with instruction and then testing their responses, constructivism encourages creating situations that foster curiosity. Constructivism asks students to question and explore these situations as a path to discovery (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2001). When collecting art for this gallery, I followed constructivist epistemologies to allow students an outlet to explore their current states of being through visual means.

The philosophical approaches for this gallery were provided by Martin Heidegger, Gunther Kress, and Jean Paul Sartre whose work with existentialism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology reinforce the idea that forms of communication are essential to the notion of "being" (Heidegger et al, 2013). In this gallery the form of communication we will focus on is art. Jean Paul Sartre's (1964) work set the framework for this gallery as I used his principles of existentialism to create codes for organizing work into categories of living, feeling, and acting.

The Philosopher Gunther Kress (2010) also informed this work with his multimodality theory that encourages creative forms of communication and interaction to foster the whole person. As an artist, I have always preferred communicating through visual forms. Kress (2010) believes the “sensory, affective, and aesthetic dimension is too often ignored and treated as ancillary” (p. 78). These philosophical approaches support the role of the arts in understanding what it is to be human and to understand being. I consulted the work of Martin Heidegger, specifically his concepts of “Being-in-the-world” (Heidegger et al, 2013).

We will talk more about these people later in the tour but for now, I will ask you to look at this work in figure 3.4. I love that this artist is using art to promote another form of art. She showcases a musician who is helping her through this pandemic and hopes their work can do the same for others as well. What a wonderful sentiment of passing on the ideas of comfort through various artistic modes.

### **Treasurer**

Once registrars have authenticated a work, the treasurer must assess its worth. Why should art be taught? Why should it be experienced? For this gallery let us examine the value of art in education. The arts are the way we, as humans, express ourselves (Efland, 1990). Starting from a young age, we communicate through the arts. Small children draw scribbles, which teaches object permanence and develops a sense of graphic development later needed for writing (Day & Hurwitz, 2012).

Later in life, humans learn to read by corresponding words to images which many times include artistic renderings or photographs. When the brain processes information, it begins by processing visual cues such as colors, images, artistic renderings, etc.

(Armstrong, 2003). Being able to interpret images and sounds like those found in the arts is what forms our very thoughts. From the very beginning of our lives, the arts play a pivotal role in our development as humans. Through the works of art that they create on their own, students gain a broader and more nuanced understanding of what it is to learn (Eisner, 2011). The arts allow us to communicate with others, connect with ourselves, and interact with our environments in ways that meet our basic human needs. More than just a scholarly-academic ideology of studying the arts for art's sake, humanity needs an outlet to be creative and to explore sound, movement, and images. All of humanity has the capacity for creativity; they simply need the outlet and encouragement (Eisner, 2011).

Anthropologists point out that the ability to think abstractly, as one does in art, is what allowed our species to create fire, the wheel, and other technologies that have made humans so successful (Ghosh, 2014). If making art of any kind is one of the distinguishing factors of our very species, then why is it not valued in education as an intrinsic part of the human experience? Chapman (1982) stated:

What is vitally needed today is a radical reconstruction of the way we think about arts education. It is unreasonable to construe art as if it were an enterprise that does not require study or merit status as a major subject within the curriculum, on par with science and the humanities. It is wrong to treat the arts only as enrichments or electives for talented students, when, in fact, all students should be equipped to deal with art knowledgeably, whether they become artists or not, and whether they attend college or not. As a nation, we tolerate art in school, we allow something called art to happen, but we do not expect much from this

instruction. We seem satisfied if children have a chance to dabble in the arts. We permit this level of engagement, and not much more (p. 12).

Why do we need art in schools? We need art so children can learn to communicate, appreciate, and value the production of others whether in musical, visual, tangible, or performance-based form (Davis, 2014). We need art so that students can be valued for more than a test score. We need art so that students can have a creative outlet in a system that otherwise cares not for their interests or feelings (Hagopain, 2015). We need art in schools so children can be human.

Children cannot be human when their educational experiences are limited to test scores and transcripts. What schools need to do, instead, is to legitimize multiple models of excellence, such as mechanical, artistic, physical, productive, academic, and so on. The Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) movement situates the arts with the likes of science, technology, engineering and math (Jolly, 2020), but this requires they must break free of the stereotype of only existing as an elective. In this gallery, the knowledge of the value of art gained by the artifacts acquired was well worth the price.

### **Board Approval**

Everyone this is Dr. Todd Lilly, one of our board members. He is hard at work but we can still wave as we pass. After curators, registrars, and treasurers, have approved works of art, the executive board must vote on whether the works in question are approved. For a board to approve work, they should be shown why these new works need to be at the gallery and in what ways they will contribute to the institution as a whole. Dr. Lilly and I served as voting board members. This gallery will introduce you

to why art matters in our society, why art is needed to understand being, and why art is necessary for education. I will review prior research and published scholarly articles concerning why, now more than ever, we need the arts in education. This gallery will showcase student work as it relates to the importance of art not just in school, but in society. Let's continue on.

### **Loaning**

The next process I want to discuss is loaning. Loaning occurs when a gallery seeks to put on an exhibition but does not have enough work in its collection to do so. Exhibitions allow galleries to show new work that sheds light on a concept or idea not represented in their collection. Exhibitions allow visitors a unique look at works from various sources that are often not seen together. Exhibitions also have the benefit of showcasing works that alone might not attract much attention, but together become a harmonious display of emergent ideas or retrospective thoughts. For this exhibition, works were loaned from students, staff members, and my own experiences while working at Dalton High School in Oak County North Carolina. Community members from across the United States also contributed virtually through email submissions. Most of the contributions featured in the current exhibition occurred during the year 2020. These works are supported by reviews of literature on art in education. Through member checking each artist confirmed their statements and my interpretations of them. A fellow staff member trained in qualitative methods research reviewed my narrative to ensure protection of the site and, the participants, and to assess my interpretations.

We are now passing the door to my empty classroom in figure 3.5 at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. My usually busy and bright room is silent. The

works students and community members loaned to me for this gallery came from their homes. Most of this work was collected during the stay-at-home orders in many states. The loan for this gallery began with obtaining approval from our local school district. I needed to explain my gallery and its potential significance to our district office for approval. I then applied to the university's institutional research board (IRB) for approval. Although my research is exempt my gallery has been acknowledged by the university in the eIRB system.

The next step in the loan was the response made by students and community members to the "Art through the Eyes of a Pandemic" project in 2020. Students were enrolled in the visual arts program in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 school year and fall semester of the 2020-2021 school year. As the curator and researcher, I emailed students instructions to follow (see appendix) before sharing the idea of the gallery on various social media platforms and local news stations, where it was open to all contributors. Participants voluntarily emailed their submissions to my work email for security and confidentiality. Participants were made aware their work would be featured in my dissertation, my class website, and on the news so that could grant informed consent before submitting any works. Participants could withdraw their work at any time.

While you browse the website in figure 3.6 let me review some of the nuts and bolts of this gallery. I analyzed the data from art contributions to look for themes to organize the gallery and, coded the themes to bracket data into chunks to check for frequency and assign values. I then used these values to determine the importance of themes to students and noted both expected and surprising codes. The themes with the



highest rates of occurrence helped me to generate an intervention. The thematic codes for this study, as revealed in the data collection are: living, feeling, and acting. Condition checks of the artifacts using member checks and peer reviews will be used to ensure the validity of the work.

### **Gallery Design**

We are almost to the main rooms. Follow me a little further down the hall. The key phenomenon in this gallery is understanding adolescents' approaches to being, as per their lived experiences during a pandemic, in hopes of understanding how to promote the arts to better meet student needs. Hoping to find and implement a solution to improve the declining enrollment of students in visual art classes at my school, I also attempted to understand the role of visual art and semiotics in capturing and recording experiences and lived realities. The gallery, by establishing student realities, offers a narrative revealing the necessity of art as a mode of communication allowing student voices to be considered in their education.

This gallery uses action-based research and is grounded in a qualitative phenomenological narrative inquiry approach and uses an emergent design. There is a particular focus on the use of social semiotics as a means of collecting and interpreting information. Social Semiotics is defined by Social Semiotics (2012) as,

Social semiotics is an approach to communication that seeks to understand how people communicate by a variety of means in particular social settings. Modes of communication are what they are not because of a fixed set of rules and structures, but because of what they can accomplish socially in everyday instantiation. With this emphasis, a key question is how people make signs in the

context of interpersonal and institutional power relations to achieve specific aims  
(Para. 1).

The importance of using social semiotics is driven by the need to see adolescent perceptions of power relations; and how those relations impact decisions towards course selection and enrollment in courses in high school.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before we step into room one I wanted to cover ethical considerations. I used the utmost care in reporting information using pseudonyms for the site and location.

Contributing artists were identified by first name only to protect their identities and granted me permission to use first names, art, and statements. While the reporting here is honest, at no time did I ask any participants to share anything more than they desired to.

I always took care to gain consent and ensure those involved had a complete grasp of how their words, actions, and contributions would be used.

### **Significance of the Gallery**

As I collected art, stories, and experiences I noticed common themes emerging. I will be honest: I am a very probing person, so I often asked for others to share what they were willing in these interactions. What I collected was a body of work that told the story of the role of art in our lives. I learned why some engage in the arts, and what about art appeals to them. I learned how art influences us as humans, and how it has been neglected in educational systems. In the process, I realized that by understanding the social semiotics, the equipment, and the existential contributions provided here I could demonstrate the absolute necessity of art in education and society as a part of the human

experience (Heidegger et al, 2013). Are you all ready to see the current exhibition?

Great, come right this way.



Figure 3.2 Elizabeth's Art "Elizabeth 1.) I absolutely love history and spend a lot of free time researching and immersing myself in history. As the world ascended into this chaos, I turned to history to learn to cope with this. I had one big question on my mind as crowds became scarce and masks became a norm: has modern day society ever dealt with something like this before? And turns out, we have. The 1918 Spanish Influenza. Masks became their norm as the virus spread throughout the world, and seeing humanity continue to thrive after that disaster gave me hope that one day everything will return back to normal just like it did to them. If these men can fight in a war wearing gas masks only to come home to wear face masks and survive, then so can we. 2. This allowed me to express how connected I have felt with history. Before this, I knew of the Spanish Flu but never immersed myself in it, I looked at it through numbers and statistics, not lives, as do so many other people. So many people facing one problem of war with another of disease, it must have been overwhelming, and going through this pandemic helped me understand and sympathize a little more than I did. Although I am lucky to still have all the people around me healthy, not everyone is. I was terrified, and I still am. My dad recently won his battle with cancer, so his immune system is almost obsolete. I as well as the rest of my family fear of catching the virus when we get groceries or prescriptions and passing it to him. I know at least one person back in 1918 felt the same way as I do, and knowing I'm not alone with my feelings, in both 1918 and 2020, makes me feel a little bit better."

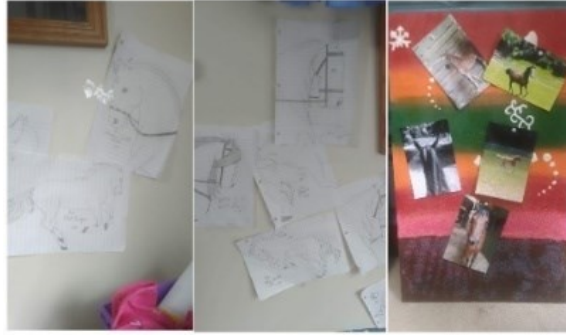


Figure 3.3 Felicity’s Art 1 “Felicity Barber 2020 Winston-Salem NC Through this whole process of self-isolating, I have learned more about myself as an artist than I have in my entire life. What these pieces represent are time and patience. Maybe not for the photo board's painted background, but the images that are tacked to it. The rest are strictly time and patience filled, requiring countless amounts of effort that I didn't know I had. Time and patience also relate to the life we are having to live at the moment. For some, it may not be as difficult. But to most of the people around the world (including those who are fighting for their lives), it's a struggle. But we need to remember that we are not alone in this world. Sure we have each other, but there's one being who fights for us no matter what-- an entity with the power to calm the oceans in the strongest storms. That deity is the Holy Spirit and he has called to many-- kids and adults alike. In this time that we are separate, most Christ-followers are showing massive partnership with the Lord, so that he has given us a new light for us to look forward to. He is asking for your time; to know that he is with you and he will fight for you. He is asking for your patience to remind you that most things won't occur with the snap of a finger or the click of a button. He is asking you to be still; to be patient for the outcome, as I had to be with my artwork. Things won't happen without effort and that, in my eyes, is divided into two parts: Time and patience.”

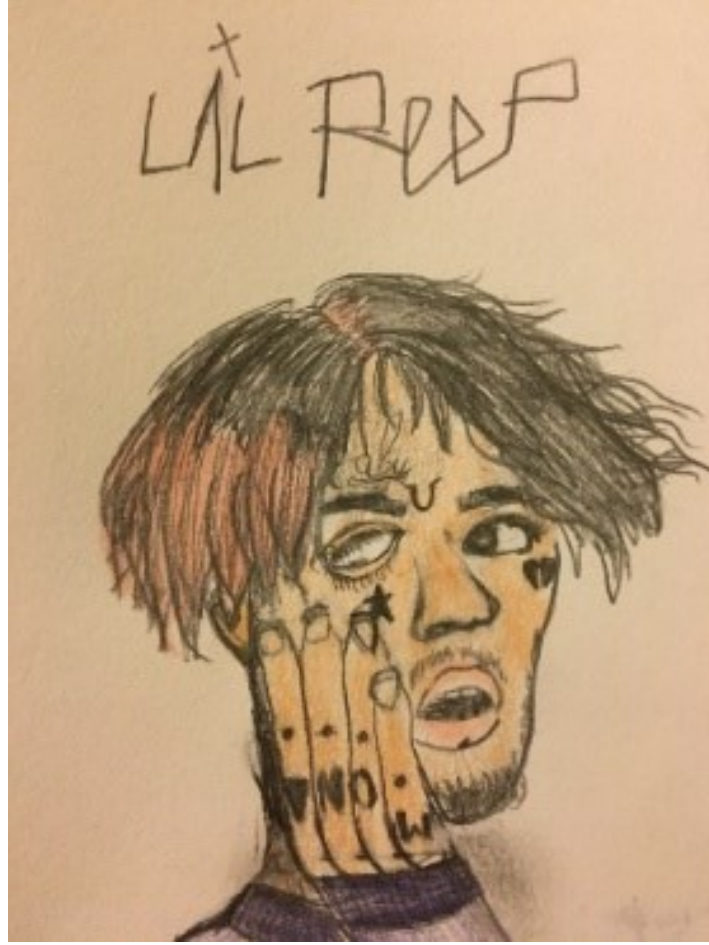


Figure 3.4 Sharai's Art "Sharai 2020 Winston-Salem NC I did this drawing because this man, Gustav Åhr, has helped many people get through rough times through his music, his music is inspiring and uplifting in sad times like this pandemic, his music has been helping me through all of this and I would like to share this amazing music artist with you."



Figure 3.5 Empty Room

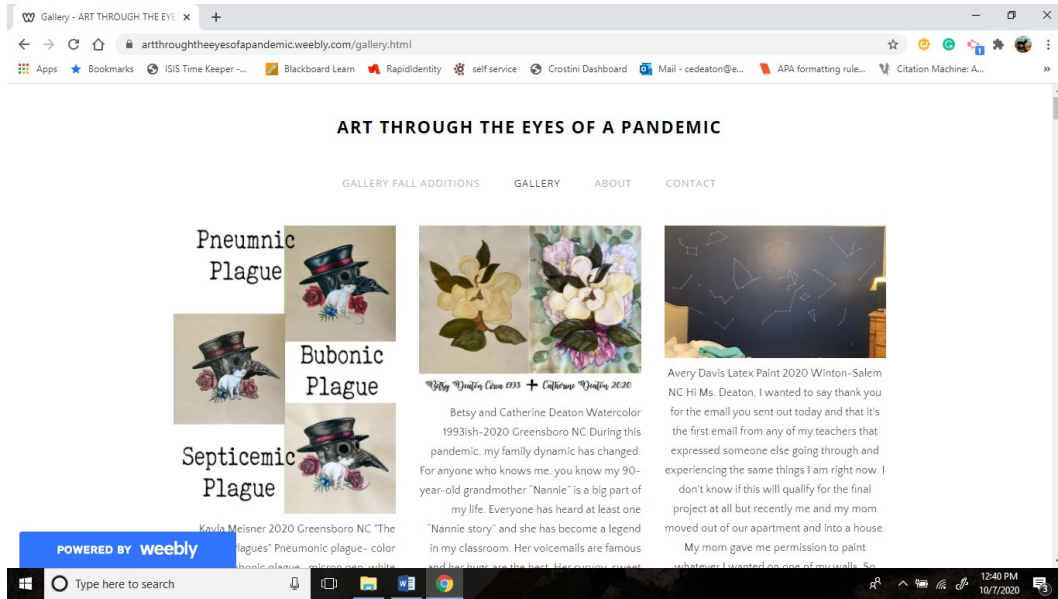


Figure 3.6 Gallery Website



CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION

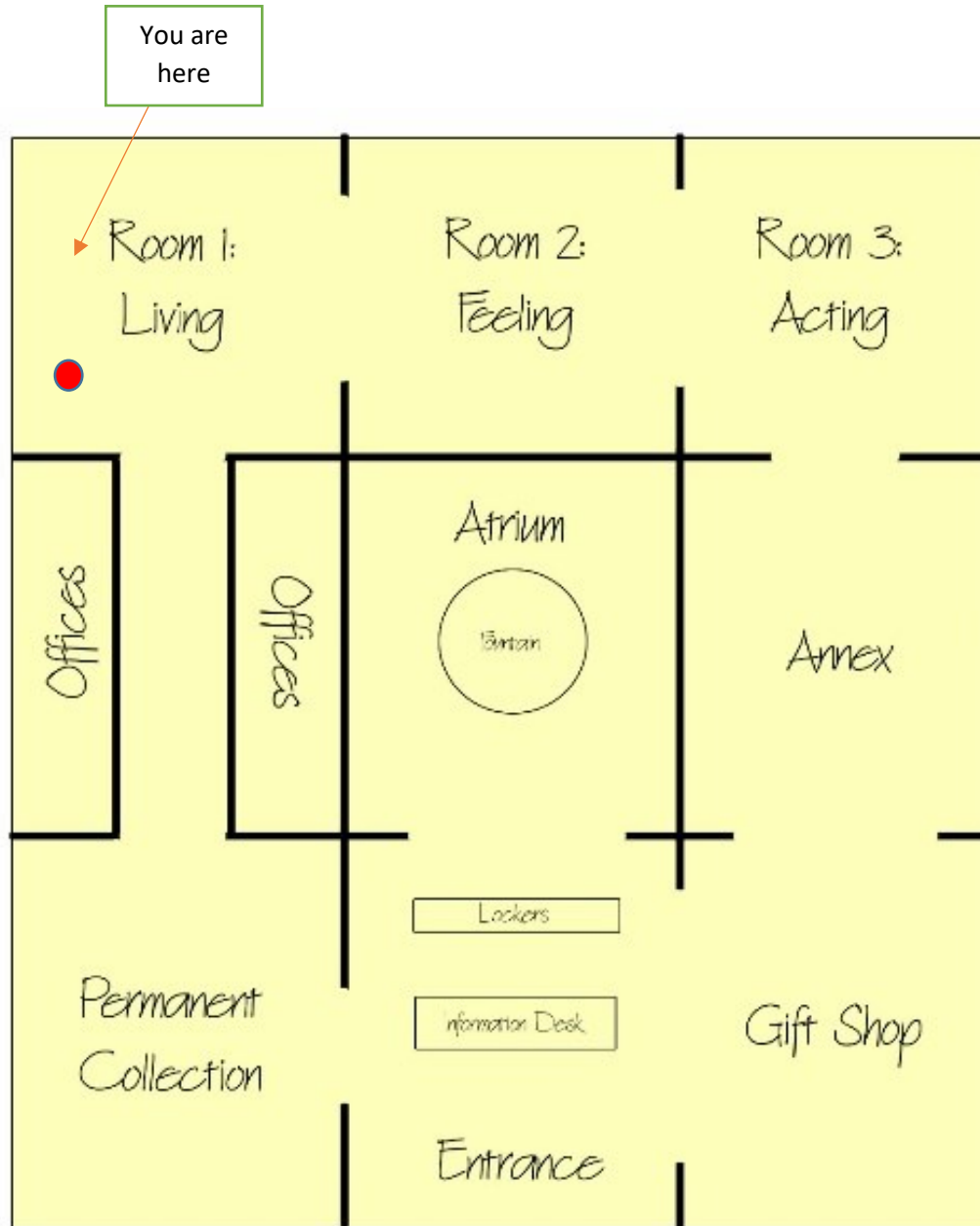


Figure 4.1 Room 1 Map

## Gallery Rooms

Welcome to our current exhibition. Galleries arrange rooms to group common motifs, common periods, common artists, or common movements. This gallery uses the common motif approach. I chose motifs (also known as codes) based on the thematic relevance of responses as they related to the ideas of existential properties. Living, feeling, and acting were the common threads in this work as it relates to existing. Think like an artist I was told by my advising professor. What is art? How do artists show their intent and purpose? How do artists convince others of their vision? They show you their art. According to the Oxford Dictionary art is the beautiful in visible forms (Zelanski & Fisher, 2011). But who defines what is beautiful and what is not? The director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art gives a broader definition and stated “Art happens when anyone takes anything and fashions it into a statement” (Zelanski & Fisher, 2011, p. 5).

All of the submissions in this community gallery make a statement. These works act as a view to why we, not just as a society, and not just as educators; but as a species, need art in our schools and our lives. These works are supported by the words of theorists and philosophers and show why communication through the arts and multimodality is vital to humanity. Below each piece is the artist’s description. This will act as the linguistic medium lending their voice to their vision. These statements have not been altered and are true unprompted voices from our community of how and why art matters. Is everyone ready to tour the individual rooms of the gallery? Let’s go!

### Room 1: Living-Being and Nothingness While a Pandemic Passes By

*“Everything has been figured out, except how to live.”*

*Jean Paul Sartre*

*“In everydayness Dasein can undergo dull ‘suffering’, sink away in the dullness of it, and evade it by seeking new ways in which its dispersion in its affairs may be further dispersed. In the moment of vision, indeed, and often just ‘for that moment’, existence can even gain the mastery over the “everyday”; but it can never extinguish it”*

*Martin Heidegger*

Why should living be considered in relation to learning? The ontology of existence and time are reflected in education as it is something all humans take part in. Although living and learning look different to every individual and place, it is a universal concept practiced by all. We did not always exist and we will not always exist, yet we will all spend a large portion of our lives learning in some fashion or another. In countries with organized educational systems humans will spend more than a decade of their life pursuing learning. Why then should learning not be deeply connecting to understanding existence? To living?

What will our legacy be? The art displayed here approaches topics of change, the transference of ideas and values, and the indomitable nature of life. In this work, there is the symbol of the eternal optimism we as a species possess and that has arguably helped us overcome so many obstacles in our evolution. Even if we fall as the dominant species, life will continue. Our beings, therefore, are defined by how we make sense of what we perceive in the here and now within the context of our being (Heidegger et al, 2013). Our lives are defined by what we value, and what we value is passed on from what we share with one another.

These sharings, or modes, come in many forms. A series of letters when combined in certain orders with numbers create equations that have allowed us to walk

on the moon. Controversy surrounds the ability of modes including texts such as “Huckleberry Finn” by Mark Twain to capture the lived truths of a nation. So much so that the book itself is banned in many school districts arguing it is modernly offensive and reflects poorly on the truths of past American society. When communication is written we seem to accept it to the point we will argue over its validity. When we gaze upon the arts as a carrier of ideas, texts of meaning, they are cast aside as adornments, wall treatments, and additions to collections for status. Art carries ideas through symbols, meanings, colors, and lines. The body in figure 4.2 laboriously carries the tools of a revolution and with them a philosophy of nations. In this work, these images weave together to create a text more vibrant, more impactful, and more reflective than any classroom objectives or learning quadrants could hope to create. This work tackles power struggles, lived realities, feared futures, and hopeful outcomes. This work illustrates the embodiment of life through visual means. Outlets such as the arts foster these visual embodiments, allowing the understanding and transmission of ideals in the classroom and onward.

The next piece shows the burden of life during a pandemic in figure 4.3. While the prior piece remains optimistic, this piece shows the desperation of our youth in a time of chaos. I especially like the artist’s use of space to show varying levels of despair. What do you think? I think this image perfectly captures what many of our students feel, not just during a pandemic, but in everyday life at school. Throughout this gallery these codes of living, feeling, and acting continuously occur suggesting our students are in an existential crisis. Note the use of sticky notes to say “numb help me.”

So many of our students describe themselves as “numb” right now. Is this numbness just because of the pandemic, or is something deeper occurring? In this deeply semiotic theme of carrying ideas, I would like to set the scene for my narrative and this gallery as a participant, researcher, and artist. I do this to establish the lived realities of the context where this work was created. Oak County is located in a rural section of central North Carolina. Strawberry, cattle, tobacco, and soybean farms line the roads. On my commute to work, there are signs where I can pull over and buy fresh eggs, a healthy goat, or a glass of local wine. The families who live here have been here for generations living on the land. You will seldom see “for sale” signs because land and homes, are handed down or built. The main industries in this area are a Nascar franchise with automotive work, automotive work at private garages, farm work, heating and air work, or working for the school system which is one of the largest employers in this county. There are also many locally owned small businesses such as coffee shops, restaurants, and bakeries. Small quaint downtown areas are scattered across the back-wood country roads. Diners featuring fried green tomato sandwiches, antique stores full of cobwebs, and bakeries with the best biscuits and donuts you can find fill these attempts at urbanization.

Fridays are spent at the high school football games in the fall. Spring is filled with travel baseball and softball. And for the girls, cheerleading is a competitive and important part of life. Everyone goes to church twice or more a week. Churches rotate hosting chicken pie dinners, pig pickin’s, and pot lucks. There is the annual Bar-B-Que festival that takes over the largest downtown area and fills the streets with art, music, and meat for miles. Hushpuppies are an acceptable side dish and coleslaw, known as just

“slaw” comes as a condiment. I am from the third-largest city in North Carolina, which is not to say much by comparison. However, coming to Oak County is, like stepping back in time. A true “Americana” experience if ever there was one.

Family always comes first out here. You will be blessed by someone, endearingly, daily. It took several years of being employed in this county to get used to this slower way of life. I remember the first time a student told me they could not do their homework because it was pumpkin season. He had been out all night harvesting pumpkins for his mother to sell by the road the next day and explained, “The first weeka October is a big un Ms. Deaton, people be getting that fall bug and wantin’ to decorate and carve. We gotta be ready with the biggest punkins you ever seen,” Justin would say. I remember in one of my early years our principal coming over the intercom and making the announcement “Alright y’all, now I know you gotta get to school, but you can’t be drivin’ your tractor on to school property. So who’s ever John Deer is out there in the senior lot, go on and take it on home.” I found out later a senior could not get his truck to start in the morning before school. If he got one more tardy he would have detention. So, as one does, he took his dad’s tractor and drove it the four miles to school. Who knew it was illegal to have farm equipment on public property.

In figure 4.4 is a work showcasing this simple life. This life that is established around agriculture and working the land. The semiotics displayed here are easy: home. You might not catch this never having been to Oak County, but for any who have, this work would immediately remind them of winding roads through pastures, early sunrises to throw outfeed, and weekday trips to the market. More than my description, this image best captures the life beat of Oak County. Simple. Uncluttered. Straightforward. And

based on friendship. Anyone will jump to help you with anything you need. And if you have a problem, someone knows someone who can fix it.

The work we just passed in figure 4.4 shows the deep connections of rural life to “mindfulness.” How do people in this community escape? By continuing to emerge in the things that make sense to them: livestock, farming, nature, etc. This area and those who live within it stick to traditions that have been set for generations. The impact of this strict adherence to tradition seeps into the educational setting when deciding students’ futures. For many of these students, their paths to the future were set long before they entered our school halls. Tradition will bind them to this place whether they like it or not. This feeling is not limited to just these students. I would imagine students around the country feel bound by systems in which they have no say and traditions into which they were born. Follow me over to this corner and we will look at what being confined in this life of tradition is like to our students.

The reality for many of the people who contributed to this gallery is that they were trapped long before the pandemic. They were trapped by the norms, routines, expectations, and rituals of performing tasks to maintain daily life in the contexts in which they reside. This simple yet profound image in figure 4.5 of a fish in a bubble is how many people are used to living. Heidegger describes this as the equipment that binds our lives (Heidegger et al, 2013), elaborating that often we function within these systems without question. We simply do the tasks we do because they have always been done. By these parameters, education as whole is could be seen as in a bubble. School systems are notorious for the being the last to implement change and the first to reject it, preferring instead to do what has always been done (Evans, 2001).

The work in figure 4.6 shows the generation that will emerge from this calamity. It does so from California, which could not be more different than the context where this gallery was produced, yet even thousands of miles and norms away, we see resounding themes. This is truly a global crisis, and its impact will be lasting and widespread. The most glaring sign from this piece comes in the sentiment of unexpected time not before acquired. This pandemic will reshape us, as it should. With each passing catastrophe, we grow and change as a society. While working 60-hour weeks, not taking time for ourselves, and putting family as an after-work activity have become the norm, we have lost our sense of priority. Life. Watching life occur. Creating life and watching life grow. Stopping to truly experience life. The child's hand gently brushes across a picture of a giraffe, the first she has ever seen. If society does not make amends she may never see one in person. Giraffes are on the endangered list (Zaveri, 2019). Perhaps we are too, but in this snapshot, her mother catches her exploring, understanding, and experiencing life. Often we are so busy living our lives we forget what defines it. All this is conveyed in a simple image of a child with toys. This is the power of art for carrying messages. When this child grows up and her mother shows her the collection of photographs she will see what it was like to explore and wonder in ways the world may have stripped her of in education as we know it today. After all, rote memorization leaves little room for personality. The power systems that influence her will take her away from this child living life unknowingly, and what will they produce? What if we change that narrative?

Why are students not taking art when it is such a necessity to our very beings?

Children's current narrative of the art experience in schools is as follows: I was working



at an open house in the 2018-2019 school year, when parents and students are invited to come to meet and speak with teachers. A set of concerned parents approached me. Their daughter was highly interested in majoring in art but struggled to fit it in her high school schedule. These parents informed me they, and their daughter were told by school personnel she should take additional core classes to improve her chances of college acceptance which then limited the student's schedule. Another group of parents approached me with similar concerns, their child loved art but worried about taking more advanced placement options. Other students and parents expressed they liked and supported the arts but felt art class was "too hard" and preferred to enroll in "easy A" electives to give themselves and their child a break from the strenuous loads of the core classes. I heard even more feedback from parents and students about eliminating electives all together so students could graduate early in December. With so many options for students, the arts were seemingly reserved for only those planning to major in the subject. All others, simply do not have the time to stop and create. Taking time for enjoyment is not an option in education. As evident in figure 4.7 our students can feel trapped in one place by the rules of the educational system just as they did during quarantine.

Yet the arts are integral to the very human experience that transcends school. Philosopher Susanne Langer postulates that to be human is to make art and express feelings. The very skills that set us apart from animals are found in art-based skills of observation, interpretation, emotion, and symbolism (Langer & Heuvel, 1988). Elliot Eisner (2011) stated "One important feature of the arts is that they provide not only permission but also an encouragement to use one's imagination as a source of content"

(p. 82). That use of imagination is what makes our species successful. To your left is a work by a former student who immigrated to the United States from Cambodia.

In this work, figure 4.8 we see a symbol of abandonment. The abandonment felt by many during this time was both physical and emotional. A student has been stranded abroad in a crisis and left by the system that brought him there. His family worries, he worries, and the future is uncertain even now months later. As an education system, we have abandoned and failed so many in the name of creating a few specialized forces. Take math to be successful. Go to college to get somewhere in life. Science is the only path that will lead you to money. In reality, these are just tropes we as a society have acquiesced into using to predict the successful future of not just individuals but a nation. Inspired by a race to space and the technological revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we have abandoned prior emphasis on thought, feeling, and interpretation (Senge et al, 2012). Just as this young man stands alone on the beach, so many of our youth stand alone in the hallways of our schools, lost and with no hope of finding their way in a system that does not and will not work for them. Too often in education we push students to achieve a future they do not have say in and do not wish to be a part of (Senge et al, 2012).

How do we get students to find a future they want to be a part of? What if art could address students need for personalized class that could mitigate student frustration? My students constantly refer to educators as being part of the system and most feel the system is not working for them. Figure 4.9 shows a visual representation of the frustration students are feeling. Green (2017) stated “Preoccupied with priorities, purposes, programs of “intended learning” and intended (or unintended) manipulation, we pay too little attention to the individual in the quest of his own future, bent on

surpassing what is merely “given,” on breaking through the everyday” (p. 147). Art when used as a form of communication and a path of personal expression, allows the priorities of the individual to become the driving force in learning. Art relies on the idea of the individual to form unique and profound statements and directions into where one wants to go.

In figure 4.10, we see an elaborate and insightful approach to breaking through the everyday while coping with the confines of a pandemic. This student combines visual and language-based modalities to make sense of her being in the world. She also uses personal connections, symbolism, and historical icons to create a work that captures her day-to-day life during a pandemic.

How can we help students understand life through visual means? Human have long used art to record our daily lives showing how we came to be and where we are currently (Eisner, 2011). Cavemen depicted their hunts and even their handprints leaving a visual imprint on our world. Early rulers constructed great monuments to honor themselves and their gods. Ancient Romans used art to promote political agendas. In Medieval times art facilitated the spread of religion. In the renaissance and all future movements, art was and will be used to spread ideas, messages, and even challenge norms and governments. Art more than any other form has recorded the evolution of the human experience. As Green and Ayers (2017) stated, “aesthetic education as we understand it is not "in any sense a fringe undertaking, a species of 'frill” (p. 7). Much like in Figure 4.10 by Kayla, this piece demonstrates the ability to understand and connect ideas of current events, historical occurrences, and symbolism to produce a meaningful visual representation that allows us to record not just our experiences; but the

human experience. Kayla's work shows symbolism being used to transmit thoughts, transmit change, and remind us of our past. The colors and imagery, purposefully chosen and beautifully rendered, tell a story of old and new facing the same struggles. These works alone make a statement, but together they weave a tapestry of humanity's fight against viruses. More than a section in a social studies textbook in high school, more than a worksheet or a test, these pieces move viewers. They validate visual modes to record lived experiences. They showcase the beauty of students possessing multiple literacies to connect with content and the world (Kress, 2010).

Let's stay to the right of the wall here as we move along. My first encounter with multiple literacies happened during my sophomore year of high school. I vividly remember the first time I fell in love with art. I have always enjoyed creating but, I had always seen art only as a fun past time. I was sitting in my honors world history class and my teacher, Dr. Via, told us for the next week we would be attending an in-class art gallery. The room filled with sighs and groans. The lights turned off and the slide projector whirled. Through a dust-filled beam an image of the Lascaux caves, "*The Hall of Bulls*" lit the rickety pull-down screen. Over the next week, my mind was delighted with images of Botticelli's "*The Birth of Venus*," Vermeer's "*Girl with a Pearl Earring*," Van Gogh's "*Starry Night*," Warhol's outrageous "*Banana*" and others along with their ties to history and the societies they captured. My teacher also played music from the respective periods while we listened to his stories and held discussions. More than any test or lecture, this display of art educated me on the world in which they were created. History came alive. This is what learning should be for our students. Using multiple access points, or modes to engage the mind, spirit, and body together in a harmony of

literacy in any and all subjects. In regards to using the arts to capitalize on imagination in learning Efland (2002) stated, “Allowing the child’s imagination to unfold in unforeseen ways was the goal, and the method consisted of freeing children from the constraints of a traditional school with its demand for social conformity, obedience to rules, and silence” (p. 751). Chapman (1982) furthers this concept and stated, “Rather than slipping the arts into what is mistakenly called the regular curriculum, the total curriculum should be redefined so that the arts are included from the onset, on par with the sciences and the humanities” (p. 25). Art is vital for recording and understanding who we are as humans. Without the artistic ability to see and interpret life, our students possess no more than a surface understanding of the contents we teach. As more and more research shows, the content we teach is not enriching or engaging to students in its current delivery (Fullan 2020). It is out dated and rooted in systems that have been unchanged for almost 200 years (Fullan, 2020).

To further students understanding of existence, we must ask who are we as humans? What are the burdens placed on our beings? What joys bring us life? Understanding and interpreting our world and lives is essential to processing who we are and what our purpose is. The work in figure 4.11 shows two individuals connecting through lines and colors. The meaning of the scribbles matters not. Instead, the act of creating becomes the human connection formed between two individuals experiencing their being together in this moment as one. More interestingly, through the artist notations of art representing time, this art becomes a visualization of a joyous occasion during an otherwise deadly event. This work is filled with hearts and smiles and rainbows. This work visually symbolizes family and the joy of being with those we love.

To some, the work in figure 4.12 is just a bag, just as some see school as just a place of learning, yet neither is true. The bag represents a connection to a loved one, but more so, the artist's last statement shows it represents art as a safe harbor in a storm. For many youths in our country, school is a scary and isolating place much like a pandemic. For those without art, without multimodality to make sense of the world, what keeps them sane? What helps them stay concentrated when their worlds are turned upside-down?

Art can be an outlet for students to form connections and make meaning of life, yet some courses focus on content and assessment instead of the learners' lives. Objectives often distract us and confine us as educators, when instead they should change our judgments so that we view our students as art products that we create and shape and nurture (Eisner, 2017). To do this, we must understand these students, understand what drives their choices, and meet them where they are to create a positive experience. Green (2018) stated,

Curriculum, from the learner's standpoint, ordinarily represents little more than an arrangement of subjects, a structure of socially prescribed knowledge, or a complex system of meanings which may or may not fall within his grasp. Rarely does it signify possibility for him as an existing person, mainly concerned with making sense of his own life-world (p. 147).

This gallery shows students "own life-world" and it is one with multiple time commitments to be considered, future careers to be addressed, and balance to be maintained. Eisner (2011) elaborates on this stating, "the effects of teaching may not show up until long after students leave school and in ways, the teacher never dreamed of"

(p. 50). Heidegger says we do not merely look out at the world and see things and people; when we look out into the world we do so with a sense of our position in time and space (Heidegger et al, 2013). We do not merely express what we see, hear, touch, and smell with definitions and descriptions, we see things concerning our beings, our current and previous experiences, our awareness of our mortality, and our sense of significance (Heidegger et al, 2013). That puts art on a whole new plane from the dictionary definition. It may seem trite, but art engages the mind, body, and soul in determining our own identities and our position in the world in relation to everything and everyone else. Our time in this space is limited. No other animal comprehends this great weight of existing. Art gives us a way to communicate this when language, mathematics, and music are not enough. Each has its use and function, but the arts can truly capture the soul with the right outlet.

The work in figure 4.13 has so many layers of meaning and symbols. This artist chose to represent fear and dreams. That connection of ideas shows a level of multiple literacies that are both intriguing and insightful. She fears for her niece's future, both for her outcome and experience. She does not want her niece to be hidden in this world of learning. What a beautiful sentiment and is one we should all want for our students. We should never want any student to be hidden behind a curriculum, an assessment, or a lesson plan. This artist's message is enhanced through the image, her art, and her words combining to make a statement about her being, her position, and the existence of others she cares about through lived experiences. She is able to capture life, death, fear, hope, family, and dreams all in one submission. We need to see our students as multimodal beings with many unique facets to explore. We need to understand their lives, their

wants, and their dreams in the contexts of our classes. Even in this fear, this student remains hopeful her niece will be able to chase her dreams. This work truly hit me in a way no professional development and no degree in education could. All through the use of connecting images, words, news, and health topics. I need to see my students. We all do. But how do we open our eyes?

So as we move on, much like many aspects of our modern society, we need to write a counter narrative to art as it is seen in education currently. The educational systems developed during colonization do not fit a global society where ideas are shared and embraced more freely than ever before. We need to consider student wants, we need to see education as a system of promoting change, and we need that change to start with considering the whole learner and not just their assessment outcomes. To include art in this, Chapman (1982) stated, “Neglected are the vast majority of students whose knowledge of art will come into play as they select and arrange homes and places of work, or as they visit galleries and museums” (p. 76).

I love Alex’s noting how tangible the outside world is, but how we cannot grasp it in figure 4.14. As I contemplated this work I began to realize that many of our students see our classrooms in these ways. They see a world outside our walls full of excitement and wonder, but within these walls all that exists is time. Time is an idea that we all know and understand, but that few make the effort to visualize. When the world changed because of the pandemic our perception of time, which no one ever has enough of, became abundant. So many who participated in the gallery noted the new time they had and could capture through visual means: a mother photographing a childhood of her newborn otherwise missed due to being at work, a drawing from a



grandchild unable to visit their grandfather as a way to stay connected while apart, and Alex's above images of daily life in this new normal. Art captures time. Understanding time is arguably a literacy unto itself. When considering my problem of practice, time was a frequent subject. Students did not have enough time to take something like art. Common core subjects push students to prepare to be the best future candidates in the global job market by making them career-ready and college-bound (Schiro, 2013). This unintentionally removes the idea of taking courses for pleasure, enjoyment, or emotional wellness. In preparing students to be adults we have deprived these children of their inherent ebullience and curiosity for learning and living (Brooks & Brooks, 2000). Art is essential for reinstating this excitement in learning and for returning students to their natural curiosities. Eisner (2011) stated, "the arts remind us of what life can be at its most vital" (p. 203). Students should be encouraged to take the time to become involved in the arts as an enriching and enlightening experience above what a regular education can provide. They should be encouraged to make time for things they are passionate about and enjoy.

Too often in our society, we look down on those who make time for themselves. We see this in teacher burn-out rates due to educators overwhelming themselves in the early parts of their careers and denying themselves time for family, rest, and enjoyment (Evans, 2001). If we could help students learn to create that balance as adolescents they could carry that skill into adulthood to potentially produce a more stable society. If you step over here, Carina very playfully demonstrates this idea in figure 4.15 with an octopus garden. While bright and cute it does have the symbolic undertone of the problem of taking on so much we need more of ourselves than we have to offer. I think

an octopus may just be a perfect symbol for understanding being in a society that is endlessly demanding.

This section focused on the living aspect of involving art in student learning experiences. Where these students live and learn defines the realities and norms of their existence. This section validated art as a mode and a means of constructing and transforming knowledge on par with all other “core” classes so that secondary arts programs can be better supported and maintained. Lastly, the gallery invited you to consider students’ being and time with regard to the lives they lead. The way we position ourselves in our lives relates to our norms, locations, and routines, yet in education we focus on contents and standards. Education has often followed a scholarly-academic approach, the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowing (Schiro, 2013). In this gallery I am seeing a reach for connecting learning to life. The pursuit of knowledge for the sake of living. Constructivist approaches facilitate this by relating content to student’s experiences. Learning can involve their lives. Learning can involve their being. By prioritizing artistic and constructivist approaches in all classes, enhanced student engagement and involvement would make learning more immersive for our learners. I see a few of you need a quick break. We will meet in room two when everyone is done.



Figure 4.2 Michael's Art 1 "Michael 2020 Greensboro NC. This is a piece called "Descendants of Cain" that I've shared before. I'm picking it for this project because of the concept behind it, and how that concept can be read in a new light given current events. I read Daniel Quinn's "Ishmael" a few years back. I'm big into the subject of anthropology and human evolution. That book completely changed my life in how I view the world and our place in it as a dominant species. It really lays out the laws of nature by which all species live, and how they apply to humans (despite our thinking to the contrary). The art that came from this book was originally centered on the idea of the agricultural revolution and the way we carried our cultures and philosophies across the globe just as we carried our agricultural tools, in order to shape the world to our will and to put a narrative to the act of shaping it. Now we are grappling with the notion of ourselves as a quite different sort of carrier, and grappling with the evolutionary power of disease that is going to shape us, especially culturally into new territory. It is frightening. It is one thing to read about in the abstract, and another to do direct battle with on a daily basis. Of all the disasters I've come to believe my generation would bear witness, disease was low on my priority list. But despite the talk of doom and gloom that we face daily, the world itself is thriving. Whatever battles we face, we'll fight them as birds continue to sing and flowers continue to bloom and seasons change. Even within the shadow of death (which lately seems a little darker, a little more real than it was before), life is constantly going on in a state of new birth. Even if we fall as a dominant species, from this or whatever new calamity, life will go on. And it will be beautiful, regardless of who is there to witness its beauty. And even though it seems that we've done a lot of damage to the web of life, in the long run we've only altered it temporarily. On the scale of geologic time, the scale of which evolution's work is best viewed, our changes are a noticeable

blip on the radar, but not the end of everything. Whatever comes after us will have been shaped by us, and that will be our legacy.”



Figure 4.3 Misa’s Art. Why did you choose this as art to represent yourself during a pandemic? I chose to take this picture instead of drawing something or painting something because I feel like it accurately sums up what my everyday life was like during the quarantine. All of the clutter and overwhelming thoughts, but also the environment that I was working and living in. What did making this allow you to express? This allowed me to express what was going on inside my head during the pandemic but also the reality of my surroundings in everyday life. It also allowed me to show how much I was just emotionally drained from all that was going on.”



Figure 4.4 Leigh Ann Oil Painting 2020 Winston-Salem NC. I paint for Mind clearing/peacefulness. These are my friend Deana's cows.”

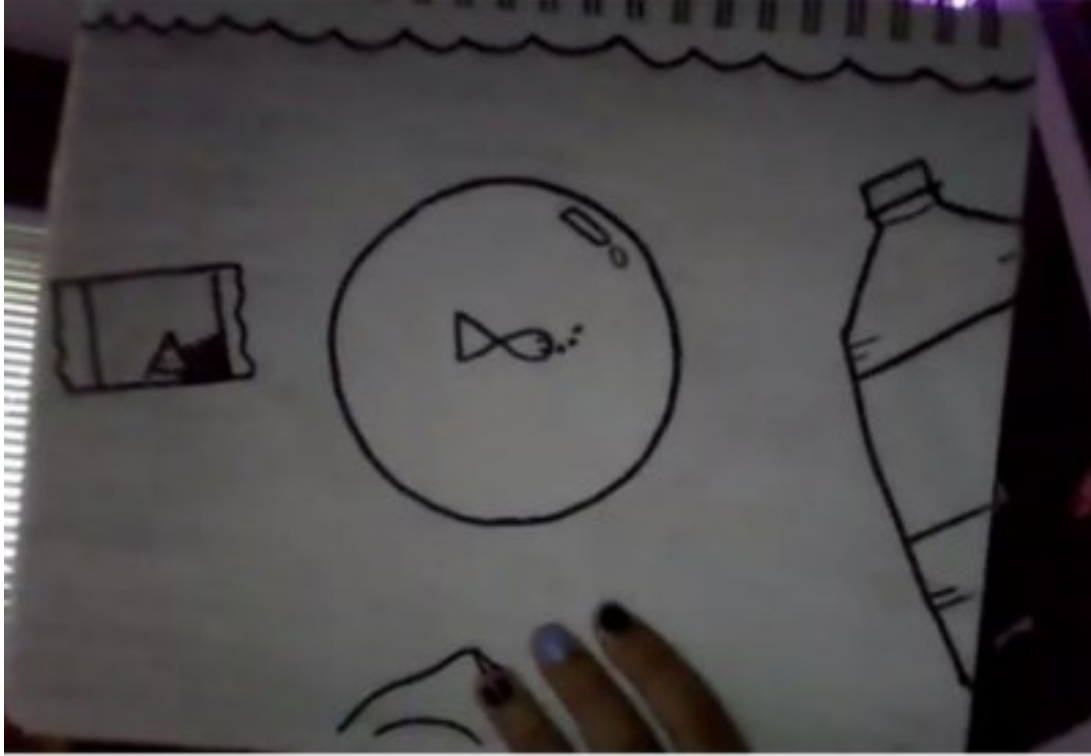


Figure 4.5 Kaia's Art "I choose this art piece of art to represent me during the pandemic because the fish can't go outside the bubble like how I couldn't go outside my house at one point. The trash in the water represents the virus. This allowed me to express how I felt like I couldn't go anywhere or do anything out side of my home kinda like I was trapped."



Figure 4.6 Stefani's Art "Stefani 2020 photography Glendora California Having a baby is a whole new learning experience as it is, but being quarantined at home with your new little human is a whole new level of fun. We get up at the crack of dawn, we make coffee, and then we play toys. If it wasn't for this shelter in place order in California I wouldn't have had this chance to really slow down and watch Madix experience life. I will remember this time as a blessing. This photo is part of my photo series "Lockdown Mornings with MAD." I began this series when California started its shelter-in-place order. It gives me a chance to control one thing in my daily life."



Figure 4.7 Frida's Art "Well to me it represents being in quarantine and not being able to go anywhere and just feels like your trapped in one place not able to get out it was really frustrating and boring"





Figure 4.8 Marya’s Art “Marya. 2020 Painting Greensboro NC On the right is the original photo of my cousin, Piseth Chann, at a beach in Indonesia. He is an international student who wasn't able to fly back home on time before the government shut down the airport. I decided on this picture of him because he is adventurous and loves to travel to different places. But that all changed because of this pandemic. He is currently living in an apartment by himself as most of the other international students had left. We often check in on him through Facebook messenger and would notice how he is online even when it is late at 4 AM (Indonesia time). This pandemic had caused him a lot of stress and that had lead to the disruption of his sleeping schedule and he even gained a few pounds. He said that he misses home and feels lonely at times. Nevertheless, he spends most of his time watching the news and have posted many opinions on Facebook of the way the Indonesian government is handling this pandemic. To reduce stress he makes small trips outside to buy food and restock some necessities. He had also started doing small exercises to keep himself healthy. When I thought of what to paint for this project, I immediately thought about him because, as a college student, I know of many international students that were forced to find other living arrangements as they were neglected by their university and weren't able to fly back home on time. I wanted to include his original picture because it is an artwork itself. In the picture, he is staring off into the sunset with rays of light hitting him at just the perfect moment. To me, those rays of sunlight represent hope. Through these difficult times, we will always find a way to overcome our struggles. It can also go with the popular saying, "There's a light at the end of the tunnel." This is my first attempt at making art after two years of neglect, so in a way, I am also reconnecting with myself. It's not the best of my ability, but I will find my way back at the end of the tunnel. :)”



Figure 4.9 Logan's Art "Logan. Why did you chose this as art to represent yourself during a pandemic?"

I choose to draw because I thought it would represent my frustration the best.

What did making this allow you to express?

I chose this because going into high school there is more work and more hours to study and it's all just a cluster building up in my head. I also put two of my favorite things to do in the art because they both got canceled due to the virus."

Pneumnic  
Plague



Bubonic  
Plague



Septicemic  
Plague

Figure 4.10 Kayla's Art "Kayla 2020 Greensboro NC "The Three Plagues"  
Pneumonic plague- color pencil Bubonic plague- micron pen, white charcoal, and color pencil Septicemic plague- watercolor pencil and white acrylic 14"x14" tan paper image roughly 8"x8." The Three Plagues is a piece consisting of three replicas of the same image using different mediums I had readily available in my home. Each piece is named for the three types of plagues of the Black Death, Bubonic, Septicemic, and Pneumonic, all caused by the bacterium *Yersinia Pestis*. While remaining in my home, I only left for necessities and refrained from seeing family and friends, important connections that I certainly took for granted. Days rapidly blended and recognizing what day it was became impossible without checking my phone. Only minor changes and differences within the days existed, similar to the images depicted in all three pieces. Watching the news I opened myself up to the worries of the world and allowed the experience of others on the

television to guide my own and increase my anxieties and cause excruciating panic attacks. An expected fixation I developed was the comparison of these modern unprecedented times to events throughout history. I've always had a love for history and even decided to make a career out of it. My ability to make sense of the past through visual means comforts me about the future and symbols of past atrocities became a beacon of hope for me that things will pass and this will eventually become a part of history. A visual connection in history I made was the use of modern surgical and cloth masks equating to the masks used by plague doctors. Stuffed in the beak were usually herbs and flowers such as roses and juniper to mask the smell of death that permeated the air. Ironically similar flower patterns cover our modern masks in an attempt to personalize the new mandatory accessory. Rats throughout history have a bad reputation of being greasy, dirty, and disease ridden animals. Their connection associated with the Black Death and the role they had to play in the spread of the disease adds to this personification. However, my relationship with the animals creates a vastly different interpretation of what I chose to depict. I have two emotional support rats that have provided immense amounts of comfort and distraction from the pandemic. Their abundance of love and playfulness continue to aid me in times of distress while reminding me to be open minded and non-judgmental. The color scheme manifested in the red roses, the white rat, and blue juniper berries can symbolize both the unity and division felt across the United States. For a while there was unity in the fact that this was not a single nation dealing with this virus but a globe, we as a species were united. This quickly soured as disagreements of how things were handled and plans for the future erupted creating sides. These sides continue to create division and in desperation to return things to the way they were may prove to be more catastrophic, further planting this moment in history. The Three plagues visually represent the anguish and joy felt during my time in quarantine and the turbulent future that has been stirred by this new obstacle. However, I am hopeful we will eventually overcome this, just like atrocities in the past. This event can promote change and progress and alert us of weaknesses and susceptible communities present within our society. We cannot allow this moment in history to fall on deaf ears.”



Figure 4.11 Rachel’s Art “Rachel. 2020 Winston-Salem NC. Attached is my pandemic art project. I decided to do the project when my three year old cousin came over. She told me she wanted to draw so I figured it was a good idea to go ahead and do my project. The reason I chose to do a child's drawing is because this represented art during the pandemic best for me. Me and Elaina (her name) had not seen each other for around a month and a half until she came over today. It felt so good to see her, and it made my heart happy. It was so fun to make art with her, I enjoyed watching her little brain work. Seeing Elaina made me think of how important it is to spend time with your family while you can, especially during times like these. I think our artwork represents time spent with family, and how if you have your family, you will always be okay.”



Figure 4.12 Lexi's Art "Lexi. 2020 Marker Winston-Salem NC. Hey Ms. Deaton. I was looking at the email you sent out about the pandemic art and thought this would represent what I have been doing in this time of hardship. My mawmaw recently asked me if I would design a little bag for my great grandmother who is in the nursing home for mother's day so we could put her gift inside. She gave me a blank bag, which allowed me to use my creativity. During this pandemic, I have relied on art to keep me sane and concentrated since our normal lives were turned upside down!"

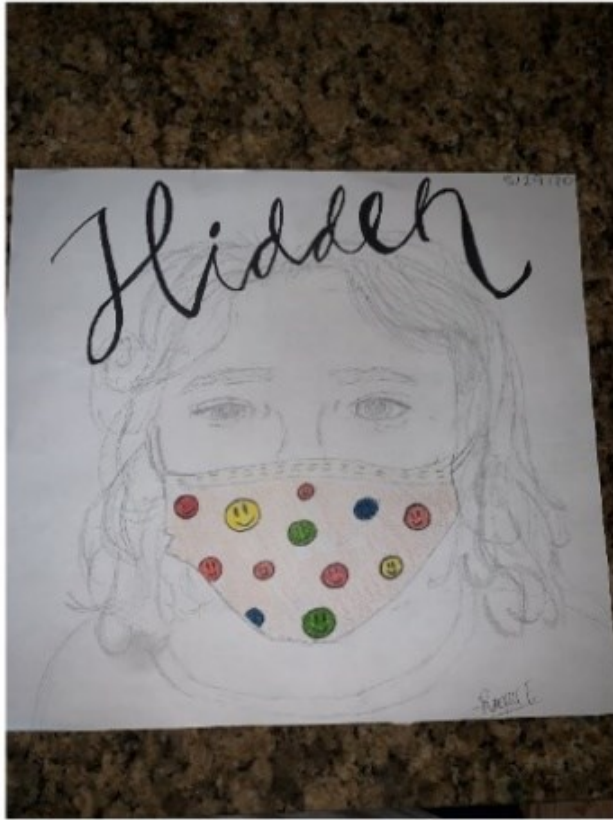


Figure 4.13 Ragan’s Art “Ragan 2020 For my art through a pandemic drawing I choose to draw a portrait of my niece with a mask on. The reason for choosing this is because it breaks my heart for that even she has to go into this world having to wear a mask to keep her safe. I feel like when we go out we are having to hide from the world. We have to stay in our house to keep us safe and then wear a mask over our mouths and nose to keep us safe. It makes me feel like we have to hide from this world through all of this to keep us safe. And the reason for choosing my niece is because this was her first year of kindergarten, her first steps to her education for her future career. Some of her first big steps into the world. And she had it all taken away from her because of this pandemic. I want to show her that she doesn’t have to feel hidden in this world and that she can express her self in many ways just like how I did through art. And to show her no matter what, to look at all the good through all of this. And no matter how crazy things are and how scary this situation can be right now to keep her head held high and to keep chasing her dreams!!”



Figure 4.14 Alex's Art "Photographer Alexandra Baker, alaybakerphoto on Instagram. Creating these photos are a way for me to document my everyday experience and explore what it means to be in isolation. As I continue to work on these images, I'm thinking about how tangible the outside world is but how we are confined to our homes. Winston-Salem NC





Figure 4.15 Carina's Art "Carina. 2020 Winston-Salem NC. This final piece was completed on canvas with acrylic paint. During these few months in quarantine I've taken a liking to plants and growing things, and just trying to hold out with all the stuff going on outside, like an octopus has eight arms is sometimes how it can feel with school, and hobbies, and life"

## Room 2: Feeling-The Unbearable Lightness of Being

*“Life begins on the other side of despair”*

*Jean Paul Sartre*

*“The entire stock of what lies therein may be counted up formally and recorded: anxiousness as a state-of-mind is a way of Being-in-the-world; that in the face of which we have anxiety is thrown Being-in-the-world; that which we have anxiety about is our potentiality for-being-in-the-world”*

*Martin Heidegger*

How do we know we exist at all? We know because we experience it. One path to experience is through feeling. You are currently in the room of feeling featured in figure 4.16. We form emotional responses to experiences and situations. Learning is nothing more than a purposeful experiencing that results in a desired outcome. To make learning relevant, we must feel it. In education, feeling is something rarely that is rarely discussed. Instead many academics favor discussions of data analyses that whittle a living breath creature down to nothing more than a number (Hagopian, 2014). Quadrants, measurable standards of achievement, assessments, objectives and so on are the scaffolds with which we build our learning systems. But feeling? That is left to school counselors, yet our students feel. And if they feel, they exist. But do they, do we, as educators feel enough in relation to learning?

I, too, am a participant in this gallery and my work is in figure 4.17. As you may have deduced from my commentary this pandemic took many things away from me. I watched each day on the news as more and more of the goals had for this year slipped

through my fingers covered in hand sanitizer. And then my dad calls and says my Grandmother has been accepted to a nursing home. Just writing those sentences brought back the anxiety I felt with each presidential and gubernatorial announcement. I needed a safe place and a safe way to explore the grief I felt as I lost so many personal goals and comforts. This work symbolizes my expressive and visual literacies coming together to cope with loss.

What losses or grief face the contemporary learner? Today's student faces an educational system that demands more and in a shorter amount of time than ever in the history of learning in our nation (Senge et al, 2012). We push students academically, athletically, and socially. Students are in clubs and community organizations, and we push them to be the agents of change we wish to see in the world. But they are still children. And, they are still human. The loss of childhood caused by the pressures placed on students in society drives the existential crisis many of our learners face (Brooks & Brooks, 2000).

Emotional and mental well-being have been more widely discussed in education and in mainstream media in recent years. The arts can be a fertile ground for students to express themselves, have an outlet, and feed their souls. Green (2017) stated, "For one thing, they [the arts] remind us of what it means for an individual to be present unto himself; for another, they suggest to us the origins of significant quests for meaning, origins which ought to be held in the mind of those willing to enable students to be themselves" (p. 157). This next piece, figure 4.18, shows a contributor truly being herself. Yes sir, that is correct. She is using the red curtain as a symbol. To her the

pandemic is a show she is watching. While the world is struggling she continues to thrive.

Encouraging of art classes as a way to balance yourself and find peace is becoming more and more important for the stability of our youth. Creating a more balanced youth would also have the benefit of a future society more capable of this idea of being present unto oneself and being whole. We will now move on to the next piece figure 4.19. Please make room so everyone can see it.

The idea of multimodality does not just apply to the area of learning. Quite the contrary, being literate in multiple media means to understand various modes and applications of learning and knowledge. I often feel society gives far too little credit to the knowledge of oneself? Do you all agree? I cannot tell you how many people I have heard say they have not and will not take the time to know themselves. This artist in figure 4.19 connected colors to her feelings and images to her mood, and she even acknowledges art's role in combating negative feelings. In this piece, the artist's visual and emotional literacies work together to provide a bright and inspirational outreach that invites others to join as well. What if all learning could be this way, inviting and inspirational by using multimodal avenues for self-discovery?

The educational philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau felt we should find value, not in the knowledge itself but in the act of acquiring it (Damrosch, 2005). The works in this room are a perfect representation of how art can become an avenue of forming relationships through shared experiences with each other and with the content we present our students. We build this miraculous network of learning and experiencing life simply by interacting with one another (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Green (2017) adds, "The

problem for teachers is to stimulate an awareness of the questionable, to aid in the identification of the thematically relevant, to beckon beyond the everyday” (p. 158). Learning should be a fun and interactive experience that engages students beings invoking feelings and emotions like sadness and joy for students and teachers alike. This beautifully demonstrated in figure 4.20 as a student reflects her feelings in portrait of herself during a pandemic.

The piece in figure 4.21 always makes me so happy because you can hear the joy in the artist’s statement. Can you feel her happiness? This work shows an artist embracing herself. She is allowing herself to explore, to experiment, and to delight in a visual medium. While art moved this person to create freely the same literacy in feelings and visual mediums can inspire nations. Much like the work of Goya’s “*The 3rd of May 1808*” and Delacroix’s “*Liberty Leading the People*” showing the emotion of war and inspiring people into revolutions, art can move people and continue to carry ideas for centuries. Art provides new ways of thinking, the impressionist challenged us to see things not as they are but as they could be interpreted to be (Wilder, 2007). The surrealist movement challenged the very notion of reality and asked viewers to consider beyond the known world (Wilder, 2007). In modern times we are seeing our streets and cities adorned with bold and moving murals supporting the “Black Live Matter Movement” (Jacobs, 2020). Art can allow us a pathway to carry our thoughts, dreams, ideas, and values to others. This contributor’s work in figure 4.22 explores a range of emotions. What at first seems like a crying eye turns out to be full of hope.

Eisner (2011) elaborates on this and state, “Arts teach children that their personal signature is important and that answers to questions and solutions to problems need not

be identical” (p. 197). This is the idea of divergent thinking through the use of multiple modes (Kress, 2010). Art can foster individuality, encourage expression, and challenge norms in deeply personal ways for our students.

How can art be used to move students in personal ways? In ancient Greece, there was a philosopher Plotinus, he felt one could reach religious enlightenment by surrounding oneself in works of art and light. Thus, the stained-glass window was born using the ideas of "Neoplatonism," which posits that one can reach this ideality, much like a nirvana, through experiencing beauty. I understood this concept from a strictly academic standpoint until visiting France. I stood in the apse of the San Chapelle Cathedral, known as the “Jewel Box of Paris,” bathed in rainbows of colored light from the stories-tall stained-glass windows. At that moment I felt such peace and delight as a multitude of hues warmed my skin. The floor looked like a dancing kaleidoscope and I could not stop smiling. Even for hours later, that feeling stayed with me. Art has such a transformative effect on those who view and appreciate it. Knowing what the “Mona Lisa” is and standing feet from Da Vinci's brushstrokes are two very different experiences. One may visually appeal to you, but the other moves you.

This can be seen profoundly in today's news cycles showing the many murals, paintings, and sculptures honoring George Floyd adorning destroyed towns and roads, filling the cracks in society with beauty and hope for a better tomorrow (Jacobs, 2020). Art has the power to inspire and to move people. Art can allow people to be themselves. Art can be used to transform our educational systems and those individuals within it. Duncan-Andrade (2009) would describe this as growing roses in concrete and stated

The radical transformation that Obama is calling for will not occur unless we treat every classroom as having the potential to be a crack in the metaphorical concrete that creates unnatural causes in the lives of urban youth. For those of us who will be working alongside this next generation of teachers, we must purposefully nurture our students, colleagues, and ourselves through the cracks, knowing we will sustain the trauma of damaged petals along the way. It is essential that we understand these damaged petals as the attributes of indignation, tenacity, and audacity. They are not the social stressors we are trying to overcome, and they must not be misinterpreted as deficits in our students. We must implore our colleagues to recognize that our damaged petals, and those of our students, are not what need to be reformed out of us; they are what need to be celebrated about us. (p. 192).

Whether individuals are gazing at the moon or moving a community to change, creating an outlet of emotional movement in our classroom is important. Art is a universal access point to becoming critically aware. Art classes can further this through learner centered approaches.

This artist responsible for figure 4.23 is passionate about how much she hates the pandemic. The expression and contrast in this piece really rile viewers. You can feel her anger at this pandemic. I am always amazed at the ability of art to transfer feelings through images like this.

Art can be a safe space for students to relieve stress, process experiences, and form connections, but art can also provide an outlet for bigger and deeper emotions like fear, sadness, and despair. This next piece is great, follow me. Figure 4.24 is one of the

best examples of multimodality and social semiotics in this gallery. This artist in figure 4.24 utilizes several approaches to and various means of communication: foreign languages, visual representations, contrasting textures and patterns, social and media references, and a story that fuses into a work that enthralls and captivates the viewer. This is truly an expression and symbol of being in a time of despair. This pandemic has brought about the fear, sadness, and troubles many students face daily in their educational lives.

Each year counselors meet with us to discuss the emotional needs of our students. In today's society, mental and emotional well-being commonly makes headlines. With the removal of play in schools and a push to force students in the future readiness programs of study over exploring existence, children can no longer be children (Gray, 2010). This stress creates a cognitive dissonance that produces an unstable youth (Gray 2010). We often hear on the news anchors reminding citizens to take care of themselves during the pandemic. Whenever there is a school shooting the lack of mental and emotional wellness education is ever-present (Paolini, 2015). Eisner and Green view the arts and the act of creation as an avenue to understanding, expressing, and balancing life. Eisner in particular felt that understanding the production of art forms was the key to understanding the individual (Eisner, 2011). Students today do not feel heard or understood. The idea of a person's voice is sadly new to our society and still being challenged as seen by the #metoo movement empowering women to finally speak up against people who have harmed them (Me Too Movement, 2020). In educational practices student voice is often tossed to the side in favor of promoting learning quadrants and tests scores.



On average in each of my classes, I have at least four students who have modifications to their instruction to address emotional deficits. One student cannot be spoken to in front of the class as it triggers trauma. One student has to be allowed extended time as deadlines cause anxiety. One student had daily emotional outbursts if she did not get a 100 on all assignments, yelling that she wanted to kill herself. Art can be an enriching, engaging, and safe form of learning to understand ourselves emotionally. Art can be used to develop empathy, understanding, and relationships to one another which are vital to tapping into our emotional well-being (Eisner, 2011). This ability to determine what works and what does not work for us is so important for our ability to find balance in our lives. Eisner (2011) elaborates on this and stated:

Imagination, that form of thinking that engenders images of the possible, also has a critically important cognitive function to perform aside from the creation of possible worlds. Imagination also enables us to try things out again in the mind's eye without the consequences we might encounter if we had to act upon them empirically. It provides a safety net for experiment and rehearsal (p. 5).

Constructivism is an advantageous approach to solving this crisis within our students' experiences allowing interactions that lead students to understand the world and themselves. Instead of simply telling our students this is how things must be done, we allow them to explore and discover, a skill that is vital in and out of the classroom in terms of finding balance in existence. As Cassidy illustrates in Figure 4.24, through art the balance of fear and a connection to a favorite television show, she can process her emotions in an array of visual responses that help her cope. Through learning to cope and communicate visually, she can then balance out her daily interactions. With such an

important role in society, you would imagine the arts would be included in mission statements for schools, yet they are not. Instead, schools focus on inspiring students, fostering respect for one another, the development of contributing members of society, etc. without stating how or through what means (Students at the Center, 2020). These are hollow words with empty promises. The arts are a perfect avenue for developing these very skills, which ultimately rely on the development of students' empathy and emotional wellness.

Too often our students feel withdrawn from their education. They cannot find a way to be passionate about their learning because they have no say in it. Eisner (2011) stated, "Promoting a love affair between the student and his or her work is one of our school's most important aims" (p. 196). Students should feel passionate about their education, but it is our job as educators to light that fire. Sara beautifully stated that in the depth of her despair, she still felt she should do something to contribute to this gallery in figure 4.25. Rousseau felt teaching the importance of having a sense of community and working towards the greater good was far more beneficial than studying academic subjects (Damrosch, 2005). I found that approximately 45% of my students participated in this gallery project during the stay-at-home order. For many classes, including my own, only 20% of students continued to work, yet even those who quit working on our class assignments wanted to contribute. By allowing students a way to express themselves we connect with them and allow them to connect with us in return. This was the first time in her artist statement that the artist in figure 4.25 confided in me why she had stopped doing her work. I reassured her that her grade was not my concern at the moment, she was. Her art gave her purpose, and after this, she continued to create.

Three of her works are featured in this gallery. The symbolism of this piece then becomes the act of creation for the sake of feeling.

This gallery as a whole suggests several solutions for healing my problem of practice, enrollment in visual arts, and helping the arts connect with our schools and students. They are an avenue and an outlet to understanding the human experience. They are a path to expression and sharing ideas. The arts encourage students to feel, challenge, understand, and experience themselves in new ways. Each of these aspects is a mode of communication with each other and ourselves. Shared experiences, shared challenges, and shared feelings create the experience of being. These modalities activate different responses in each person in whom they resonate using art a vessel. The next piece in figure 4.26 is by the same contributor as above but months later. You're right, ma'am. It's like this work is by a totally different artist. Isn't it amazing how art can show the transformation of an individual even in such a short time?

This section explored the importance of art's fostering feeling in the educational setting and as path to understanding being. The art exhibited how when given minimal instructions people of different ages use art to position their being in the world, both literally and abstractly. The insight gained in this section answered how to influence the curriculum of the high school art classes to better reach our students. Art is a safe and powerful vessel for processing emotions. Teaching with feeling, being present to one's self, and treating art as a form of creating balance and expression are all ways of acknowledging art is essential to humanity. Constructivist ideologies can help provide teachers the instructional access point to allow feelings into the curriculum. When

learning can include emotions, passions, and personality, students will form stronger bonds to the content. Elliot Eisner (2011) profoundly stated,

Joy is not a term that is used much in the context of education but if the arts are about anything, they are about how they make you feel in their presence when you know how to read their form. The arts, when experienced in the fullness of our emotional life, are about becoming alive (p. 85)

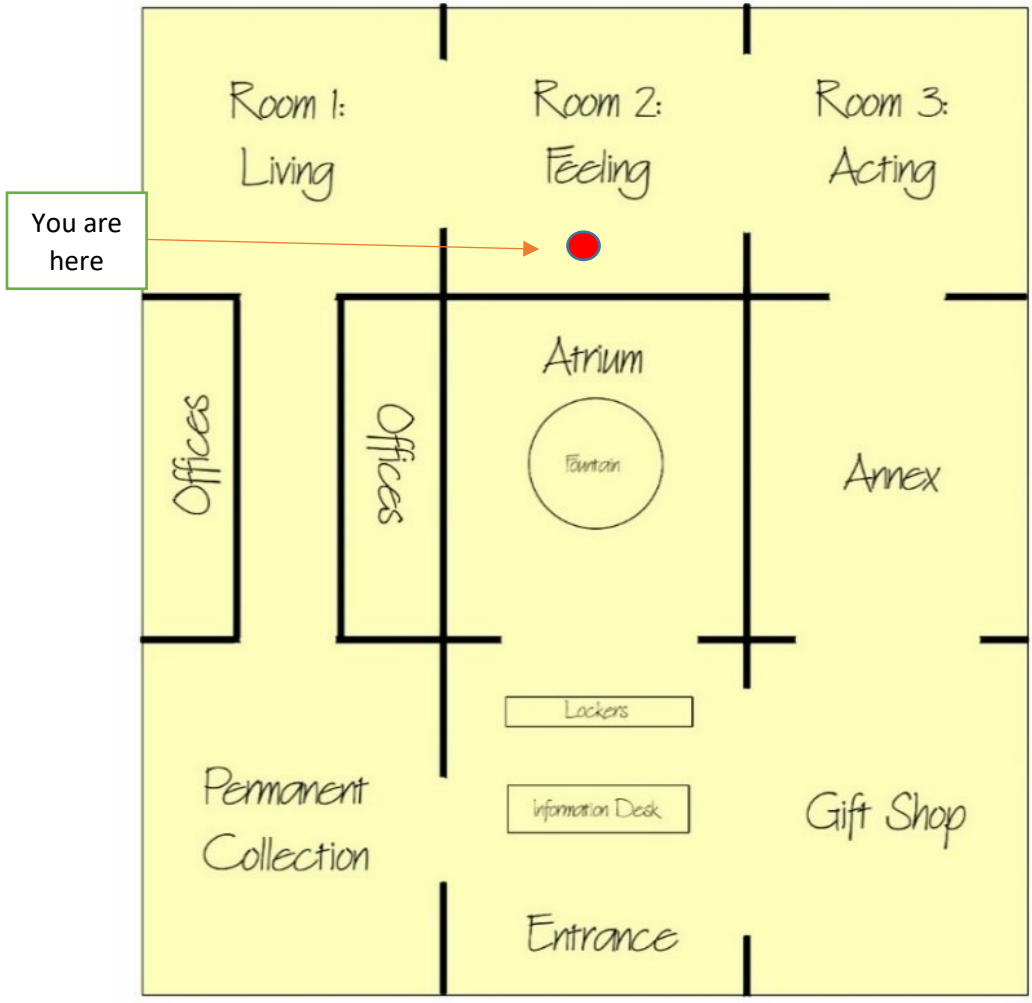


Figure 4.16 Room 2 Map



*Betsy Deaton Circa 1993 + Catherine Deaton 2020*

Figure 4.17 Betsy’s Art “Betsy and Catherine Deaton Watercolor 1993ish-2020 Greensboro NC. During this pandemic, my family dynamic has changed. For anyone who knows me, you know my 90-year-old grandmother “Nannie” is a big part of my life. Everyone has heard at least one “Nannie story” and she has become a legend in my classroom. Her voicemails are famous and her hugs are the best. Her syrupy-sweet southern accent is legendary. She made the difficult, but necessary decision to move to a retirement home early this year. On a few occasions during this pandemic, my parents have needed my help moving Nannie’s belongings. As an artist herself, her home was filled with canvases, frames, drawings, and paints. Many of her works we found were left unfinished. I decided to keep a few of these. I wasn’t sure why at the time. I had kept several finished paintings that now hang beautifully in my home. But these unfinished ones that now littered my kitchen table kept calling to me. When I decided to start this collective art project I reflected on what this pandemic meant to me. I kept coming back to these unfinished works. My grandmother is the only grandparent I have known. In the last few years, we had a monthly date of driving to Winston-Salem on Sundays to eat lunch and go shopping. Ice cream and sugar cakes were almost always involved. These were always such fun times full of stories and laughter. I have seen my grandmother once during this pandemic from a distance across a room. Not one hug in months. For her, it has been hard too. She is a fiercely independent woman who thrives on social activity. Now she is alone in an unfamiliar place. But then again many of us feel that way right now. So I while I mulled over what should be my contribution to this project my mother handed me an unfinished painting of a large magnolia by Nannie. My grandmother has always loved magnolias and recently told me they were the only flower she had at her wedding. As I thought about what to do for my piece of art, this magnolia painting was sitting next to my now abandoned bridal bouquet of peonies in front of me. My wedding has been postponed for an entire year due to this pandemic. Much like this art, my big day is left unfinished. And with that, I started to lightly sketch in the peonies in my bouquet behind the magnolia that my grandmother has started. What if I finished her work with my own? So...what does my

pandemic art represent? Two artists: related. Two bridal floral artworks: related.  
One FINISHED composition helping me stay connected.”



Figure 4.18 Emma's Art "Emma: Living through this pandemic hasn't affected me much, fortunately. I spend a lot of time on the computer anyways doing digital art, socializing, or entertaining myself with videos and games. I chose this art to represent myself during the pandemic because I like to be optimistic in situations that aren't so much. This artwork allowed me to express that behind the red curtain of the play; the pandemic, behind there, are some happy memories even if it doesn't seem so. Behind the red curtain, I believe there's a rainbow of happiness and content!"





Figure 4.19 Sharai's Art 2 "Sharai. 2020 Winston-Salem NC. This art piece is similar to the first one I did but I personally think I was happier when I did this piece because all the colors represent emotions, emotions during this pandemic. I have noticed more people have been sad and art is a nice way to get away from that. Thank you Ms. Deaton for this opportunity to get our artwork out there to inspire other people to do art of their own."

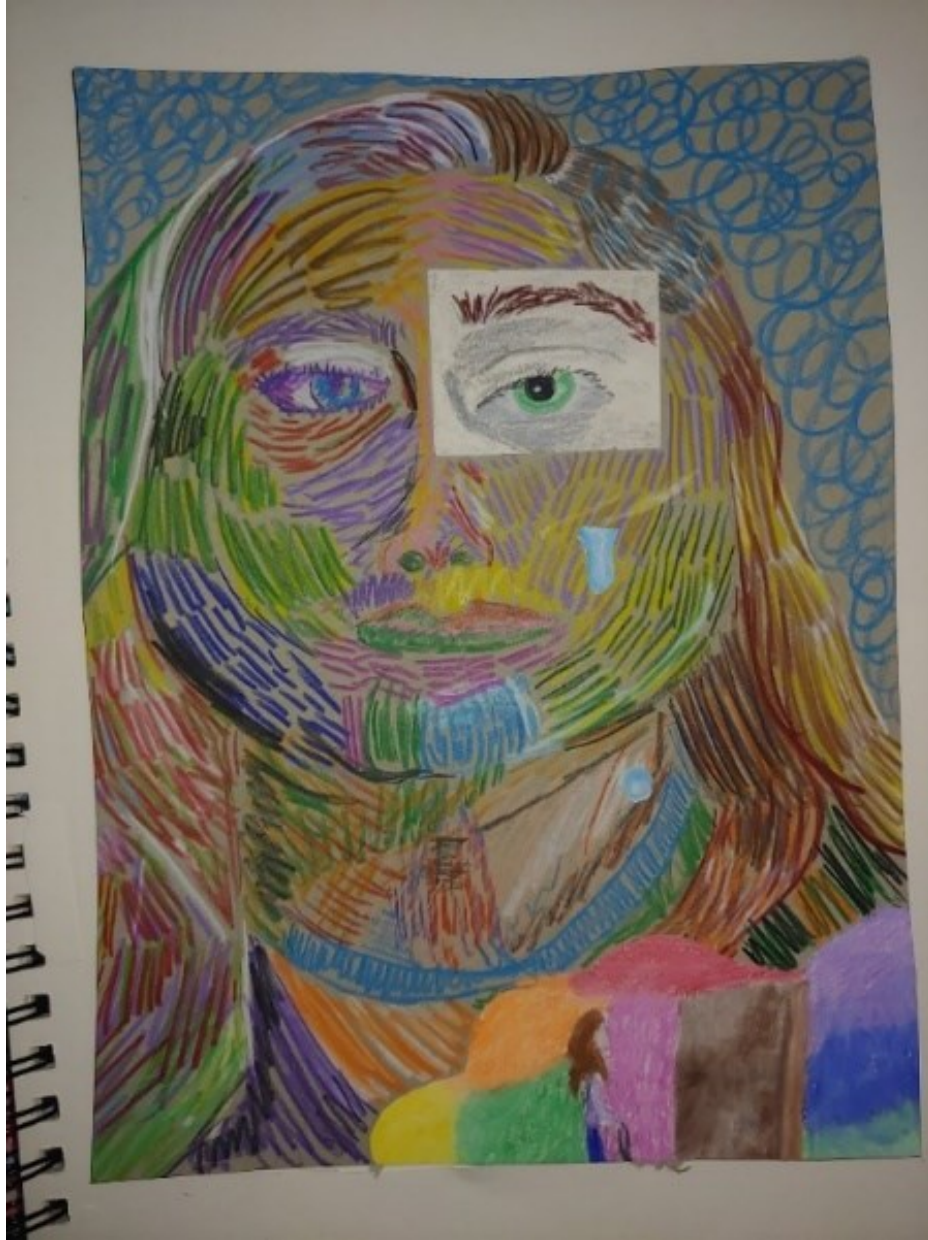


Figure 4.20 Vyctoria's Art "Vyctoria. I chose to make this piece because I wanted to express how trapped I feel in my emotions and how much I hold back from everyone else. This pandemic has made me realize how suffocated in my emotions I really am. It has made me feel this way because usually I am always busy and never have time to myself to sit down and relax and process my feelings or thoughts. I am still trying to be positive and as kind as I can be, but sometimes it's really hard because of all the stress that gets put on me to deal with. So to express how much I hold back I drew a book with me holding a key to it and all the different colors around me represent my emotions. They are blurred and sort of mixed together because when I hold back I don't know how I feel. I drew myself as abstract because I have no clarity on how I feel or how to act."



Figure 4.21 Chloe's Art 1 "Chloe. 2020 Winston-Salem NC. During quarantine,I have been doing all kinds of different art. I have been exploring all kinds of new styles, such as the splatter paint art. I have done all kinds of splatter paint art before. This one is by far the best one I ever did. The other art I created was the moon. This was the first time I ever tried to paint the moon. I wanted to do the moon because every night when the moon is out, my family and I go outside to admire it. Unfortunately, since it has been raining, we could not go outside to look at the moon, so I decided to paint it. I hope you enjoy my pandemic Art project."



Figure 4. 22 Andrew's Art "Andrew. Acrylic on canvas panel. Why did you choose this as art to represent yourself during a pandemic?" I chose this art piece to represent myself because the colors around the eye are in varying bright shades, instead of regular skin tone, because this is a time of chaos in the world around me and not "regular," and I believe the flurry of colors represent that. "What did making this allow you to express?" Making this allowed me to express that among all the uncertainty and chaos, I have hope in my eyes, which is why the eye doesn't particularly look sad. It is calm. You could think of the eye as the eye of a hurricane, where it is calm, while there is a storm around it: the colors."



Figure 4.23 Aurora's Art "Aurora. Winston-Salem NC. 1. I choose this art to represent myself during the pandemic because it showcases my frustration of losing my motivation and inspiration to do things I enjoy. It made things harder to enjoy and felt like I wasted a lot of my time not doing anything during the pandemic. 2. Making this art piece of me allowed me to express all my frustration throughout the pandemic."



Figure 4.24 Cassidy's Art "Cassidy 'Nightmare', watercolor, charcoal, marker, and red fabric on watercolor paper. 2020 This picture is to encompass the emotions that I feel during this crisis. The spiral in the background is to symbolize both the monotonous passage of days and the hypnotizing effect the news has had on me- who is to be believed? What are we to believe? I'm not sure, and I don't want to be pulled in by the dubious promises of safety, nor the uncertain promise of death. The characters written in the spiral are questions, prayers, worries and thoughts I've been having- all written in Chinese, to symbolize where the virus originated. "What will happen to us? Will my loved ones be saved? God, please help us. I don't want to die". A gray hand covered in scratches represents not only the hand of fate, but my own hands. With all of the hand washing and contact with water, I have developed pompholyx on my hands, causing painful blisters filled with water to appear and burst open, causing cracks and sores to bleed and leak excess fluids. The small white faces with terrifying teeth and smiles represent the virus itself. The virus acts without mercy, and it has no qualms about hurting others- making me view them as giddy beasts who would love to encroach upon my body. The curtains, made of red sheer, represent the fact that none of this feels real. Like a movie, or a play, that just doesn't seem to end. My inspiration for this piece was not only from my own feelings, but from one of my favorite shows: Puella Magi Madoka Magica, a show where girls with magical powers have to find and destroy witches in their labyrinths, which is what this piece takes some inspiration from. The dadaist style of the labyrinths inspired me to make cut outs and glue them onto the paper with hot glue, to give the picture a 3D effect. The use of cloth was also inspired by the show, giving the picture a more unique feel."



Figure 4.25 Sara's Art "Sara. Winston Salem NC. 2020 I was debating on whether or not I could make a piece of art that could resemble what I've felt during the pandemic. I've lost all motivation and every time I try to make a piece of art it never comes out the way I want it to. Despite these feelings, I felt I should do something. Although it is small and not very detailed I feel as though it's a good representation. It is a dark piece, literally and metaphorically. During the pandemic I have become depressed and have spent my days in my room, in the dark. The blur of the world outside represents how I have no concept of time while in my room. I sit in a chair or lay in my bed and watch the days go by. I feel nothing and find comfort in my depression. These past few days I have been getting out more and more. I've been gradually getting better. I'm trying to stay positive. At first it was rough but I feel like as time goes by it will get better. I know I'm not the only one who has felt this way during this time. I used to hate the saying "you are not alone," but I want people to know just that. I've dealt with depression in the past and I know others who have as well. In times like these where it is easy just to spend your days laying in bed and wallow in your thoughts, you have to force yourself to not conform to those negative thoughts. You have to force yourself to get up and do at least one thing. Do something that you love that will get your mind off those negative thoughts. I hope at least one person can relate to this piece and the meaning behind it. Thank you."



Figure 4.26 Sara's Art 2 "Sara. I was going to make another piece of art but decided to use this picture of a butterfly I took a few weeks ago instead. This butterfly represents the change that not only I, myself has experienced and gone through during this time, but also what the whole world has gone through. I love butterflies and in the past few months I have seen so many flying around. Butterflies represent transformation and the changes that one can experience. I think we can all take something away from this picture, even though it is simply a picture. This picture allowed me to express the change I've experienced personally. At the beginning of the pandemic, I went through a really tough time mentally. Since then, I've been able to move out of that toxic mindset and into more a positive one. Through family and friends, I have been able to be become happier and content with my life at the moment, despite living in a pandemic. Butterflies are beautiful and they make me feel happy which is what I feel in this very moment. I hope at least one person can take something away from this, whether through this picture or through my words. Much love."



### **Room 3: Acting-Injecting A New Dimension in Societies Veins**

*“Only the guy who isn't rowing has time to rock the boat.”*

*Jean Paul Sartre*

*"During the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, going to demonstrations and organizing demonstrations, those were my big moments. I liked being part of a mass that had ideas, I think. When you communicate to children the excitement of imagination, of seeing new things, seeing possibility...what worries me about schools, children go to school, they don't see the point. If we can make them see there is a point...that takes imagination."*

*Maxine Greene*

The world in which we exist is a damaged, hurting world. Centuries of injustices have led to bubbling frustrations corroding our everyday actions. A trip to the grocery store can digress into a shouting match between strangers over a face mask (Bromwich, 2020). The poor choices of individuals who have been enabled to act grossly for years are leading to the deaths of innocent persons throughout our country. These egregious actions are sparking worldwide protests demanding reform. Debates, a decades long tradition cannot be held civilly because society has lost its sense of respect, decorum, and tolerance. We are at war with ourselves (Stacey, 2019). All the while our students sit and watch as adults behave badly, as injustice continues, and as we as a species fall apart. There is a desire to make a change, a willingness to act, a call to arms for those who still feel we are worth fighting for. How does this change involve learning? When we only teach individuals to recite facts, they never learn to communicate. When we only teach individuals to pass tests, they never learn to think for themselves. When we do not give

individuals a supported outlet to express and understand themselves and others, they become rigid beings whose inflexibility leads to the crumbling of society. Our existence depends on action to continue.

Are you all ready for the last room? This one is seen in figure 4.27 and is very moving so be ready. This work in figure 4.28 is the second piece by Sara who was mentioned in the prior room. While we communicated about her struggle, another group was struggling too. She did not feel her art was much, but to me this piece was a beautiful demonstration of her depth as a person to put others before herself while she was down. This piece combines social literacy, racial literacy, and visual symbolism to make a simple statement: Black Lives Matter. Art has been used as a form of advocacy for generations. Art gives students the path to demonstrate the change they wish to see in the world. Green (2017) stated, “There is then, a kind of resemblance between the way in which a learner confronts socially prescribed knowledge and the ways in which a stranger looks at a map when he trying to determine where he is in relation to where he wants to go” (p. 153). Where do our students want to go? They want to go to a place with a new narrative of our society, one where racial equality not only exists but is the norm, yet many of our students who need the arts to make a change the most are the very students denied access to enrollment in it. Griffin (2015) stated, “In 2001, the federal No Child Left Behind Act mandated that schools begin disaggregating standardized test score data by subgroup, including race and economic status” (p. 182). Consequently, struggling groups could be identified and then remediated to improve scores. Collins (2011) found there was an overrepresentation of African and Latino students who become enrolled in such remedial classes, thus denying them access to the arts, and a creative outlet during

the school day. Although the achievement gap in marginalized groups has been closing in the classroom, there is still a disparity in educational opportunities with experiences in courses like the arts among different groups of students based on income, race, and ethnicity (AEP, 2017). Art programs are some of the most expensive to fund and sustain in schools. They require a vast sum of materials most of which are all consumable. For schools with little financial assistance, art, including access to highly trained art teachers is not an option. This next work in figure 4.29 shows the frustration at the systems inability to change in ways that will benefit our diverse population.

For Title I schools who receive additional federal funding based on the amount of financially disadvantaged students, these funds cannot be used for enriching courses such as the arts (Title I part A Program, 2018). These funds are used to support courses that are heavily tested and whose scores are reflected on school report cards. In North Carolina, 437,601 students attended Title I schools in the 2016-2017 school year (Children in Title I schools by race and ethnicity: KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2019). In our education system, too many students are denied access to the arts, and often those are the very students who would benefit from it the most (AEP, 2017). Wang et al. (2019) found that enrolling immigrant students in art classes improved student's desire to achieve and adapt, allowing emotional growth in a difficult time of transition. There has been an increase in the immigrant population in the United States and many of these students attend schools with poor funding, where their access to the arts is limited, if not nonexistent. Immigrant students account for 28% of the public-school population with 30% of that population living below the poverty line (Camarota et al., 2017).

Raise your hand if you feel all students should have access to the arts. Beautiful! I agree, everyone needs artistic access. Art is a strong way to educate groups on culture and race to remove discrimination, not only in the classroom but in society. Culture encompasses a group's values, traditions, communications, learning styles, contributions, and relationship patterns (Gay, 2002). Culture can be physical, including the art, music, and attire of a group. In the 1980's Gloria Ladson-Billings sought to improve education for diverse populations and discovered there was little on the academic success of African American students. More often, scholars cited this demographic as "at-risk" or "disadvantaged" (Ladson-Billings, 2014), prompting a form of educating teachers on how to focus on students' assets instead of failures. Instead of asking what was wrong with diverse students, she sought to find what was right, and how to help teachers use those strengths to further their understanding of multicultural education. Thus, the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy was born. This form of education has three main components: it focuses on academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. By its very nature, art expands on two of these concepts' nature: cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness. Art and culture have always been interwoven and in being tied together, they have birthed symbols of sociopolitical consciousness such as the imagery of the clenched fist of the Black Lives Matter movement seen in the next work in figure 4.30. I love how this contributor captured that the Black Lives Matter movement is not just an American issue, but a global one.

Art can also be used to promote Ladson-Billing's further theories of Culturally sustaining pedagogy, whereby students' cultural identities are maintained in learning and demonstrating knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2014). I used this method this year when

teaching the Mexican art form of “Alebrijes” to my Spanish speaking students, using Spanish websites and documentaries in their native language. The students were delighted to learn more about their culture and have a way to express it as well. When diverse students feel supported and when Caucasian students feel knowledgeable and develop understanding, groups can work together towards common goals as seen in the currently occurring protests against police brutality in our nation (Jacobs, 2020). Art is a perfect vessel for developing these connections and common grounds to promote systemic change. In terms of critical awareness art can give a visual connection to group’s power struggles and injustices in society without “white-washing” history. Art provides visual truths and undeniable feelings of inequality that can move individuals and change perceptions to promote future counter narratives.

Much like the change this mask hopes to elicit, the perceptions of art in schools needs to change, but so too must our perceptions of education as a system. We live in a time of unrest. School shootings have become a regular occurrence forcing students and staff to train for the potential of an active shooter entering their school. A pandemic the likes of which has not been seen in 100 years has kept children out of school for months. Education has had to reinvent itself to be online or homebound. Our country, engaged in daily protests fighting for racial equality has caused the closing of streets, highways, and entire cities. Green (2017) stated, “The contemporary learner is more likely than his predecessors to experience moments of strangeness, moments when the recipes he has inherited for the solutions of typical problems no longer seem to work” (p. 153). Students today need to be prepared to handle this change. Carly demonstrates this beautifully in figure 4.31 in her mask creation. In this work, she attempts to use art to

change society's stigma of mask-wearing. Art allows students to learn to make a perceived problem beautiful. The arts teach students there are multiple perspectives to any situation and that in complex forms of problem-solving, purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. The arts teach children to learn to say what cannot be said (Eisner, 2011). Learning the skills to communicate effectively through visual means gives students an additional way to solve problems and change the world around them. In figure 4.31, Carly uses symbolic literacy, florigraphy, textiles, and embroidery to convey multiple messages that reinforce this idea of change through problem-solving.

How do we promote change in our schools? Education often uses problem-solving as a buzz word, something done on a worksheet or during a lecture. What if changing perceptions and problem solving were more than parts of the lesson and instead were the processes of learning? Several learning theories informed this gallery: learner-centered ideology, social reconstructionism, social efficacy, and constructivism.

Learner-centered ideology puts the child at the center of not only instruction, but the entire learning process allowing for an educational experience that speaks to student interests (Alanazi, 2016). This gallery did just that. It asked students to make art in ways that made sense to them. In regards to a learner-centered school, Schiro (2013) stated, "The ideal school is full of activity: physical, verbal, social, and emotional" (p. 108). In conjunction with learner-centered ideologies, the learning theory of the most support in this mentality is that of constructivism.

Constructivism focuses on the human mind's innate ability to wander and explore. Applefield et al., (2001) stated, "Constructivism is an epistemological view of knowledge

acquisition emphasizing knowledge construction rather than knowledge transmission” (p. 37). Education, as we know it today, is designed to prepare students for adult life. We enroll students in predesigned courses to educate them on how to be successful and contributing members of society which takes priority over student enjoyment and engagement (Brooks & Brooks, 2000). Prior eras of education demanded memorization of facts. This method evolved into a system of high-stakes testing to show accountability of learning. As understanding and consideration for the human mind develop so does the understanding that learning is more than just a memorization process. Constructivism helps learners internalize and transform new information by combining it with prior knowledge and experiences. With multiple links to philosophical and psychological viewpoints from works by Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Jonassen, and Goodman, constructivism considers learners' realities towards the learning process (Ertmer & Newby, 2008). Constructivism puts students, and not responses to stimuli, or memorization of material, at the forefront of an educator’s consideration. This gallery used this approach by giving students little guidance for producing their work. The gallery only asked students to consider their experiences and relate them to art.

If you’ll follow me this way we will see how these learning theories play a key role in solving the problem of practice by helping me modify art instruction to meet learners’ needs. By embracing these theories, art courses can become student-driven, enriching, and exploratory courses that allow students a chance to express themselves and their interests. This personalization of education is difficult to find in other courses guided by state testing, wherein the content is narrowed and teachers teach to the test, thus inhibiting individuality (Flinders & Thornton, 2017).

If art education can become more relevant, learner-centered, and individualized, more students are likely to enroll in the arts. If students find more enriching and engaging experiences in the arts they are also more likely to continue to enroll, thus improving retention of art students. The arts allow students to explore, to wonder, to experiment, and create feely in ways that matter and have meaning. This is sweetly illustrated in figure 4.32. For the artist Leah, these flowers and bits of nature form a symbolic representation of exploration. Of wonder. They were collected purposefully and arranged carefully to create a message that, to her, makes perfect sense. To Leah, this pile tells a story as a valid form of communication. The combination of literacy and exploration creates a sculpture that delights and uplifts.

Wandering and wondering is just a starting point. The next point to consider is action. How will students use these experiences of exploration to better the world around them? How will their experiences change our senses of being? Curricular theories meet this need and informed to the theoretical framework of the gallery. One such theory is social efficiency, which puts the needs of society at the forefront of all learning. Students learn in ways that will produce an adult who is capable of contributing positively to society (Schiro, 2013). Schiro (2013) stated, “Social-efficiency educators believe curriculum objectives must be stated in behavioral terms as observable skills, as capabilities for actions, as activities people can perform, as demonstrable things people can do” (p. 58). Another theory informing this gallery is social reconstruction, which uses education as a way to repair society to produce adults capable and wanting to provide a better future for all (Schiro, 2013). Schiro (2013) stated,



Social reconstructionist assume that education if it is revitalized along the lines they recommend, has the power to analyze and understand social problems, envision a world in which those problems do not exist, and act to bring that vision into existence” (p. 152).

All of these ideologies combine to create a well-rounded and engaging curriculum that will produce a student who is personally involved and wanting to make a difference in the world.

Studying curricular theories can impact my problem of practice by helping me improve the curriculum creation for visual art courses in my school. When courses can be designed to address bigger issues that are more future-forward in thinking, then courses can be more valued, supported, and funded by schools seeing a need for them.

Over here we see the work in figure 4.33 is by Leah’s sister Tessa. Tessa’s work differs from her sister’s in that it shows more object representations. Rather than just feeling and colors, Tessa’s work makes a statement. She has constructed a person, a sky, a tree, and a flower from the collected materials. She has personalized her interpretation. She has created a story with a setting, a character, and a purpose all through found objects arranged to meet her visual needs. She created, she made sense, she wondered, she explored, and in the end, learning happened. This is truly and genuinely my hope for my students. That learning will become an immersive experience whereby knowledge is not the focus but the by-product of a meaningful series of explorations.

This room explored the changes that can reconstruct art and education to foster students being unto themselves and agents of change. Giving them a voice, creating

counter-narrative, and inspiring change is something art has done for centuries.

Constructivist ideologies and transformative curricular theories can improve the impact of the arts to change failed educational systems. Through constructivism, students use their experiences to make sense of knowledge, and in making sense of knowledge, learning becomes relevant and impactful. This is a great piece to end the gallery tour. In figure 3.34 the artist created this piece to represent the dawn of a new era. Our future generations are leading us forward with hope for a better tomorrow through systemic changes.

This concludes the exhibit. Feel free to wander back to any work you like. We will gather in the atrium to reflect on our experience before exiting at the gift shop. Make sure to check out the chart on the wall. We just had it installed this week for a guided reflection of the gallery.

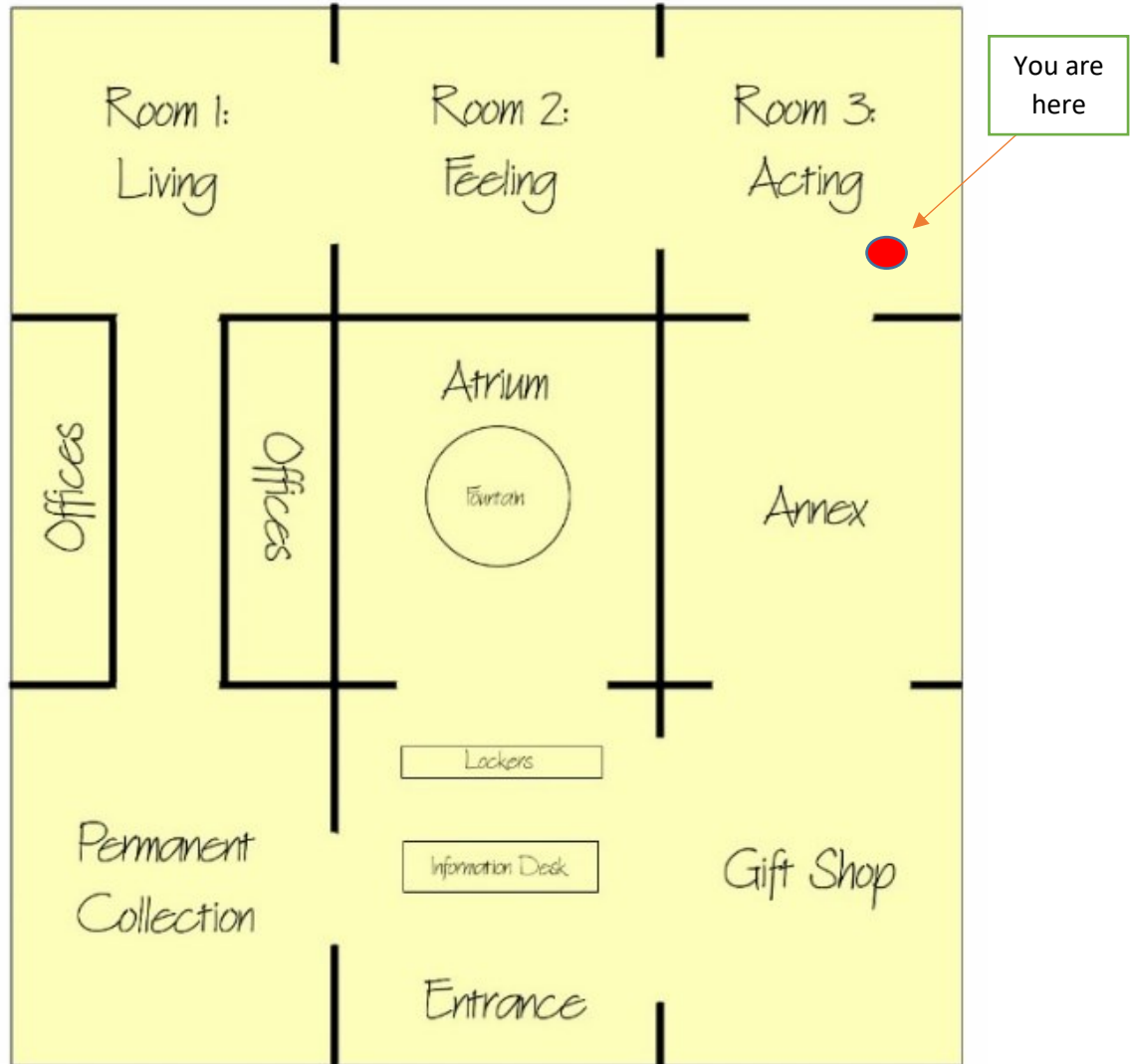


Figure 4.27 Room 3 Map

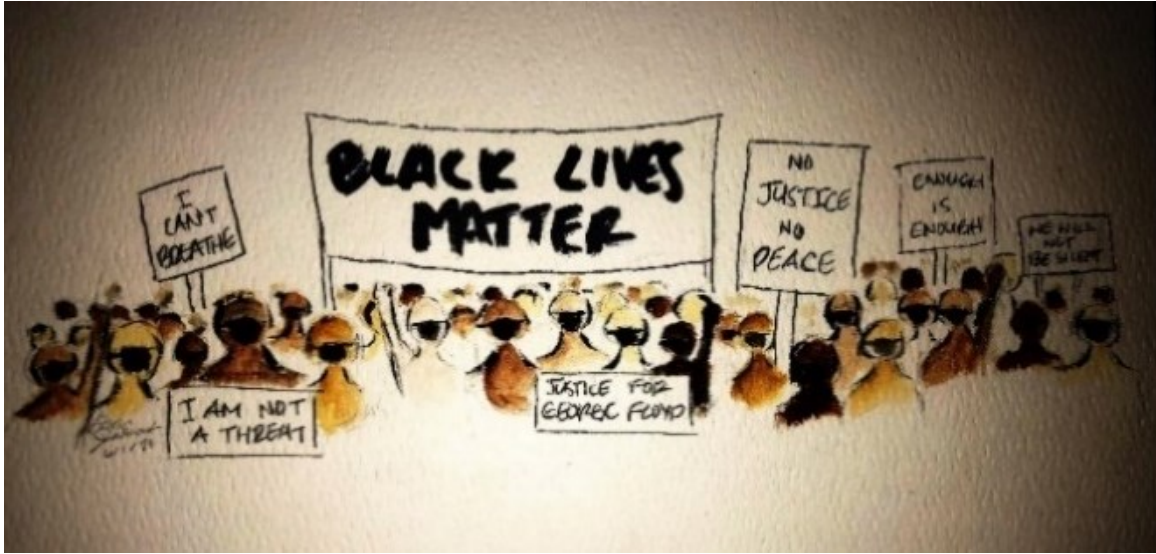


Figure 4.28 Sara's Art 3 "Sara. Winston-Salem NC. 2020 I made this piece in response to the current Black Lives Matter movement. I wanted to find a way to speak up and make a difference. I know it isn't much, but this piece helped me express the change I want and hope to see."

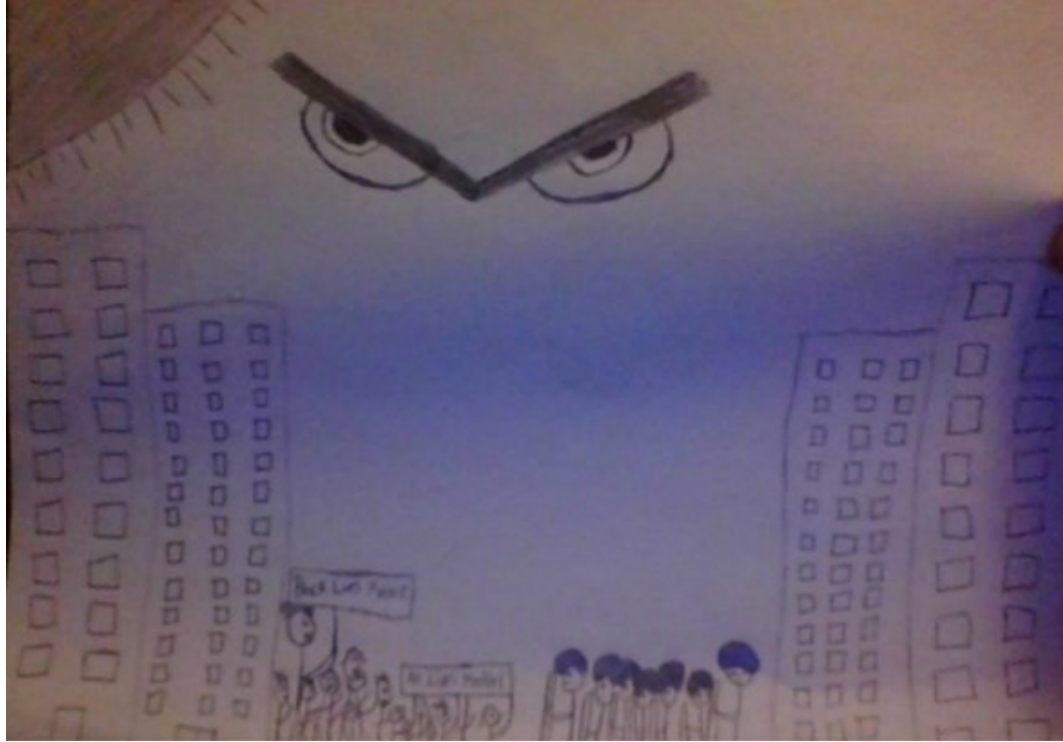


Figure 4.29 Kaleb's Art "Kaleb. Winston-Salem NC. I choose this art because I am an African American. This allows me to express how angry I am that it takes this much for a change to happen."



Figure 4.30 Emilie's Art "Emilie. Winston-Salem NC. I chose this art to represent myself during the pandemic because I feel that it shows not only are we going through a pandemic but everywhere you look there is something else happening. This art allowed me to express how during COVID -19 there are many different things taking place including the black lives matter movement, and how the world is slowly getting weaker."



Figure 4.31 Carly's Art "Title: "In Sickness and in Health" Embroidery: Carly Wooten - <https://www.carlyannewooten.com> Mask Assembly: Sarah Steele 2020 Washington D.C. When the pandemic first started, there was much confusion around masks. In many East Asian countries, wearing a mask is seen as a normal item to add to your wardrobe for the good of public health. Wearing a mask in America however, has made many uneasy because it is something different. Despite it being for the common good it is hard to establish a new habit especially when there is fear involved. A way to combat this is to transform masks into an item that you want to wear by turning them into a beautiful item. Masks are associated with doctors, needles, and sickness. But what if we associated them with fashion, beauty, and style? What if a mask became something that you were excited to wear everyday? For this mask, which I created for Catherine Deaton's exchanging of rings, there is a balance between beauty and fear, love and grief. The flowers embroidered on the mask, marigolds and roses, were thought to be cures for the plague in 1665. The Victorian practice of Floriography, or the "language of flowers," relates roses to "happiness, grace, desire, and mourning." Marigolds are related to "grief, despair, affection, and pretty love." The beauty of the flowers along with the solemnness of their meaning are meant to remind the viewer that it is ok to be sad about this changing world. Nonetheless, humanity continues to find beauty. Washington D.C."



Figure 4.32 Leah's Art "Amanda and Leah. Winston-Salem NC. 2020. Mixed Media For my girls this pandemic has meant being at home all day with me. When the work is done it means we get OUTSIDE to play. Here are their finished products after going on a nature collection for materials. Tessa's art teacher, Mrs. Mendenhall, assigned this project modeling after the story "Leaf Man" by Lois Ehlert. Tessa and Leah LOVED the nature walk BUT also thoroughly enjoyed using their imaginations to recreate and repurpose the natural materials around them. ART is everywhere! I LOVED watching them use their imaginations and was impressed with their creativity."





Figure 4.33 Tessa's Art "Tessa and Amanda 2020 Mixed Media Winston-Salem NC. For my girls this pandemic have meant being at home all day with me. When the work is done it means we get OUTSIDE to play. Here are their finished products after going on a nature collection for materials. Tessa's art teacher, Mrs. Mendenhall, assigned this project modeling after the story "Leaf Man" by Lois Ehlert. Tessa and Leah LOVED the nature walk BUT also thoroughly enjoyed using their imaginations to recreate and repurpose the natural materials around them. ART is everywhere! I LOVED watching them use their imaginations and was impressed with their creativity."



Figure 4.34 Zoey's Art "Zoe. This piece of art represents the changes that not only myself but society as a whole is going through. I chose to make an abstract piece to convey that we are all, in a sense, becoming new people. The pandemic, along with people all over the world fighting for justice and standing up in the name of those who are oppressed has allowed us all to have a new beginning. The sun rising in the background of this composition represents just that - a new "day" has started. The creation of this artwork has allowed me to expre

Table 4.1: Research Question Alignment Table

Research Questions	Codes/Answering Questions
Specifically, to the threat of declining enrollment in high school art courses: What appeals to students about the visual arts?	Living, Feeling, and Acting. Students like the ability of the visual arts to capture what it is to be alive and how to make sense of those lived experiences.
When given minimal instructions/expectations, how do people of different ages use art to position their being in the world, both literally and abstractly, and how might the answer influence the curriculum of the high school art class?	Acting. Individuals showed us that art is used to translate complex systems into visual expressions. Capitalizing on this process in the art class through constructivist epistemology allows a personalization of educational experiences through visual means.
How might art be validated as a mode and a means of constructing and transforming knowledge on par with all other “core” classes so that secondary arts programs can be better supported and maintained?	Living and Feeling. Adolescents using art to make sense of their lived realities can produce students with a more structured view of life, themselves, and their future goals. This could better prepare students for making choices for a successful life after public school as students will have a greater understanding of being unto themselves.

CHAPTER 5: GIFTSHOP

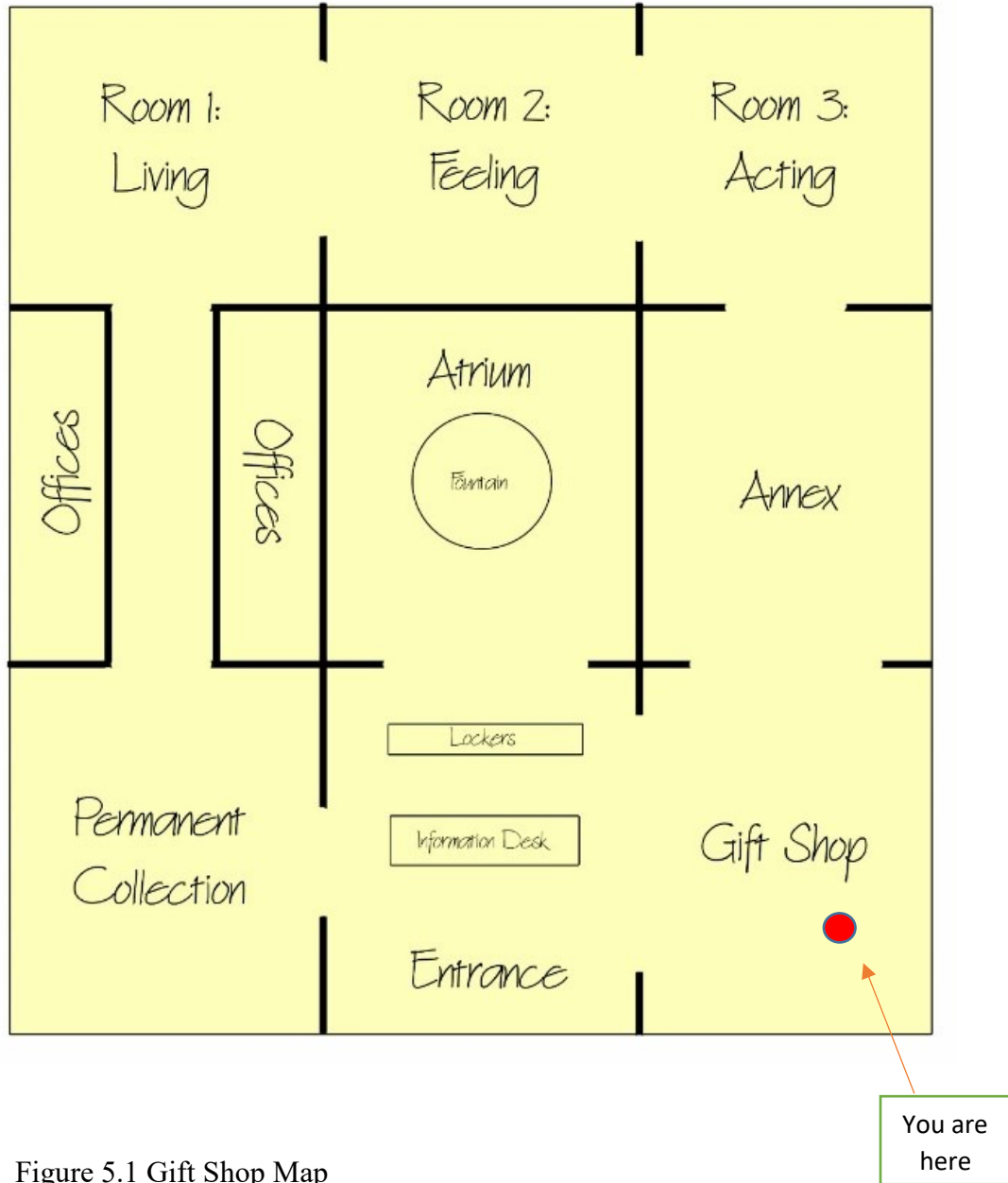


Figure 5.1 Gift Shop Map

Welcome to our fantastic gift shop! The Van Gogh socks are my personal favorite. Gift shops are a vital and engaging part of a gallery. Although some find that gift shops tacky or childish they provide a lot of the funding for acquisitions and loans to occur.

We have a current sale on the reproduction of the work in figure 5.2. Did you know this artwork was the springboard for the Art through the Eyes of a Pandemic Project? The caption tells the story of the work, but the longer I involve myself with this gallery, I realize this story is the gallery. It is the story of art being used to form connections, to inspire others, to give hope and solace in a time when the world became unrecognizable. It is using many modes of literacy (art, language, emotions, etc.) both knowingly and unknowingly to reach others and ourselves. It is using these modes to understand being, time, and existence for the world in which we are currently situated in. Heidegger reminds us that a phenomenon, like a pandemic, is something observed and experienced. To him, a person's experience is an opportunity to further or to define their Dasein, their "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger et al.,2013). Each individual has a different life, a different context, a different set of experiences that alter their perception of the phenomenon. Each person will see the world through a different lens, allowing a vastly different realization to occur. These realizations will force a person to examine their life, feelings, and choices (Sartre, 1968). This realization extends beyond a pandemic. Heidegger and many existentialists ground their theories in the realization that life, existence, is temporal. Therefore, to make meaning in a temporal existence one must use a semiotic medium or system such as art to find any sense of direction and purpose.

In this work I argue that the process of navigating the public education system for students is just as much a phenomenon as a pandemic is. The realizations acquired by art produced for this gallery are spurred from a crisis but in reality, existed long before this virus, and, they will continue to exist long after a vaccine is distributed. Students need art in schools to understand their being in this world. Students need art in schools to find purpose. Society needs art to produce individuals who can build a more stable and fulfilling future through understanding their existence and purpose in this world.

When I began researching the topic of declining enrollment in visual arts classes in the spring of 2018 in my first doctoral-level class, I remember feeling a lot of despair. Who is to blame? How can I fix it? And more importantly, what if I cannot? Many times, in this program, I have been left to truly question the validity of my profession. Can the arts be saved? Are they worth saving? Rousseau felt studies of things such as the arts polluted the mind (Damrosch, 2005). Efland (1990) argued that many see art as merely a decorative endeavor without merit or meaning. Due to these misnomers the arts are cast aside in favor of courses with high stakes testing, college desirability, or a myriad of other options that result in better school funding and stronger futures for students. These systems are not evils. I understand their worth. However, they come from a place of misinformation and ill-informed stereotypes about the arts. I also understand that life is not centered solely on academically success. Life is about finding a balance with one's self, a balance between school, sports, hobbies, friends, etc. Life is about understanding power systems and working to change them. Life is about situating yourself within your entities and producing new and better aims. Eisner, Efland, and Greene all argue strongly that art is a way to understanding these systems and existence as a whole. Eisner (2011)

believed creativity through art was the key to understanding the very cognitive processes that guide our daily choices and priorities. Greene (2010) believed art was to be used to change what should be and what might be in society through social imagination developed through the use of the visual arts. Efland (2002) believed the arts could contribute to the overall development of the mind furthering social communication and cultural understanding. All of these theories presented through a lens of constructivism could reinvent the place of art in education, and society. I am not inflated enough to believe art is the savior of education nor society at large. Rather, I believe the visual arts are a path to reformation for the way we perceive and permit learning in our public education systems.

Below are the insights I have gained from student responses; and my recommendations for improving my problem of practice based on the social semiotics explored in this gallery. This work has given me hope for the arts in education. They are not dying, and I hope these insights will help others looking to save content, such as the arts, with which they too are passionate. There is more than one path to success and success itself takes on many forms. When you are ready to check out head to the cash register and Danielle will help you.

### **Souvenirs from Exhibit**

I love this work in figure 5.3 on the tote bag you have picked. Maybe I should get one? Art when viewed as a valid mode of communication allows accessibility to a wide range of understanding the human experience. Art is the access to being, a form of artist hermeneutics if you will. It is imperative that we as a society form multimodality in how we communicate, transmit, and experience knowledge. Part of the division found in our

society has roots in mere misunderstandings and lack of flexibility. Art is indispensable to forming connections and carrying forward ideas. We as a society will struggle to show progress until we begin to place the arts in the same esteem as the sciences and math. As the artist's statement in figure 5.3 captures how we handle change and situations shapes us for the better. The goal of this gallery was to find ways to reconstruct the narrative of the arts in public education by showing art as a path for exploring the notion of being through the use of social semiotics.

This gallery has attempted to adjust the misinterpretation of art in mainstream society by showing what appeals to individuals about the visual arts and why they should be valued. Art serves as a semiotic function that is as vital as any other course. Students need all modalities in our struggle to come to terms with how we position ourselves in this world and our society. While improving art class enrollment in the future is important and in progress through a variety of approaches, that is not the ultimate goal I seek, nor is that the implication of this gallery. These works reflect a need-a deep intrinsic need-for humans to create and communicate in a multitude of ways. Currently, educational systems are discouraging the use of multimodality as a valid form of acquiring knowledge. Standardized tests and standardized learning strip our youth of their ability to creatively explore and express what it means to be alive. Allowing students to construct their understandings of the world and themselves through creative means such as the arts allows humans to truly understand their being-in-the-world relation to existence. The art in the gallery tells a story. It reflects the lived realities of individuals in a global conflict. The works are semiotic evidence of what being human is like in isolation. If this art is how people can communicate and make sense of the world



when alone and distress, imagine how they might position themselves in society with art when they are not.

Did you know that while finalizing this gallery, art education in North Carolina secured a major victory? In July 2020, Governor Cooper of North Carolina signed into law that starting in 2024 all incoming students will be required to take a fine arts class to graduate (McGaha, 2020) a victory following 10 years of pressure from state arts councils and support from state senators. With arts programs cut at many sites in my district, it can take years to reestablish or solidify existing programs. Finding ways to stabilize the arts now is more important than ever to ensure their successful integration for all students in the future. The final work in this exhibit in figure 5.4 is a perfect summation of this victory. Those with an appreciation for the arts can flourish even in the darkest of times.

### **Future and Upcoming Exhibits**

Before we leave I want to cover the future exhibits you can look forward to attending. After this we can get your things from your locker. I am creating a new course, Interdisciplinary Art. Using the approaches and insight gained from this research to provide a unique and personalized educational opportunity for students through the visual arts. This course uses the successful implementation of constructivism seen in this gallery to guide instruction. This course is also grounded in learner centered, social efficiency, and social reconstruction curricular approaches. I would recommend further research into the sustainably and continued success of this program to improve department enrollment. So far, this class creation allowed for the offering of a new course, attracted 10 new students to art, and retained 14 students that otherwise would

have left art. In its first year the class improved enrollment in the arts by approximately 25%. If this course proves successful it would be useful to other arts disciplines to explore how to improve their numbers as well. As of October 2020, interdisciplinary art had been operational for one month and students are really enjoying the content, the discussions, and the use of their personal interests in a class setting. Students have asked if they can enroll again in this class in the future and continue to earn credit. They can. Students have already begun referring friends to take this course next school year. I would be interested in a study showing the progress of the class as well as the students who may choose to repeat the course over several years.

In the future I am also interested in the impact of the newly added state graduation requirement of a fine arts class. Will this cause the dynamics of visual arts classes to change? Starting in the 2024 school year, an influx of a students will have to take art but may have no actual interest. Interdisciplinary Art as an option for those not looking to improve skill but meet graduation requirements could prove beneficial to maintaining artistic integrity in the traditional art courses based on essential standards from the state. The addition of courses for just painting, drawing, digital design, or ceramics could also become necessary versus just nice, to help accommodate this new population of learners. Now that art is officially no longer an elective, the implications of this exhibition could be expanded on, continued, and applied to the new population of students starting in 2024.

In a more personal approach, I would like to see further research on giving students a voice. I find that daily I am hearing a cry by our students to want to be heard. They want to make their mark. Education in our country has been relatively unchanged

for decades now. The systems that worked in the past do not fit our current population. I would be interested in the impact of giving students a voice in other contents would produce.

When facing critics of the arts, I often hear the phrase “art isn’t for everyone, you know.” The ability to use imagery, one of our five senses, to make sense of the world around us is vital to our existence. Just as smells and taste impact daily decisions we make, so do the visual arts. The arts are everywhere: sports logos, clothing, home décor, product packaging, technological designs, interface layouts, signs on stores, etc. are all linked to the visual arts. The arts are a part of our everyday existence. Art is for everyone because art is used by everyone, every day. Now, imagine what the world would be like if the arts were valued by everyone. That change starts with better visual arts education, that change happens now, and that change begins with you and me.

This concludes our tour. I hope you enjoyed our gallery and hope you will come again. It has been my pleasure taking you through the annals of art education in our society at large and during a pandemic. Feel free to continue to explore the gallery at your leisure and thank you for your patronage in recognizing art as a semiotic mode. Do not forget to get your belongings from the lockers and turn in your key at the information desk.

Have a great day!



Photograph 2017 Phuket Thailand



Encaustic 2020

Figure 5.2 The Starting Point “Catherine Deaton Encaustic 2020 Greensboro NC. I love traveling and go somewhere new and exciting every summer. This year was to be a road trip through Iceland as my honeymoon. Sadly my trip was canceled. So I started looking through old photos and found a picture from when I was on a boat off the coast of Thailand sailing through the PiPi Islands. I can remember the sun on my face and the dusting of raindrops in my hair from the incoming monsoon. I remember laughing with my friend and our captain about the monkeys on an island we had just visited who stole my Pepsi (monkeys are jerks) and then the sky went completely black. The rain came in so hard we had to cover ourselves in towels to stop the beating of our skin. I could see red welts with every drop that pierced through the boat's bimini top. The boat rocked violently and we held on tight to each other and our belongings. The boat began to flood.

We tried to hold things up from the water but between the rocking of the boat and strong wind, it was impossible. So I grabbed my camera (I had my very expensive Nikon with me) and shoved it under my shirt to try to cover it. The ship's first mate tried to make jokes to put us at ease and somehow in this terrifying situation, I found myself laughing. And just like that, the storm ended and the sun came out again. If you've never been through a real monsoon it is truly something. This was not my first or my last experience with such as this since we spent two days on the water in the South China Sea. I took my camera out to find only a drop or two of water on it. I took a photo of the now calm waters and sky and the bespeckled islands that now stretched out in front of us. There are still stray raindrops hitting the water. I decided a few weeks ago that I needed to keep my mind challenged during this time. I was spending far too much time binging on Netflix (thanks a lot Tiger King) or I found myself obsessing over the news. I watched the death and infection rates rise, state closings increase, and I couldn't stop watching. So I needed a distraction. I decided to order an encaustic kit online. Encaustic is painting with hot wax. It is an ancient art form that goes back centuries. It is not often taught as it is incredibly dangerous. But when you've got nothing else to do, why not take a risk? I decided to do an encaustic painting of this picture from the South China Sea. I did it unconsciously but when I was done I was telling my fiance the story of the picture and his exact words were "it was the calm after the storm." I had to cancel my wedding a few days prior to making this art and somehow I think my soul reached out to this memory, this moment in time, to remind me about the calm after the storm. I'd spent weeks stressing out over canceling \*MY WEDDING\* which is why I obsessed over the news. I was looking for ways to still have this event. I was so sad seeing there was no hope which is why I couldn't turn away from the hilarity (and audacity) of the Tiger King. And when I turned to art for comfort I was unknowingly reminded to be hopeful. This storm, this pandemic, will pass too. You simply need a captain to keep you steady and a first mate to keep you laughing. So here is what I painted in thick layers of hot wax. I got a few burns. But it is my picture of hope remembered.”



Figure 5.3 Amanda's Art "Amanda. Photography Winston-Salem NC 2020. Regardless of what is going on in the world, I have ALWAYS LOVED BUTTERFLIES. Watching them flutter around without a care in the world from one beautiful flower to the next quenching their thirst with sweet nectar has often brought peace and beauty to many of my spring and summer days. But NOW more than ever, during the midst of this pandemic, the butterfly's journey symbolizes a change that must happen deep within, a new beginning. Like this butterfly that underwent an elaborate transformation from a caterpillar, after a time spent practicing patience, lots of patience, it appeared at the peak of spring when the new buds began to bloom on my daughter's tree. The tree always blooms right around Easter, yet another confirmation of a deep change and a new beginning. During this time it has not been easy. My thoughts as an expectant mother welcoming our third addition, our third "Ray of Sunshine" as we like to say, during a time when so much is unknown has honestly been just plain scary. But with this image I captured of this radiant butterfly, I see hope for a new beginning. To stop, reset, rest, prepare, and allow this time to transform and change me and my family for the better is much like the caterpillar transforming in its chrysalis. We will soon be a family of five and now is not the time to allow this situation, this pandemic, to overcome us with pain, sorrow, and fear. Now is the time to take it all in stride much like the butterfly often has too when it must allow the wind to take it to the next flower. It HAS NOT been easy but with trying to practice patience, like the butterfly, doing the best we can under these trying circumstances, and trying to prepare for a better day I am hopeful that we will come out transformed for a new purpose. I am hopeful for a new beginning when we welcome our new addition and I am well aware that as this season of life passes, this butterfly will continue to remind me that change is ongoing. New beginnings happen all the time and how we handle the changes and situations helps to shape us, for worse, but hopefully more often than not, for the better."



Figure 5.4 Macy's Art "Macy 2020. I decided to do something different that I wouldn't normally do. I wanted to represent that even in dark times, Artists and those with an appreciation for art can flourish during this time and create something beautiful. I hope you like it!"

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## APPENDIX A: A CALL FOR PANDEMIC ART

### **Call for Pandemic Art**

A letter from the Collector

I hope this email finds you healthy and well. After speaking with many, I found a resounding need for something different. If you are like me my days have all begun to look the same. They blur together with no particular highs or lows, only moments that make me giggle or seconds that sometimes make me sad.

We have all faced a loss in this situation. Loss of our seeing our friends, loss of our daily routines, loss of graduations, loss of normalcy, and some of us (myself included at times) have lost hope for things to ever be okay again. Each day we struggle with this new normal while never really knowing when it will truly end. I want each of you to know I am here with you and for you.

I've been on social media for more than I ever imagined I would be and one thing that keeps striking me is the use of art to cope with these times. Art means different things to every person. If you have Instagram I highly recommend following morkskywalker. He is a dog that was rescued from the meat trade in China. Tunameltsmyheart is another

favorite too. Both of these amazing pet owners invite people to make art of their dogs to auction off to others to bring smiles to people. I myself am the proud recipient of a "Mork Hug." The rainbows of hope movement asked people to draw rainbows on sidewalks and post online to spread joy. This all got me thinking...

For some, art is capturing the now and even the mundane. It is a snapshot in time. Check out this article on the BBC showing a man capturing every day life in early photography: <https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-52373308> For some, it is chasing the impossible and trying to bring to life the whimsy that resides in our minds as we try to escape this endless time at home. This video does a fun job of explaining why we make art <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVIQOytFCRI>

So my challenge to my students, my friends, my coworkers, and maybe even you is this: I would love for you to make a work of art. Make anything you want. Take a picture of anything you want. Draw anything you want. Paint anything you want. Keep it appropriate though. And send it to me. My goal is to create a digital gallery of what you all are finding hopeful, sad, normal, or idealized in this time of the pandemic. I want to see what living in this pandemic looks like through your eyes. I am also going to include some questions for you to answer with this art:

Why did you choose this as art to represent yourself during a pandemic?

What did making this allow you to express?