

Uncovering Layers of an Artist-Teacher's Identity: Engaging in Collage Processes

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A Project 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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University of Victoria

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Abstract

This paper examines the multifaceted identity of the artist-teacher using collage and its non-linear process. It first discusses my early relationship with artmaking and learning through experiences in the classroom. I then explore the concept of the artist-teacher and the challenge of balancing the responsibilities of the classroom while maintaining an authentic artistic practice. My capstone project led me to focus on using my collage process as a way to navigate and revisit my artistic process, but also reflect on how it has shaped my artist-teacher identity. I then discuss how I brought this artmaking experience into the classroom and incorporated my artistic process into my lessons. This led to my students and my own involvement in a gallery show where students and artist-teachers showcased their work side-by-side, cultivating conversations about the importance of art education. It was also an opportunity to connect with the artist-teacher community. My project concludes with a final reflection on the connections I discovered between my collage process and my approaches to teaching and how it will affect my classroom practice in the future.

Keywords: artist-teacher, collage, artistic process, identity

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Chapter 1: A Collage of the Past

Figure 1

Grade 5 Landscape



Note: Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (1998). [Watercolour, Tissue Paper, Glue, Markers].

One of my earliest memories of collage was when my elementary teacher encouraged our class to create with various materials. Playing and experimenting with these materials freed me from the pressure of creating representational art. I felt liberated. Collage became about finding images and textures that spoke to me and arranging them where I saw fit. As layers would mix and new meanings in the work would form, it had endless possibilities. As I continually revised the composition, I could feel the creative energy evolve and transform as the momentum of artmaking took over. The final product became less important; it was about engaging in the creative process and letting it guide me (Figure 1).

Recollecting such early experiences of creating without boundaries or expectations has made me yearn for that feeling again. This liberating feeling that artmaking can engender motivated me to become a full-time art teacher. However, the growing demands of classroom responsibilities make it difficult for me to maintain an artistic practice outside the classroom—an issue many art teachers face. Art teachers commonly strive to prioritize and facilitate the

journeys of beginning artists while also pivoting to the ongoing needs of the class. Although some art teachers may try to create alongside their students, maintaining this balancing act can be challenging. As artist-teachers immerse themselves in creative problem-solving within their classroom, the results of their hard work can be fulfilling; however, at the end of the day, many lack the energy to engage in their artmaking.

Positionality

As an art educator on the lands of amiskwacîwâskahikan (Cree), colonially known as Edmonton, I recognize and acknowledge that this sacred land that I call home is on the traditional land of Treaty 6, Region 4 of the Métis Nation of Alberta. This land has been occupied by the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dene, Nakota-Sioux, Métis, and many other Indigenous people for thousands of years, and their historical relationship with the land continues today.

I position myself as a Canadian-born second-generation settler who has greatly benefited from living on Turtle Island. I have attended multiple post-secondary institutions, including the University of Alberta, the University of British Columbia, and, most recently, the University of Victoria. The education I obtained from these institutions has also introduced me to the First Peoples Principles of Learning and has shaped how I approach and facilitate learning in the classroom. As an act of reconciliation, I strive to learn and continually deepen my understanding of Indigenous teachings and reflect on my relationship with this land.

These experiences have made me reflect on my role as an art educator and how I can teach my students about the importance of visual literacy. I am honoured to have a position that allows me to teach students how to utilize their art to explore their social and cultural identities,

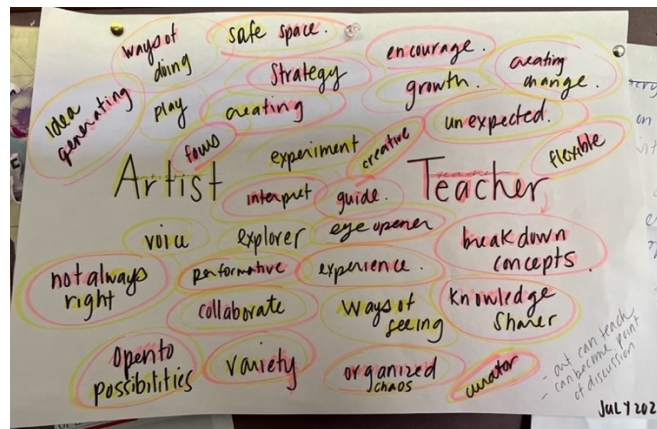
express themselves and their values, and use art as a medium to enact change. I have the great privilege of guiding my students to expand their knowledge through art education.

Misconceptions of an Art Teacher and the Shifting Nature of the Artist-Teacher

One of the barriers I encountered during my capstone was undoing my perception of what an art teacher should be—someone who only teaches students the skills and knowledge needed to be an artist. The art teacher is responsible for facilitating their students' learning but also for classroom management and maintenance, leaving little time to explore their artistry independently and authentically. An artist-teacher, however, draws on their experiences as an artist and infuses them into their classroom practice (Daichendt, 2010; Graham & Zwirn, 2010). Yet, they are not focused solely on making art. Instead, the term itself should be viewed as a philosophy for teaching where the teacher considers how artistic ways of thinking affect their classroom practice. By doing so, an artist-teacher can teach their classes how to navigate the creative process efficiently and effectively. Thus, I had to examine the differences between an art teacher and an artist-teacher and how engaging in artmaking practices could influence my classroom (Figure 2).

Figure 2

My Definition of an Artist-Teacher



Note: Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Markers].

The identity of an artist-teacher is multifaceted and interchangeable, and research suggests these identities are constantly changing and evolving throughout one's career (Daichendt, 2010; Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Harris, 2021; Hoekstra, 2015; Mackenzie & Wolf, 2015; Payne, 2023; Thornton, 2011). Hoekstra (2015) discusses the ambiguous and complex definition of an artist-teacher, highlighting that measuring their devotion to artmaking is difficult. Similarly, Thornton (2013) argues that an effective artist-teacher dedicates themselves to both identities; however, the time and effort spent on each can differ. In some cases, the responsibilities of a teacher can feel like a deficit in one's artistic practice, and it can be challenging to develop and discover an artist-teacher identity within the confines of the school system (Payne, 2023).

At the same time, embracing the cyclical, non-linear, and fluid nature of artist-teacher identities and leading with artistic exploration can provide insight into how these practitioners teach. Thus, to be a successful artist-teacher, one must build an interdependent relationship between both identities and be aware of how the artistic process can amplify their teaching practice and how their teaching practice can influence their artistic practice.

The Process of Letting Go and Learning within Uncertainty

Since becoming an art teacher, I had not engaged in meaningful artmaking for a long while and revisiting the artistic process was an uncomfortable stage of my journey. Although the studio was an exciting place of discovery, a door into the unknown also opened. Entering the studio brought up many feelings of doubt and uncertainty in my abilities as an artist, and I felt lost in the process. I had to relearn my ways of making while simultaneously sitting in the discomfort of not knowing where to start.

Carabine (2013) conducted a narrative case study where she ruminated on her uncertainty and remained present and open to her art-making experience. At first, she defaulted to her familiar artmaking practices. Once she got comfortable, she engaged in ongoing experimentation, and her work opened new and unexpected ways of thinking. This provided valuable insight into her creative process and informed it on a deeper level. By engaging in her tacit and experiential learning, Carabine found that the trial-and-error, although tedious at times, contributed to the artmaking process. Artists are always in a state of transformation, and understanding how failure and uncertainty contribute to an artistic identity is often overlooked (Fremantle & Kearney, 2015). Art can be continually revised, and it can be argued that artists learn most about themselves through these revisions (Fortnum, 2013).

In the studio, I needed to let go of perfectionism and embrace, learn, and accept the ups and downs of the artmaking process. I had to be comfortable with the shifts that came with artmaking and accept that every decision contributed to my growth as an artist, regardless of whether it felt right or wrong. I had to stay present during this process without getting discouraged. Like Carabine, I initially stayed where I knew it was safe: collaging. Although being permitted to play did not feel like an efficient use of time, I became more deeply immersed in this process and built confidence in my artmaking abilities. With every “mistake,” my unique artistic voice developed as I learned to build momentum, fluency, and confidence in my art form.

Searching for an Image: Piecing Together the Image of an Artist-Teacher Through Collage

For this capstone project, **I investigated how my collage process informs my identity as an emerging artist-teacher.** Teaching, like collage, is often about weaving meaningful connections between the curriculum, inspirations, and lived experiences into our lessons and reflecting on the overall composition of our work. As Butler-Kisber (2019) argues, the motions

of assembling collages can reveal unexpected revelations. I discovered that my artistic practice of collaging mixed media from different sources is in line with my teaching practice and that “the interdependent components of a collagist inquiry aim above all to reveal the practice” (Vaughan, 2005, p. 42). The fact that I am interested in collage and mixed media is, in fact, a methodology of practice. The placement and juxtaposition of different influences lead to modes of questioning and reflection. Thus, I utilized collage processes to explore connections between my identities as an artist and teacher.

I turned to Maxine Greene’s experiential learning theory and revisited her conception of the learner’s role. According to Greene (1980), learners develop a deeper understanding of their world when actively participating. This type of engagement can create new modes of thinking, encourage critical thinking, and create more meaningful learning experiences. Participating in my experiential learning allowed me to scrutinize my artistic process while exploring and contemplating my artist-teacher identity from a tactile perspective. By mining through my creative ecology (Harris, 2021), this embodied experience led me to examine, reflect, and assemble the layers of who I am as an artist-teacher and where my influences come from.

Chapter 2: Wayfinding In Collage - Searching for Wholeness from Different Parts

Butler-Kisber (2018) encourages the use of collage in all stages of research to stimulate and conceptualize thoughts that arise during the creative process. Collage's potential to drive inquiry through its many iterations can unlock systems of thought, understanding, and evocation. It has the power to represent our subjective experiences, which may be challenging to contextualize into words (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Culshaw, 2019; Graham & Gussak, 2023; Mackenzie & Wolf, 2015). Graham & Gussak (2023) maintain that the collage process is more of a "holistic impression of something rather than an exact representation of the idea or thought" (p. 32). When engaged in collage, "the joining of disparate fragments can produce associations and connections that bring unconscious thoughts to the surface" (Butler-Kisber, 2018, p. 118).

Because it is an accessible medium, collage felt like the safest approach to reinvigorate my inner artist and examine my creative process. To me, collage is about finding inspiration through found imagery. Sjöholm (2014) states that this collection phase is "gathering processes – rooted in an initial soaking up of experiences and impressions, objects, references and narratives" (p. 508). Sifting and sorting through my images allowed me to respond and reflect on why I gravitated toward them. Barbara Bolt (2004) elucidates that this tacit knowledge is where "decisions are made, not according to logical thought, but as a direct and felt response to handling elements" (p. 8). Thus, gathering, positioning, and repositioning images informed my practice more than a finished piece would. Having a heightened awareness of the decisions I was making within my work allowed for opportunities for multiple iterations to emerge; the moving and manipulating of the materials was a way to process and understand how my artist self and teacher self could be linked.

The medium allowed me to get comfortable with my non-linear approach to artmaking and taught me how to scaffold my creative process into stages of creation, assembly, and reflection. According to Graham & Gussak (2023), collage “symbolizes and holds potential for intersubjective entanglements. They are never completely known, as they potentially and likely shift and change in relation to time, people, and context in which they exist” (p. 35). Early in my collage process, I recognized my reluctance to glue anything down for fear of it becoming fixed and permanent. However, the impermanence of collage should be seen as advantageous because it can be continually altered and adjusted, revealing new areas of thought and understanding. Thus, this tacit experience was a way for me to conceptualize, understand, and respond to my emerging identity as an artist-teacher.

Every element of my collages “represents the practice at a particular moment: its form and content reflect the juxtaposition of individual ideas, realms of thought, texts, images, and other creative works, and the conversation that develops between them” (Vaughan, 2005, p. 41). For me, collage was not about creating a specific meaning behind my pieces but immersing myself in the process and understanding the thoughts and emotions that emerge from it. Collage became a way to explore and assemble my artist-teacher identity and translate this to paper and vice versa.

Simultaneously Creating While Resolving: Key Collage-Making Moments During My M.Ed. Journey

At the beginning of the studio courses, I was precious with the collages I made and would intricately cut out certain sections with an exacto knife (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Experimentation with Collage



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2022). [Magazines, Mixed Papers, Film Negative, and Embroidery on Canvas].

I had to get this out of my system, and as I gained more confidence in my artmaking, I experimented with different mediums and approaches to my work. Based on the suggestions of other artist-teachers in the studio, I made a linocut and frottages from my collage, which taught me to let go, play, and view my work from different perspectives (Figures 4-5).

Figure 4

Collage to Linocut



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2022). [Mixed Media].

Figure 5

Collages, Frottages, and Linocut Prints



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2022). [Mixed Media].

I then started incorporating torn paper from various sources into my artwork. Tearing up these pieces became a metaphor for letting go of perfection and embracing the unplanned moments of my process. At first, I started using the torn pieces as backgrounds (Figure 6), and interestingly, this technique mirrored what I did in Grade 5 (Figure 1). My artistic journey had come full circle, and this technique became a recurring theme in my future art pieces.

Figure 6

Torn Paper Experiments



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2022) [Linocut Printmaking on Found Papers].

Figure 7*Mixing Media Studies*

Note. Cha-Cha Ledda (2022). [Magazines, Mixed Papers, Linocut Prints, Embroidery Thread, and Washi Tape on Chipboard].

As I moved forward and became more comfortable with my studio practice, I started experimenting with my collages by incorporating printmaking and embroidery stitches, which acted as anchors, creating harmony and unity in my pieces (Figure 7). Because my artistic practice was always in flux, I often worked on a smaller scale, which allowed me to experiment with different materials freely. Moreover, sometimes multiple compositions were created at once, which made artmaking more manageable and prevented me from getting fixated on one piece. These pieces became warm-ups for the more significant pieces I would eventually make, but they all contributed to working through the nonlinear thought processes I was having.

During the second summer in the studio, I reused the leftover pieces or offcuts from previous work (Figure 8). These pieces created constraints, and strategically fitting these scraps

into new and interesting compositions became an exciting challenge (Figures 9-11). In these works, an interplay between creating and resolving, restraining, and letting go emerged, which spoke to the push and pull between my old artist self and my new artist self.

Figure 8

Mapping My Artistic Practice



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Mixed Papers, Offcuts, Magazines, Print Outs, and Embroidery Thread on Chipboard].

Figure 9

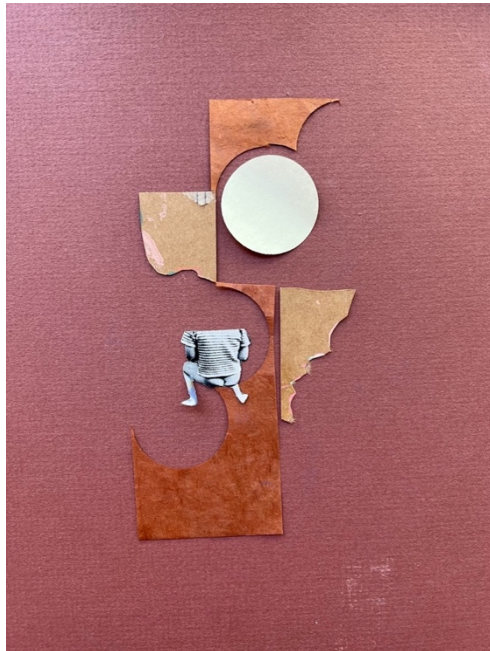
Studying the Interplay between Restriction and Randomness



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Found Photographs on Mixed Paper].

Figure 10*Scrap Paper Experiments*

Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Offcuts and Mixed Papers on Board].

Figure 11*Butts and Stuff*

Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Offcuts, Papers, and Magazine Cut Outs].

My newfound practice encouraged me to get my classmates to contribute their scraps for a collaborative and participatory element at our *(Re)Emergence* group show (Figure 12). We invited patrons to playfully meander in our discarded works, manipulate them, and create new compositions out of them. My art practice of repurposing offcuts became central to the show and a way to pay homage to the remnants of our processes from the studio.

Figure 12

(Re)Emergent Play



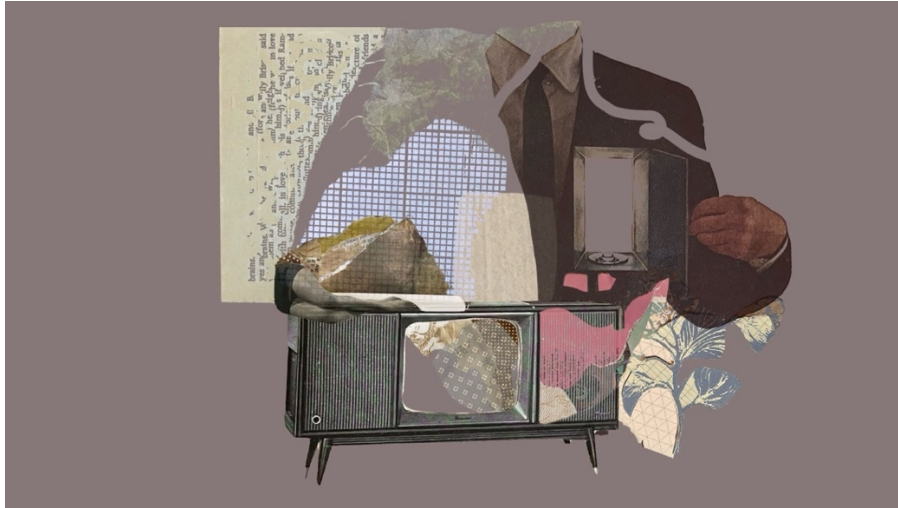
Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Mixed Media].

Learning to collage and edit my pieces digitally opened a new world of experimentation and possibilities. I learned new tools in Photoshop that were impossible with traditional analog techniques, from adjusting the transparency of my pieces to isolating specific areas. The process of letting go took a new turn when I discovered the magic wand tool, as it would randomly grab certain areas of my work, and I could replicate them (Figure 13). Learning how to create digital

collages allowed me to take risks with my art and undo any action that did not work for me. It expedited the artmaking process and allowed me to experiment, repurpose, and rework areas of my pieces.

Figure 13

Experimenting with Digital Collaging in Photoshop



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Scans of Mixed Media and Existing Work altered in Photoshop].

Figure 14

Experimenting with Digital Collaging in Photoshop



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. 2023. (2023). [Scans of Mixed Media altered in Photoshop].

In the classroom, I try to push my students to use their reference photos rather than copy them online. Digital collaging allowed me to make my reference photos out of found imagery, which was an exciting revelation. I decided to paint my reference photo out of acrylagouche (Figure 15) and added a gold leaf as a touch of collage. Having a practice consisting of analog and digital processes has made me think about composition and layering materials differently, and this exciting interaction between the two mediums broke new ground in my artistry.

Figure 15

Breath of Fresh Air



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Acrylagouache and Gold Leaf on Chipboard].

Because I was examining my identity, I ended the summer studio with a self-portrait that united the influences in my life (Figure 16). Through the intersectionality of digital papers ranging from Chinese and Filipino imagery to my works in progress, the pieces came together and resembled islands. I inadvertently created a map of my identity and artistic practice.

Figure 16*Pieces*

Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Scans of Existing Work and Digital Papers altered and assembled in Photoshop].

Manipulating the Pieces: Bringing Process to the Forefront

Analyzing and scrutinizing my artistic process and understanding how my inspirations contribute to my artwork became an essential stage of my journey as an emerging artist-teacher. Using my experiences from the summer studios, I returned to teaching high school and Advanced Placement art classes with the intention of building a classroom that prioritizes and focuses on process. The best way I could show my process of thinking and making was by assembling a mood board, a bulletin board filled with images, inspirations, and textures, at the

front of my classroom (Figure 17). This mood board's purpose was to show the artwork I completed during the summer studio, as well as other creative inspirations, thoughts, pictures of techniques I wanted to try, and textures that inspired me. This visual reminder also motivated me to stay immersed in the creative process and develop these ideas when I had time to create. The mood board became a frame of my thinking process, essentially a collage in and of itself and it allowed me to unify my artist and teacher selves in the classroom.

Figure 17

Mood Board



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2022). [Mixed Media on Plexiglass].

The mood board allowed me to share resources and techniques with my students, who were eager to embed them in their artwork. Around the mood board, I conversed with my

students about how I created some of my art pieces; surprisingly, they could identify some nuances in my work I had not seen. The mood board opened a new way of teaching and became an essential resource and example in my classroom and informed my artistic practice.

The mood board inspired me to develop a lesson plan where students created their own mood boards on my classroom windows. This lesson encouraged them to pay close attention to the decisions they made in creating their artworks and develop a deeper understanding of how their inspirations played a role in their artmaking. This practice was similarly studied by Hilsdorf and Gates (2021), who examined how their students' creative processes played a role in the construction of their Advanced Placement portfolios. Likewise, Gillespie (2014) focused on the "allowance for nonlinear thinking in problem finding and problem-solving not by focusing on immediate results, but rather by favouring exploration and experimentation of a theme or big idea" (p. 14). My Advanced Placement students were in the middle of planning their portfolios' themes, and the mood board became a way for them to track their inspirations and make visual connections within their existing artworks. As they assembled their mood boards, I could take a step back and observe my class as they conversed with others about their inspirations.

Much like collage, this lesson became a layered learning experience of understanding the non-linear steps involved in creative practice. The mood boards inadvertently became a lesson for everyone involved: it was a way for me to use my artwork as an example and share the insights of my collage process tangibly to teach my students my ways of thinking. It was also a way for my students to understand how their ideas play a role in their artmaking. My non-linear approach to collage-making encouraged me to shift my classroom practice where I was no longer the teacher with all the answers but rather a coach encouraging students to develop their artistic voices and explore their inspirations. It was a way for me to collaborate with my students, and

together, we worked through the creative process side by side as artists. By exposing my collage process, I externalized the internal, making the layers to my process visible. In the end, the practice and assemblage of the mood board became an essential resource, example, and overall metaphor for bridging my artist-teacher self with my students. This was an early stage of my attempts to embed and incorporate my students' work-in-progress into my artistic practice of collage, which will be discussed in the next section.

Scrapped – Preparation to Show

Sharing my collage-making process encouraged me to use my summer studio practice of using offcuts to create a new art piece. I was inspired by the artist-teacher Joseph Doubtfire, who repurposes leftover offcuts of his students' artwork. He makes these pieces in short fragments of time as he juggles the role of an artist-teacher. To him, these pieces become evidence of his students' progress, which I value as an artist-teacher. This iteration process becomes his way of contemplating his emotions with teaching while sharing his creative process (Doubtfire, 2023).

Doubtfire's approach challenged me to use my student's work as a starting place for new pieces. I started collecting and scanning my students' scraps to create a digital collage in Photoshop (Figure 18). I wanted to highlight the momentum of the classroom and the quick decisions made during artmaking. Despite being discarded bits, I wanted this art to highlight the overlooked stage of the artmaking process. Although I felt like I was relying on my students' work to propel me forward, it was also a way for me to intentionally incorporate the inner workings of my classroom into my pieces (Figure 19-20).

Figure 18

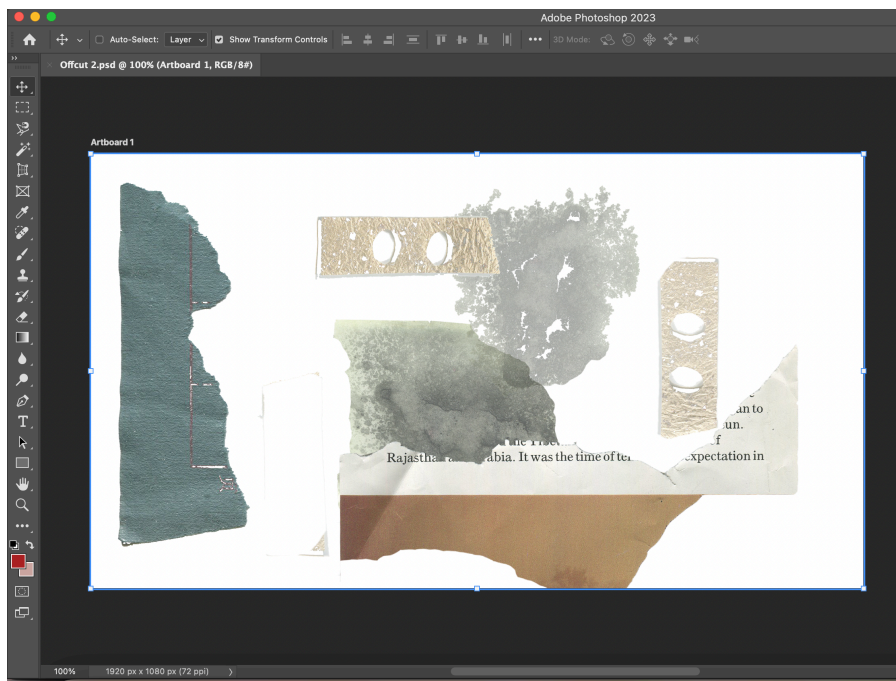
Scraps from Students



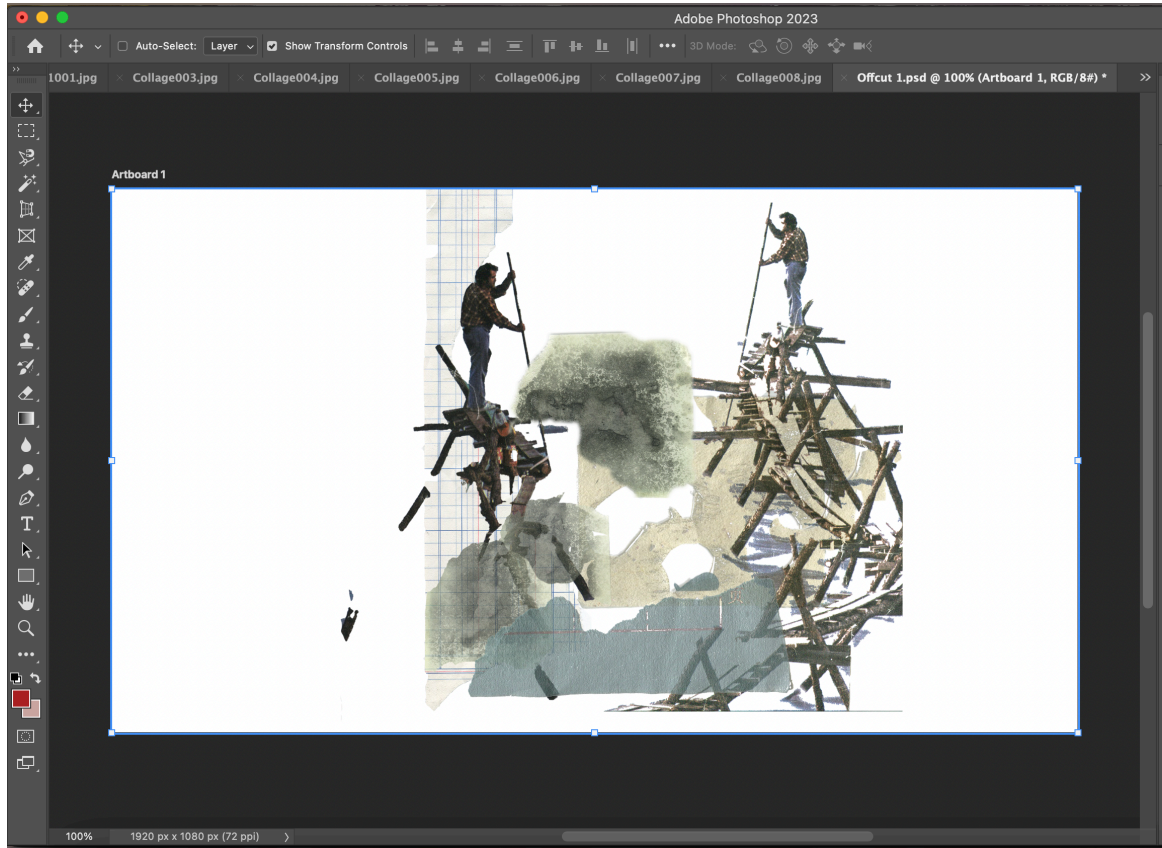
Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Scans of Offcuts of Mixed Media Papers].

Figure 19

Rearranging and Repurposing Offcuts



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Scans of Offcuts of Mixed Media Papers in Photoshop].

Figure 20*Experimenting with Offcuts*

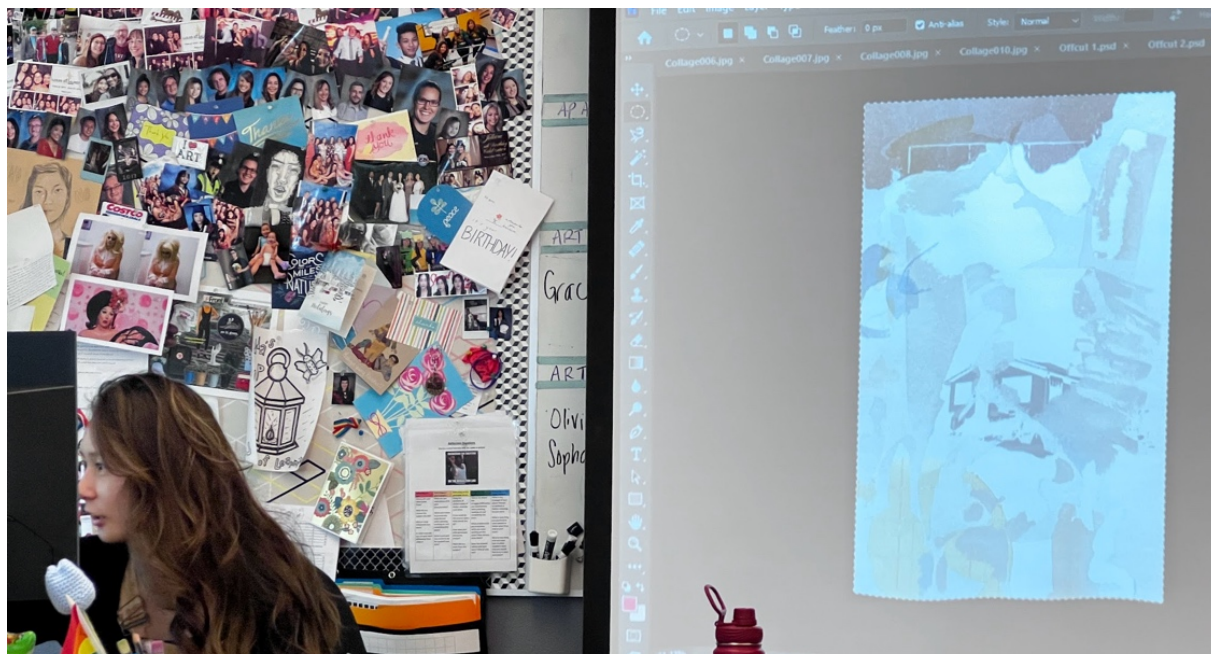
Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Offcuts and Scans of Existing Work in Photoshop].

I shared my digital collage process with my students on the projector, and they were surprised to see how I gathered, reused, and repurposed their work, calling attention to the indirect collaborative role my students had in my process of developing this artwork (Figure 21). I welcomed their suggestions, exchanged ideas and skill sets, and engaged in meaningful conversations about my creative process. This experience opened my eyes to yet another approach to teaching and learning, rendering my artmaking process at the center of my lesson. Immersing myself and my students within my collage process broadened my conversations about

the ebbs and flows of the artistic process. What resulted was a picture of my perspective on art education: every part of the artmaking process, no matter how small, informs the final product.

Figure 21

Collaborative Collage at Work



Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Photo taken November 29, 2023].

Figure 22*Scrapped*

Note. Artwork by Cha-Cha Ledda. (2023). [Scans of students' offcuts and watercolour trial runs digitally altered and assembled in Photoshop].

Together, my students and I assembled and manipulated these pieces in Photoshop to develop the final work. Including them in the Photoshop collaging process broke boundaries and opened the door to an artist and a teacher leading them through her creative process. The final iteration of this piece (Figure 22) is a picture of active collaboration between my work and my students' offcuts.

This piece led to our involvement in a group exhibition entitled *The HEArt of It: Why Art Education Matters* where art teachers and students from various schools displayed their artworks side by side and, in written form, reflected on why art education matters and how art is an outlet

for them. In the following section, I will outline the impact of this exhibition on not only the students involved but also the collaborative artist-teacher community built from this event.

“The HeART of It: Why Art Education Matters”

The exhibition *The Heart of It: Why Art Education Matters* was organized by a teacher from a local school in collaboration with two Edmonton school boards. This show occurred between January 27, 2024, and February 28, 2024, at the Night of Artists (NOA) Gallery in Bonnie Doon Mall in Edmonton. The exhibition showcased artworks and writings of K-12 artist-teachers and students from Edmonton, reflecting on the significance and impact of the arts on their lives. It brought artist-teachers and students from diverse backgrounds together in a shared space, fostering conversations about art and art education. This crucial concept of the power and influence of art and art education united the artists in the show. Placing students’ and artist-teachers’ art pieces side by side in a gallery promoted equality in their creative endeavours, a mutual acknowledgement that each of these contributors is an artist navigating the creative process in unique ways.

The show in and of itself became a collage of artists from various ages, backgrounds, and schools. I, along with 2 students from my Art 30 class and 2 students from my Art AP class, contributed 5 individual pieces that were made during the semester, particularly ones that spoke to our identity, and we all chose different mediums to express our ideas. Interestingly, our autobiographical pieces spoke to how we used art to navigate and understand our world. My piece, in particular, melds together my processes and identities as an artist and teacher and speaks to the cyclical nature that feeds into both worlds. Placing this dual identity in the public sphere serves as a model, where I am exemplifying to my students the essence of what it takes to

be an artist and an educator. I showcased my artistic endeavours to affirm and elevate my students' identities thus contributing to the show's overall collective collage about art education.

Although the approaches to our artwork were different, in their artist statements, students and artist-teachers spoke about the power of art as a conduit for creative and artistic experimentation, exploration, envisioning, and expression. Furthermore, many of the artist-teachers reflected on the importance of art education as it allows students to explore and creatively problem-solve the world around them. In the end, artist-teachers and students had a shared understanding that the arts are an outlet for our connections to the world.

Participating in this gallery show made me re-evaluate how my creative practice plays a role in the classroom. This show also put me on the same level as my students, where we could collaborate and share ideas that aligned with the exhibit's intent. It paved the way for authentic and intentional artmaking and was a professional investment for my students and me, contributing to my evolving artist-teacher identity. It promoted artistic unity within a diverse setting of artists, much like collage. This process has taught me that being an effective artist-teacher is more than consistently making; it is being open to conversations with students and maintaining empathy for the artistic process.

A Collage of Conversation: Connections and Exchanges Within the Artist-Teacher Community

Often, artist-teachers are isolated, and we rarely have opportunities to meet up and engage in authentic conversations about our everyday life in the classroom. This event was an opportunity to cultivate connections and collaborations among the artist-teacher community in Edmonton. As we prepared for the show, we discussed the concept of the show and the various approaches our students took in their work and shared our students' successes and growth with

each piece. We agreed that this exhibition was an exciting opportunity for youth to establish connections within a larger art community to exchange ideas and learn from one another. The show was an amalgamation of artists who juxtaposed disparate elements of their world to make new meanings – much like collage. This show echoed the power of a collaged community in that “it is a holding space between individual fragments where new potential connections and reconstructions occur and evolve” (Graham & Gussak, 2023, p. 35).

While engaging with other artist-teachers about artmaking within our teaching practice, we expressed our frustrations with the need for more time to create within our busy lives. We often could only create authentically when alone in the classroom without students. These connections reassured me that not finding time to make art consistently was a shared experience felt by most art teachers. We established a collaborative and supportive community of artist-teachers that encourages one another to create more consistently or have conversations about artist-teacher practices. This idea echoes the sentiment of Thornton (2013) in that one should maintain a system of teachers who support them on their artistic journey.

This show gave us the motivation to create, allowing us to reclaim our role as artists and reflect on how art education has shaped our teaching practice. By revisiting our artistry, we were transformed into learners again, and our students could see that their art teacher was similarly vulnerable: learning, creating, and growing. It also gave me an opportunity to engage in collage processes as an artist-teacher directly in my classroom with my students. With this opportunity, I found time to create alongside and with my students, which expanded my understanding of the possibilities of what being an artist-teacher can look like in practice. This exhibition and its message emphasized the importance of reflecting on our creative practice in and out of the

classroom. The conversations from this collaboration were just as transformative and essential as the artmaking itself.

Lost and Found: A Zine (Appendix B)

These conversations inspired me to create a zine based on my exploration of my artist-teacher identity and the lessons I learned along the way (see Appendix B). A zine can be a narrative collage that incorporates several mediums and is meant to be a quick visual response to the signs of the times. It can also be replicated and passed on to others. This zine combines scraps and offcuts from the classroom with some of my work from the M.Ed. program. Small, short, and concise, the prompts in this zine act as reminders that artist-teachers might need to hear from time to time, especially when they do not have time to create consistently. I hope that it can help even the most reluctant artist-teacher to start creating again. My zine is meant to remind artist-teachers that no matter how small the effort, they can still immerse themselves in the creative process, and it can have a profound shift in their teaching practice.

Chapter 3: What Remains? A Final Reflection of a Collage for the Future

Art has played a significant role throughout my life, and becoming an art teacher allowed me to share the thrill of creation with my students. However, I became an art teacher who prioritized her students' journeys. It became all-consuming, and something was missing. Enrolling in the M.Ed. program allowed me to reinvest in my artistry without the distractions of the classroom. Meeting artist-teachers from diverse backgrounds and seeing their approaches to artmaking became an invitation to immerse myself in the process.

Reengaging in the creative process was initially daunting; however, adopting a collage process allowed for non-linear play. I had to let go of being in control and sit within the spaces of not knowing and knowing. It was also a chance to get curious, listen, and understand my feelings toward artmaking. Surprisingly, riding these waves of uncertainty, hesitation, and feeling like a failure was a necessary part of the process that would open me up to new ways of making.

Through an embodied collage practice, I was searching for a picture of who I was as an artist-teacher. I searched for wholeness within many parts, which took time to sift through. I learned that every step I made through tacit knowledge was a step in the right direction. I had to uncover the layers of who I was as an art teacher and reconstruct a tapestry of who I am as an artist-teacher. I am still learning to balance the fluidity of these two identities, but I now understand their interdependence on each other.

Sharing this vulnerable experience has contributed positively to my teaching practice and pedagogy. Using my journey as an example, I was able to authentically mentor my students and scaffold the creative process for them. I plan to continue to be open about making as I see how it has strengthened my bond with my students over mutual creative processes and ways of thinking.

Through this process, I have understood that collage practices underlie my approaches to teaching and artistry: finding and using inspiration from various resources, continually rearranging the composition until I see fit, and reflecting on the process I took to get there. This is how I piece together my art classroom. The cyclical nature of collage and teaching is a process of continual revisions: it is not about always getting it right but adjusting, making adaptations, and learning from the process.

Collage has become a personal metaphor for my identity as an artist-teacher. It became a lens through which I explored and integrated the pieces of who I am as an artist, a teacher, and a human into my classroom. Throughout this journey, collage became a way for me to get insight into the facets of my artistic process and my ever-changing and impermanent artist-teacher identity. As collage adapts to its surroundings and is flexible and innovative, for me, it has become a form of wayfinding and my way of thinking.

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Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography

Butler-Kisber, L. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Based Perspectives*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526417978.n8>

Butler-Kisber examines the power of collage as a vehicle for inquiry and its capacity to unlock and facilitate thoughts. It is an accessible and tangible medium that can be used to conceptualize and express ideas. Collage can be used as a physical metaphor to represent tacit knowledge and its ability to unveil the known and the unexpected. Ultimately, collages can facilitate, reveal, and understand our ideas in our creative process.

Butler-Kisber illustrates how collages can be used in all parts of the research process. For example, they can be used as initial research to connect the intended and unintended thoughts that emerge when making art. Concept maps can be created out of collages that can be continually revised. Collages can also be used to encourage discussions of abstract thought processes. After many revisions, a finished product can result, but the methods one takes to get there are just as important.

Collages have many advantages, but some issues arise, such as using found images ethically, when to use collages formally in research, and how to evaluate the thought processes behind collages. Since collage can be very open-ended, Butler Kisber advises that when using collage, parameters need to be established for the intended use of collage. Is it for exploration? Is it being used as a final product? Or is it a combination of both?

This article explains how graduate students can use collages for inquiry, exploration, and research. I aimed to use collages for reflection, experimentation, and overall analysis of my practice and understand how they can reveal unintended thoughts and feelings about being an

artist-teacher. I paid close attention to my process and use the guiding questions provided to inform my research. Using collages as concept maps is a way to keep track of my thought processes and revisit and revise my ideas.

Carabine, J. (2013). Creativity, art and learning: A psycho-social exploration of uncertainty. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 32(1), 33–43.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2013.01745.x>

This study aims to expose and understand the uncertainty of the artistic process. Carabine argues that this uncertainty is an accepted part of the artistic process but needs to be addressed. Using self-study and practice-led research, Carabine analyzes her creative process and forces herself to “sit in discomfort” while remaining open to experimentation.

Carabine found that the art she made informed her practice, regardless of its “success” or “failure.” Her reflections revealed that her art often reverted to what was safe and comfortable. I can relate to this notion, as it occurred during the studio course this summer. For Carabine, acknowledging the uncertainty of artmaking became necessary in “letting go,” a process which built her confidence. Her tendency to experiment with different mediums, while liberating, felt “ongoing” and often “led nowhere.” Carabine argues that this is a necessary step in the evolving artistic process, and she deliberately embraced perseverance amidst the uncomfortable.

This study shows that knowledge is built on practice and experience. Art teachers can become “art tutors,” coaching students to navigate the unpredictability of artmaking. As teachers need to make space for experiential learning and reflection, giving students infinite time to develop and reflect is unrealistic. Trying to access tacit knowledge strategically in the classroom is a goal of mine.

I used this capstone project to reflect on my artistic journey. I worked through the lingering anxieties and uncertainties that have prevented me from making art for a long time. Since becoming a teacher, my artistic practice has disintegrated. I hoped to rekindle my art practice by sitting within the uncomfortable space of not knowing and seeing where it takes me. Like Carabine, I wished to create a bridge between my students and me by acknowledging and normalizing the inevitable uncertainty that comes with artmaking.

Culshaw, S. (2019). The unspoken power of collage? Using an innovative arts-based research method to explore the experience of struggling as a teacher. *London Review of Education*, 17(3), 268–283. <https://doi.org/10.18546/lre.17.3.03>

Using collage inquiry and one-on-one interviews with educators, Culshaw investigates the struggles that teachers experience in their day-to-day life. Culshaw argues that collages go beyond the written word and add a layer of conceptual analysis that can unlock emotions. Although the teachers felt vulnerable about their lack of artistic ability, Culshaw used collage methods to ease this anxiety as it is an accessible and freeing medium.

These collages became visual metaphors of experiences, especially when accompanied by ongoing dialogue during artmaking. Teachers' explanations before, during, and after constructing their collages revealed the internal and external struggles that they experience daily. Although the idea of struggle can look different from person to person, Culshaw discovered that the cognitive process of creating collages opened the door to unlocking unexpected feelings and emotions. These non-linear thought processes and unexpected understandings that emerge from collage-making are what I was interested in for my project, and they can reveal unintended feelings and meanings.

The interviews helped set the intention of the collage-making process. Such guidance is necessary, especially with this medium. The participants took inspiration from what was in front of them and paid attention to the tactile nature of picking materials based on their emotions. In my research, I paid close attention to my artistic choices during my collage-making, especially the processes of layering and the materials I was drawn to.

Culshaw also created collages and put herself in the participant's place. When analyzing her work, she devised various approaches that allowed her to foster more excellent reflection and interpret the meanings behind her collages. During the creative process, I reflected not only on my creative practice but also on my teaching practice. Through this M.Ed. program, I tried to renew my practice, as I have struggled to balance my teacher and artist roles over the years.

Fortnum, R. (2013). *On not knowing: How artists think*. Black Dog.

Drawing from different artists, Fortnum explores the unknown that occurs in artmaking. Artists enter an interplay between spontaneous instinct and controlling their next move while creating, and this momentum becomes a wild card that can propel them forward or leave them in a black hole of doubt. Fortnum argues that this internal dialogue can disrupt the artist's flow. However, if artists take the time to explore and linger in that space, they can move towards a deeper understanding of their creative process and shape their artistic identity.

The challenge with artmaking is that work can be continually revised. However, in those revisions and decisions, one can learn more about themselves as an artist. Artists are put in difficult positions where they rework something repeatedly, and as much as this can be frustrating, continual revision can be valuable to one's learning.

Learning to live within the space of not knowing is a skill that students can benefit from. Fortnum argues that the current education system demands that students have a clear-cut plan about how they will create a piece of art. As such, art teachers should create a sacred space supporting exploration and risk-taking as students venture into the unknown. Art educators need to play the simultaneous role of not only being the guide through the unknown but also relinquishing control and letting students play.

This chapter resonates with me because I wanted to learn to be comfortable in the unknown. Putting myself in a not-knowing space encouraged me to learn more about my approaches to artmaking. Artists are always in the state of becoming, and I wanted to show that I sometimes need clarification about the outcome of my work. I wanted to show students that this is the beauty of art: it is meant to unfold in mysterious ways.

Fremantle, C., & Kearney, G. (2015). Owing failure: Insights into the perceptions and understandings of art educators. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 34(3), 309–318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12083>

This article speaks to the discourses surrounding failure as part of the art-making process. After interviewing teachers at a UK university, Fremantle and Kearney found that the typical approaches to failure need reframing. Most artists understand that failing is a part of the process and that they learn as many lessons from their failures as they do from their successes. However, with respect to how failures shape our identity and how we perceive ourselves, there is often tension. The teachers in the study reflected that the restrictive nature of assessment may be the root cause. The education system is tied-up with concepts of right and wrong and assigning the label of failure when a student has not met the curricular outcomes. This notion makes it difficult to have open and frank conversations about failure with their students.

Teachers should understand how failure triggers a shift in artistic identities. How do we teach perseverance in the face of failure? The authors suggest that when speaking about failure, switching it to a verb (failing) can imply that it is a process rather than an outcome. Students may be more willing to take risks in their artmaking by turning it into a process. Teachers should support students by explaining the valuable lessons that can come from failure. The search can be as fruitful as the destination, and artmaking is only sometimes about finding answers to questions.

In this project, I aimed to reframe failing and highlight the importance of trial and error in artmaking. As much as it scared me to expose my failures, students needed to see that I am not perfect. I wanted my students to see that my approach to artmaking mirrors what they encounter in their artmaking. It is about problem-solving, and missteps are expected. I hope this action leads to more authentic artmaking for my students and me. Using choice-based projects in art classrooms can help with feelings of failure. Once different approaches are taken, students in the room can recognize and applaud the differences.

Greene, M. (1980) Aesthetics and the experience of the arts: Towards transformations. *The High School Journal*, 63(8), 316–322.

Maxine Greene's theory on aesthetic education focuses on engaging students through the artistic process. When students encounter art, unforeseen thoughts appear. Immersing themselves in the creative process can help them build, decipher, and create new connections with art. These open-ended spaces become places of transformation and reflection, and aesthetic education allows students to explore possibilities.

Through this aesthetic journey, the teacher becomes the facilitator and encourages students to build relationships with art and artmaking. Their role is to not only arm their students

with the necessary skills to understand art forms but also provide an non-judgmental environment where students can explore freely. This role can be a balancing act of shaping and deepening the aesthetic experience for each student. By constructing meaningful perspectives, students become sensitive to the art they see and can create and reflect on its role in their lives.

Greene highlights that this cognitive thought process is challenging to assess formally in the everyday classroom. She urges teachers to ask students guiding questions as they play, engage, and experiment with the material. Teachers should consider the sociocultural backgrounds of their students and understand how these past experiences shape and transform student perceptions. As such, teachers can provide alternate ways for students to express themselves other than through standardized assessments, such as formative assessments. Teachers can utilize formative assessment and have students reflect on their artistic journey's beginning, middle and end. What can result is an art experience grounded in connection, knowledge and understanding.

In this project, I broke down and examined my artistic process by utilizing Maxine Greene's theory of aesthetic education. Through artmaking and deliberate self-reflection, I aimed to understand my creative practice through my choices. This awakened possibilities and promoted different modes of thinking that can help me guide students toward authentic artmaking. Ultimately, this will improve my teaching and help me maintain an art practice.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the Arts, and Social Change*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Greene argues that when we experience art first-hand, it can “enable us to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed” (p. 122). When teachers open students up to the unpredictable possibilities of art, students become more critical thinkers.

However, teachers must find the delicate balance between guiding students while allowing them to be open to their engagement with art. For example, bringing students into a gallery is an experience in and of itself, but students should not be idle in this scenario. Instead, teachers should direct them to be active in their interpretation and reflection of the art that they see. Teachers should be passengers rather than drivers in their students' aesthetic experiences.

Greene argues that the more we immerse ourselves in artmaking, the more we form connections within ourselves. Students should be taught to make meaningful connections within their world and everyday experiences. Art can be used as a vehicle to access those connections, and teachers have the important task of using the arts to tackle traditional constraints and standards of the education system. Greene argues that the conventional education system does not justify subjective experiences within the arts, and she suggests that weaving in everyday experiences can make for more authentic education.

Using Greene's ideas, I activated my own experiential learning, examined the approaches I take in my work, and played with translating them into my teaching. By closely examining how I create art, I hoped to form a deeper connection to my artist-teacher self. Engaging in my art-making process can inform my teaching practice and how I address creative problem-solving in my classroom. I hope to grow from this experience and continue to strengthen my artist-teacher voice.

Hanawalt, C. (2019). At the threshold of experience: Encountering new art teachers through research as collage. *Visual Arts Research*, 45(2), 8–28.
<https://doi.org/10.5406/visuartsrese.45.2.0008>

In this article, Hanawalt uses collages to document new teachers' experiences in the classroom. At the beginning of the study, she reflects on the difficulty of being a beginning

teacher, constantly refining one's practice and philosophy. Through discussions and interviews with her participants, she found that they exhibited frustrations with trying to execute their own goals in the classroom in the face of standardized teaching.

As a result, Hanawalt decided to use the "relation-of-nonrelation" collage method in her research, a term coined by Massumi. According to this method, a new meaning can emerge when objects are placed next to each other, even if they are unrelated. Both objects can maintain their meanings, but when placed side by side, they can create a new relationship and change the interpretation of those objects. Using this method, she assembled photographs of students and teachers at work, the artwork produced, and the interview transcripts. In this process, she became an active participant in this assemblage. She developed a whole new understanding of her participants' experiences by putting these images side by side.

Hanawalt's collage process was not meant to be a finished product but rather a way to understand the connections in her research. I aimed to do this in my capstone project: I sat with my collage process and investigated my relationships with my artistic decision-making and how it contributes to my teaching practice. The way Hanawalt gives herself space to sit with her collages and scrutinize the connections that emerge from teaching interested me. I practiced patience by situating myself within the collage processes, and I became mindful of the decisions I made when creating. In essence, her research highlights the discussion of what collages "do" rather than what collages "mean", which can open up new ways of knowing and understanding.

Harris, D. (2021). *Creative agency*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Harris opens this chapter by commenting on how creativity has lost meaning, and most people equate it to innate artistic giftedness. He argues that creativity is also seen as a limitless

power without boundaries, and parameters must be set to exhibit it authentically. Nevertheless, he uses the term creative ecologies to describe the process of weaving together our relationships between significant objects, events, and experiences in our lives. Creative ecologies are constantly changing, unfolding, and evolving, and it is something that we must relinquish control of. The more we engage with our connections with artmaking, the more we learn about ourselves. This notion harkens back to Maxine Greene's theory of aesthetic education in that we learn more about ourselves when we are given opportunities to engage with art and artmaking. By examining the makeup of our creative ecologies, we can learn more about what influences our artmaking.

Harris's idea of creative ecologies relates to my artist-teacher practice because I constantly take elements from my everyday encounters and embed them into my classroom. My teaching practice is a collage of my experiences that help me reach my students more deeply. I try to teach my students to use their everyday experiences to inspire their work. Encouraging students to analyze their creative ecology and understand how it influences them can lead to more authentic artmaking.

I explored my creative ecology as an artist-teacher in this project. I paused and looked at my past and present experiences and to learn how they have contributed to my identity and understand this identity more deeply. I tracked my process and progress of artmaking and document the thoughts and feelings that emerge from it. I exhibited my approach transparently to students and showcase the tacit knowledge involved in my artmaking process.

Hilsdorf, U., & Gates, L. (2021). Influences of a classroom setting on students' artistic processes. *Visual Arts Research*, 47(2), 67–78. <https://doi.org/10.5406/visuartsrese.47.2.0067>

In this article, the authors investigate the artmaking processes of Advanced Placement (AP) students in a high-school setting. They wanted to compare the artistic processing that occurs with students to that of professional artists and specifically chose the AP class because of the student's various art experiences. It is interesting because this study comes from a reflection by both authors, who have the luxury of practicing art for a sustained period. This time is not available in the classroom, and the authors wanted to figure out how best to support students' artmaking in a constrained time frame.

They used Mace and Ward's model of the artistic process to understand students' creative processes better. The five stages of this model are artwork conception, idea development, making the artwork, finishing the artwork, and resolution. This flow chart fits their study because it encourages flexibility in the artistic process, and the artist can decide how they navigate it. Although the participants engaged in all stages of the process, they felt they could only explore part of their process because of restrictions set by the teacher. Teachers must re-examine their classroom structures and understand how they might influence their students' artistic processing.

In my classroom, I wish to allow students to explore their process freely, but I am expected to meet curricular outcomes as a teacher, so I understand why deadlines are so important. Teachers are expected to abide by a curriculum, which can disrupt a student's creative flow. I had the luxury of having last summer to create without boundaries of time, and I feel as if I have been chasing that ever since. Limiting time on my art is something I wanted to explore in my project. Because I work full-time, it can be challenging to create art, but I can try to use these time constraints to my advantage and make small pieces. I intend to continue to find ways to infuse art-making time in my everyday life as a teacher.

Hoekstra, M. (2015). The problematic nature of the artist-teacher concept and implications for pedagogical practice. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 34(3), 349–357. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12090>

Hoekstra examines the qualities of an artist-teacher and the concepts associated with these roles. In a study from the Netherlands, Hoekstra assembled a team to instruct using the Reggio Emilia pedagogical approaches to immerse children in the art-making process. The study found that children responded best to the visiting artists who frequently reflected on their artmaking and modelled this form of thinking to their students. The artists continually drew from their practice to teach the students about creative problem-solving. The artist-teacher becomes the mediator between the actions that occur in the classroom and can come up with strategies that students can learn and use in their artmaking.

Hoekstra argues that the definition of an artist-teacher must be specified. For example, some artists in the study were teachers, and some were not. Some of them maintained an ongoing artistic practice, while others did not. This issue calls attention to the need to clarify the definition of an artist-teacher. Although being mindful of a variety of students' needs is an expectation of any teacher, Hoekstra argues that an artist-teacher should be aware of what it takes to produce art and how these artistic behaviours can be integrated into their teaching. They should also be aware of the duality and fluidity of their role and understand that it can shift from time to time. All artist-teachers should acknowledge this unifying notion.

In my capstone project, I explored the role and identity of artist-teachers as I have always seen them as two very different professions. Striking a balance and allowing for flexibility between the two roles is something I plan to refine in my career. Hoekstra stresses that “the artist-teacher concept is no longer one of conflicting paradigms, but instead becomes a model for

teaching” (p. 349). This article was relatively short, but reading about the effectiveness of artist-teachers who balance their roles was thought-provoking.

MacKenzie, S. & Wolf, M. (2015). Layering sel(f)ves: Finding acceptance, community and praxis through collage. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(31), 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1782>

Using collage inquiry, Mackenzie and Wolf documented pedagogical development with student teachers. Through ongoing written reflection and discussion, the student teachers reflected, deconstructed, and reconstructed their emotions during their teaching practicums. In addition, students created and made sense of their experiences using the tacit knowledge that can be associated with collage-making processes. The collages became conversation pieces, and the authors focused on the feelings that emerged from the artmaking.

MacKenzie and Wolf created a shared community of practice with the recognition that although teaching is multifaceted and can promote socialization, it can also be an incredibly isolating profession. This idea became the starting point that guided the participants’ collage-making. The participants were asked to respond visually to this idea, so their collages became a metaphor for their teaching experiences. The authors felt it was important for the participants to see the different approaches to this shared exercise. Interestingly, before the study, the authors also engaged in the collage activity to anticipate some of the participant’s feelings and experiences. They felt it created a necessary bond that would open them up to being vulnerable and sharing their experiences. I explored this in my capstone project. Leading by example and creating art informed my teaching practice and led to more authentic artmaking.

It is imperative for teachers to recognize their imperfections and foster an appreciation for the unique experiences within the profession. Such introspection leads to stronger bonds with students and their colleagues. I identified with this idea and acknowledged and worked through

my imperfections as an artist and teacher during this capstone project, and I am continuing to do so. I regularly share my experiences and frustrations with artmaking with my students, which will hopefully lead to more authentic artmaking. Through this project, I readdressed my pedagogy of being an artist-teacher and embraced my ever-changing artistic process.

Sheridan, K. M., Veenema, S. A., Winner, E., & Hetland, L. (2023). *Studio thinking 3: The real benefits of visual arts education*. Teachers College Press.

This book instructs students how to think and behave like artists in the studio. Even when artists create, they may have a plan in mind. However, interactions with their art can cause them to deviate from this plan and change their intended goal. This process informed the basis of this book. They developed four studio structures (a demonstration-lecture, students-at-work, critique, and exhibition) and the 8 Studio Habits of Mind (understand art worlds, stretch and explore, reflect, observe, express, envision, engage and persist, and develop craft). This framework prioritizes formative assessment emphasizing the artistic process over the final product. Students can approach this model in no particular order. They encourage students to pick one and move through each habit organically, similarly to how an artist would work in their studio. Through this framework, students become independent, think like studio artists, and work through artmaking's complexities.

The Studio Thinking Framework is flexible enough for artist-teachers to try in and outside of their classroom. The authors added a fourth part in the third edition: "Studio Thinking in Contemporary Practice". They felt it was necessary to address how artist-teachers use this framework in their classrooms. While only a few of the teachers explicitly explain how this model applies to their artmaking, they suggest that artist-teachers should find occasions to use the Studio Habits of Mind in their practice and reflect on it. They embed Studio Thinking

techniques in lesson planning, incorporate terminology that encourages reflection and creative thinking, and create a safe studio to explore and experiment freely.

As I reflect on my artist-teacher practice, I find these techniques inspiring. I kept this framework in mind as I engaged in my artmaking during the M.Ed. program and shared this experience with my students while paying attention to every stage in the creative process and understanding how it informs my pedagogy and practice. I am looking forward to implementing this model in my classroom in the future.

Thornton, A. (2013). A conceptual model. In *Artist, researcher, teacher: A study of professional identity in art and Education* (pp. 80–90). essay, Intellect.

Thornton explores the difficulty of sustaining a practice as an artist-teacher. This role is part of a growing identity and requires a commitment by the individual. These roles require time and energy and can be difficult to balance, especially with teachers' increasing responsibilities in the classroom. He suggests that some artist-teachers encounter an identity crisis that prevents them from balancing the two roles evenly. In this chapter, Thornton proposes a conceptual model that can be used as a guide or checklist for artist-teachers. He suggests that artist-teachers must create a positive relationship between artmaking and teaching. They also need to build up a support system that is made up of artists and non-artists to help support them on this journey. Artist-teachers are also determined to embed plans and strategies that fulfill this role regardless of whether it is in or out of the classroom.

After reflecting on Thornton's conceptual model of artist-teachers, I find that my intentions of being an artist-teacher are present, but enacting the art-making side of being an artist-teacher is something that I struggle with. I have put much of my focus on my students and

their creations in the class, but as Thornton writes, an interdependent relationship informs one's teaching practice when one creates art.

I wanted to work on my relationship with artmaking and how it relates to teaching, focussing on my commitment to both practices. I aimed to dismantle the assumptions of how much an artist-teacher should make in their spare time and argue that being involved with an artistic community and researching art is still valuable. I wanted to approach my art as I would if I were a student. In the end, this project has helped me work towards making the artist-teacher role not only a part of my identity but embracing it as a way of life.

Whitelaw, J. (2021). Collage praxis: What collage can teach us about teaching and knowledge generation. *Journal of Language & Literacy Education*, 17(1), 1–23.

Collage is used in this research because, as much as it is readymade, it also relies on uncertainty and processing. In Whitelaw's study, the participants were given a story and had to use Molly Bang's rules of composition and perception to depict scenes from it using collage methods. Collage is a hands-off and hands-on medium because students must surrender and work with the available images. Teachers are no longer the leaders of the classroom with all the answers, and students must rely on themselves to constantly revise their composition until it feels finished. The participants were surprised they had taken different approaches in their work, providing multiple entry points of understanding. While this article focuses on collage and how it can help with literacy, collage can also deepen our understanding of our approaches to artmaking. Collage is a powerful medium that can push against preconceived notions of artmaking and decipher and understand abstract thoughts. Although collages can be subjective, they can provide multiple entry points of understanding and promote discussions on different

approaches taken. Collage can be a way to understand and push against preconceived notions of thought and expand thinking.

After reading this article, I realized that collage can involve translating a prompt and turning it into a visual. During my collaging process in this program, I gave myself prompts to keep moving through the artistic process. The malleable nature of collage-making can reveal unexpected insights and revelations. Through my project, I used collage to visualize and reveal the ideas in my head, and I investigated my aesthetic experience through this process. This article acknowledges that teachers need to recognize that they are always in a state of becoming and that they do not always have the answers to everything. Through creative processing and making, they can develop their artist-teacher identity.

