

**Expansion**  
**Teaching Through the Creative Process**

by

Amber W. MacGregor

B. F. A., Emily Carr University of Art and Design, 2001

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Department of Education: Curriculum and Instruction

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Supervisory Committee

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### **Abstract**

This paper is the logical, linear part of an art-based study of the creative process and its use in education. It begins with an introduction through our “current state of affairs,” continues with a short description and discussion of creativity and a personal explanation of my fascination with the creative process as a leaning tool, then goes on to how we might consider it as a discipline or domain in its own right. It then moves through an examination and reflection of my art-based research into the creative process and concludes with some ideas for implementing creative teaching methods in a classroom/studio setting to enrich the learning of students, including informal project ideas. This paper is supported by accompanying visual works that were the focus of my creative research for the duration of my Master of Art Education studies.

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## Dedication



For my mother, Irene Rieley, whose passion for everyday creativity has driven my own.

For my father, David MacGregor, a lifelong learner and creative spirit.

For my daughter, Biatrix, whose journey of discovery is only just beginning.

Last but not least for my husband, Kyle Labinsky, because the journey is the destination.

## Expansion

### Teaching Through the Creative Process

#### The Current State of Affairs

As I write this, we are at the end of week nine of sheltering-in-place, plus physical distancing in the COVID-19 pandemic. Things are just beginning to open up again, although it's hard to know what that really means. Here we are after weeks of ruminating on our place in the world, and what we would like to see moving forward. There has never been a better time to initiate positive change on a global scale. We've seen that we can do things that are difficult, that we can mobilize, that we can act globally to enact sweeping changes within our societies. Now, will we just return to *business as usual*? The reality is we will never return to *business as usual* again, not the way we have understood it in the past. This pandemic has changed the way we do everything, and think about, everything. It has forced me to look at the world as an interconnected whole, I hope that it has afforded others the same time for reflection.

What might be one of the most important things now is that we have a vision (or many visions) for the future (see Figure 1). To have a vision we need to use our creative and curious minds. E. Paul Torrance (2002) described the importance of having *a vision of the future* in his book *Manifesto*:

Positive images of the future are a powerful and magnetic force. These images of the future propel and energize us, giving us the courage and will to take important initiatives and move forward to new solutions and achievements. To dream and to plan, to be curious about the future, and to wonder how much it can be influenced by our efforts are important aspects of humanity. In fact, life's most energizing and exciting moments

occur in those split seconds when our strugglings and searchings are suddenly transformed in the dazzling aura of the profoundly new--an image of the future. (p. 31)

Figure 1.

*Visual Journal Digital Edit • Invisible City June 2020*



Note. Manual visual journal entry digitally altered. Digital image ©2020 A.M.

What do *you* want to see in our collective future? What sort of changes would you make in the way you live, the way your city is run, the way your country deals with social issues, environmental issues, aboriginal rights, education? There are so many questions for which we can begin to seek new answers. We can begin by first imagining the world we would like to see, and then by creating it. In the hubbub of our unmasking we will need to learn to do things in a very different way. Our interactions with one another will be altered, perhaps indefinitely. Some of us have, during this time, had time to reflect on what we would like our world to become, to imagine a future different from the one we seemed to be heading for. Sir Ken Robinson (2017),

could not have foreseen this pandemic but he has been discussing the growing list of global crises we face for many years now and what part of the solution to many of them might be:

It may be that some of the challenges we are creating in the natural environment, in politics and in our conflicting beliefs, will overcome us, and maybe sooner than later. If so, it will not be because we have made too much of our imaginations but too little. Now more than ever, we need to exercise these unique creative powers that make us human in the first place. The challenges we face are global and personal. (ch. 1, para. 30)

This project is about how we might incorporate and encourage creativity in our schools in a holistic manner that would allow everyone involved in it (students, teachers, support staff, parents, etc.) to benefit from it now and throughout their lives. To this end I am beginning with myself and documenting my own efforts to increase my understanding and use of creative thinking and processes and my ability to transmit this information to others. The incredible stock-pile of research and writing on this topic points towards the amazing benefits of creative thinking and doing and how they can transform our lives, our understanding of the world and our place within it and, if we want, our collective future. The enormous amount of information on creativity is indicative also, of the urgency with which the global creative community feels its use is vital. How do we on the inside get this information to a larger audience on the outside in a way that will allow others to share our understanding of the power and usefulness of creativity?

## Why Creativity?

My research for this Masters project, thus far, has taken me from the question of “What does art teach?”, through to the question of “What doesn’t art teach?” From ancient cave art and the shamanistic societies that have created it, through to curiosity and its implications for creative growth. I have considered the origins of public education, as well as the gist of the new British Columbia public school curriculum (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC’s New Curriculum*). I have reflected upon my artistic education and the flaws inherent in many systems of art education. I have looked at the differences between pre-contact First Nations Societies and their holistic approach to art and education and modern Western societies’ divide-and-conquer approach to art and education. I have considered my artistic practice and how it relates to and influences my teaching philosophy. Through this journey that has often felt very much like scrabbling around in the dark searching for the next clue that could illuminate my way, the one constant has been the concept of creativity and its transformative abilities. The creative process has become my light in that darkness instilling a clarity of insight that I did not previously possess. The reason for this is simple, it is because creativity is so obvious, so useful in everyday life and so much a part of envisioning and realizing a positive future. Creativity is so obvious we often overlook it. Our ability to think and make creatively empowers us!

Obviously not everyone sees creativity in the same way that I do. The buzzword in education now is “*innovation*” (Juliani, 2017), which is the ability to come up with new and potentially culturally significant ideas, theories or products. It seems difficult to envision teaching towards innovativeness without enabling creativity. Innovativeness, like art or much theoretical knowledge, is an outgrowth of creativity not the other way around. My hope is that

many educators who have an eye to teaching so that students are enabled to think innovatively, have a clear understanding of the importance of creative processing. It seems that teaching towards an “innovative mindset” (Couros, 2015) is increasingly considered a requirement because it is what businesses and corporations expect of their employees. As an example Alexis Fournier (2019) states, “Businesses are now paying more attention to the benefits of encouraging innovation than ever before. 63% of companies now have chief innovation officers to help drive new ideas and systems” (para. 2). This is an American statistic but the odds are pretty good that this is an indicator of the working culture in Canada as well. It is implied that employees come already prepared to take on this challenge of innovative thought within the workplace.

Innovation is an offshoot of creativity, which is the top “soft skill” employers expect their employees to possess in 2020 according to LinkedIn (Bolden-Barrett, 2020). A Forbes article from 2019 stated:

In its recently released *Global Talent Trends 2019 Report*, LinkedIn cited soft skills as vitally important for career success. At the top of the list? Creativity.

And it's no wonder. Creativity is the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly disparate things, and to generate innovative solutions. When you're creative, you're able to turn new and imaginative ideas into reality. (Blashka, 2019)

Personally, I don't think this is necessarily the most important reason to encourage creative thinking or lateral thought processes, however, *if* it encourages a creative focus in learning then it can't hurt. The question is whether or not the drive of educational systems to sustain this idea of teaching to innovative thought will increase the focus on creativity within schools? It is

important to give our students the tools to pursue work in an ever advancing marketplace, but it is paramount to foster their personal and creative growth. Without the nurturing of the creative aspect, the ability of individuals to come up with innovative ideas may be stunted and more importantly, the true natures, dreams, and aspirations of our individual students may not be fully expressed or realized as they move beyond their schooling. It seems that educators, outside of the fine arts<sup>1</sup>, also need to be up to the task of teaching to encourage creativity and innovation. To this end it makes sense that workshops could be routinely held for educators to teach them how to tap into their own creativity and to explore their own innovative abilities, and then how to encourage these things in their students. It shouldn't be assumed that all educators are on the same page with this form of information or teaching.

Perhaps it is only that I worry so much about our collective future that I consider the work of creativity in schools to be so vitally important. However, my original impetus for this work was to find a way to empower students to remain themselves and have a strong and abiding belief in their own abilities and strengths, throughout their schooling and beyond. This was not the case for me, or for many others I have spoken to and read about over the years. I feel extremely fortunate that despite having soul-crushing experiences in the public school system, I managed to retain a piece of my creative spirit, in no small part because of my inspiring and creative parents. At home my parents modelled creative freedom for me. They were both ceramic artists when I was young. My father also painted and spent many years renovating our house. We had endless supplies at hand, clay of course, which my sister and I often worked with while our mother was working on hand-building projects, but also paper, drawing supplies and paint,

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<sup>1</sup> Within the fine arts, teachers are routinely trained in the aspects and teaching of creativity, though not necessarily with an eye to innovation

among other things. My father is a great advocate of powdered tempera paint which he used extensively. In this way, art making and creativity were encouraged. They were a part of everyday life as well as part of play, for me. This creative drive allowed me to push through school and graduate (though just barely), and took me through art school, theatre school, and my teaching degree. It was not the negative outlook of my grade two teacher who told me I would “never be good at math” when I was seven (something I staunchly believed until I was almost thirty years old), or the certificates for *Citizenship* that I got routinely every year in elementary school, nor the well-meaning guidance counsellor I had in grade twelve who decided that accounting would be the best career choice for me, that have charted my true path. Looking back, I think now that if my creative abilities had been fostered in school it would not have taken me so long to become who I am meant to be, or to begin to reclaim my full creativity and to value it as I do now. Believe me when I say that the journey has been exceedingly long and laborious for when we lie to ourselves about our own truth because we have been taught that it is wrong, or not good enough, it takes a great deal to sway ourselves in the opposite direction. That is why creativity is at the heart of my research, and why I believe it to be at the heart of education as well.

## What is Creativity?

Creativity is, arguably, the act of taking our imaginative thoughts and ideas, as well as learned information, and turning them into something new. Robert Schirrmacher (1988) said, There are many ways to define creativity. Perhaps this has added to the confusion, misunderstanding and mystique surrounding it. People have different definitions for the same term. How would you define creativity? Some generally accepted definitions are

- The ability to see things in new ways
- Boundary breaking and going beyond the information given
- Thinking unconventionally
- making something unique
- Combining unrelated things into something new (p. 5)

Creativity can be a challenging thing to define because the term embodies a process that can be described in a large number of ways and may achieve multifarious visible outcomes, or none at all. So, what does it mean to be creative? Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) claims there are three different types of people who are routinely described as creative:

The first usage, widespread in ordinary conversation, refers to persons who express unusual thoughts, who are interesting, and stimulating - in short to people who appear unusually brilliant... The second usage refers to people who experience the world in novel and original ways. People whose perceptions are fresh, whose judgements are insightful, who may make important discoveries that only they know about... The final use of the term designates individuals who, like Leonardo, Edison, Picasso, or Einstein,

have changed our culture in some important respect, their achievements are by definition public. (pp. 25, 26)

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) calls those within the first of these creative groups “*brilliant*” rather than creative. Those within the second group he describes as “*personally creative*”, and those who fall within the final group he calls “*the creative ones without qualification*” (pp. 25, 26). His reckoning of the meaning of *creativity* he takes from what he identifies as the original definition of the term “-namely, to bring into existence something genuinely new that is valued enough to be added to the culture” (p. 25). He adds that, “All three kinds of creativity enrich life by making it more interesting and fulfilling” (p. 27).

What does this mean for the rest of us? The ones that do not fit into one of these categories? Can we all benefit from and use creativity? According to educational psychologist Dr. Ruth Richards (2011) the answer is *yes*, “We all have creativity—it actually keeps us alive, and it helps us thrive. Here are our flexible improvisations, our hunches and intuitions, our human ability to try this and try that. Truly, without creativity many of us would be dead” (p. 2). Sir Ken Robinson (2017) says: “Everyone has creative capacities. The challenge is to develop them. A culture of innovation has to involve everybody, not just a select few” (ch. 1, para. 5). It follows, then, that it would benefit everyone to be educated in the creative process, so that we can all progress creatively towards a positive future. The “*something new*” that creativity enables does not necessarily have to be entirely new in the world it only has to be new to the person creating it. We can use creativity wherever we are and for whatever purpose we might need it for. Dr. Richards (2011) calls this “*everyday creativity*” (p. 2). In her estimation creativity is something that is inherent in everyone and only needs to be fostered and used to be continually

useful. Beyond this Richards (2011) has stated and I concur that, “People finally need to hear the message: Our creativity is a fundamental survival capacity. Not only does it help us stay alive, it helps us learn what we are living for. Our human creativity must be taken seriously” (p. 3 ). In a similar vein Sir Ken Robinson (2017) describes the role of education in advancing civilization as follows:

In the twenty-first century, humanity faces some of its most daunting challenges. Our best resource is to cultivate our singular abilities of imagination, creativity, and innovation. Doing so has to become one of the principle priorities of education and training everywhere. (ch. 2, para. 48)

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) has asserted a similar if even more pronounced battle cry:

While we cannot foresee the eventual results of creativity--of the attempt to impose our desires on reality, to become the main power that decides the destiny of every form of life on the planet--at least we can try to understand better what this force is and how it works. Because for better or for worse, our future is now closely tied to human creativity. The result will be determined in large part by our dreams and by the struggle to make them real. (p. 6)

## Creativity as a Domain

Considering its importance in human wellbeing and innovation, it seems strange that creativity is not an educational discipline like mathematics, social studies, or science. It is true that many disciplines use creativity in some way, and people can be creative within any discipline. It is also true that creativity defies the common rules of a discipline or what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) calls a *domain*, which he describes as follows:

Each domain is made up of its own symbolic elements, its own rules, and generally has its own system of notation. In many ways, each domain describes an isolated little world in which a person can think and act with clarity and concentration. (p. 37)

Creativity, of course, doesn't manifest itself with the same set of rules universally, nor does it have a singular system of notation, the way that something like geometry, or music does. In that way it is more of an un-discipline than an actual discipline. The term "undisciplined" has always been anathema within public school systems, perhaps this is why creativity is not taught, in any general way, within them. Schirrmacher (1988) has said that when teachers were asked to select their ideal pupil from a list of four profiles, they "overwhelmingly selected children characterized as highly intelligent but low on creativity. The behaviour problems that could arise from creativity (or its stifling)...appear to outweigh any advantages or assets" (p. 15). He continues with, "Highly intelligent children follow directions, work independently, listen, pay attention, obey, and conform. On the other hand, the highly creative child is often considered a problem requiring individual attention" (p. 15). From this we can understand a little of why creativity has been given limited acknowledgment within school curricula. If students labelled as *creative* are also labelled as *disruptive*, *attention seeking*, or *troublemakers*, in a word

*undisciplined*, many educators may not want to foster the creative aspect in others. If classroom control is the central attitude of an educator towards teaching, then it follows that an expansive view of students' learning would be unnecessarily limited.

“Hold on” you might be thinking, “Art is taught in the K-12 school system, art is creative.” I concede that sometimes art is creative, but that generally the art that is taught in schools is limited in its ability to encourage creativity. This is not because art teachers don't know how to teach art or make it interesting, it is because the very idea of *art* has become something in our society that we largely engage in making to produce products. Peter London (1989) describes part of this disconnect, which entails the removal, through societal secularization, of artistic making from the realizations of the soul: “Unaware of the original intentions of craft, we have taken the by-product of art, beauty, as the ultimate good of art” (p. 10). Many of us have been thus diverted from any other higher purpose to pursue image making. However, even to produce artistic products for the purpose of creating beauty, or recreating a likeness, a person needs to learn how. In schools, we don't teach the basics of art making with similar rigour<sup>2</sup> as we do the basics of mathematics, for instance. So that by the time students get to a place where they feel they should be creating work of a particular calibre, many of them find it intimidating if not impossible. This of course makes rational sense. Imagine if you had never been taught how to multiply or divide, or the order of operations and you got to grade seven or eight and your teacher said, “Today, we're going to begin algebra,” then gave you a question that

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<sup>2</sup> Rigour in academics is described as “referring to that fine line between challenging and frustrating a student. It means that students are challenged to think, perform, and grow to a level that they were not at previously” (TeachHUB, 2014). Personally, I believe that rigour in this context is central to creative work as well as academic work. Another aspect of rigour is time spent on something, to learn it well. These two aspects of rigour, time spent and challenge created can also be utilized as central components in teaching through the creative process.

looked like this,  $\frac{5z + 1}{3} = 7$ . Would you have any idea what to do or how to begin? Similarly imagine being asked to draw, or paint when you had no real understanding of how to go about it because your artistic abilities had not been fostered. According to Schirrmaker (1988), “The product and process explanations of creativity are not mutually exclusive. ... If it were not for the creative process, the creation of creative products would be impossible. Creative products are built through creative processing” (p. 8). Many teachers seem to believe that because most young children create in an unfettered way that children of any age will continue to do so. Peter London (1989) said, “Making images is as natural a human endeavour as speaking” (p. xiii). He followed with:

Most of us are severed from this ability to visually speak. It would seem that a major contributing factor must be how we have been taught to make images. We have learned to be embarrassed by our efforts. We have learned to feel so inept and disenfranchised from our visual expressions that we simply cease doing it altogether.” (p. xiii)

Betty Edwards (1979) claimed, “The majority of adults in the Western World do not progress in art skills much beyond the level of development they reached at age nine or ten” (p. 62).

Edwards continued to say,

The beginning of adolescence seems to mark an abrupt end of artistic development in terms of drawing skills for many adults. As children, they confronted an artistic crisis, a conflict between their increasingly complex perceptions of the world around them and their current level of art skills. (p. 63)

There is a difference to be noted between what we now understand as *art* and the foundational act of creativity that may result in its making. Therefore, the making of art in school does not always elicit creativity in students but rather, in some cases, brings on feelings of fear, inadequacy, and perfectionism. Peter London (1989) said, “Starting off by making a picture is like starting off composing a symphony. It’s the most complex and difficult thing to do, and yet it is the very first task given a would-be student” (p. 22). He followed with this statement about art students, “The fatal myth they have been led to believe is that art is about replicating beautiful things and moments of the world. They do not understand that no one can succeed in this killing task. No one” (p. 22). The truth is, in Kindergarten, we probably had no problem drawing or painting, or sculpting in clay, or acting, or dancing because we had not yet developed an idea about what art was, only finding it an enjoyable pastime, a source of joy or discovery, or a way of bringing stories to life. Lynda Barry (2019) described the innate creative understanding of children in her book *Making Comics*,

We draw before we are taught. We also sing, dance, build things, act, and make up stories long before we are given any deliberate instruction beyond exposure to people around us doing things. Everything we have come to call the arts seems to be in almost every 3 year-old. (p. 15)

As we get older, we begin to understand the concept of “art” largely through a Eurocentric lens, and it seems to have become ingrained in our cultural understanding. Within Western cultures, art is often understood, even by children, as something *other* that is created by people known as artists who have specific artistic abilities. Students often believe those with artistic talent can make art worth looking at and those without it simply cannot. Personally, I believe this is very

far from reality. But, when we look at art, we often create a judgement about the person who made it, and this enforces some students' beliefs about intrinsic artistic talent. In schools, for instance, teachers may consider a student who makes technically skilled artworks as being *naturally talented*, *highly creative*, or *artistically gifted*. The truth is that any form of creative endeavour takes a lot of hard work. Those *naturally talented* students may indeed have a propensity to create the type of work they make, they may have been "born with greater manual dexterity, and/or a heightened sensitivity to rhythm, design and colour" (Gold and Oumano, 1998, p. 10), but it generally still takes them a lot of practice, and trial and error to get to the point where that judgement about them is formed. For instance, Robert Schirrmacher (1988) described the artistic education of Yani, a child artist considered to be a prodigy, who at the age of three began a months long intensive self-training into the art of Chinese brush painting. "Yani's father credits her success to her drive, not to talent. Frustrated and annoyed that her pictures bore so little resemblance to her mental images, at age three Yani crammed several years of artistic development into several months" (p. 5). Yani had unlimited time and materials, and an artistic mentor in her father, and she was committed, even at such a young age, to engaging in the craft of painting. It's a similar thing for anyone who is considered *highly creative*, or *artistically gifted*, or indeed for those that are considered to be the opposite of these things, no one is born that way. We are born curious and our creativity can be developed; what we make of those things has a lot to do with our education and our environment.

I am suggesting that fine arts and the creative process be taught concurrently with a focus on process over product and with the same intensive focus that mathematics and language arts are within the K-12 education system. What I mean by "the same intensive focus" is every day,

and hopefully with more joy and play involved. Along with this infusion of process driven arts education, creative processing should, ideally, be embedded into the curriculum of every discipline. If we don't give our students the time, and encouragement to explore their creativity in new and different ways, that creativity may never develop very far. According to Schirrmaker (1988), "Although all children are capable of creativity, the potential to create remains dormant without practice. With practice the potential to create becomes a reality" (p. 8). How many of our students could go on to be creative innovators given the time and tools to explore their creativity throughout their schooling? How many of them could live more productive and satisfying lives knowing how to tap into their creativity? Sir Ken Robinson (2017) put it like this,

Children with strong academic abilities may fail to discover their other abilities; those with less academic ability may have equally powerful abilities that lie dormant. They can all pass through the whole of their education never knowing what they are. They can become disaffected, resentful of their "failure" and conclude that they are simply not very bright. Some of these educational failures go on to have great success in life. How many do not? They may never know what they are capable of or who or what they might become. (ch. 5, para. 39)

To me, this idea of children going through the whole of their education never knowing who they truly are (Robinson, 2017, ch. 5, para. 39), is simply intolerable. Is this something that should be allowed in our school systems? The gracelessness, and disrespect with which some educational systems have regarded, and continue to regard individual children's lives and wellbeing should never, in my view, be supported.

## A Question of Time

If all human beings have natural creativity, then it is not impossible to suppose that a human of any age may be brought eventually back into the realm of creativity given the chance. A big part of that is allowing the time to explore those things that we are curious about. Goleman, Kaufman and Ray (1992) bring up the point of intrinsic motivation and creativity in relation to time:

If intrinsic motivation is one key to a child's creativity, the crucial element in cultivating it is time: open-ended time for the child to savour and explore a particular activity or material to make it her own. Perhaps one of the greatest crimes adults commit against a child's creativity is robbing the child of such time. (p. 63)

This is an important point especially for educators, that time and energy must be spent on creativity in our own lives and in our classrooms, no matter what it is that we teach.

Schirmacher (1988) asserted that as educators we should:

Provide time and space for creative expression. Children need plenty of space to lay out materials and work alone or together to give form to their ideas. Time and space should be flexible and fluid. ... An excessive concern for constant cleanliness, quiet, or neatness inhibits creative "messaging about. (p. 13)

We need to allow intensive focus on both creativity and curiosity everyday so as to encourage the growth of our students as individuals and as citizens of the world, and enable their capacities to create positive change through ideas and innovation. Along with that, wouldn't it be amazing if students felt that their creativity was valued and learned to value it in themselves and others?

Perhaps our school curriculums need to be changed to focus on creativity? The public school curriculum of the Province of British Columbia (2020) for instance, is slowly increasing its focus on creativity<sup>3</sup> (section: Core Competencies). Perhaps the educational models that we currently know will begin to shift after this pandemic and will become radically different in focus, out of necessity. Or, perhaps, many teachers will simply begin to shift their individual teaching practices to incorporate the creative process, which seems to me the most important un-discipline for which all other disciplines lend their insights. Creativity is a foundational learning aspect and the time we spend as educators weaving it and creative expression throughout our curriculum (Schirmacher, 1989, p. 14) is time well spent. The long standing practice of relegating creative endeavours to the backseat of learning (or Friday afternoon before the buses come) needs to be seriously reconsidered.

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<sup>3</sup> The public school curriculum in British Columbia, Canada already has a comprehensive section on creative thinking (Province of British Columbia, 2020, section. Core Competencies) and how to implement its use in many areas of study. This gives educators permission to explore it in any discipline. This is great news for education in BC. However, wide implementation of this aspect of the curriculum is still in its early stages, it is yet to be seen how far reaching this new part of the curriculum will become. For further information see the BC Ministry of Education Curriculum documents on creative thinking: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies/thinking/creative-thinking>

## Creating Space for the Creative Process

The creative process is the means by which we gain the insights and ability to create with original intention from our imagination, ideas and learned information. It is a form of research whereby we can explore, interpret, and create from a place of curiosity and play.

What would a discipline, or domain, focused solely on the creative process for its own sake look like? How could educating through the creative process enrich learning and promote growth throughout students' educational careers and lives? These are the questions I have been seeking to answer through my research into creativity, curiosity, and the creative process.

Personally, I am focused on these questions because I want to make teaching and learning more holistic, focused more on life and how to live it. To this end it should be noted here that the Reggio Emilia approach (Alkudhair, 2016) to early childhood education would make an excellent model from which to build a creativity centred curriculum for any age level. Loris Malaguzzi (Malaguzzi and Gandini, 1998), the founder of this method, described the mission of the Reggio Emilia approach as being “to create an amiable school — that is a school that is active, inventive, liveable, documentable, and communicative. ... to make a school that is a place of research, learning, revisiting, re-consideration, and reflection” (p. 9). At the centre of this model of instruction runs the theme of what Malaguzzi and Gandini (1998) termed “the triad” of “children, teachers, and parents” brought together within this learning approach specifically “to intensify the interrelationships among them” (p. 9). In this way strong relationships are formed and a continuity of learning is played out against a backdrop of mutual respect within community. Malaguzzi and Gandini (1998) said, “The loneliness, the separation, the indifference, and the violence that more and more characterize modern life undermine our

proposal for a system of education based on relationships” (p. 10). This holistic approach to education, where the student is supported by a learning community that includes friends, peers, educators, and family, is an idea that is relevant not only to early childhood education but to all education. The isolation and indifference that Malaguzzi and Gandini spoke of seem even more prevalent now than when he wrote this some twenty-years ago. The other aspect of the Reggio Emilia approach that is so appealing is its focus on creativity, curiosity and inquiry-based learning (Alkudhair, 2016, p. 53). Taken together the community aspect and focus on creative learning make this an ideal method within which to explore and learn through the creative process.

Sir Ken Robinson (2017) has likened our current educational model to industrial systems and to the auto industry, with educational policy makers focused on raising standards, improving efficiency, returns on investments, and promoting cost-effectiveness (ch. 3, para. 17). However, unlike an industrial system, education is about the care and nurturing of human beings. Robinson (2017) put it like this: “People... are keenly interested in their own lives and education. They have feelings and opinions, hopes and aspirations. Ignoring the human factor is at the root of many of the problems that industrial systems of education have created” (ch. 3, para. 17). Industrial systems of education are based on preparing students through the lens of the priority subjects that seem currently to be most relevant to the economy (Robinson, 2017, ch. 3, paras. 8, 10, 11, 12, 13). Arts and humanities are not generally considered to be as important within this realm of building students into cogs of the economic machine as are the Disciplines of mathematics and science.

It feels as though we are moving through a teenage phase in education, where ideas of creative thinking and community are moving in to replace outmoded models like standardized testing and isolated grading; but it is happening in fits and starts, with some parts of the country and some schools moving forward more quickly than others. It is encouraging that there is some positive momentum, at least here British Columbia, in the drive to move the curriculum towards critical and reflective thinking (Province of British Columbia (1), 2020, section: *Core Competencies*) as well as creative thinking (Province of British Columbia (1), 2020, section: *Core Competencies*). At least looking at the new curriculum documents (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum*) makes it look this way in theory. I have yet to see this curriculum being enacted in schools as widely as it is expected to be. Though for teachers already working with the former curriculum there is a huge amount of curriculum renovation that has to go on for these new methods to be put in place. For example, seasoned teachers who are used to teaching directly from text books or using written tests as exemplars of student learning, are having to adopt and integrate “a concept-based competency-driven approach to learning” (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum*), which focuses instead on having “all areas of learning based on a “Know-Do-Understand” model which supports a concept-based competency-driven approach...” (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum*). This is intended to be a model of curricular interconnectivity that allows for its core “three elements, the Content (Know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand) [to] all work together to support deeper learning” (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum*).

There is also positive forward motion in education that is being spearheaded by the likes

of Canadian collaborative educator George Couros, through his insightful books *The Innovator's Mindset* (Couros, 2015) and *Innovate Inside the Box*, with Katie Novak (Couros & Novak, 2019) both books on innovation and creativity in education but more importantly about building relationships within schools. Couros (2015) quoted Simon Sinek (2014) who asserted:

We need to build more organizations that prioritize the care of human beings. ... as members of the group, we need the courage to take care of each other when our leaders don't. And in doing so, we become the leaders we wish we had. (p. 67)

Couros' work is becoming more mainstream as he seeks to move his ideas and those of other inspiring educators outside the box.

Engaging students in the creative process is one way to address the *human factor*, that Robinson (2017, ch. 3, para. 17) mentions, because unlike some forms of standard learning it isn't about finding a specific answer to a specific question, it's about foraging for inspiration through active research into the things that students are curious about. There are generally no right or wrong answers in creative processing; and the research engaged in during the creative process can have a myriad of non-standard outcomes. Unlike standard research it can create a cascade of avenues for self-expression and can carry a student or group of students in any number of directions. The important thing is that the creative process itself is often the destination. The chaos of creativity is a key to its enduring usefulness in everyday life. Michele Cassou and Stewart Cubley (1995) said,

Chaos is the soil of creation; it plows the ground of intuition, preparing it to receive the seeds that wait in secret places for a fertile home. There is no need to force shapes to connect in order to make a coherent statement. This will be a betrayal of your intuition,

and will lead only to control and loss of energy. Without chaos, nothing will grow. (p. 30)

I equate this theme of creative chaos to the reality of living within an irrational world. When we learn to become comfortable with the ambiguity of the creative process, we begin to become more comfortable with the ambiguities inherent in life. Uncertainty and fear can be such hindrances for many to live full and rewarding lives. The creative process allows us to imagine and move into realms that we might otherwise be reticent to explore; it opens new avenues of learning, connection, self-exploration, risk, and meaning. Beyond this, the creative process helps connect us to our inner-self and the earlier it is allowed or taught, the less fragmented that inner-self will be.

It may be difficult to imagine a chaotic educational space, or to consider how that might be a place of learning for students. I see it as a cooperative learning space, where we as educators can offer insights, learn alongside, and work with (not try to control) the idiosyncrasies of our students and the collective culture of each class as a whole. This style of classroom is more like the atelier of the Reggio Emilia schools, a hub that is central to the community based inquiry of making (Vecchi, 2010, p. 4). This need not be chaotic in the sense of clashes or violence, but rather the ordered chaos of a hive, where everyone plays a part in the creative actions going on.

### **A Segue into Artistic Practice and Process**

One of the true challenges for me during my research has been how to incorporate my artistic practice into it, or rather how to conduct my research as an artist, but also my search for creative strategies, applicable in the classroom, through it. To this end I have, during the course of this Masters, tried a number of different approaches to shifting disciplines within my art practice. This has given me a greater sense of the challenges that some students seem to encounter when moving into artistic or creative work from academic work as I also find shifting from one to another difficult. One of the amazing things about cross-curricular creative work, once you get into the flow of it, is that it opens up avenues of insight that may remain closed through a single avenue of inquiry. What this means is that, this method of working, through creative research, provides “spaces where interdisciplinary, personal, and critical connections can be made ... and scaffolds for natural [cross-]curricular connections” (Sanders Bustle, 2008, p. 12) to be created. The willingness to interact with, and be critically aware during the action of, and movement between these specific modes of making and researching have also been instrumental in their success as art-making and researching methods. I will recount here the trail of my creative research from the beginning of my Masters study in the summer of 2018 to the present. Through the course of these vignettes of creative practice you may get an inkling of the rigour with which a person can enter into and become entangled while traversing through their creative processing. Far from being only a surface means of interpreting, understanding, valuing or engaging with content, creative research allows an enmeshing or merging of our selves and our stories with an activated understanding of subject matter. All of this merging between

ourselves and our stories, happens through a creative dialogue of reinterpretation through discovery and invention.

### **Imaging Poetry**

The initial cross-curricular project on my journey was a project collaboration initiated by my friend, and writer Astrid Van der Pol (2018), and me. We have been working concurrently to create a body of work consisting of her poetry and a series of cyanotypes that I have been making in response to her written imagery. The poems I have been working with are from a series she has been working on tentatively titled *Souvenir Hunting: A Field Guide to the Sea* (Van der Pol, 2018). Together we decided upon the use of cyanotype as a fitting medium to convey the often enigmatic qualities of the subject matter, because of its cyan blue colour, its reliance on water to bring out the print's true image, its antiquity as a medium, and its ability to embody the mysterious, and sometimes elusive character of her written imagery. The process of collaboration has been a push/pull of ideas and interpretations. Through this process, we consult one another on points of interest, use of symbolism, and ideas for presentation/sharing of the collaborative work. The first image that I produced is titled *Salt-Dried Sailor* (see Figure 2) and is based on a poem about Manfred Fritz Bajorat, a German sailor, who was found mummified by salt and hot dry air on his boat that was drifting, half-sunk, off the coast of the Philippines in 2016. The poem itself cannot be reprinted here in its entirety as it is still in a partially finished state. Here is a small section of the text of *Dolphin Catcher's Mummy-Man* by Astrid Van der Pol (this version 2018).

Tonight mosquitoes buzz in the cove's ear,

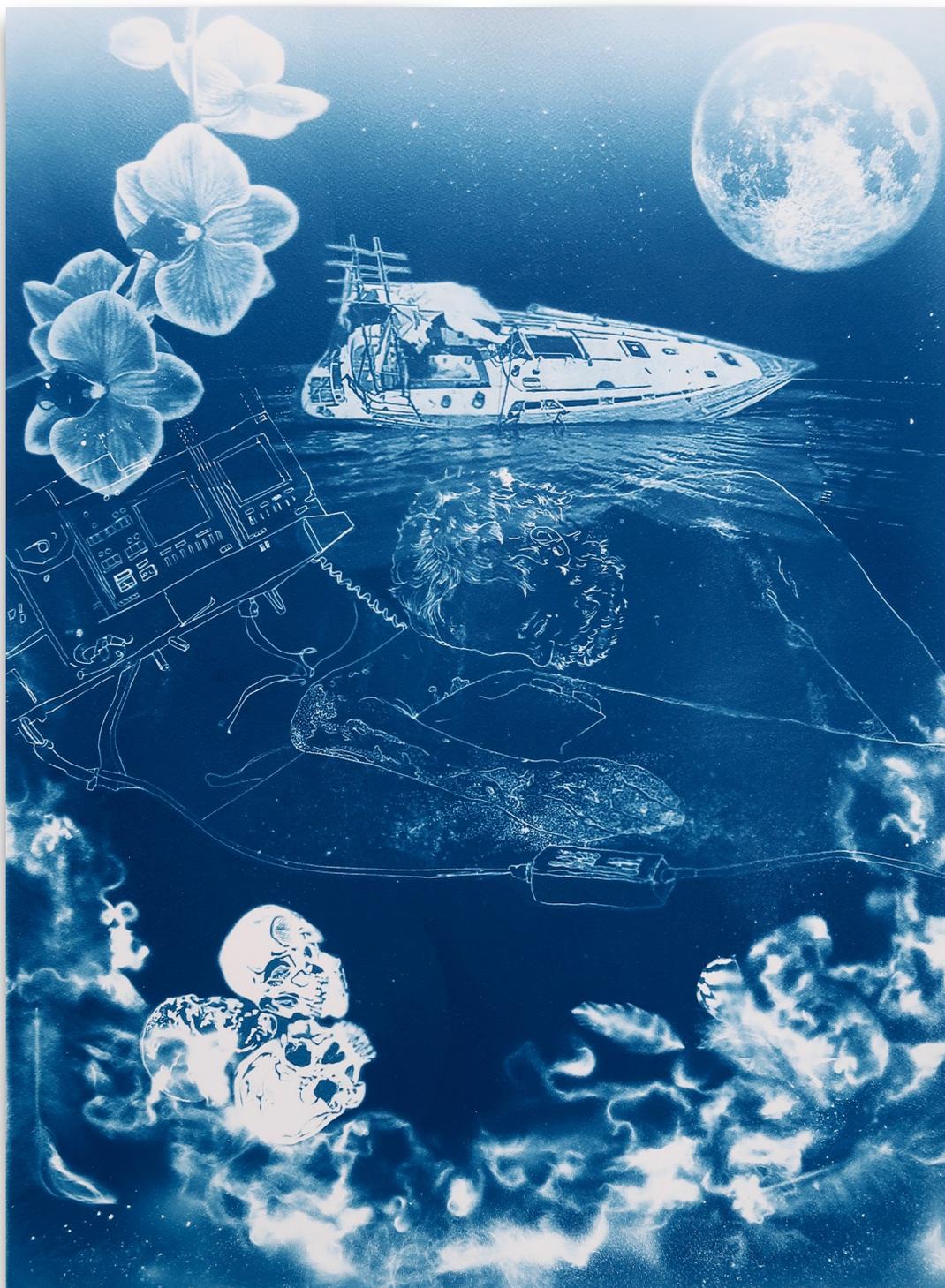
breeze trips orchids and a corpse drifts

in the South Pacific. This salt-dried sailor  
with his head collapsed on right arm  
-part nap, part knuckling under,  
is no Lycidas, no unripe blackberry plucked.  
With the radio, unused and a photo, unpinned,  
the cockpit closes its eyelid.  
But Mummy-Man stays, sailing on (p.12)

When I first considered the poetic imagery, I was intrigued by its lush tropical atmosphere, and then by the thought that this man had been unable to receive help in his dying moments because of his lifestyle choices. His beloved boat had become his tomb. I wanted to show him both cradled and shadowed by the sea. I was curious about the poem's content and imagery. I researched the story behind the poem, I then used studio processes to respond, analyze and interpret the findings.

This image was created using a composite "negative" made on a piece of clear acetate, using ink drawings, and layered transparent photocopied negatives. This negative was placed on a piece of watercolour paper prepared with cyanotype emulsion. On top of the negative were arranged feathers, shells, wool roving, seaweed, and sand and then a piece of glass was clipped over the top to hold this fragmented "negative" together. This was exposed in a UV light box for 3.5 minutes. Afterwards all the objects and the negative were removed and the whole thing was rinsed and then submerged under water to reveal the final image. This final, often visually dramatic "drowning" of the exposed print is what brings out the hidden image which finally releases its rich blue mysteries to the naked eye.

Figure 2.

*Salt-Dried Sailor (version 4)*

Note: Cyanotype on watercolour paper, 18" X 24"

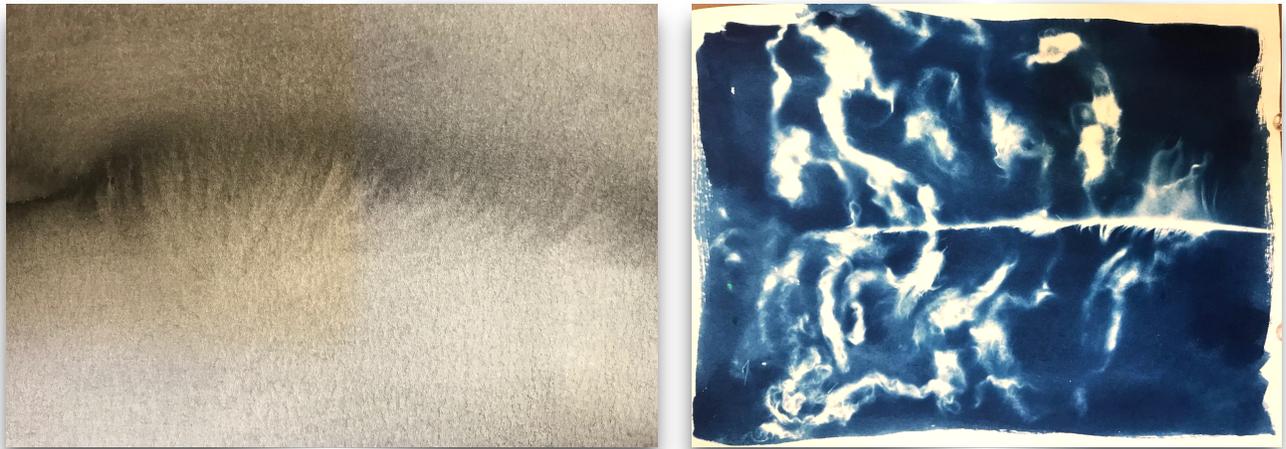
The challenge of cyanotype is that it is reliant on elaborate preparations to get the result that you want and even then, there may be uncontrolled variables that will have an effect on the final product. I was lucky that I only had to complete four full size prints to achieve the image quality I was hoping for. Being a painter, I generally have the ability to rework areas of an image that don't work for me. This is not really possible with cyanotype, as adding ink or paint to the surface changes the surface quality of the image and breaks the illusion of depth that can often be created. All the imagery in the final print is embedded in the painted negative and created by the shadows of objects I laid temporarily on top of what will become the final print. Part of the rigour of this creative process was matching the media to the ideas, and part of it was being disciplined enough to give up (a painter's) control and rather embracing a printmaker's persistence and attention to the technical process. I enjoyed the challenges of this work both from the standpoint of a cross-curricular project and because of the limitations of the medium which forced me to work very differently than I usually would.

In the second summer of my Masters I completed a second cyanotype work titled *Long Tresses of Dreams and Stars* (see Figure 4), based on another poem by Astrid van der Pol (2018) titled *Moitessier* (p. 40). The poem is about the voyage of French sailor, Bernard Moitessier, who circumnavigated the globe, solo, in a small sailboat in 1968. For this work my creative research was initiated in a different way than the previous cyanotype, beginning with reading and viewing images and videos of sailboats moving through water, including Moitessier's own film footage from his 1968 voyage (Videowest, 2012). In preparation for creating an image I also learned about the fascinating physics called *fluid dynamics* that are behind the forming of a wake behind a moving boat. The absolute symmetry that is created through this process is quite phenomenal

and is a fitting visual exemplar for the concept of the unremitting persistence of a sailor. This inspired me to create several fluid watercolour studies (see Figure 3) and cyanotype composition tests ( see Figure 4) of the wake of a sailboat intended to approximate the *feel* of the boat's movement through the water, rather than beginning with the visual imagery of the poem as I had for the previous cyanotype.

Figures 3, 4.

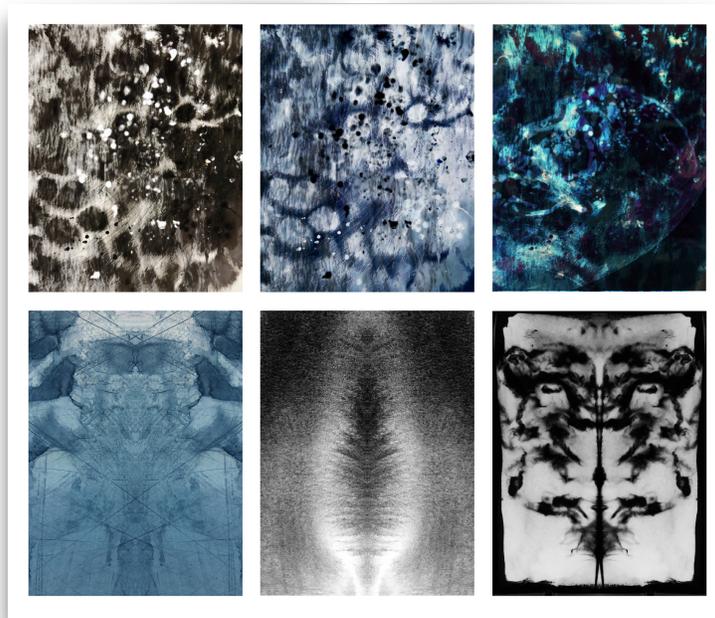
*Watercolour Study #1 for Wake and Cyanotype Study #1 for Wake*



Note. Watercolour on watercolour paper, 9" X 12", Cyanotype on watercolour paper

Following this initial process of interacting with the *wake* as the central character in my inquiry, I began making digital iterations using the watercolours and cyanotypes as a base, in attempts to visually define textural memories of water and stones, and water and wake symmetry (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.  
Digital Iterations of Water Textures and Wake Symmetry



Note. Compiled digital images.

This altered processing through sense memory and digital iterations allowed a different understanding of the subject matter to emerge as I created an interconnected pathway between the wake and the stars.

I made the image from a negative hand-painted on transparent wet media film with alcohol ink and black acrylic gouache and printed on watercolour paper coated with cyanotype emulsion, as previously, with the addition of feathers only. The resulting image (see Figure 6) is simpler and more painterly than the first cyanotype. The painterliness caused by the hand-painted negative imparts a sense of my artistic hand, imbuing the personal into this story of another that I had not considered when deciding on the media for the making of the negative. I think, the whole, evokes a sense of the worldliness and otherworldliness of Moitessier's seafaring experience.

Figure 6.

*Long Tresses of Dreams and Stars (version 4)*



Note. Cyanotype on watercolour paper, 18"X 24"

### *Visual Journals*

Throughout the course I have maintained a current visual journal. A visual journal is like a sketchbook that incorporates ideas, images, drawings, paintings, collected materials, collage, reflective writing, research notes, etc. A visual journal can be either manually or digitally produced. Visual journaling is an active and central part of my research methodologies that I use through both formats. I concur with Sara Scott Shields (2016) comment about visual journaling, that, "...meaning and understanding manifest through the juxtaposition of images with text, creating a physically and conceptually layered exploration of who we are becoming inside of and in relationship to our research projects" (p. 12). I agree with this concept that using creative means to research, allows us to merge with our work, that we are able to experience an embodied shifting of understanding and practice that brings our ideas and thoughts into the realm of tangible forms. Scott Shields (2016) follows with: "As a companion to exploration and research, the visual journal embodies the practice of embracing text and image to create new, more complex understandings" (p. 12).

Through the use, in concert, of images and text the visual journal insinuates itself between the realms of image and writing. This liminal space of making exists within what Springgay, Irwin and Kind (2005) term "a/r/tography" which they describe as "arts-based research as enacted living inquiry" (p. 899). "A/r/tography is a coming together of art and graphy, or image and word. It is a doubling of visual and textual wherein the two complement, extend, refute, and/or subvert one another" (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 900). When we research in an interdisciplinary way we open up to unforeseen avenues of inquiry. The visual journal can be a companion to our thinking (Scott Shields, 2016) on this journey of discovery. Lynn Sanders-

Bustle (2008), who uses a modified version of the visual journal that she calls a “visual artifact journal,” had this to say about art educators contemporary use of journaling both for themselves and their students:

The use of sketchbooks, journals, and reflective writing in art education is nothing new. Yet, a contemporary shift from a modernist to a postmodern paradigm challenges educators to revisit and reuse practices to include experiences that are not solely about formal content and the development of art skills but those which cross discipline boundaries, encourage conceptual development and foster creative and critical inquiry, all within the context of an ever-changing world. (Sanders-Bustle, 2008, p. 9)

Anita Sinner (2011) said: “visual expressions authenticate ... in ways narratives alone cannot by attending to visual content, reflection, translation, and interpretation of images” (p. 184).

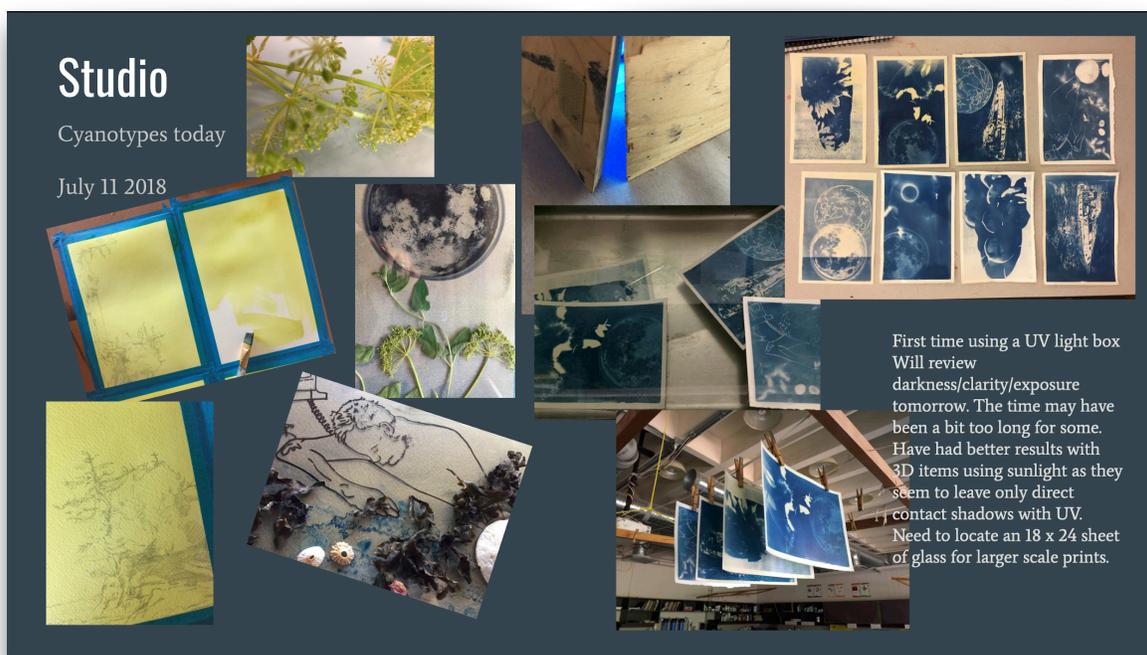
I believe an entire course on the creative process could be conducted solely through visual journaling. Wherein students could use creative and expressive means to document and reflect on their lives, school experiences, or a specific project or inquiry. The format allows a certain openness and free-rein to descend on the creative process. This means that a more personal and unrestricted interplay might occur with the subject matter than one often permits when creating an art piece; as a journal is not what we consider a finished work and therefore can exist outside of the realm of judgment, either from ourselves or others, that we keep for finished work. This is similar to a personal journal where we are generally free to express how we feel, and what we think, unhampered by the ideas or judgment of others. One difference is that in a classroom studio setting it is generally acknowledged and understood that the instructor will view all or part of your visual journal, but that you are in control of what is and what is not

viewed. Another difference is that often the visual journal is used as a tool to focus on aspects of specific projects that are part of the course being taken and express ideas in process in relation to those projects. You can also describe a visual journal as a *process journal* or a *creative journal*.

My visual journaling for this Masters began with process journaling as a mode of creative research, through the various art projects and courses that I encountered. These have been very useful for collecting data in relation to artistic projects where generally no trace of the process is left after they are completed. For example the process of cyanotype goes through several stages on its way to a finished image. Some of my visual journals are devoted to the preparation and printing processes of cyanotypes including information on timing in relation to exposure, images of preparing emulsion coated paper with negatives and or objects prior to printing, etc. (see Figure 7).

Figure 7.

*Visual Journal • July 11 2018*



Note. Digital Visual Journal Entry on cyanotype tests using a UV light box

Over the course of the last year, before and especially during pandemic lockdown, and as I have had no students with which to work, I have undertaken a project to create visual journal entries in relation to specific ideas or projects much in the same way that a visual journal might be used in a studio class setting. This has resulted in a good deal of rich visual research into the processes within which we are expected to teach middle and high-school art (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Arts Education*). Engaging with these processes, which include the elements and principles of art and design, from a student perspective, or as if I had not interacted with the ideas before, allowed new insights to emerge about teaching through them or in relation to them. I now have a greater sense of their interconnectivity and that students may find it challenging to work explicitly with these concepts in mind. I have generally found teaching art through the elements and principles of art and design to be stultifying both to the students I have taught and to me, as they take what may be an engaging interactive pursuit and turn it into an analytical chore. I think it is preferable to allow art to happen and then to discuss the concepts in relation to the art already made if the necessity arises. I feel that sometimes we have no words or explanations to describe those aesthetic decisions that enable the activation of an artistic space. It seems presumptuous to assume that students should be able to put into words something that we are not always able to ourselves. That being said, there is no reason why the elements and principles of design should not be mentioned or used as comparative templates rather than as exemplars that *have to* be employed as part of the creative process.

I have completed a few full sets of manual entries, some of them on 2D journaling techniques such as blackout poetry, pen and ink, and observational drawing, and the others on the elements and principles of art and design. Along with these were produced concurrent digital

entries on the elements and principles of design and on creativity. I felt it necessary to engage in this concurrent making of both the digital and the analog journals as I have often made it an option to do one or the other with my art and media arts classes. In reflection, I think this is a good practice as the different modes allow different meanings and information to emerge from the same initial prompt or idea. Through this project I have come to appreciate the different modes for their individual abilities to facilitate self-expression. I feel that students can, in choosing to engage with their chosen option, stretch their understanding of what can be done in that mode and find a personal voice and aesthetic style that resonates with their understanding of making.

It may be noticed, within the following images, that both my analog and digital journals have improved both aesthetically and in regard to their flow of information throughout. These improvements are the result of research into the processes of others who use visual journaling and a personal interest in creating a richer visual experience. I felt that my earlier journals were not as engaging, because their content did not flow in the same way. It makes sense that as we intensify our efforts to communicate, that we learn new means to pass on information that are, clearer and more visually specific.

## A Visual Journal Mini-Gallery

Following are images of some of my visual journal entries, both analog and digital, from the last two years (see Figures 8-14):

Figure 8.

### *Visual Journal • August 3rd 2018*



Note. Digital visual journal entry for *Visual Interview*. Analog visual journal page top right

Figure 9.

### *Visual Journal • Work Prior to July 3rd 2019*



Note. Visual journal of some photography work completed prior to classes starting in 2019.

Figure 10.

*Visual Journal • March 27, 28, 2019*



Note: Analog visual journal entries. Watercolour, pencil, ink, collage.

Figure 11.

*Visual Journal • October 2019*



Note. Visual journal about the Tseshet Nuu-chah-nulth term *hishuk'ish tsawalk* (Everything is one).

Figure 12.

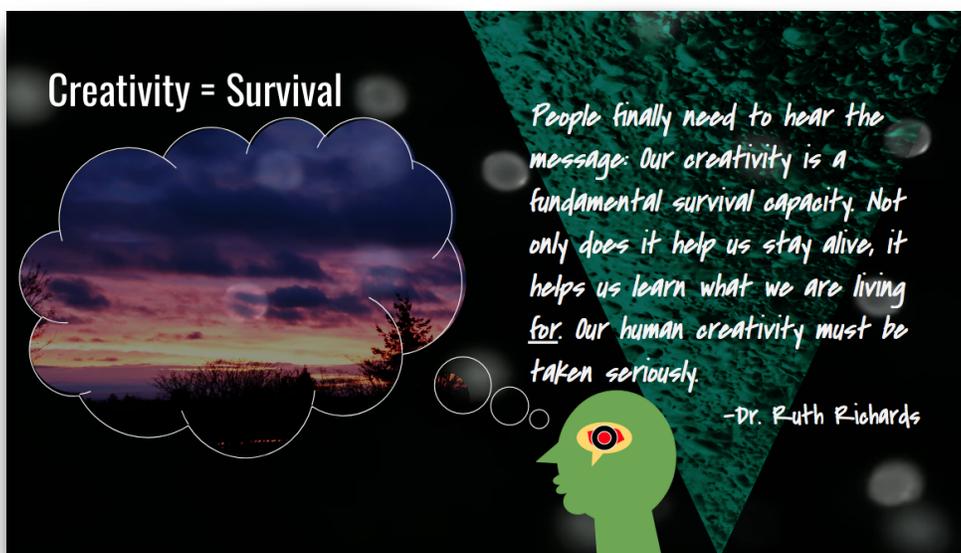
*Visual Journal • Emphasis, May 9th 2020*



Note. Analog visual journal entry for the *Principle of Emphasis*. Collage and paint on paper.

Figure 13.

*Visual Journal • Creativity = Survival, May 18th 2020*



Note. Digital visual journal entry that is part of the digital sandbox, *Curiosity, Creativity and the Creative Process*. Quote: (Richards, 2011, p. 3).

Figure 14.

*Visual Journal • Unity, May 20, 2020*



Note: Visual journal illustrating the Art and Design Principle of Unity.

### **Intuitive Painting**

Just over twenty years ago I was introduced to the concept of intuitive painting, a method for creating art from the subconscious mind. Intuitive painting is like a form of artistic meditation where, instead of deciding what will be painted, you allow it to come to you as you work. The two books from which I learned this technique are Michele Cassou and Stewart Cubley's (1995) *Life, Paint, and Passion* and Aviva Gold with Elena Oumano's (1998) *Painting from the Source*. The initial reason that I found this method of working so inspiring was that it is a method entirely based on the process rather than the product of painting. It is a way of working steeped in the creative process that allows imagery to come forth from the unconscious rather

than forcing imagery onto the substrate. Intuitive painting's connection to spirituality and healing also cannot be overlooked. Gold and Oumano (1998) described the creative "source": "Native Americans call it Great Spirit. Mystics and seekers throughout the ages referred to it as the Divine. Yogis think of it as Prana, life-force energy" (p. 8). They followed with, "For our purposes, the source is all that and more - a combination of what Freud termed the unconscious, Jung called the collective unconscious, most modern psychotherapists label the psyche, and ... spiritual seekers ... refer to as the soul" (p. 8). Because the process and imagery of intuitive painting are so personal and come from our subconscious, it makes sense that they would be associated with spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, and yoga. Michael Grady (2006) says, "...art at its core, is a form of spiritual healing and artists might serve as healers in the same manner as indigenous shamanic healers once served tribal communities" (p. 87). Perhaps then, it is not impossible to think that working through subconscious imagery may help students to know themselves in a deeper sense. However, the concept of spirituality often may not be comfortably incorporated in a classroom for fear that a teacher is attempting to indoctrinate their students into a specific religious avenue. Sean Steele (2014) suggested that teaching through philosophy, may be the next best thing:

Given the hostility that even a whiff of "religious education" tends to provoke among a vocal, litigious minority in our society, and given the cooling effect that the looming threat of litigation has upon educational discourse and inquiry in the classroom, I suggest that introducing philosophy and philosophizing into our schools may be the most strategically amenable way to encourage the "spiritual reflectivity" or "ontological awareness" that both Senn and Mayes advocate. Philosophy and philosophizing do not

ring *overtly* as “spiritual” or “religious” activities in the ears of many; and yet genuine philosophy (as the “pursuit of wisdom”) provides both teachers and students with perhaps the best hope of smuggling a *transformational* education into the classroom... (Steele, 2014, section 4)

The process of intuitive painting, I found very freeing and it helped me to enter a state of flow relatively quickly, the blocking in and adding of details happening rapidly and without much revision. Though, I have to say that having a background in drawing and painting may make this a lot easier for me than for someone to whom these foundational techniques are foreign. Proponents of the technique state that a background in drawing and painting is unnecessary. Cassou and Cubley (1995) asserted: “...you are lucky if you don’t know how to paint! You are lucky, because you will have to invent” (p. 12). Meaning that you come to it with no preconceived notions of how to make images in a certain way, your path forward will be purely intuitive. It is a method I would like to incorporate into middle school and high school art classes, at some point, if I can figure out a way to make it intriguing to students as a process.

The challenge with introducing this type of work to middle-school or high-school students may be in selling the concept itself or trying to explain what it is for. As described earlier, middle school and even high school students are entering a stage where realism and the approval of friends (and media?) may introduce fear of failure into the art room. Finding safe ways to play could involve encouraging non-representational ways of working or coming up with alternative ways to create representational images such as, using photocopied images as a base for “intuitive” experimentation with paints or other media. I also discuss later a possible method to set up a class that could help to build it up as a community with a culture of inclusion

within it, leading to less fear of failure and judgement. Lynda Barry (2019) teaches people how to draw comics which she asserted, “leap over” the “problem of drawing in a ‘realistic’ style” because in comics we aren’t trying to recreate with realism (p. 22). So daily drawings, introduced through Barry’s (2019) simple comic book character drawing method devised from “the Brunetti Style” (p. 43), could be a great way to introduce some technique without the hard-wired expectations coming to the fore for students.

For me the amazing thing about intuitive painting is how quickly it can conjure up the energy of childhood, how it frees you from the spectre of expectation and judgement of the final product. Just like the way we all painted when we were children with joy, creating stories, and free from self-consciousness.

The following images (see Figure 13) are of the work in process of my second intuitive painting where you can see the added details and inner story beginning to emerge.

Figure 15.

*Intuitive Painting #2 • In Process*



Note. Work in process. Acrylic on canvas board, 8” X 16”. June 2020. © Amber MacGregor

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the work I have completed during the course of my research. I have worked concurrently on several series of digital photographic self-portraits employing multiple exposure as well as 35mm double-exposure, pinhole photography and photogram work produced in the darkroom at UVic during the two past summer terms. As well, I completed a large number of watercolour studies, and am currently working on another large scale cyanotype as part of the series with Astrid Van der Pol.

I have a tendency to jump from painting to photography and alternative photographic processes and back again with forays into textile arts such as felting, and soft sculpture on occasion. All of this lends itself both to my teaching abilities and my learning abilities, and I have found all of it endlessly useful in everyday life, and in my teaching and artistic practices. I have worked (and played) very hard to learn as many artistic disciplines as possible and am extremely proud of my achievements in this area as my knowledge allows me to pass on such a wealth of creative and technical understanding to my students. I find also that having the ability to work in almost any medium means that my artistic practice is expansive. If I am inspired to create something, I can rely on the expertise I have to express that inspiration in virtually any way it needs to be expressed or to invent or learn techniques to facilitate the project. This means that choice of media can also be an intuitive process that answers the call of the creative drive rather than fitting the message to the medium. My abilities also give me confidence and drive to continually learn new techniques.

As I have worked through these various projects I have come to the conclusion that one of the greatest hindrances to creative expansiveness is a lack of confidence. When we lack confidence in an area, we tend to shy away from developing it for fear that we will be called out

or that it will be noticed we are deficient. In a word we fear judgment, from others but also from ourselves. What this fear indicates is a closed-minded attitude to learning. Cultivating creative confidence in students might best be begun by investigating open-mindedness with them. Carol Dweck (The RSA, 2015) stated that:

Those who have a fixed mindset about their intellectual abilities and talents, think intelligence is a fixed trait, you have a certain amount and that's that. This is the mindset that makes kids afraid to try because they are afraid to look dumb [sic] (time. 0:21)...The number one goal for kids with a fixed mindset is to look smart at all times and at all costs. Their whole lives become oriented to avoiding tasks that might show a deficiency. (t. 2:23)

I equate the prevalence of the fixed mindset to an epidemic that results in a dearth of creativity in students. Carol Dweck (The RSA, 2015) shared this statistical information: Kids who are praised for their ability or intelligence are more likely than kids who are praised for their process, to develop a fixed mindset and be turned off to learning. (t. 6:10) These students often believe that if you have “ability” you shouldn’t need to exert any effort. (t. 2:52) Conversely, kids who are regularly praised for their process, including strategies, effort, focus, and persistence are more likely to develop a growth-mindset (t. 6:15), they come to believe that effort is what activates their ability. (t. 3:28) Dweck (The RSA, 2015) conveyed the need to instill a “new value system” by sharing and questioning about struggles rather than accomplishments and by praising the processes engaged in. (t. 8:20) Further Dweck (The RSA, 2015) determined that:

The more research shows us that human abilities are capable of growth, the more it becomes a basic human right for students to experience that growth and to ... [learn] in environments in which all students can fulfill their potential. (t. 9:15)

## The Creative Process at Work

How do we enter into a creative mind-frame? What has to happen for a person to be inspired to think or make in a creative way? Prior to the initiation of creative work/thought there takes place what is described by Betty Edwards (1979) as a cognitive “shift from verbal, analytic processing (...called “left mode” or “L-mode”) to spatial, global processing (...called “Right-mode or “R-mode”)” (p. vii). For some individuals this shift is effortless and for others it can be difficult. Part of the teaching of creativity might include some form of fun preparation that leads into creative work to smooth this shift, for those that need it, and reiterates the direction for those that find it less challenging. This preparation could include some form of meditation, drawing exercises such as contour drawing, or scribbling, listening to music, or perhaps movement exercises, or walking; indeed, anything that would provide a transition from the verbal, analytical processing mode and facilitate an entry into the spatial, global processing mode.

I have been attempting to decipher the key processes that lead up to thinking or making creatively. This task asks that one remain aware and in-the-moment during the transition phase between the impetus and initiation of creative work. This transition phase is where many creative people turn on a sort of instinctual auto-pilot as it is often when a state of what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) terms *flow*, begins. In a state of flow, one enters “an almost automatic, effortless yet highly focused state of consciousness” (p. 110). Goleman, Kaufman, and Ray (1992) suggest that:

In flow, people are at their peak. Flow can happen in any domain of activity. The one requirement is that your skills so perfectly match the demands of the moment that all self-consciousness disappears. If your skills are not up to the challenge, you experience

anxiety; if your skills are too great, you experience boredom. When skills and challenge match, then flow is most likely to emerge. At that instant, attention is fully focused on the task at hand. One sign of this complete absorption is that time seems to pass much more quickly--or much more slowly. People are so attuned to what they're doing, they're oblivious to any distractions. (para. 25, 26)

One aspect of this observation of flow, that is particularly relevant with kids in schools, is the idea of “*all self-consciousness disappearing*”. This requires a particularly deft touch in the classroom, many students are so acutely self-conscious and worry over the proper methods for doing things, that they find it difficult to engage in work that isn't product oriented and to work without self-consciousness. How as educators can we create environments of safety, security, inclusion, and non-judgement? This may be a key element of initiating creative work in schools. Shirmacher's (1988) assertions about facilitating creative development in young children, could also be adapted to work with children of any age. Some of his recommendations were:

Children flourish in a psychologically safe setting which respects, trusts, and empowers them to act autonomously without the fear of criticism, rejection, failure, or pressure to conform. Children need to make choices and decisions, and to do things on their own in their own way. By providing an array of materials and activities from which to choose, the environment can be set up to foster children's autonomy. ... Creativity should not be approached as an isolated skill that must be scheduled into an already over-crowded day. Children cannot magically turn on their creativity to fill a half-hour time slot on alternate Fridays. ... A resourceful teacher will find ways to integrate creativity into the curriculum.” (p. 14)

### Initiating Space for Creative Work

Here are my ideas for aiding in the process of creating a space for creative activity to take place:

1. Always lead with compassion for your students and an understanding of their individual needs. Get to know them and allow them to work with their individual strengths. George Couros (2015) said, “Tailor to the strengths of individuals. Building upon the strengths of your people ensures that you get more out of them, not less” (p. 128).
2. Work and learn alongside your students. Be always willing to take the same risks and do the same tasks that you are asking of them. “People do not feel comfortable taking risks ... unless leaders are willing to take risks themselves, share the things they are doing, and try to improve themselves” (Couros, 2015, pp. 130, 131)
3. Remember to praise processes and efforts over abilities (talents) and intelligence (Dweck, The RSA, 2015).
4. Change the tone of your classroom, by naming it something other than “the classroom” call it something like “the studio” or “the studio of invention” or give it a personified name like “Maude”. You could even ask students to collectively name the space or brainstorm ideas and then vote on the favourite. Changing the name changes the rules and associations of the space.
5. Share and explain E.P. Torrance’s (2002) *Manifesto for Children* with your students.
  - 1.) Don’t be afraid to fall in love with something and pursue it with intensity
  - 2.) Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths
  - 3.) Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from

the games they impose on you. Free yourself to play your own game.

4.) Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.

5.) Don't waste energy trying to be well-rounded.

6.) Do what you love and can do well.

7.) Learn the skills of interdependence (p. 11)

6. If you have the ability, make the space as comfortable and useful as possible with places for resting or thinking as well as table/floor areas for intense work. Also having supplies of all different kinds available is key to creative work. These may include: paper, magazines, newspapers, pencils, pens, markers, paint, brushes, glue, rulers, scissors, modelling clay or clay, cardboard, clean recycling materials, exacto knives, yarn or string, wooden blocks, access to computers or tablets, cameras, etc. Whatever you think might be useful for creative work.
7. Share the creative work of others from different disciplines with your students through stories, videos, video conferencing, field trips, books, websites, etc.
8. Make the rules of your "studio" clear and state them simply, something like:
  - 8.1. This is a space for play and for work
  - 8.2. Come into the space with an open mind.
  - 8.3. Always consider the feelings of others before you speak out.
  - 8.4. Any and all ideas are welcome no matter how "different" they may seem.
  - 8.5. Whether working as a team or individually allow all ideas equal consideration.
  - 8.6. \*Making mistakes is encouraged.
  - 8.7. Thinking and doing are equally useful.

8.8. Research and the outcomes of that research can take any form necessary.

\*I included the rule about encouraging mistakes because there seems to be such a fear of making mistakes amongst students. As was described earlier students often grow increasingly self-conscious as they progress through school and this can make it difficult for them to encounter mistakes as learning experiences. To change student experience keep in mind, and implement, ideas to increase self-confidence and self-efficacy in the classroom. Goleman, Kaufman and Ray (1992) described the value of making mistakes as follows:

In creative problem-solving, a mistake is an experiment to learn from, valuable information about what to try next. People often hold back in their efforts because they are afraid of making mistakes, which can be embarrassing, even humiliating. But if you take no chances and make no mistakes, you fail to learn, let alone do anything unusual or innovative. (para. 18)

This statement makes clear the importance of taking risks and allowing space to learn from mistakes when working creatively. As I have stated previously, creating what Shirmacher (1988) called “a psychologically safe space” for learning that “empowers’ students “to act autonomously” (p. 14), is incredibly important in relation to building student confidence so that they feel capable of taking creative risks. This building of confidence also entails, as I previously stated, what Carol Dweck (The RSA, 2015) described as instilling a “new value system” by sharing and questioning about struggles rather than accomplishments and by praising the processes engaged in. (t. 8:20)

## The Creative Process in Practice

### Project Ideas

Once a space and atmosphere have been established in the studio, consideration should be given to what sorts of projects would best fit with your particular students interests and strengths. Following are a few suggestions for projects centred on the creative process. These are meant as suggestions only and may be tailored to the needs of a particular group of students or age range, or to be used within any discipline. Each project includes a Big Idea from the Province of British Columbia's ( (2), 2020) new curriculum for Arts Education (section *Arts Education 9, Media Arts 10*), this is an overarching theme for the project. As well each project includes a description of a selection of the curricular competencies and projected learning outcomes that it encompasses in relation to the new Province of British Columbia ((2), 2020) arts curriculum documents (sections: *Arts Education 9, Media Arts 10*).

#### ***Project 1: Visual Journal<sup>4</sup>***

**Big Idea:** Identity is explored, expressed, and impacted through visual arts experiences (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9).

#### **Curricular Competencies and Projected Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to use creative processes to:

- Create using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, and purposeful play.
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts.

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<sup>4</sup> See the accompanying classroom *how to* slides for more information for teaching Visual Journaling in both analog and digital formats. Link to What is a Visual Journal? slides: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1noJQKGUTGVjqNLfaifSQAvMOSx\\_v7jcmsjQSSStF4Pso/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1noJQKGUTGVjqNLfaifSQAvMOSx_v7jcmsjQSSStF4Pso/edit?usp=sharing)

- Demonstrate active engagement and discipline in creating works of art and resolving creative challenges
- Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through artistic experience (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9)

Students will learn:

- The elements of design: line, shape, form, colour, space, texture, value
- The principles of design: pattern, repetition, balance, contrast, emphasis, rhythm, unity, proportion
- How to use personal narrative as a means of representing self-perception and identity in artistic works
- The use of image development strategies such as: elaboration, simplification, magnification, reversal, fragmentation, distortion, [etc.]
- Personal and social responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, and responding to visual art (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9)

A visual journal is like a sketchbook, it is a place to explore ideas, respond to prompts, and document processes and findings through writing and images. Entries can include written text, drawings, paintings, photographs, fragments of information, collage, random thoughts, items found in daily life such as tickets, stamps, stickers, newspaper articles, food stains, pressed plants/flowers, etc. Anything relevant to creative explorations can be added.

Artists create visual journals or process journals to help them explore and play with ideas, and

concepts, to use as storehouses of information for upcoming projects, to write, document, and collect things from their daily lives, etc.

Visual Journals can be made in a number of formats. They can be made manually or digitally produced. Have students explore the two types to see which one will best serve their purposes. Or they can jump back and forth and use both if that seems like the best thing.

Visual journaling is a great way to document and work through ideas in relation to any course of study. It makes sense to have students complete a visual journal in tandem with other projects for the duration of any course as it allows them to delve more deeply into their own process through personal reflection, play, and tangential thinking; if the visual journal is understood by students to be part of their course of study, and is shared with the instructor it can also lend invaluable insight into the student's creative process. Another positive aspect of visual journaling has been asserted by art educator Clarissa Todd-Adekanye (2017) who has stated that through visual journaling the "making [of] art that is relevant and relates to student experiences encourages students to reflect critically on their personal goals. Self-reflection nurtures students to become self-confident, and being confident encourages self-healing (p. 1). As an educator who has used visual journaling extensively with students Todd-Adekanye (2017) has seen and documented the useful effects of visual journaling for students to achieve higher levels of self-confidence that are documented in her scholarly paper *Visual Journaling for (Self) Education: In Art Education*. Todd-Adekanye (2017) has stated that,

"Self-esteem affects our trust in others, our relationships, and our work – nearly every part of our lives. Positive self-esteem gives us the strength and flexibility to take charge of our lives and grow from our mistakes without the fear of rejection. (p. 11)

In this way the visual journal can be viewed as a tool of engagement through which students can reawaken (or persist in), on a personal level, what Gloria Fenam Orenstein, as quoted by Suzi Gablik (1991), called “the methodology of the marvellous” (p. 1). Gablik (1991) described this as an “—inexplicable synchronistic process by which one attracts as if by magnetism, the next piece of vital information” (p.1). The purpose of which is to “restore” as Gablik (1991) asserted, a “sense of aliveness, possibility, and magic” (p. 1) Todd-Adekanye (2017) put it more pragmatically: “Art can be an essential tool for adolescents to connect with [themselves] in order to obtain the qualities that will result in self-esteem, self-healing, and self-advocacy” (p.11).

### ***Project 2: A Cabinet of Curiosities***

**Big Idea:** Art Experiences can build community and nurture relationships with others  
(Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC’s New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9)

#### **Curricular Competencies and Projected Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to use creative processes to:

- Create using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, and purposeful play.
- Create works of art using materials, processes, and technologies for different purposes and audiences
- Demonstrate active engagement and discipline in creating works of art and resolving creative challenges
- Collaborate through reciprocal relationships during the creative process
- Demonstrate respect for self, others, and the environment (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC’s New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9)

Student will learn:

- The elements of design: line, shape, form, colour, space, texture, value
- The principles of design: pattern, repetition, balance, contrast, emphasis, rhythm, unity, proportion
- The roles of artists and audiences in a variety of contexts
- The use of image development strategies such as: elaboration, [serialize], [miniaturize], [juxtapose], [transmute], distortion, [etc.]
- Personal and social responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, and responding to visual art (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9)

A cabinet of curiosities is a curated collection of items that elicit curiosity. In the case of this project each student will create an item for the cabinet, and the class collectively will create the cabinet to store all of the items in. This is a collaborative project. This project asks students to work collaboratively through the creative process to reach a collective goal, the completion of a collective archive of art objects, but which initially has no prescribed form. The purpose of this project is to introduce students to three concepts (1) Archiving as a collective experience, (2) Collaborative creative processing, and (3) Basic curatorial practices.

Through the experience of this project, students will experiment and play with materials to create, what for them constitutes an object of curiosity, something they believe will draw others in, and create questions about its making or origins. Students then will make a box, container, or “house” for their object, this process asks students to consider the care and keeping of their object in singularity. The final process is for students to collectively build a cabinet to

house all of the contained objects so that they remain accessible to viewing and handling. In this way students become aware of the interconnectivity of all of the individual pieces and consider how to intermingle and contain them collectively, in essence, curating their presentation. In a sense this process is in keeping with the concept of artist Carl Schwitters' *Merzbau* projects (West, 2011, p. 99), wherein he created "built environments that housed and incorporated his found objects" (West, 2011, p. 99). Of the final and largest of these, Anne West (2011) has said: "...the *Merzbau* carefully balanced a sense of whimsy and specific peculiarity ... — with a sense of coherent composition" (p. 99).

To begin, as a class collectively brainstorm ideas generated by the title "A Cabinet of Curiosities", consider what it might contain?

Have students imagine and write about or draw or otherwise document ideas in relation to this concept and the brainstorming session.

Have a collection of things ready to make objects out of. The classes initial brainstorm session should give you ideas of what sorts of things to include. For example if the class has suggested natural objects such as leaves, rocks and pinecones start with those sorts of things. Then add to that whatever else you can think of. These can be things that are associated such as other natural materials: hemp string, wool roving, charcoal, yarn, seaweed, sand, etc. as well as things that wouldn't be normally associated such as human-made materials: hot glue, clean recyclables, nails, staples, paint, etc. These can all be used along with the materials that you already have on hand in the classroom.

Ask students to select items from the materials and construct an item of curiosity, this item does not need to have any practical purpose.

Once the item is complete ask students to make a box to house it in.

Once all the boxes are complete the class should be brought back together to brainstorm ideas for creating a cabinet to contain the boxes.

Students can then either work all together or in groups to create a cabinet for the boxes. The cabinet can be made from cardboard, or whatever materials match the mood and inclination of the students. The cabinet should be able to house all of the boxes and their contents and make them accessible.

Once the cabinet is made the project is complete and has become its own archive.

Ask students to reflect on their experience through visual journaling throughout and on completion of the project.

### ***Project 3: Soundscape***

**Big Idea:** An artist's intention transforms media technologies into art (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Media Arts*, grade 10)

#### **Curricular Competencies and Projected Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to use creative processes to:

- Engage in a period of research and empathetic observation
- Create artistic works with an audience in mind
- Recognize and evaluate creative choices in the planning, making, interpreting, and analyzing of media artworks
- Communicate ideas and express emotions through art making
- Develop personal answers to aesthetic questions

- Edit based on feedback from critiques (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Media Arts*, grade 10)

Student will learn:

- Media production skills including pre-production, production, and post production [procedures]
- Digital citizenship, etiquette, and literacy
- The roles of artists and audiences in a variety of contexts
- ethical, moral, [cultural], and legal considerations associated with the use of media arts technologies
- Technical and symbolic elements that can be used to create [aural] representations influenced by points of view, story, genre, and values (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Media Arts*, grade 10)

A soundscape is generally a sound or combination of sounds recorded in an environment that evokes the place or mood in which it was created. In this project students can create an imagined soundscape by combining self-recorded and/or found/made sounds to create an aural environment that evokes a specific mood, idea or place.

To begin, play some examples of soundscapes for the class. Discuss what students feel the different soundscapes convey and brainstorm ideas for creating soundscapes.

Students can work individually or in small groups. Through the use of a simple mixing app like GarageBand on an iPad or smartphone, students can both record and create sound, then layer and arrange it into a soundscape composition.

Give students handouts or access to online resources<sup>5</sup> to help them work with the sound mixing app or technology that you have chosen.

Students should engage in group critiques to refine their aural works, and learn collaborative ways to facilitate engagement with this medium to enhance the effectiveness of their creative/imaginative aural stories.

Creation of a soundscape gives students a different entry point into the creative space by allowing them the opportunity to realize the effect of sound on experience. One of the offshoots of creating a soundscape is that as National Geographic (2015, section: *Background and Vocabulary*) magazine asserted, “A particular place has its own specific character or sense of place. Sounds help to create a sense of place” (para. 1). Also creation of a soundscape activates students’ critical thinking skill of analyzing (section: *Objectives*) and introduce the “geographical skills of acquiring geographical information through data collection, observing, and systematically recording information” (section: *Geographic Skill 2*, para 2). Through the use of sound, students can consider how to express emotion, and create and modulate the effects of an aural narrative with or without words.

Ask students to reflect on their experience of soundscaping in their visual journal.

#### ***Project 4: Empathy Narrative***

**Big Idea:** The arts provide opportunities to gain insights into the perspectives and experiences of people from a variety of times, places, and cultures (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC’s New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9)

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<sup>5</sup> Link to a Soundscape Project Google Doc, which includes the use of garage band and information for handing in through Google Classroom: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XjaT5pGDroodJidvY9q8Akv47maoexAuQYG\\_rDpDW8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XjaT5pGDroodJidvY9q8Akv47maoexAuQYG_rDpDW8/edit?usp=sharing)

### **Curricular Competencies and Projected Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to use creative processes to:

- Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, and belonging through artistic experiences
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts in relation to the arts
- Compose, interpret, and expand ideas using symbolism, imagery, and elements
- Take creative risks to experience and express, thoughts, emotions, ideas and meaning
- Adapt and apply learned skills, understandings, and processes for use in new contexts and for different purposes and audiences
- Demonstrate respect for self, others and the audience (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Arts Education*, grade 9)

Student will learn:

- Personal and social responsibility associated with creating, [presenting]and responding in the arts (Province of British Columbia (2), *BC's New Curriculum: 2020, Arts Education*, grade 9)
- Digital citizenship, etiquette, and literacy (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Media Arts*, grade 10)
- The roles of artists and audiences in a variety of contexts (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Media Arts*, grade 10)
- ethical, moral, [cultural], and legal considerations associated with the use of

- media arts technologies (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Media Arts*, grade 10)
- Technical and symbolic elements that can be used to create [aural] representations influenced by points of view, story, genre, and values (Province of British Columbia (2), 2020, *BC's New Curriculum: Media Arts*, grade 10)

“The word [empathy] comes from the Greek *empathia* that combines the root words *en* (in) and *pathos* (feeling). Empathy means ‘feeling into’ or entering through the use of imagination...” (Dalton, 2007, p. 19) An empathy narrative (Dalton, 2007) is a creative reimagining of someone else’s reality. It allows someone to walk in the shoes of another by imagining what that might be, feel, look, smell, and sound like. Robert Dalton (2007) said: “It is likely that our strongest feelings of empathy grow out of storytelling, whether in plays, novels, graphic novels, and other genres of narrative” (p. 19). There are several reasons why I think a creative reimagining through empathy might be something useful for students to experience. Dalton (2007) asserted,

as a particular form...empathy narrative invites a response much as one might encounter in a conversation. ... empathy narrative answers back with a work of art, a short story that understands the work from the inside out. It is necessarily more personal, more affective, and yet it must stand on its own merits as a responsible reply. (p. 20)

In this way an empathy narrative can enable students to experience a unique understanding, of another, through imagining in a feeling, sensing way. “Narrative is an important way that humans make sense of their experience” (Dalton, 2007, p. 24).

To begin, show a series of images of people or animals (these may be photographs of actual people/animals, or reproductions of artworks) or a combination, conversely, tell short stories about different people and/or animals. Get students to pick one of the pictures or stories to create an empathy narrative about. Begin with the question, “What feelings are aroused by this...” (Dalton, 2007, p. 20) “image or story?” Dalton (2007) recommended using the following prompts with students to elicit a deeper connecting within imagining:

- What might [they] say to you or you to [them]?
- What if this person [or animal] was you? How would you feel in [their] condition, in that place, or being observed by passersby?
- If you could enter that space and look around, what might you find around corners or what might you discover if you were to proceed deeper into space?
- If the frame were wider, what might you see to the left of right, up or down, or even behind you?
- Using all of the senses, not just sight, think about some of the sounds that might be heard, imagine the temperature of the air, smells, tactile qualities of clothing, and the building, and so forth.
- Beyond the present moment, what do you imagine has just happened or what might likely happen next? Think about this [person’s or animal’s] experiences, hours or even decades earlier that might have led to this moment. And what might the near and distant future hold for this person [or animal]? (p. 22)

The task is to imagine what their person or animal is feeling and thinking and convey their imaginings in some way. They can create a written, spoken, animated, video, or other visual

interpretation, or any combination thereof for their narrative.

As an aside, an empathy narrative is a fantastic addition to any novel study, have students choose a character they don't identify with and ask them to create an empathy narrative for that character. It's amazing how we can learn to see that everyone comes from a different background and has different understanding and coping abilities just by learning to imagine ourselves in their situation. The empathy narrative is a powerful way to help students understand and empathize with the ideas, and lives of others through imaginative and creative consideration.

Ask your students to reflect on their experience of creating an empathy narrative in their visual journal.

## Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to say that there is nothing so inspiring and beautiful as seeing the simple joy and abandon with which young children enter into creative play/work. There is no pretence, no feeling of restriction, or compromise of integrity; just the joyful exuberance, or engaged thoughtfulness of minds and bodies working in a state of flow. If I can help one student who has been led astray from this reality back to it, I will feel I have accomplished something truly great in my life.

Throughout this project, I have advocated for a wider inclusion of creativity through the use of the creative process in public education, having determined through my research that it is essential to students' personal growth and wellbeing as well as their ability to move their ideas towards innovation. The fundamental benefits of creativity should compel us to reconsider its classification as an add-on to curriculum, or a time-filling strategy; and instead embed it as a central component within the curriculum of every discipline. Perhaps, even going so far as to reimagine the creative process as a domain, or a discipline or un-discipline in its own right. With an eye to this form of inclusion, I would like to reiterate Robert Schirrmacher's (1989) assertions about building safe spaces for our students to inhabit:

Children flourish in a psychologically safe setting which respects, trusts, and empowers them to act autonomously without the fear of criticism, rejection, failure, or pressure to conform. Children need to make choices and decisions, and to do things on their own in their own way. By providing an array of materials and activities from which to choose, the environment can be set up to foster children's autonomy. ... Creativity should not be approached as an isolated skill that must be scheduled into an already over-crowded day.

Children cannot magically turn on their creativity to fill a half-hour time slot on alternate Fridays. ... A resourceful teacher will find ways to integrate creativity into the curriculum. (p. 14)

First and foremost, my work as an educator means that I am always aware that I work to serve the greater good of my students and their wellbeing in a holistic manner. This means always relating with empathy to my students, getting to know them, and respecting and valuing their thoughts and ideas. Empathic teaching also means working with students' strengths, while recognizing their unique and individual qualities. I feel that without this care for my students the entry into deep creative processing is made more difficult, for some of them, due to insecurities and fear of judgement and, for others, due to disengagement and apathy. As Sir Ken Robinson (2017) asserted: "Everyone has creative capacities. The challenge is to develop them" (ch. 1, para. 5). This is my challenge, and I believe the challenge of all educators, to encourage and develop students' creative abilities.

As we slowly move out of this pandemic phase, it is my deepest hope that our societal states of division, judgement and classification will finally start to shift towards a more hopeful and holistic future. I believe that maintaining our children's creative integrity, and curiosity throughout their schooling is one of the best and most holistic ways to ensure that we continue the shift to a more just and sustainable society. Truly the creative process helps to bring about opportunities for limitless expansion of thought, understanding and innovation.

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