

**BUILDING BONDS AND BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS
THROUGH COMMUNITY ART**

By

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An Applied Project Report Submitted to the
Lamar Dodd School of Art of the University of Georgia
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ART EDUCATION

Athens, Georgia

2014

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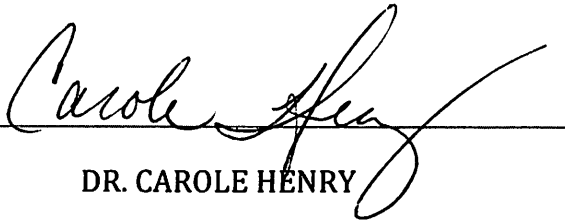
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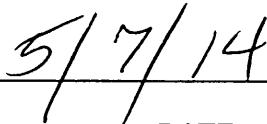
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Approved:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carol Henry", is written over a horizontal line.

DR. CAROLE HENRY
MAJOR PROFESSOR

A handwritten date "5/7/14" is written over a horizontal line.

DATE

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Chapter 1

Snippets of conversation fade in and out of my ears as I walk by. In one corner, a mother is describing her concept to a neighbor while her son busily sculpts the face of a mythical creature in the space beside her. At another table, a series of couples share their weekend stories as their hands push and pull the red clay at their fingertips. The clay they are working with is native to Georgia. The stone arches, grassy fields and looping bicycle paths of Atlanta's Grant Park serve as the backdrop for their Sunday art making. To a casual observer, these people may seem like old friends, friends whose connections stretch far beyond the confines of this two-hour free ceramics workshop, perhaps members of an artist collective or weekly community group. In reality, many of these people have just met for the first time.

The sound of dried tamarind fruit crackles beneath my feet. Across the street a gong chimes loudly, calling saffron clad monks to afternoon meditation. The landscape around is timeless, almost eternal. Thousands of years of northern Thai history emanate from the bricks of temple ruins, clashing with the beeps and buzzes of new technologies, changing demographics and fading traditions.

A softer bell rings intermittently as a red motorbike selling ice cream glides down the street. An old woman sounds her high-pitched bicycle bell just once to warn three laughing children of her presence as they meander through the street. This local symphony of bells signifies the end the school day, and the beginning of a different, more informal style of learning. Soon neighborhood children clad in white

and blue school uniforms will stream through the open gates, approaching our makeshift garden classroom with a mixture of excitement and nervousness. In broken English and watered down Thai, they wonder where the arts will take them today? Will it bring them to the US through Jackson Pollack style t-shirts, France through Impressionism, or maybe even the far reaches of Tanzania?

Across the globe, another sound shakes an otherwise silent room—
Screeeeetch—another strip of tape is peeled from the roll. The silence enveloping the room is ripe with creative energy. Looking around, it is not a sombre, nor an unpleasant atmosphere, but rather one filled with concentration and determination. Though only one day into a 10-day leadership development camp for migrant youth, these 19 boys and girls work effortlessly together. Their goal: to create a unified tape person that incorporates an aspect of each group member in some way. Budding friendships are visible as one partner circles strips of tape around another's hand, waist, or even head. Collectively the small groups mold and shape their individual appendages to create a larger whole.

Each of the vignettes above illustrates the essence of community art. With the term "community art", I mean art that incorporates diverse members of a given population; art making that is open to a wide-range of participants who may not have previous experience or development in the arts. A community art project may assume a variety of forms. One project may involve shared art making by all the members in a community, another might assume the form of a few artists collaborating to speak for a given community, while another may develop as an artist transforms the ideas of community members into a visual piece for the

community. There are no set criteria for a given project, but a vital element is the inclusion of many voices in the process.

Throughout my studies, I have been drawn to the idea of using art as a catalyst for social change, not so much as a targeted critique of current issues and structures, but through the cultivation of positive relationship. In this way, art education serves as a means of making the world more beautiful through art projects aimed at giving individuals a space to explore, express, and share in shaping the world around them.

I first witnessed the power of art making to extend beyond the walls of a studio and nuances of a material while working in Thailand. It was there that I learned how a seemingly simple art lesson may transform into a more complex impetus for reshaping beliefs, ideas, and relationships. From this experience, there is one program, the Young Lions Global Artists Program—a weekly free after school art program for neighborhood youth aimed at travelling the world through art and expression—that serves as both guide and inspiration. For me, this program offered one of the first tangible indicators that the visual arts not only hold aesthetic value, but also the potential to sow the seeds of stronger, more empathic communities.

Visual art is often considered an icon of individuality, a place where the artist wrestles with personal demons, reflections, or associations with the world. In an extreme view, the tortured artist works in isolation, consumed by the idea and act of creation. In reality, artists have formed collaborations and collectives for generations. A well-known example may include the Dadaists of the 1960s or the Guerrilla Girls in the 1980s. While individual artists still hold a great deal of fame in

the professional art world, collaborative movements continue to spring up from generation to generation, often hinging on the needs of social groups to find a voice or advocate for change.

Collaborative by nature, community arts projects carry with them an element of variability. There is no way to know who the participants will be or what they might bring to the project. As an artist designing a collaborative project, I bring my own vision of how the project will unfold and what the results will be. An arts classroom, whether situated in a school or located in a more informal environment, such as a farmers market or community center, can be a place to break down social walls in a short amount of time. There is something about the act of creating in a shared environment, working with your hands and manipulating a material, that seems to invite conversation. Sometimes the conversation is focused on the art being created, but often it gravitates towards the lives and experiences of the participants involved. Through a discussion of my own experience with collaborative art projects, I aim to illustrate the power of a shared creative environment to promote empathy and acceptance of others, even those who may differ in personal values and ethnicities. Like the butterfly effect—an element of chaos theory suggesting that a small change in one place can lead to profound change at a later state—the relationships formed in a single workshop may grow and lead to the development of more positive relationships between individuals, groups, neighborhoods and eventually towns, cities and nations.

In the past five years, I have had the opportunity to help create and facilitate a variety of community art projects. I've chosen to discuss three projects here: The

Young Lions Global Artists workshops in Chiang Mai Thailand, Emerging World Ceramics collaborative clay project for Art on the Atlanta Beltline, and an arts-based program for migrant youth attending the Leadership Without Limits program through the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia. These three projects stand out to me significantly for the positive relationships they have inspired and the ways in which they grew beyond their original intentions. On a small scale, each of these projects provided individual artists with a space to explore and be creative. Expanding a bit further, these three projects opened the door for diverse conversations, broader interpersonal connections and a stronger sense of community. At an even larger scale, these projects highlight the potential for arts engagement to help build healthier, more compassionate communities.

Chapter 2

Art, Society, and Conversation

Evolutionary reflections on community building

Themes of empathy and compassion seem to weave in and out of my applied project. These two words: “empathy” and “compassion” are at the root of positive interpersonal relationships; in many ways, they provide the nucleus for community bonding. So often the idea of compassion is linked to religion, to the ethics and morals of man. Yet, when I think of compassion, one of the first stories that comes to mind is that of Max, an elephant I met while volunteering at The Elephant Nature Park in Thailand. Max was well loved by humans and animals alike. Taller than most Asian elephants, he was both handsome and gentle at heart, making him something of a Casanova to his female counterparts. While most male elephants only show real interest in females during must, a period of elevated testosterone, Max could be found flirting with small groups of ladies any time of the year. He was charming and playful, as any Casanova should be. One morning, Max did not rise with the rest of the elephants. Though awake, he simply could not muster the strength to lift his immense body weight onto his feet. For elephants, standing is an integral part of survival. When elephants lie too long their circulation ceases to function properly, and they soon die. Aware that Max was in danger, his elephant friends visited regularly throughout the day. During their visits, many would lean their foreheads into his back and attempt to push him to his feet. One friend, a small middle-aged elephant named Lily, was especially devoted. She refused to leave his side. Her behavior regularly alternated between nuzzling his face and slamming the ground

with her trunk in a show of frustration and distress. Despite the efforts of both the humans and elephants of the park, Max soon passed away. In the week that followed, the herd would visit his stall often. With each visit, the elephants would touch every aspect of his home: sleeping area, wall posts, water trough, any remaining remnant, with their trunks before leaving again.

Max's story is not as unique as it may seem. Like humans, many animals can survive in isolation, but will not thrive without the support of community. The animal world is ripe with examples of altruistic behavior; behavior inspired by a desire for positive social relationships. At the Yerkes Primate Center in Atlanta, for example, there lived an elderly, arthritic female chimpanzee. Walking was difficult, but she could manage slowly. The Chimpanzee area was large, and the drinking water was some distance away from the huts where the chimps spent much of their time. For an old lady with sore joints, satiating thirst could easily become an arduous trek. To ease her troubles, younger females would often run ahead as she started her journey. They would gather water in their own mouths, run back and spit the water directly into hers, eliminating the need for her to continue the tiring trip (De Waal, 2013).

Signs of love and altruism are not unique to the primate world. Ravens, who are rarely thought of as compassionate beings, have been observed preening and nuzzling beaks with a friend who has just lost a fight. Even alligators show special attention to loved ones. Parents will carry their young safely encaged in between their jaws to protect them on a long journey (De Waal, 2013). According to Darwin, "The social instincts lead an animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to

feel a certain amount of sympathy with them, and to perform various services for them” (De Waal, 2013, p. 25). For all of these animals, and many more of the Earth’s creatures, strong community bonds are integral to their survival. Compassionate and caring interactions may mark the line between evolution and extinction. Like our animal counterparts, much of our own cognitive and creative development has been contingent upon our existence as social beings. The ability to form connections through compassionate interactions has played an influential role in our own continued survival.

Though it is not yet possible to travel back in time and witness the societies of our ancestors, we are able to catch glimpses of how they may have functioned through the behaviors of our closest relatives, chimpanzees. To maintain their social order, most chimpanzees live in small groups that allow for one on one contact between each member. These connections between group members are referred to as dyadic bonds, and in chimpanzee societies these dyadic bonds are maintained through mutual grooming. The act of grooming releases “opiates in the brain, which in turn promote feelings of well-being and attraction and lead to social cohesion” (Massey, 2001, p. 4). In order for the group to remain strong and cohesive, every member must groom or be groomed by every other member.

Early human primates shared a similar level of intimacy. For most of human evolution, our ancestors lived in “societies of intimates” (Blatt-Gross, 2010; Massey, 2001), only fairly recently in the evolutionary timeline (10,000-8000 BCE) have human social groups grown beyond a size that can be maintained through physical contact. Where a chimpanzee group of 50 members requires roughly 20 percent of

their time for grooming, an early hominid group of 120 members would require 40 percent of daily time to maintain the same level of cohesion. With so much time spent grooming, little would be left for sleeping, hunting, eating and other activities required for survival (Massey, 2001).

To compensate for new methods of social grooming, early human beings developed larger brains, language skills, and mimetic behavior. According to sociologist Douglas Massey (2001),

Language emerged not to give humans a capacity for rational or abstract analysis per se—rational thought was more of a by-product—but to enhance their *social intelligence* to enable them to get along in larger groups.

Language is the ultimate social arbiter, allowing people to maintain interpersonal relationships through conversation, to monitor the social interactions of others and to reach collective decisions through discussion.

(p. 8)

Through language—verbal and non-verbal—we are able to communicate our acknowledgement of, love for, and dissatisfaction of other human beings. In this sense, we are grooming one another without literally “plucking the bugs from each other’s hair.”

While verbal language development has played a somewhat obvious role in the ability to communicate with larger groups of individuals, it is but one form of human communication. Verbal language provides one means of communication, but is not sufficient to convey the full spectrum of human thought and emotion. Scholars in art education, anthropology and evolutionary biology, including Blatt-Gross

(2010), Carroll (2004), Dissanayake (1982, 2000), and Donald (2006) have linked the arts with the growth of early human societies. The arts offer an alternative means of communication, a gateway to inner experience, to those feelings and emotions not easily conveyed through words. On a group level, artistic engagement presents a new outlet for the social grooming once so intimately employed by our primitive ancestors. Through the making and receiving of art, such as music, dance or painting, human beings can communicate raw emotions and visceral understandings of the world around. In *Art and Human Nature*, Noel Carroll (2004) states that,

Artworks, in this respect, coordinate feelings; they attune audience members to each other. In this regard, one might say, along with Tolstoy, that artworks cultivate fellow feeling; artworks have the power to build communities of sentiment in their audiences and/or participants. In this, artworks have the capacity—at a fairly elementary level—to promote cohesion among groups. (p. 100)

The arts are often considered the language of emotions. Part of what makes art successful as a social conduit is its ability to tap into shared experience, to trigger raw emotions that link human beings beyond social and cultural traditions. For art philosopher Phillip Dutton (2009), interest in the arts originated from an interest in the lives and minds of others. Traditionally, the arts were inherently social, regularly linked to communal ritual and ceremony. According to Dissanyake (2000), art is rooted in the act of “making special” (p. 148) in order to illicit emotion and engage communal feelings. Born from early mimetic forms of communication such

as imitating gestures, actions or facial expressions, early art forms utilized visual signs and human body language to bind larger communal groups through shared emotions and communication of shared beliefs (Harle, 2008).

In a relatively short period of time, human social groups grew far beyond the confines of primitive grooming, thanks in part to the development of verbal language, art making and symbolic communication. While early linguistic and artistic development enabled our early ancestors to live in networks beyond the most intimate 50 person primate groups, their early societies remained relatively small compared to modern social networks. Where an early hominid society may have consisted of 1000-2000 dyadic relations, the number of dyadic relationships necessary to maintain our current groups is close to 10,000 (Massey, 2001).

With a rise in urban living and ongoing technological advancements, our communities are growing larger every day, making it more difficult to maintain relations intimate enough to enable a feeling of connection and belonging. New forms of communication, such as social media like Twitter and Skype, present greater opportunities to connect with people across social and spatial divides. While technology has widened the virtual social web, technological advances have also mechanized services that would have once offered a chance for physical, interpersonal exchange. In the past, an individual would have likely conversed with a banker while withdrawing cash, perhaps discussing the weather, current events or other conversational details. In contrast, an automated cash machine now offers a quick and convenient alternative (Bourriaud, 1998). These transitions to automated communication remove us further from the intimate grooming that once sustained

early communities, offering the question: does a lack of physical proximity lead to weaker social cohesion?

Facial recognition and the ability to read others' body language too have been integral to human social evolution. Laughter, for example, is known to release the same endorphins experienced through physical grooming. Like the deep connections formed by physical grooming, incidences of laughter tend to be higher when there is face-to-face contact (Dunbar, 2012). According to anthropologist Robin Dunbar (2012), physical proximity is more satisfying "because it provides many more cues about the other person's responses to what we say—and this seems to be particularly important where laughter is involved...seeing another person laugh seemed to make it more satisfying than laughter via other media" (p. 4). While social networking tools have the capacity to expand existing relationships, they are limited in the social cues they are able to mimic. As a result, virtual networks may not suffice to replace the emotional and physical benefits of face-to-face contact.

In much the same way that the arts enabled early human ancestors to bond and grow, art making and appreciation can provide an avenue to positive, interpersonal relationships in communities that have become separated by geography, technology and/or economics. As Carroll (2004) states: "...the capacity of art to quicken the social glue of fellow feeling is an advantage that has no substitute. Art is a lever on human nature that enhances sociability"(p. 101). The arts have the ability to offer a common language when words will not suffice. Sometimes the things that need to be said cannot be articulated with words alone. A

painting or piece of ceramic art provides an alternative form of expression, a tool to help give an individual a voice when the dominant language may not be accessible. With expression and emotion at their core, the visual arts speak to those core emotions that precede verbal communication, such as fear, sorrow or joy. While beliefs and languages may vary, basic emotions are shared across socio-cultural divides. Human beings share a common connection in their abilities to feel love, happiness, pain, sorrow, and compassion. For this reason, an art workshop may open the door for a conversation that may not otherwise be easily accessible. Take for example, the work of artist Jens Haaning in Denmark:

When Jens Haaning broadcasts funny stories in Turkish through a loudspeaker in a Copenhagen square (Turkish Jokes, 1994), he produces in that split second a micro-community, one made up of immigrants brought together by collective laughter which upsets their exile situation, formed in relation to the work and in it. The exhibition is the special place where such momentary groupings may occur, governed as they are by differing principles. (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 17)

Engagement in the arts, whether through making or viewing, creates an atmosphere of collaboration. As Eisner (2002) asserts:

Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture. (p. 3)

An art workshop may serve as a catalyst for a change, a venue for breaking

down barriers and inspiring new relationships.

Moving Forward in the 21st Century: How art and compassion contribute to healthy societies

In a recent talk at Emory University, the 14th Dalai Lama (2013), Tenzin Gyatso, attributed various social problems: theft, violence, murder, fear, and jealousy-to a lack of compassion for other people. Throughout the talk, he linked this lack of compassion to an absence of loving relationships. According to the Dalai Lama, an absence of love prevents human beings from being truly happy, and without happiness, it is difficult to truly feel secure in oneself and compassionate to others. Positive human relations are defined by compassion, which in its true form is born from empathy for another's situation. The Dalai Lama (2008) contends:

...that a seed of happiness, of inner calmness, of inner strength, creates more inner strength, self-confidence, and less fear. That automatically causes some kind of close feeling towards other human beings to develop. A compassionate attitude opens our inner door, and as a result it is much easier to communicate with others. If there is too much self-centered attitude, then fear, and suspicion come and as a result our inner door closes. Then it is very difficult to communicate with others.

Compassion and empathy are closely linked, even used interchangeably at times. For me, empathy is a precursor to compassion. Empathy enables an individual to be sensitive to another's experience and emotional state. Though different in definition, both compassion and empathy imply an acknowledgement of another's situation coupled by concern for and acceptance of this individual as he or

she may be. As discussed above, the ability to empathize has been the foundation of human survival throughout evolution. This recognition of the societal value of empathy also gives rise to curricular shifts that show more value for notions of care and empathy. In art education, the need to develop more caring relationships between students is frequently discussed, and the art classroom is viewed as a fruitful avenue for cultivating such relationships. (Barrett, 2010, 2013; Noddings, 2012; Phillips & Siegesmund, 2010).

Empathy and discourse are not mutually exclusive. As Barrett (2013) explains: “we need to know about who or what we are in empathy with so that we may feel compassion” (p. 32). Works of art inspire conversations. They invite viewers to discuss imagined realities, emotions or circumstances, to share stories and discuss dreams. A work of art serves as a jumping point for learning more about oneself, others, and the world at large. According to Barrett (2013), these discussions lead to the formation of “communities of understanding”. And “When communities of understanding are formed, peace in the World increases” (p. 39).

In contemporary literature on empathy and care in the classroom (Noddings, 2005; Phillips, 2003; Phillips & Siegesmund, 2011), art making is considered a powerful tool for self-discovery and reflection, which are essential tools for developing care for one’s self and eventually care for others. Making and talking about art create common ground and help to highlight otherwise unseen connections. According to Barrett (2010), talking openly about art enables individuals to learn about themselves, other members of the group, and their varying responses to the art. “By listening to one another, we learn about each other

and can create communities of understanding” (p. 124).

This “talking” about art is not defined only through formal critique, but also by the informal discussions that happen during the art making process. The art studio presents common ground, where the medium is a unifying factor and the atmosphere an incubator for social exchange. It is common for artists to discuss their work in a studio setting. One artist may ask about another’s technique, or request the critical eye of a colleague. The questions that are born from these exchanges easily open the door for deeper conversations to take root (Barrett, 2010). In many ways, the act of collective art may highlight otherwise unseen connections. “When the arts genuinely move us, we discover what it is that we are capable of experiencing. In this sense, the arts help us discover the emotional contours of our emotional selves. They provide resources for experiencing the range and varieties of our responsive capacities” (Eisner, 2002, p.11).

In many art classrooms, this discussion is encouraged as another source of learning. Art making engages the imagination and provides an outlet for connecting with the environment, expressing emotions, and contextualizing lessons learned. It also contributes to the development of relationships. As students observe one another molding clay and manipulating materials, they begin to learn more about whom their fellow peers are as people and why they do the things they do (Phillips, 2003).

The feeling of being heard is a powerful one. For many individuals, the arts offer an avenue to speak. Reflecting on her classroom experience, Phillips (2003) states that “children who feel their voices have value will be more willing to become

active participants in their learning. They are more likely to learn how to listen to others and, in turn, understand the viewpoints of other people” (p. 47). The same could be said for teenagers and adults. It is empowering to feel that you are respected in a group, have contributed to the conversation, and have something valuable to offer.

In the 1970s, graffiti artists in New York City began tagging city walls as a means to be heard. Soon “writer’s corners” formed around the city, inviting artists to share ideas and critique work (Christen, 2010). Graffiti artists of today continue to utilize the art form as a means to communicate within a world that may otherwise render them voiceless. “For Coco 144, writing is ‘a cry, a scream from [New York’s] streets. In doing this, we got to say something that was a statement. This was a way of saying, ‘Hey, I’m Coco. This is where I’m from, and this is what I’m doing.’” (as cited in Christen, 2010, p. 238). Through feeling heard, individuals may feel more accepted within the community, and in turn may feel more responsibility for maintaining this community. From the early days of graffiti writing in New York, artists saw the potential to rebuild their communities from within (Christen, 2010). The act of creating a work of art ignites the imaginative capacity of students. The graffiti “crews” of New York City are just one example of the transformative powers of art making.

Maxine Greene (1995) may describe the scene painted above as an “in-between” (p. 39) space. Such a space can occur when students feel open to share, where voices are heard, and relationships formed. These in-between spaces might form in the classroom, or in a less formal setting outside the school walls. An

integral element of creating these spaces is enabling a reciprocal exchange, fostering both the expression and reception of each individual's voice:

Many of the alienated or marginalized are made to feel distrustful of their own voices, their own ways of making sense, yet they are not provided alternatives that allow them to tell their stories or shape their narratives or ground new learning in what they already know. The favored ones, in contrast, seldom question the language of dominance or efficiency or efficacy in which they were reared, although they may seek out discourses more appropriate for a shared young culture or for moments of rebellion or adolescent discontent (Greene, 1995, pp. 110-111).

The arts not only open the door for more conversations, they also provide a forum for these "voiceless" to move away from the margin. They open the door for conversations missed, sometimes overlooked by the dominant culture. Through an art workshop, individuals are given a stage to share their stories. Such a workshop may further empower these individuals to believe in their own value as members of a community. On the other hand, these workshops provide a venue for discourse between members of different social strata, ethnicities, or belief systems. When participants from a wide-range of backgrounds are invited to join a workshop they are also invited to engage in a broader social discourse, a discourse that presents the opportunity for expanding individual World-views. For Greene (1995) "...becoming literate is also a matter of transcending the given, of entering a field of possibilities. We are moved to do that, however, only when we become aware of rifts, gaps in what we think of as reality" (p. 111).

According to Dewey (1938), experiences are the true catalysts for learning. Learning is best absorbed through experience, both past and present. The learning outcomes of a given experience may need a period of incubation. At the time, such an experience may seem trivial or unrelated, only to be called forth for use in a future experience, cultivating learning long after the initial experience has passed. In the words of Eisner (2002): “future experiences may confer a significance upon earlier learning that it did not initially have....The fact that the seeds have been planted is the first crucial move” (p.71). The work of an art educator is not just to plan lessons, provide materials, and guide creation, but also create experiences that will foster exploration. It is vital to provide experiences that ask students to engage in conversations that may be out of their daily norm. Each of these conversations may sow the seeds for more diverse relationships and world-views, leading students to imagine new ways of living.

Imagination is a key factor both in making and responding to works of art. For Eisner (2002):

...the arts provide permission to engage the imagination as a means for exploring new possibilities. The arts liberate us from the literal; they enable us to step into the shoes of others and to experience vicariously what we have not experienced directly. (p. 11)

Here, too, the arts are transformative. The process of engaging with art enables an individual to create new possibilities; new connections; new worlds. Some imaginative acts may be context driven—writing a plot line for a cartoon, or creating an interstellar background for an alien creature—while others may be

guided by larger social needs, such as developing resourceful housing for communities hard hit by natural disasters, or installing public art aimed at play and interpersonal interaction. Each imaginative act actively develops the creative capacity of individuals. When the gates of imagination expand, individuals may find new insight on the worlds they live in, and the impetus to shape and reshape these worlds. Imagination empowers the individual to be an active agent in her community (Eisner, 2002; Greene 1995). For Greene (1995):

Community cannot be produced simply through rational formulation nor through edict. Like freedom, it has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common; they have to find ways to make inter-subjective sense. Again, it ought to be a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group's becoming (p. 39).

Art, in its many forms, provides such a space. The process of engaging individuals with varying backgrounds and experiences in the arts, encourages these same individuals to employ multiple modes of communications. The workshop space combines elements of making, viewing, talking about and appreciating art. But it does more than that, it also works to create imaginative communities (Greene, 1995), which, according to Greene, are integral in creating a platform for change. For, as Greene asserts, "...it may well be the imaginative capacity that allows us also to experience empathy with different points of view, even with interests apparently at odds with ours" (p. 31).

An art workshop invites participants to explore new possibilities, envision new outcomes, and communicate with individuals from differing backgrounds and value systems. While the new possibilities explored in a given art project may be small in scope, tied specifically to the medium or prompt given, the act of exploring these bounded possibilities may plant Dewey's (1938) seed for future growth, helping individuals to envision future possibilities, homes, communities and even the global world.

Because community art implies a collective, collaborative process, there are endless possibilities for its manifestation. While the structure of a workshop may vary, the materials may differ, and the participants will enter with ever changing perspectives and stories, each project serves to enhance a discourse and create new meaning. Personally, my interests lie in the visual arts. I am drawn to color, texture and shape; to the smell of fresh art supplies and the hidden surprises that come through play and experimentation, though I think the distinction between art practices is not so clear cut, a well-rounded workshop will acknowledge the sights, sounds, feel, and verbal perceptions of a given experience. Through my own experiences as a student and teacher, I have witnessed the power for the arts to inspire change. As it has done for centuries, art continues to be a catalyst for social cohesion and a tool to inspire imagination, compassion, and change. One of the guiding questions in my own work with community projects has been: "in what ways can art making enhance or expedite group bonding?" In the next three chapters I will discuss further Young Lions, Art on the Atlanta Beltline, and Leadership Without Limits projects, with the aim of exploring this idea further.

Chapter 3

Watching the walls crumble: First glimpses of art as a transformative tool

The sounds of bells permeate the air, piercing the quiet around our residential office. Gongs from the temple next door chime loudly, calling saffron clad monks to afternoon meditation...



Fig.1: Riding home after Young Lions (2011)

Listening to Pete Seeger belt American Folk beneath the leaves of a tamarind tree that provides shade from the frenzy of downtown Chiang Mai, I'm filled with an odd sense of worlds colliding. The crinkle of a plastic blue tarp softly sounds beneath my feet. With the help of Pbut, my Assistant Director; Jessica, the project's original creator; and four volunteers from Germany and the United Kingdom, I methodically lay out large plastic plates turned paint palettes around each tarp, check brushes to make sure they are clean, and prepare blank t-shirts, aprons and drying stations for the rush of students who will soon arrive. Today, the students will "visit" America through the frame of Jackson Pollack style expressionism. They

will learn a little about US culture and the world of abstract expressionism, but perhaps more importantly, they will leave with their own hand painted t-shirt. In the last moments of quiet before the students arrive, I know today will be fun. What I don't yet know is the extent to which the group will grow and change.

On this day, I have been the Art Director of Art Relief International for four months, though I have lived in Chiang Mai, Thailand for almost four years. As the Art Director, I coordinated all of the workshops we held around Chiang Mai. Our mission was to provide opportunities for empowerment, education and expression through the arts. We partnered with a variety of schools and non-profit organizations around Chiang Mai, with populations ranging from migrant youth, children and adults with physical or intellectual disabilities, survivors of human trafficking, and the local LGBT population. While we travelled much of Chiang Mai and the surrounding towns, there was a lack of programming in our own neighborhood, Wat Suandok, named after the temple that stood across from our office gates. In the fall of 2010, Young Lions Global Artists was created. Young Lions was a weekly art program for local youth living in the neighborhood around our office. At the time it was the only program we offered at our own office, the rest were in conjunction with other organizations. The start of Young Lions coincided with the beginning of my time as Art Director for Art Relief International. I was not the original creator, but as the new Art Director, I was influential in growing and shaping the program in this first year.

When Cultural Canvas Thailand, the parent organization of Art Relief International, moved their office into the neighborhood behind Wat Suandok, they

quickly became aware of economic disparity existing in this residential area of Chiang Mai. Around the corner from our office, amidst the more affluent houses owned by middle class Thai families, was a narrow alleyway with a series of shacks possessed by migrant families who had travelled either from the hills of Thailand or, in some cases, across the border of neighboring Burma. The parents were migrant workers, in search of resources and better opportunities for their children. With limited rights in Thailand, they were restricted from certain levels of the economic sector, lacking the paperwork necessary for higher paying jobs. The families worked hard to survive in the contemporary world, picking up construction jobs and selling handmade goods whenever possible. Some days, the children went to school, other times, they worked with their parents to help support the family. In the evenings after school, many of the children would sell handmade lanyards of jasmine hand woven by their mothers and grandmothers earlier in the day. The lanyards symbolized good luck and well-being.

Recognizing how hard the children worked and the limited opportunities they might have for art and exploration, we created a weekly art program devoted to travelling the world through art. The workshops were free and open to anyone, though aimed at elementary aged youth. There was no sign up sheet, and students were free to leave early or come late if needed. As an afterschool program, we also offered a healthy snack for the students to enjoy. Every Wednesday afternoon, the unkempt garden space outside our office transformed into an art studio and airport terminal where the students would learn about a new country, experiment with new materials and create a work of art inspired by the places “travelled”. To get the

children in a “travelling mood”, each budding artist was given his own handmade passport, constructed from Thai mulberry paper. Each week, the students were given a visa for their visit to chosen country, and a Young Lions stamp to mark entrance into that country.

As an arts empowerment organization, Art Relief’s initial goal was to provide an opportunity for these children, who worked so hard both in school and after, to play, express themselves, and be children for at least 30 to 60 minutes per week. The premise was to provide local youth with a chance to travel the world through art. Many of these children may never have the opportunity to physically leave Thailand, but through art they could travel the world, creatively immersing themselves in a different place each week. In this sense, they could expand the possibilities to imagine, for, as Eisner (2002) states, when individuals cannot imagine new possibilities, their worlds become static. In opposition to this, the arts offer the potential for expanded notions of possibility:

Aside from promoting our awareness of aspects of the world we had not experienced consciously before, the arts provide permission to engage the imagination as a means for exploring new possibilities. The arts liberate us from the literal; they enable us to step into the shoes of others and to experience vicariously what we have not experienced directly” (Eisner, 2002, p. 10).

With this thought in mind, the opportunity to “travel” through a weekly art workshop might also inspire the children to imagine new possibilities for their own lives, new realities that may have not been considered before.

The lessons themselves began as collaborative efforts. As a small organization, we had a limited staff, only myself and an assistant director worked full time on Art Relief. With limited staff, the bulk of our work was performed with the help of volunteers from around the world. A cornerstone of our work process was discussing plans weekly as a group. We utilized these weekly discourses as an opportunity to mull a lesson over, look for unseen connections, and ensure everyone involved was on the same page.

The Early Days of Young Lions Global Artists

Growing up in the US culture of originality, aversion to copying, and emphasis on freedom of expression, I found that guiding the students through the early lessons felt like strapping on a pair of cement boots and sinking to the bottom of a river. Artistically, the children had no real framework for creative expression. The majority of their art education was focused on learning traditional Thai techniques, copying masters, and creating “beautiful things”. With a primary goal of self-expression and empowerment through the arts, our lessons were more focused on giving the children an opportunity to play with different media and find their own creative solutions to a given challenge.

As the overall workshop model was themed around travelling the world through art, each week’s art project was loosely based on an artistic artifact or craft related to the place we planned to visit that week, such as a Japanese style fan or Indian batik scarf. To help students form a visual context for these new objects, we would prepare two to three demo pieces for each workshop, as well as talking points, and options for students to choose materials, paint colors, or subject matter.

The demo pieces were meant to provide a visual jumping off point rather than a pre-determined outcome. But, as soon as work time began, the students would ask to see the demo pieces, and then dutifully copy them, waiting for friends to finish with the demo pieces before beginning their own work. If they struggled to mimic a given shape or line they would ask how to create it, rather than devising their own solutions. At this point, we would usually reply: “you can make your own design. Draw what you like. This is just an example.” For the most part, the students seemed to enjoy the workshops. They came back week after week, excitedly asking what we would be doing as we put a new “visa” into their paper passports, but they were reticent to embark from their creative shells.

Socially, the walls were equally as high. Having lived and worked in Thailand for several years, I was aware of a sense of elitism many Thai citizens felt towards ethnic minority populations, a social reality unfortunately present in most nations around the world. I was shocked, however, to discover the true depth of these divides, so socially ingrained even at a young age.

To encourage a relaxed environment, we held our classes in the garden in front of our office, inviting any child that passed by to join the fun. Our mobile classroom consisted of five to eight fold out tables (about three feet per side) and a series of colourful tarps. We sat on the floor, which is a common custom in Thailand, working in groups around the small tables. I distinctly remember an uncomfortable interaction during our first lesson. Two Thai girls came into the lesson a little bit late. We welcomed them and asked them to join a table, but the only table with space had a young girl who had grown up in Thailand, but was ethnically Burmese.

The Thai girls quietly refused to join her table because she was Burmese. Pbut, born and raised in Chiang Mai, took on the role of teacher for these sessions in order to explain complex lessons in Thai and relay stories of the exotic places we visited virtually each week. Being Thai, she obviously understood the nuances of Thai culture and appropriate behavior better than myself and my volunteers who were mostly young and fresh to Thailand. Harmony and non-confrontation are valued significantly over displays of public emotion or dispute. Not wanting to make a scene about the obvious prejudice that had just occurred, Pbut quietly allowed the children to move tables and continued with her lesson. Rather than attack the problem outright, we continued our lessons, modelled respectful behavior of all people, and subtly encouraged the children to work outside of their established friend groups.

There are a variety of thoughts that spring to mind in the presence of such blatant prejudice. As an educator, my early thoughts turned to devising effective means to address such an issue. Though I am conversational in the Thai language, my personal lexicon lacks the vocabulary to effectively discuss discrimination. Pbut, our assistant director was Thai and taught most of the lessons. Though she possessed the lexicon, she was born in a culture built on the notion of “saving face” and maintaining group harmony at all times. To save face, one will never call another out on a behavior in public or create a situation that will make the overall group feel uncomfortable. It would be better to just quietly ask the students to move around than to start a discussion that might make students feel bad. This posed an interesting landscape to navigate. In private, we would discuss what a shame it was

that such prejudice occurred and that the children were so forthcoming with prejudice comments, yet unsure of what would be the best solution to the problem. What was the best approach to take?

In the meantime, we continued to teach our lessons, personally demonstrating an atmosphere of acceptance with each class session. We treated all of the students the same, encouraged the efforts of each artist and invited participation from all regardless of background or livelihood. We discouraged segregation by limiting the number of tables available and asking students to sit where there was space. If students complained, we would acknowledge their opinions but also remind them of the fact that there was limited table space, and we all had to share, encouraging them to talk with the other artists at their table rather than looking for a place to move. At the time, it didn't feel as though we were directly addressing the underlying social issues that existed in our group. To me, it felt almost as though we were ignoring these issues for lack of a better plan. Our primary goal was to offer a safe environment for all of our students to explore art, have fun and be creative. Despite initial contentions, all of the students continued to return week after week. Something about the art seemed to keep them coming back.

Turning Points: Creativity unleashed

For much of my youth I was a serious and competitive gymnast. Like the mastery of any skill, learning gymnastics brings a persistent ebb and flow of marked progression followed by what feels like prolonged stagnancy. You practice every day, try a skill over and over again only to feel as though all your efforts are in vain. Then one day, for no obvious reason, nor special circumstance the skill springs forth, reminding you that your persistent training actually did serve a purpose.

I have vivid memories of what seemed to be the creativity turning point for our Young Lions. The lesson was bird masks, loosely based on the Carnival tradition in Brazil. We gave each student a blank Mardi-Gras style mask (covering the eyes and a small part of the nose), colored pencils, cray pas, crayons, and glitter to decorate their masks, as well as feathers in assorted colors to create Carnival style creations. As usual, we warily created a demo or two, wanting to offer the students a reference without guiding their creative process too explicitly. We anticipated that the students would color the masks, maybe add some unique patterns, but for the most part follow the demos pretty closely as they had done in the past. The lesson followed a similar plan as previous lessons. Pbut discussed some of the country specifics with students while highlighting images on a power point. She explained the lesson, gave a short demo, and then it was time to begin. With the help of one of my volunteers, I handed out a mask to each student and laid materials on each table. My foreign volunteers (approximately eight were with us at the time) and I then interspersed ourselves around the tables with the Young Lions. We worked alongside the students offering support both through our own artwork and more explicitly through words and actions when needed.

As the students began to work, something magical happened. A table of three boys asked for scissors. A little surprised, I handed them a pair of scissors and watched. Chattering away, one boy began to cut and reshape the white mask, rather than making a bird he decided to make something more akin to Frankenstein. A table of two young girls next to the boys caught site of his creation and watched with curiosity. Another boy decided to cut new shapes and glue them on to his original mask in order to create a robot. A creative revolution began to grow and spread. At another table, a pair of young girls feverishly worked out an intricate pattern of stripes and circles.

Unexpected rains began to fall. We hurried into the covered area beside our office building laughing and screaming. A little wet, no one wanted to stop. Their creations were taking life and so too was the collective spirit of the group. At the end of most lessons, we would take a group photo of the students holding their new artworks. On this day, I looked down the line of masks to see a myriad of original characters, designs and shapes. Each of the masks had a life of its own, a character that reflected the artist who had made it. For the first time, the art seemed to really be an expression of the children. No longer were they looking for a right answer in the demos we created. Today they had created what their imaginations called for.

Greene and Eisner often write about the role of imagination in bringing forth change. According to Eisner (2002), “a culture populated by a people whose imagination is impoverished has a static future. In such a culture there will be little change because there will be little sense of possibility” (p. 5). The flip side of this implies that the opening of imaginative possibility in turn opens the gate to new perceptions of the world.

On the tails of this imaginative breakthrough there came a blossoming of social breakthroughs as well. In the same way that the students began to cut and reshape their Mardi Gras masks, they too began to cut and reshape their assumptions about whom the other students were that they worked with. Looking back on that first year of Young Lions, there is one lesson that stands out to me the most for its reflection of the dynamics present within our group. On this day, we were scheduled to travel to the United States through Jackson Pollack style expressionism.

Rather than creating a giant canvas, each student would receive a blank t-shirt to paint in the style of Jackson Pollack. The environment was playful before the students even arrived. On this day we had no tables, the entire yard would be the day's studio space. We spread five large tarps over the grass and tamarind leaves. Atop the tarps sat large makeshift paint palettes appropriated from plastic lunch plates with divisions for different food items. Like most workshop days, we set up a variety of coloring books and games for the students who arrived early to play with while they waited. Since the first lesson, I had been steadily looking for ways to expand the pre-class activities and students' experiences with one another. Initially, we had given the students coloring sheets to work on while they waited for class to begin. The coloring sheets were fun, students seemed to enjoy them, but they were also isolating as a fairly solitary activity. Throughout the weeks that had transpired, I had gradually introduced new games, including a Thai version of Jenga and English language memory games. For Jackson Pollack day, we decided to add in some more physical games. We set out a number of squishy balls and hula-hoops in the yard for potential use and planned group games to play if time allowed.

The set up of the activity was by nature collaborative. With a limited number of paint palettes, the students were forced to share and communicate with one another. Work spots were chosen randomly. When a student was given a shirt, he or she was directed to the first available tarp. The groups were determined by t-shirt size and place in line rather than race, gender, economics or politics. While the students worked, we played American music and laughed with them as they explored the physics of splattering paint around. The children experimented with different techniques, such as moving closer or farther from their “canvas”, angle of their wrists, force of the flick. Soon they were sharing techniques or combining brushes to paint with multiple colors at the same time. The three boys at my tarp station, significantly ranging in age from five to eleven years old, decided it would be more fun to work together in painting each others’ shirts. The one who owned the shirt would choose the colors, which the others helped to apply. Competitions arose based on who could flick paint from farther away.

In a 360-degree snapshot of the scene, I could see laughter and conversation from all corners of the classroom; no one was left out of the conversation on this day. When the t-shirts were finished, the students eagerly joined us in games of tag, ball toss and red light green light. Some danced to the American folk music we played while others showed off well-developed hula-hoop skills. Today, there had been a clear transformation in the group dynamics. For so long these Young Lions maintained their shells of reserve, dutifully working on their lessons, softly asking questions and sometimes quietly causing mischief. Each previous lesson seemed to silently chip away at their cocoons. First releasing the creativity and imagination

they held inside and then releasing the energy and playfulness of the childhood they possessed. As class came to a close, the students lingered, not yet ready to leave. They were having too much fun, the games were not finished and new friendships were forming. What began as another weekly art lesson, had beautifully transformed our Chiang Mai garden into more of a community youth center, where the children could gather, play, laugh, create friendships, and learn from one another.

Art class or community center

There were workshops that followed where we jokingly wished those shy and reserved children would return. Once the monsters had been released, there was no turning back. Where it was once difficult to solicit a response from the children, they now joyfully shouted answers, and joked around with one another. On one particular afternoon, Valentine arrived at our gates crying. Not knowing why she was upset we invited her in. She wanted to come to class, she said, but her parents would not let her today. They needed her help at home. Only five years old, she wanted to play and make art instead. We sat with her for a bit until she felt better and then made an agreement that she could take the materials she needed and create this week's project at home. And so she did.

In March, the students went on school holiday. During school holidays, many students would return to village homes or visit relatives in other provinces. Knowing many students would be away, we cancelled classes for the holiday week. On Monday, the students who remained in Chiang Mai arrived at our gates to ask if we would have class this week. We said no and they scurried away on their bicycles.

Throughout the morning they biked back and forth down the street, laughing and calling to us through the window as they biked past. Around lunchtime they returned through our gates and started to play in the yard. There was a covered area connected to our house-cum-office. The covered area, referred to as a *sala* in Thai, housed a table and chairs where the volunteers often chose to work.

This table was quickly appropriated as a workspace for our young students. We offered them sculpey, paper and assorted crayons and returned inside to finish our work. I peeked out the door twenty minutes later to find that an informal lesson had begun. One of the older children, Fa, was leading a lesson in sculpting animals and the younger children were eagerly following along. When the clay had run its course, the children came in for a visit. We told them we had to work, but they could stay and play in the yard if they liked. They agreed, though declaring that they first had something to show us. Grabbing my hands, four or five children hurriedly directed me to a pond on the side of the house, with Pbut and Wad, our volunteer coordinator in tow. Here two brothers were catching small frogs. The children looked up at the mango tree above the pond and pointed out the ripe mangos. Without the equipment or experience harvesting ripe mangos high up in the tree, we shrugged. Two of the girls laughed and ran home, soon returning with their father. We talked for a few minutes and then watched as he climbed high up into the tree to pick the mangos. When he came down he offered us the fruit. We thanked him and took one or two, offering the rest to the children and their families. The children excitedly took the fruit, collected their fallen bicycles and ran off. As Valentine's father turned to leave he thanked us. We thanked him and smiled as he

left, appreciating the day's work disturbances for the opportunity they offered to form a better relationship with the parents of the community, parents who had been so wary of us before.

As the school year came to a close so too did our first year of Young Lions. Many of the students would be working or visiting relatives during the summer, so we decided to take a summer break as well. Writing the final evaluation for the workshop series, I found myself reflecting more on the personal changes that had occurred than on the art itself. The art making was the crux of the project, the glue that held the group together, and the reward that kept the children coming, but it was not the end point of the experience, rather the beginning. On one of the last lessons of the year, I again surveyed the group before me. We now had children as young as three and as old as eleven, with older siblings helping younger siblings, boys and girls cordially sharing materials, commenting on each other's work, drawing cartoons and playing games with one another. Even more special, we had parents bring their youngest children and create their own art through the guise of "helping their young children" through the projects. These same parents just nine months before had only allowed their children to come for 20 minutes, had worried we were wasting their time, and hoped only that their children would learn English. Now, they too were part of our family, eagerly answering questions related to the week's lesson, sharing in the experience with their children, and the parents of other children in the neighborhood. When our kitchen sink broke, or our dog Murphy inevitably broke through the fence again, we called on Valentine's dad to help us fix

it, happy that we could provide work while also learning more about our community members. If he could not help, he would refer us to another neighbor that could.

Inspiration

This blossoming of community around art regularly inspires me. As I think about community engagement through the arts. I am regularly reminded that people often just want to make things. Daily, people post new projects to try from online sites like Pinterest, craft classes continue to sell out, and free workshops regularly draw interested patrons.

In nine months, the community of our Young Lions program underwent profound change. Just as time may weather and break a stonewall, time too has the ability to loosen the bricks that may separate people. This project served as inspiration in several ways. It provided the impetus for my decision to pursue graduate studies. Though I had always had an interest in visual arts, I had not formally studied studio art as an undergraduate student. I possessed a smattering of skills and experiences in ceramics, drawing, painting, and printmaking but had yet to develop depth in a given medium. In this regard, I felt that I was lacking a sufficient skill base to grow the lessons we offered beyond creative self-expression. There was a point, particularly with the Young Lions, where they also wanted to learn technical skills. They wanted to learn to draw in order to enhance their abilities to express complex ideas. Personally, I also wanted to learn more about the nuances of visual media in order to feel confident as an artist and possess a broader store of knowledge to access when building lessons.

On another level, the transformations I witnessed during the Young Lions sessions continue to drive my interests in community engaged arts. They serve as the core of my belief that art provides an impetus for positive change in lives and communities. Sometimes an art project may redefine the relationships of an established group, at other times an art workshop may open the doors to new relationships. For the Young Lions, time was a significant factor. Art was the avenue to imagination, and discourse, but time was the constant that encouraged change to take place. Had Young Lions been a one-off workshop or a shorter series of lessons, the students likely would still have gained valuable experiences, but the changes may not have been so profound. Part of the success of Young Lions in breaking-down social barriers was the time afforded to getting comfortable with one another. Because we had months together, we could more slowly come to know one another. The longer our interactions stretched out, naturally, the more comfortable we all became with one another, allowing for the breaking down of divides that had prevented interactions early on.

Chapter 4

Snippets of conversation fade in and out of my ears as I walk by

When the first workshop began we were understandably nervous. Concerned about what we would say; how we would teach technique; whether our supplies were appropriate; would people make interesting work? Would they like us? Would it rain? So many questions ran through my mind.

Before I knew it, the tables were filling up with participants. Some were starting to play with the clay in front of them. Shape it and mold it. Others were hesitant, maybe feeling like fish out of water. It was time to begin. We introduced ourselves. Explained the goals of our project: to create a community engaged collaborative art piece for Art on the Beltline. We discussed the local origins of the Lizella clay that each artist now held. Next we demonstrated basic wedging and coil building techniques. Now it was time for the budding artists to create.



Fig.2 Horse sculpture in its new home on the Atlanta Beltline (2013)

Conversations. The words shared between strangers and loved ones are what stand out to me most when I think about our project for Art on the Atlanta Beltline, which began in mid-August, 2013. The conversations that arose seemed so natural, so carefree. Unlike the Young Lions, the Art on the Beltline workshops were limited by time. Participants attended for one hour, two at the most. In these workshops, the social barriers were not so high. For the most part, the participants

seemed open to the project and to one another. Yet, in a similar way, these one-off ceramics workshops opened the door for unexpected connections and imaginings to occur.

With an interest in narrative and community engaged art, Brittany Ranew, a friend and fellow graduate student in art education at the University of Georgia, and I set out to create a proposal for Art on the Atlanta Beltline—an annual juried public art installation running from September to November—that would inspire Atlanta residents to share their stories. The driving force behind the Atlanta Beltline, a network of trails and parks built along an existing, under-used rail corridor circling the city, was to create avenues and pathways for better connecting the neighborhoods of Atlanta, with the hopes of ultimately creating a more unified urban community. As part of the overall Atlanta Beltline project, Art on the Beltline was developed as a means to invite Atlanta residents to interact more with the Beltline trails that encircle the city through art installations and community events.

Eager at the thought of creating an art project aimed at community engagement, Brittany and I set out to brainstorm a proposal that would achieve this. Our overarching goal was to develop a project that would connect participants to the Beltline while also inviting participants to not only appreciate art, but also collaborate in the art making process. In our early stages of idea development, we discussed the unifying forces of narrative, focusing on the ability of a story to open up lines of communication, with projects like NPR's Story Corps (<http://storycorps.org/>) as inspiration.

Personally, I was also drawn to the idea of treasure or scavenger hunts. More specifically, I wanted to find a playful way to engage artists and non-artists alike in an artistic experience. Play itself can be linked to the idea of expanding imaginations discussed by Eisner (2002) and Greene (1995). For the Root-Bernsteins (1999), play opens up pathways to new learning and discovery; “play provides a fun and risk-free means of seeing from a fresh perspective, learning without constraint, exploring with out fear” (pp. 276-268). Latta (2001) further links play to growth and exploration, as freedom to play provides each individual with agency as an explorer of possibilities. In developing a project for Art on the Beltline, I hoped for a public activity that would be fun; would make individuals smile while also offering a new, perhaps unexpected experience through play and exploration. On a broader level, I dreamt of helping individuals with a limited relationship to art better understand how the arts may be a regular part of their own lives, rather than isolated events in galleries, or an area of life they simply “just don’t understand”. I simultaneously wanted to create a space steeped in interpersonal connections while also drawing back the curtains of the “art world” to invite more people into the fold, advocating for the value of arts education in the process.

As the deadline for Art on the Beltline submissions loomed closer, Brittany and I toyed with a variety of ideas. Would we create a trail of art with a technological aspect, allowing trail walkers to simultaneously appreciate and contribute to the work? Perhaps we would interview elderly members of the community and somehow share their stories through visual media? Connecting all of these ideas was a central theme of participation and collaboration. In the end, we

settled on creating a collaborative installation incorporating a series of hand built sculptures made by local residents. We chose clay because it is tactile, organic and closely connected to the place from which it originates. It also may feel less intimidating than drawing based activities. While drawing may scare an adult away, particularly an adult who believes he cannot draw, clay is forgiving. There is always the possibility to ball your clay up and start anew.

Above all else, we shared a belief that actually making art is integral component in conveying the aesthetic and personal values of the arts overall. With this in mind, we settled on a project that would combine making, viewing, and collaboration. The project was composed in two parts: the first involved public clay workshops free to any age range, experience and ability and based around the theme of “dreams”. There were four in total, all held on an August Sunday in Grant Park, Atlanta. The second component combined these varied pieces into a collective installation immersed within the natural environment of the Atlanta Beltline. The act of setting the installation was not collaborative in the way the workshops were. Brittany and I curated and placed the work ourselves, but the final installation showcased the hand of each of our participating artists. The other goal of this final installation was to encourage people to explore the Beltline trails, to walk in the woods of the Reynoldstown trail, be aware of the Art on the Beltline events and take pride in their work as it found new life in this public venue. The core of the project was about connection, exploration, and further connection.

During the workshops, we informed each artist of our plan to install the finished work in a joint installation along the Atlanta Beltline. We gave each artist a

link to our blog with regular updates about the installation process and a map to the final installation site. We encouraged participants to visit our blog regularly and venture out to the Beltline during the exhibition in order to see their final works, as well as the work of other artists from the different workshops. At the end of the workshop day, participants had the option to take their unfired pieces home, though our hope was that they would all wait to collect the final fired version (unglazed, but fired to maturity) from its final home on the Beltline, or leave it along the Beltline after the exhibitions closing for the weather and world to determine its fate. In a way, this was a unique artistic collaboration between ourselves as teachers, curators and artists, and our students as both artists and patrons.

Going into the workshop, I was worried the new artists would be disappointed about leaving their work, especially if it was their first handmade ceramic sculpture. To my surprise, their responses were overwhelmingly positive. The artists loved the idea of having their work displayed in a public setting and the added adventure of finding it anew among the trees, rocks and other Beltline scenery. As the workshops came to a close, what the artists talked most about was having fun, making something new and meeting other people. Though proud of their work, many of the artists were more excited about the process and the idea of being a part of Art on the Beltline, than of the work itself.

The building process

In planning our workshop lesson, Brittany and I settled on coil building as a primary entry point into hand building. Coil pots are one of the first things artists make in an introductory ceramics class, from kindergarten to retirement. Like the

ABC's or music scales, coils offer a foundation for clay building with a starting point that ensures a hollow form. During our planning stages, we were fairly concerned with the fire-ability of the clay, wary of forms that would not dry in time or would be too thick causing them to explode in the kiln. Coils seemed like an effective way to ensure that the pieces would survive the firing process.

Our first lesson workshop began at 10am. The participants arrived, finding a seat at the tables we had set up as they strolled in. Each seat had a block of clay waiting to be molded. We introduced coils as planned. And, as expected, they proved a welcoming entry point into hand building. The artists enjoyed rolling the coils and felt comfortable stacking, scoring and slipping them. Yet, at the same time the coils felt limiting. While the artists had free reign to shape their forms in any manner or to add additional pieces to create new forms (as we demonstrated), many did not seem ready to re-imagine their cylindrical coil forms in these ways. One participant was a practicing sculptor. Rather than employing the coil method, she pressed and squeezed her clay ball into the form she wanted and then hollowed it out with a knife. Watching the participants as they sat down I had noticed the inclination to push and pull the mound of clay in front of them. I found myself wondering if molding a solid sculpture and hollowing it out at the end would be more intuitive for some? Going into the next workshops, I included this as a technique for artists to build, hoping the forms they made would be less defined by the techniques available and more by the ideas they hoped to convey.

Workshop Observations

As the participants began to work, I made a point to move around the tables; to meet each artist, or group of artists and talk with them: Where are you from? How did you find the workshop? Have you done ceramics before? Do you know what you plan to make? I would ask a question or two to spark a conversation.

In preparing the workshop station, Brittany and I consciously placed the tables in a large square shape (see Appendix 2) rather than isolating the rectangular tables in rows. This organization made it easier to give demonstrations to large groups, while also allowing participants to see one another—with the hopes of nurturing a communal environment.



Fig.3 Art on the Beltline workshop set-up (2013)

The location of the workshop was also purposeful. We wanted to be outdoors in order to limit any physical barriers to participation. Public spaces can be, as

Grodach (2010) asserts, “sources of local uniqueness that may help to build community interaction and attract neighborhood investment in the face of globalization’s tendency toward homogenization and privatization” (p. 475). By situating our workshop at an area park rather than inside a community building, we hoped that a lack of physical barriers would also help to break down social or mental barriers blocking individuals from artistic engagement. We chose the Grant Park Farmer’s Market as our ideal location. Farmer’s markets are by nature communal. They have an atmosphere of shared resources, knowledge and space.

Our overarching goal was to create art from the community within the community. While a park building or community shelter might provide protection from the weather and more space to work, it would also isolate the workshop from the environment around. Our hope was that passersby would also engage in the workshop, inquire what was taking place or possibly ask to join. If nothing else, the farmers’ market atmosphere provided a convivial backdrop to our workshops. It offered a sense of shared experience within the constructs of this event that takes place only at a specific time on a specific day.

Artists Revealed

Most of the participants joined the workshop with friends or family members. In a sense, having the support of a friend or loved one may help to create a level of comfort that leads to a more open environment for all participants. In one workshop, for example, a mother joined the lesson with her elementary aged son. Across from them at the same table an older couple sat with their adult daughter, having made a family plan to meet up at our free workshop on this Sunday morning.

Early in the workshop, Rose (the mother with the young son), who had very limited visual arts experience, would consult her son for advice. Together they would discuss the next steps in their creations. Rose was working on her first novel and so decided to create a book out of clay that would represent her dreams of publication. She readily admitted her own lack of experience in clay, as well as her enthusiasm to learn. She was eager for help from both myself and the other artists at her table. Throughout the 60 minutes of this first workshop, I spent a large portion in consultation with her, collectively devising the best strategy to achieve her goals. Her son, a fifth grade student in Atlanta, had recently viewed a set of Egyptian sarcophagi on a museum trip. He was inspired to create a personal interpretation of these ancient relics in the form of a sarcophagi-like monster formation.

Soon the input from one another was not enough, and the critique spread across the table: "How do you think I should make this? Do you think this looks alright? What are you making?" These questions served as ice-breakers for the patrons at the table, a way to create initial common ground. As the questions flowed, they subtly morphed into more personal queries: "Where are you from? Where do you live? How did you get involved in this? How long have you lived in Atlanta?", opening the door to broader narratives about places lived and commonalities shared.

In another workshop, a table group was made up of three couples: Sara and Garrett; Ian and Rebecca; and Tom and Patrick, as well as four friends, Ernesto, Mike, Paul and James. All were roughly between the ages of 25 to 40 and without children. As young residents of Atlanta, these participants shared similar interests in

the social and cultural events of Atlanta. Akin to the first workshop, the relationships between participants began to bloom via work-specific questions. As individuals became more familiar with one another, their conversations shifted to other points of interest— upcoming events in the city and favorite restaurants, bars or concert venues. At one point, the conversations hovered around mutual appreciation for the antics of Olive, a famous local dog with a very active Twitter account. Interspersed between these discussions of Atlanta culture, were continued comments about work being made punctuated by laughter over mistakes, praise for successes, and vulnerabilities in learning new skills.

Among the four friends (James, Ernesto, Mike and Paul), James was a fairly accomplished sculptor. In the course of the workshops, he rendered an eerie elf-like face (fig. 4). His friends were less familiar with clay sculpting and struggled a bit more to settle on a creative direction. They had joined the workshop mostly to have fun with one another and try their hands at clay, concerned more with the process than the outcome. They were jovial about the experience, joking about one another's mishaps, though perhaps less confident to work beside their more proficient friend. The majority of our participants entered the workshops with little background in ceramics but an interest to give it a try, leading to a sense of learning together.



Fig.4. Example of the elf-like face sculpture (2013)

During the second workshop, which was the most full at 22 people, the conversations were quite different. While the first session's interactions focused primarily around local entertainment, the ones in this session revolved much more around the artists' dreams than local events and lore. Similar to the first session, this workshop had a diverse mix of participants ranging from single college students to families with small children, and elderly adults with grown children.

Compared to the first workshop, this second workshop had a higher number of young children, which may have contributed to the more topical conversations that flourished around the table. The dreams that people shared spanned the gamut of the word "dream". Some of the dreams discussed related to future goals and ambitions, aligning with my own expectations for how the theme would be interpreted. Yet, a surprising amount centered around dreams formed in sleep. Several participants tapped into these night-time adventures to fuel their art making. Others enjoyed the vocal forum to discuss dreams, while making sculptures that were not directly related.

The third session brought with it a completely different set of circumstances. For the first two workshops, we had beautiful weather: warm, clear, sunny blue

skies. Though the forecast predicted rain, by this point, we were feeling fairly confident that the weather would hold for remaining workshops. Then, like a cartoon thundercloud, the rain swept in with a force. In a matter of minutes the weather had turned from beautiful to torrential. Knowing that it might rain, we had set up our workstations under large party tents. To make room on the tables for building, we stored the sculptures from the previous sessions on a tarp on the ground. When the rains came, we quickly threw a tarp over top of the finished sculptures and rushed to move everything else that needed to be dry under the tents. Our first priority was ensuring the participants were dry and all of the paperwork we used to track workshop events was not ruined. Distracted by the rain, our verbal introductions and building lessons were more scattered than usual. Looking down, we soon realized that we were set up in a low point in the park as the ground flooded at our feet. We laid cardboard boxes underneath the tables to keep participants' feet dry and gave everyone towels for chairs that might have gotten wet.

As everyone began working, I turned to check on the previous sculptures resting on their tarp. Lifting the tarp I was taken aback by the rising water levels that had settled around our beautiful sculptures. Going into emergency mode, Brittany and I quickly moved all the sculptures to tables under the tent (luckily this workshop had smaller numbers than the others so there was room at the tables). The participants near us helped to move sculptures around and reorganize the tables to fit more sculptures. With the help of volunteers and participants, we were able to save the sculptures with only a couple of casualties.

Throughout the process, I expected the artists working to throw in the towel and leave for better shelter. The workshops were free and there would be no repercussions for leaving, but to my surprise, they stayed. Despite soaked feet, cramped tables, and what felt to me like utter chaos, they continued to work. Echoing the atmosphere of the earlier workshops, participants joked and shared with one another. The weather forced everyone to work together to make sure the work-tables were securely under the tents and that each member was protected from the elements. In a sense, this group was pushed to bond even more than the previous groups through the act of looking out for one another— a sense of unity through overcoming adversity. Reflecting recently with a friend of mine who had attended this particular workshop, I mentioned how I wish she had come earlier because the first two workshops had seemed so perfect. She replied that it was fun, and she especially remembered a boy at the table who worked so long on his “cool monster- the narwhal” while his dad humored him. His dad had made a sculpture fairly quickly, a pyramid with animal icons, and then patiently supported his son as he painstakingly created, re-imagined and created again his Narwhal. For her, the rains had been just a small matter, an adventure to overcome rather than a disaster.

In the fourth workshop, we had to abandon the organization and aesthetics we had painstakingly laid out in the morning. The rain had stopped, but the damage remained. The ground was now made of cardboard boxes, Towels were wet, and tables were cluttered with drying sculptures. But the sun had returned, and a new group of artists had ventured out to the park to make art. The participants in the last session were very understanding of the slightly chaotic set-up. In the end the results

were the same. Dishevelled or not, each session was successful in creating a positive environment, one that left me feeling inspired after a long and sometimes stressful day.

Shared developments

Each of the four workshops we delivered had a similar environment of friendship. Though the participants differed significantly in age and background with each workshop, the freedom to connect with one another seemed to carry throughout.

As I mentioned earlier, many of the participants entered the workshop with little experience. Some were artists in other media including woodworking, theater, sculpture, puppetry, and music. A number of the participants had a connection to Brittany or I, while others had heard about the workshop through fliers or social media. As a workshop facilitator, it was incredible to see how wide the net was cast. Having no experience with Twitter, we were completely surprised that our little workshop had found its way to the Twitter feed, and that complete strangers found it interesting enough to join.

When we began the workshops, many of our participants mentioned their limited experience in ceramics or lack of ideas for their sculptures. Several discussed nervousness about not knowing where to begin, but an excitement to try. The theme for the sculptures was “sharing your dreams”. When conceiving of the idea, we anticipated that participants would create sculptures related to personal dreams for the future, maybe personal goals or broader wishes for humanity, but we purposefully left it open to artistic interpretation. To our surprise, the conversations

we heard related more to the dreams of sleep rather than dreams of ambition. It seemed that our participants connected more to the project and to each other through the stories that developed while they slept. For others, their conversations may have been about dreams, but their constructions came more from the shapes that arose as their hands worked the clay.

At the end of day, I looked around at the hand built sculptures in front of me, standing tall amidst strewn cardboard boxes, half-full bags of clay, dirty wire tools and empty cups of slip. Looking back on how excited each of our artists had been to physically make a sculpture filled me with happiness. I couldn't help but feel inspired by the atmosphere that had been built over the last six hours.

Like Dewey (1938) and Eisner (2002) assert, all experience has the potential to spark a change not yet known at the moment of experience. It is interesting to wonder what a given experience may inspire in the future thoughts and lives of its participants. Often times, it seems as though urban living is defined by anonymity, social ties obscured by expanding populations, cars, and growing technological interfaces. I am reminded of the scene described by Bourriaud (2002) in which he describes the community of immigrants brought together by the broadcasting of Turkish jokes and stories via loudspeaker in a Copenhagen square. Part of what inspired me about the Beltline workshops was the sense of warmth and camaraderie that came about in the interactions between participants. It brings me back to the idea of "societies of intimates" (Blatt-Gross, 2010, p. 357) and the influence of face-to-face interactions on cultivating positive emotions (Carroll, 2004; Dunbar, 2012). The conversations that occurred face-to-face during the Beltline

workshops both reinforced the value of being heard (Phillips, 2003) and encouraged compassionate listening (Barrett, 2010). As the Dalai Lama (2008) articulated, “recognizing our shared humanity and our biological nature as beings whose happiness is dependent on others, we learn to open our hearts, and in so doing we gain a sense of purpose and of connection with those around us” (p. 73).

Through these positive community art events, a foundation was laid for imagining more positive communities overall (Eisner, 2002; Greene, 1995). These workshops serve as a reminder of how rewarding it is to converse with other human beings, to share both experiences and stories with one another. According to Wheatley (2002), a social activist and consultant:

Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change—personal change, community and organizational change, planetary change. If we can sit together and talk about what’s important to us, we begin to come alive. We share what we see, what we feel, and we listen to what others see and feel...I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again. Simple, honest, human conversation. (p. 3)

In many ways, I hope that our workshops did plant a seed for future. In truth I hope it planted many seeds— a seed to continue creating art, a seed that reminds individuals of their community connections and investment, and a seed that encourages participants to imagine new possibilities.

Chapter 5

The silence that envelops the room is ripe with creative energy

Sometimes the effects of a workshop, or series of workshops, are nebulous. The theories of Eisner and Dewey are again reflective in this third project, for as Eisner (2002) expresses, the outcome of a given experience may not reach its full effect until it is re-engaged through future experience. Sometimes empowering an individual first can create a bridge to empowering communities in the future. The art component of *Leadership Without Limits* is an example of such a case.

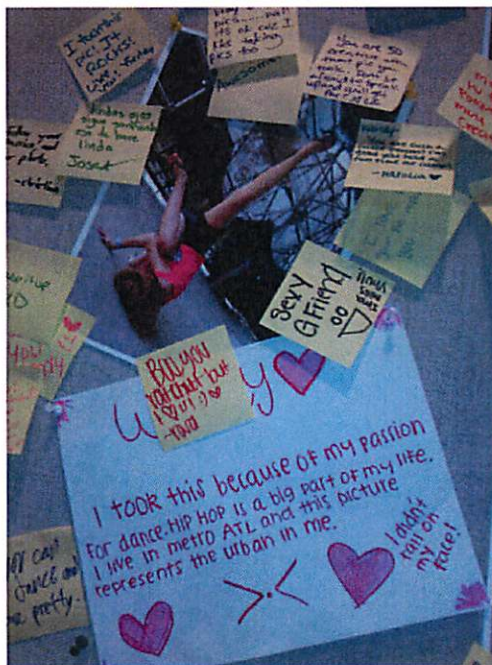


Fig.5 Student work accompanied by comments from other participants

The project was initially guided by a similar program described in the article “Graffiti Walls: Migrant Students and the Art of Communicative Languages” (Rodriguez-Valls, Kofford, & Morales, 2012). Focused on a more traditional academic environment, *Graffiti Walls* was a four-week program aimed at personal expression through visual and verbal art. The initial goals of their project were to develop stronger language arts skills for English Language Learners and create a

common ground between classroom teachers and migrant learners. Through the course of written and visual activities, the project met the initial goals while also fostering a greater sense of identity and confidence in the students, as well as a deeper feeling of connection between all of the participants—teachers and students alike. With limited literature on the application of arts to broader, non-arts specific community projects, this article served as initial guidance in the development and structure of such a project. The article provided a useful case study for modelling future programs, particularly with regards to resource suggestions and insight on problems and successes within the program.

Art and leadership meet

Leadership Without Limits (LWL) is a “college access” program facilitated by the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, in partnership with the University of Georgia and the Georgia Department of Education’s Migrant Education Program. Taking place annually in June, the aim of the program is to expose first generation and migrant youth to university life, empower these youth to believe in their own ability to both attend college and be leaders in their communities, and to provide support in the application process. When I joined the J.W. Fanning Institute, Carolina Daribisi, the head of the LWL program, asked if I would be able to help her expand the program offerings and incorporate new avenues for creativity and empowerment. As we talked further, we recognized that the program offered an interesting opportunity for a multi-day arts based workshop. The camp was long for Fanning youth programs, 11 days compared to the usual three to five day programs. The students stayed together in the dorms for the course of the camp. Carolina felt

that there was a lot of room in the evenings to add more structured programming. As a result, we decided we would pilot art as its own activity in the program itinerary, something that hadn't been offered in previous camps.

The process of developing an arts program for the Leadership Without Limits felt very much like a journey in itself. As I began planning, I had three objectives in mind: help inspire group bonding through collective and collaborative art making; illustrate the power of art education to support broader themes of leadership and empowerment; and provide a forum for teenage students to voice their thoughts, feelings and ideas about life, community, their futures and the concept of leadership. The end result was a five-session art program largely focused on photography and self-identity. Each of the workshop sessions involved an element of collaboration and sharing. Towards the end of Spring semester, I brought fellow graduate student Nicole Akstein on board. Nicole had asked me for suggestions on youth groups who might be open to photography-based workshops. She had a particular interest in migrant populations. The LWL group was an ideal fit for her interests. I also thought that it would be nice to have some extra support in the planning and facilitation of the lessons. While the staff at the Fanning Institute were excited about the idea of art, they were hesitant to provide any real input, often stating that they didn't know very much about art or "couldn't even draw a stick figure". Since this was the first program of this type at the Fanning Institute, I strongly hoped it would succeed, and welcomed the addition of another creative voice in the process. By this point, I had written most of the lessons, which I shared with Nicole for feedback. Nicole's experience in teaching photography and

familiarity with *Literacy Through Photography* (Ewald, 2001) proved helpful in both the planning and teaching of the workshops.

In the months leading up to the LWL summer program, I developed and redeveloped a series of workshop activities. My ideas ranged from creating a collaborative ceramics mural, developing personal visual journals, and painting cellophane statues similar to the Cow Parade, a nationwide art project and fundraiser that invites artists to design fiber glass cows which are placed at various cities around a hosting city (Cowparade Holdings Corporation, 2011). In general, when planning art sessions for community programs not specifically focused on the arts, I find myself distinctly aware of the fear many people hold when it comes to artistic expression. The first words I often hear are, "I can't even draw a stick figure" or "I don't know, I'm not creative." Aware that entering back into the arts can be intimidating, especially for individuals who stopped art making during childhood, I seek to first help individuals recognize their existing abilities. If I can expand participants' understanding of the arts beyond traditional notions of drawing and painting then I can invite them to develop a new relationship with art making, one that opens their eyes to possibility and experimentation. Inviting participants to make art in forgiving media, such as clay, papermaking or collaborative projects, may help build confidence to later approach more intimidating forms of expression, such as drawing.

With this in mind, I sought to develop an art project that would feel accessible to all students, regardless of artistic skill or confidence level. Foremost, I wanted to find a medium that would be engaging and relevant for the students,

something they would be excited about exploring and could continue to play with even after the program was finished. I settled on photography. Photography is a medium with a rich history of technological innovation and development. It engages both creativity and understanding of processes, with opportunities to create both physically and digitally. It is also a medium that can be equally collaborative and personal. It is forgiving, particularly with the advent of digital photography. If you are not happy with your photography, you can simply take another photograph, or perhaps enhance it on a computer, or cut it and turn it into a collage.

As I developed the session, I had two running goals in mind: the first was to empower students to explore their personal dreams and goals more in depth. As a leadership camp, Leadership Without Limits had an overarching aim at inspiring students to pursue postsecondary education and empower them to create positive change in their communities. I believe that engagement in the arts can be a powerful tool in developing these areas. There is something to be said for subconscious exploration, for those times when you are drawn to create something but don't really know why, and the value of the cognitive processes that happen as you move a pencil across a page or zoom in on a passing flower. Though the end result may not clearly represent the topic at hand, such as leadership, the ideas are ripe in our brains and this act of creating may lead to unexpected connections or epiphanies.

My second goal was to help build a more cohesive group through a collaborative art-making environment. I hoped to work with the students to develop a collaborative art project that would enable deeper connections between students. Having witnessed the power of art making to unite groups in the past, I hoped to

explore this idea more. Could art making help to build a really strong group, one that would provide the students with a support structure as they transitioned through high school and into college?

Memories form

The moments that stand out to me the most happened on the first and last days, which coincided with the start and finish of the overall Leadership Without Limits camp. Our first art day was held on the second day of the overall program. My goal for the first day was to develop an art project that would “hook” the students and excite them about art, even those who may not regularly make art or consider themselves artists. I also thought it would be beneficial to introduce a project that would require teamwork. Since this first art day was at the beginning of the overall camp program, I saw it as an opportunity to help foster positive group relationships early on. Looking for something fun, tactile and unthreatening, I decided on Mark Jenkins inspired tape sculptures. Jenkins fuses street art with sculpture by creating life-sized human forms out of packing tape, newspaper and other low-cost materials and placing them in public venues such as parks and street corners (“Mark Jenkins”, n.d.). With clear packing tape as our medium, we created life-sized human sculptures using our own bodies as molds (See Appendix 3). The idea of using packing tape seemed fun as it incorporated an unexpected use for an everyday material not usually associated with sculpture. It would also enable the students to easily create interesting forms that would be light and playful.

Mentorship was a theme built into the LWL camp program. Each of the staff members had a mentor group, which consisted of four to five students. Mentor

groups were geared towards providing the students with more positive support structures and a more intimate group of individuals to talk about goals, issues, fears and other themes that may arise during camp days. Each group was led by a current college student who served as the mentor and leader of group activities. I was the exception as a graduate student and Fanning Fellow. The hope behind these mentor groups was that in forming a positive relationship with a current college student, campers would feel more comfortable asking questions and more inspired to pursue higher education in their own lives. The mentor groups stayed the same throughout the entire 10-day program, engaging in a variety of activities together including regular nightly meetings. In order to support this structure, and encourage cohesive, open groups, we asked the students to approach the tape sculpture project in their same mentor groups. The groups were slightly different on this day than they would be for the duration of the program. To account for language needs some of the members were switched to mentors proficient in Spanish. In addition, my own mentees were added to the other groups for this activity so that I could rotate between the groups. With the groups set for the time being, the students were given the task of creating a tape sculpture that reflected each group member in some way. The rest was up to them.

Since it was only the second day of the program, the students were still new to one another. For some, these small groups represented the first opportunity to converse with members of the larger group they had not yet conversed with. Initially, I was nervous the students would not be interested in the project, would think it was silly, or feel it was a waste of time. The overall camp schedule was busy.

As a result, many of the art sessions had been scheduled from eight to ten at night, wrapping up a long day of activities and lectures. Going into the session, the students were tired and wanted free time. Walking from dinner to the Fanning Institute, where we held our first lesson, I heard rumblings of complaint: “We have another activity? Why are we doing this? I want to play basketball”. Some of the staff, themselves not artists, echoed these feelings. They wanted to play games with the students and felt the group needed free time to bond. This is the first time we had offered an art program with Leadership Without Limits, and, as first experiences normally go, we were all a little unsure of what would unfold.

To introduce the sculpture activity, I shared some photos of Mark Jenkin’s street sculptures. We talked a little about street art and street sculpture, using a Powerpoint of interesting images as guidance (See Appendix 3). With some inspiration brewing, I gave a demonstration on creating tape sculptures, highlighting the process of first wrapping appendages with the sticky side of the



Fig 6. Mark Jenkins sculpture

tape facing out, followed by subsequent layers with the sticky side down. Post-demo, the students broke into their groups (four groups of five students with one adult mentor each). Nicole and I distributed tape, scissors, and sketching materials for the planners in the group.

Walking around as the students worked, I was surprised at how dutifully they were engaged in the process and how well they worked together. With my

fears that the students would not be interested in art making, I had assumed the students would rush through the activity in order to go back to their dorms and hang out in an unstructured setting. On my stroll through our makeshift art studio, I noticed some groups working quietly, partners dutifully taping one another's arm, leg or torso, while additional group members thoughtfully discussed assemblage strategies. Other groups loudly joked, jousting with their new cellophane arms or kicking each other with tape legs. Individual limbs were taped together to form a body, requiring group members to brainstorm a system of attaching these limbs and creating a unified figure they could agree on.

I approached the group at the front of the room: Elena was busily taping Elizabeth's leg, while Jose and Christian worked on building a torso, which was reminiscent of a superhero costume. In another area of the room, Julio and Omar made four arms with hands attached. The pair really enjoyed taping each other's hands, which had resulted in a large number of hands and arms to use.

Moving into the Board Room, where the other two groups were working, I was admittedly pleased to find the groups laughing and chatting loudly. As I walked up, the students excitedly showed me what they'd been working on. Josue, a 15 year-old boy who had barely spoken up to this point was busily entertaining the group with his antics. He asked me if they could try making a cellophane face a try. He was eager to be the one to have his face taped. A little wary, I agreed, on the condition that myself, Nicole or one of the other mentors be the one to cut the tape off in order to protect the students from cutting one another or having to worry about cutting one another. As word spread that Josue's group was doing a head,

every group wanted to give this a try. The excitement was infectious. Valentine's group, who I visited next, even added a horn to the top of their cellophane head, creating something between a human and a unicorn, a uniman? (See Appendix 3)

Like a flash of light, the two-hour art session approached its end. I began asking students to wrap up, thinking they would be eager to return to their rooms, relax and chill-out with friends. I first approached the group closest to me. They stared back at me with wide eyes and asked if for more time or "maybe can we work on them again tomorrow". I replied: "We can work a little bit longer tonight but try to finish up soon". From the other three groups, I received a similar response. Hard as I tried, I couldn't seem to get these students to stop working. I talked with the other staff, and we agreed to extend the session. 10:00 pm soon turned into 10:30 pm. Finally we had to wrap up so the students could make it back to their rooms in time for lights out at 11:00 pm.

Before wrapping up for the night, I gathered all of the groups together to share their creations and explain the decisions made. By this point, the atmosphere was fairly carefree. Rather than pulling teeth to illicit student responses (which had been the experience up to this point), we struggled to tame the conversations enough for to give a single group the floor. Though I wanted to maintain some control over the situation, I was also excited that the majority of side conversations were about the work made, rather than unrelated topics. Before leaving for the night, the students asked if they could take photos with their sculptures. Many also asked if we could do the activity again another day. The building was abuzz with energy. Having a little fun, we told the groups they could find a place around the

building to integrate their sculptures, so that the Fanning Institute Staff would find them in the morning. The kids loved this idea and eagerly rushed towards the elevators and bathrooms as their ideal exhibition spaces. In the end, we decided it would be best to leave the sculptures in a sitting room between the main lobby and office boardroom, with a sign giving credit to the artists.



Fig.7 A group of LWL students pose with their tape sculpture (2013)

Walking back to our residence hall, Jason, the lead mentor reflected on the night. "That was really great" He said, "I think we should do it with all of our student groups." I was slightly taken off guard by this comment. Though Jason was open to art, his comments leading up to the camp referred to art workshops more as filler activities for holes in the program rather than the serious opportunities for student growth. I felt excited that not only had the students loved the workshop, but staff were also opening up to the potentials afforded by art making.

Later that night, after the students went to sleep, we had our daily mentor meeting to reflect on the day and discuss plans for the next day. During the meeting, the other staff members were excited to share what they had seen. There were comments that Arimar and Jasmine, two students who in the previous two days had been very quiet and sometimes overshadowed by other students, were exceptionally talkative and creative during this activity. Another very shy student, Josue really blossomed during the activity. He stepped up as a group leader for the activity, sharing many creative ideas and demonstrating a rich sense of humor that had been dormant during the program's more academic activities. This activity introduced the group to new aspects of their group members and allowed those who took a backseat in the academic or structured leadership activities to become leaders here.

The mentors further reflected on the opportunity this project gave them to better bond with the students. Each group of four to five students had a program mentor working with them, both as a team member and to provide guidance when necessary. They further reflected on the ways this project required the group to problem solve different ways to successfully build their sculptures. They described the mixed components—teambuilding, fun, and an out of the ordinary project environment—as successful in helping their small mentor groups better bond.

Despite the success of this first workshop, I spent every day of the program worried that the students would not want to do art during evening sessions. I questioned our decision to incorporate organized art activities in the evenings, often from 8:00 to 10:00pm, after the students had spent long days in leadership seminars

and workshops. I thought to myself: “these students probably just want to hang out with each other. They’re going to hate me for trying to teach these workshops right now. The staff just want to go back to the dorms...”. Personally, I had an interesting role in the program. Outside of the art workshops, I worked as a mentor for the students, which meant that I attended all of the daily activities with the students, slept in the dorms with them and met with my specific mentor group nightly. The majority of the program activities were led by external facilitators, I was the only mentor to also teach a series of activities as part of the program curriculum. This likely played a role in my concern that students would not appreciate the workshops. I was somewhere in-between a friend and a teacher and it felt awkward to migrate between the two areas, as if the students would expect me to know they were tired and just wanted to hang out, or perhaps that I would have to deal more closely with any negative opinions they might have about the workshops, versus the other facilitators who simply left when their workshops were finished.

Thankfully, the atmosphere of each session was jovial. Though the days were long, the atmosphere during art class always felt fresh, peppered with laughter and playfulness. Throughout the sessions, students worked with enthusiasm rather than complaint. After tape sculptures, the rest of the workshop was based on photography, utilizing elements of Wendy Ewald’s (2001) *Literacy Through Photography* curriculum and focusing on creating self-portraits through a combination of photography and writing/exploratory activities. I chose photography for a couple of reasons. The main reason was to provide an accessible entry point into art making for students with varying levels of artistic experience.

From past experience travelling and working with students, I had noticed that there seems to be a natural interest in photography amongst all age groups. As soon as a camera is pulled from a bag, there is a smiling face there ready to play with it and all its fixtures. Photography is both technically engaging and socially relevant, especially with the advent of smart phones and photo sharing applications, which are used widely across age lines and geographic boundaries. In his discussion of photography, Barrett (2003) further describes the role of photography in contemporary life. For him, ..."the majority of the images that we receive today are not conceived and executed in egg tempera or stained glass; they are photographic images that come to us by way of the Internet, newspapers, magazines, movie screens, and especially through television". (p. 140) In this way, photography is both compelling as a technological and creative medium, and approachable as a common means of communication.

Communication and collaboration

The opportunities for communication and collaboration were more abundant than I expected. Even something seemingly small, like learning basic camera techniques, can be an opportunity for teamwork and conversation. To introduce students to the concepts of framing, setting up the shot, and the idea of metaphor, we asked students to work in small groups in order to symbolically represent a word through photography. The words were determined by the students themselves, with each group choosing two words at random to represent. At the start of the activity the students were asked to simply choose two to three words that they found interesting as a group, though Nicole and I had already given a brief

on the day's activities outlining the upcoming photography activity that would ask them to create photographic representations of words. When each group had chosen their words, they wrote them on small slips of paper, folded each page and placed them in a bowl for other groups to select. The words ranged in depth and abstractness from soccer to friendship and learning. By asking the students to choose words, rather than giving them pre-determined words, we hoped that the subject matter would be more relevant to their lives and interests. To add another element of problem solving, each group was asked to blindly select two words from the bowl, words that had been chosen by the other groups rather than their own. The challenge: to find a way to represent the essence of each word visually and/or metaphorically through photography and teamwork.

Later, when the students took their final self-portraits, teamwork again played a role. With limited resources, the students relied on colleagues to help them set-up and physically take the shots. Aside from technical needs, friends were also useful in bouncing ideas. Despite planning and brainstorming sessions, when the moment arrived to create our self-portraits students struggled with what to shoot. Even more so, they struggled with how to represent themselves in an environment that was still relatively foreign. At the beginning of this five-day art project, Nicole and I had discussed the overall project with the students. We had shown examples of self-portraits, discussed the idea of a self-portrait as a means to reflect on lived experience and communicate a part of yourself through visual media. We asked the students how they felt about the project and if they were interested in proceeding with self-portraits. Through our discussions, we also addressed the varying forms of

self-portrait, ranging from traditional to abstract/metaphorical, and the incorporation of associated sites or objects that connect to the artist. The project was interesting in that it asked students to connect to reflections of themselves not directly tied to the materials of their lived experience, nor concretely tied to their homes—the valued sites of their daily lives—since they were limited to the environment around the Fanning Institute and the limited possessions they had brought to camp. Under these constraints, students were presented with the challenge of how to represent the more abstract notions of their selves. Some students took to this more easily than others.

Prior to actually shooting the photographs, Nicole and I asked the students to engage in a series of brainstorming activities. These activities were also inspired by Wendy Ewald's (2001) curriculum, aimed at encouraging students to both write and think about their identities and lived experiences. Interested both in the idea of mapping and of the connection between our bodies and the memories we hold, we asked the students to create a memory map, using drawings of themselves as geographic markers. The hope was that tangible, physical memories, such as a broken bone or lost tooth would lead to conversations about deeper memories; about moments in life that had defined who these students were, both in their own eyes and in the perceptions of others. We sought to explore the connections between experiences, interests, influences and values and their influence on personality development. We also hoped to enable the students to see value in their unique personal stories, and to appreciate the stories of others—encouraging compassion and empathy in the process. Most importantly we wanted to empower

the students to embrace their own individual depth, the unique characters they have to offer the world.

The memory mapping proved harder than we expected. While the students enjoyed drawing their figures they had difficulty producing rich memories from these experiences. Many latched onto tertiary memories, a broken bone here and there or surface expressions of personality such as a love of soccer. While the pictures held value in encouraging the students to think, they lacked the stories of life and experience we had hoped for.

When the day arrived for us to take the actual photographs, we began with a little more discussion about photography basics and self-portraiture. We discussed examples of various types of portraits, angles we could use, framing, symbolism, and emphasis. Then the time came to shoot. We offered the students the space inside and outside of the Fanning Institute, and also offered the opportunity to travel to other locations on campus if they desired. Students worked in pairs or groups of threes so that each artist would have an assistant to help take the shot, and to accommodate for camera needs. In the end, about half of the students chose to walk to other sites on the UGA campus, such as Sanford Stadium and the Founder's Garden. Many of the students who chose to leave the Fanning Institute had a specific inspiration in mind, the others were just eager to go on another campus adventure.

The project culminated in a collaborative exhibition. My goal with this final exhibition was to offer a space to for critique and a collective display of work, utilizing a method learned in my Art Criticism and Aesthetic Understanding course. At the end of the self-portrait session, each student had chosen a final image to be

printed in color on quality 8x10 photo paper. This last art session was the first opportunity students had to view their photos as finished work. We asked each student to hang his or her photo with an artist statement beneath it, transforming the classroom walls into an informal gallery space. We then discussed the post-it notes that were laying on the tables before them, introducing the role of the post-it note as a means to comment on one another's photos, ask a question or leave a message for a fellow artist.

The final art session took place on the last night of camp. For this reason time was limited; the end of camp party was scheduled after art time, and the students still needed to go to sleep at a decent hour. We dedicated a block of time for the students to comment on one another's photos, but also let them know that the photos would remain up until it was time for the students to leave after lunch the next day. While the students were eager to share their work, they were also excited about the dance party we had planned on this last day of camp.

I expected the students to comment on one or two photographs at most. Coming from a studio critique mentality, I also anticipated that the comments would be related to the work. What transpired in the end was much different and far more meaningful than I had anticipated. As the gallery space arose on the last night of camp, our post-it note critique turned into a forum for the students to share their love and appreciation for one another. While students shared appreciation for the work itself, they also commented on shared camp experiences and more general qualities they appreciated in one another. (See Appendix 4)



Fig. 8 LWL Final critique and exhibition

One of the elements that was most lovely about this final “exhibition” was the mapping quality it held. In a way, we had created a real, live Facebook wall. Here the students had their self-portraits and artist statements along with a series of messages and wishes from the new network of friends that had been built. More than just photos on a wall, the exhibition turned into a communal event where each member was engaged in writing and leaving comments at this moment in time. As the night unfolded, the moment extended to also include shared moments of reading comments and talking about each other’s photos, while also laughing about memories that had formed over the past 11 days. To me this was the most beautiful part of the project—witnessing the ways in which the artwork once again created moments of shared experience.

In a post-program evaluation I designed with support from Nicole, the students were asked about their experiences with the workshop. To my surprise,

each of the evaluations was positive. Every student felt that the art workshops were an important part of the LWL experience.

When asked: *would you recommend workshops like these in the future?*

Students replied:

“Yes, I think it would help other kids to express themselves. “Yes. Art is a way to communicate with other[s].” “Yes because they were perfect for our age and very creative. It would really catch other people’s attention.”

For the question: *what did you enjoy/like most about the workshops?*

Responses included:

“We had a lot of fun, but overall I really like how we work together and communicate [with] one another. We got to know each other better.” “Everything was fun. The tape sculptures and everything, I got closer to people.”

What did you learn? “I learned that you don’t need much to have fun, and a lot of creative stuff.” “I like it because we could put funny things that we have done in the program.” One last reflection made me particularly happy, in response to the question: *What would you change?* “I would give more time to the arts section”

Prior to starting the project, Nicole and I discussed ways to engage the students in a collective piece. We played around with ideas of exhibitions, public art and digital forums, such as a group blog. With time and material constraints given by the LWL camp structure, we decided to go old school and create a handmade zine. Having edited a literary zine in high school, I loved the idea of returning to these guerrilla art tactics. I also really loved the idea of providing the students with a physical book that held a piece of each group member.

On the first day of the art program Nicole and I had introduced the idea of making a zine. We showed pictures of past zines and explained that a zine was like a magazine, but generally made by hand drawing or pasting images and words on to separate pages, which are then Xerox copied and assembled into a book. We also discussed the history of zines being an affordable way to mass-produce and disseminate a message publicly. We mentioned that we thought this would be a neat way to wrap up the project, emphasizing the idea of each student creating an individual page as a way to leave a message for friends, a message that could be looked back upon in days and years to come. On this first day, the students seemed excited about creating a zine, which in turn made me feel excited to see how the project would unfold.

Approaching the end of our time together, I reprised our zine discussion on the second to last art session. I asked the students if they would still be interested in creating an LWL zine. Pretty unanimously, they replied yes. Like the three art sessions that had come before, the students surprised me in the excitement they had for the project, and the time they put into their pages. The environment was relaxed as the students talked and joked with one another. Yet, they still worked, though one or two students seemed more interested in flirting with one another. As a starting point, I suggested to students the idea of writing some of their favorite memories from camp, things they had learned, or messages they would want to take back home with them. We also gave them small black and white print outs of the self-portraits they had created (the color versions would come on the last day).

With camp coming to a close and little time to assemble the books, I told the students that I would put them together and give each student a copy at the reunion scheduled for October. At this reunion, the students would come together to present the community service projects they had completed over the summer and check-in as the new school year was underway. In September, I returned to Fanning after spending the summer in Thailand. Turning the corner into my office, I was greeted by a large box of photos, brainstorming projects, body maps, and 11x17 completed zine pages. In my summer adventures, I had all but forgotten the art adventure we had taken nearly three months before. As I looked through the box all of the memories from my 10-days with LWL came rushing back.

With the reunion approaching quickly, I began scanning the color originals in order to copy and assemble the letter-sized zine booklets. Before printing everything, I planned to make a test copy just to be safe. As I began working, I very quickly realized the errors in our planning. When we gave the students 11x14 paper we thought this would give each a two-page spread that could easily be folded to create an 8.5x11 sized book. What we did not account for were the pages on the backsides of each of these spreads. With so many spreads and no single 8.5x11 sheets, it made binding a tricky problem to solve. A further problem came with the realization that 11x14 does not reduce neatly to 8.5x11. The solution: scan and shrink the images to create a book that was bound on top. This way we wouldn't need to fold or cut anyone's images in the middle. In my box of materials from the summer, I also found the collages that the students had made during a two-hour

session at the Georgia Museum of Art. Talking over the zines with Nicole, we decided to include these collages as well.

To put the books together, I worked with Central Duplicating to scan and shrink each image in color. Since 11x14 doesn't shrink neatly to 8.5x11, I decided to make the books slightly smaller than 8.5x11 and cut off the white borders that would occur in the shrinking process. I then hand stitched the books to create a finished artifact holding each student's messages, dreams, and ideas for the future. At the reunion, the end of the day was celebrated by giving each of the students a graduation certificate and personal copy of the zine. As I pulled out the zines, the students' eyes grew wide and many smiled. They too had forgotten about pages made in the frenzy of last camp moments, parties and goodbyes. Thumbing through the pages, students laughed at jokes and reminisced about summer events. Flipping through the colourful collage of personalities, it was clear that the zine was more than a set of copied pictures, it was a vessel that held 10-days of memories, friendships and lessons learned. The only part missing were pages to reflect the experiences of Nicole, myself, and the other program mentors, who ran out of time to make our own contributions.

Reflecting on the overall project, I am reminded of another quote by Maxine Greene (1995):

To be yourself is to be in process of creating a self, an identity. If it were not a process, there would be no surprise. The surprise comes along with becoming different—consciously different as one finds ways of acting on envisaged possibility. It comes along with hearing different words and music,

seeing from unaccustomed angles, realizing that the world perceived from one place is not the world. (p. 20)

From the perspective of a project such as this one, an arts project focused on empowerment and confidence building, this seems so fitting. The LWL camp and our art project worked in tandem to expose the students to new possibilities while opening a space to toy with some of different selves we all contain within us, selves that shift in relationship to home, family, friends, schools, dreams and environments. Greene's quote is also a positive reminder that there is always room for growth.

Chapter 6 Reflections

The existence of art is the concrete proof of what has just been stated abstractly. It is proof that man uses the materials and energies of nature with intent to expand his own life, and that he does so in accord with the structure of his organism—brain, sense-organs, and muscular system. (Dewey, 1934, p. 26)

As I contemplate the different stories and lessons discussed above, I find myself drawn to the idea of reflection as it plays out in the workshop setting. Formal reflection was most ingrained in the LWL workshop series and also one of the more interesting aspects of that overall program, particularly with regards to the way in which students approached self-reflection. In the United States, self-reflection is a well-known and often well-integrated educational concept. Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) discuss the value of a “big idea” in lesson planning, relating this concept closely to self-identity and self-reflection. A seemingly universal concept, it is easy to overlook the cultural values that play a role in comfort and familiarity with self-reflection. Performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Pena (2000) describes self-analysis as foundation of the American psyche, one that significantly guides interpersonal interactions, a cultural phenomenon that differs widely from the Latino culture in which he grew up in Mexico City.

A single-two hour workshop in the park easily opened the door to personal reflection and sharing for residents of Atlanta, yet, just two weeks before the brainstorming sessions for our migrant youth in the LWL workshops—all of whom were of Latino descent and either born overseas or children of first generation immigrants—proved more difficult. For these students, we used the same brainstorming principles and techniques learned in our American textbooks and

pedagogical courses: techniques including mapping memories, free writing about self-identity, journaling about personal goals, and sharing with peers. The students seemed to enjoy the activities, but struggled to break through surface descriptions. They found it easier to describe past events, such as breaking a bone or moving, than more internal beliefs or qualities. They described themselves through the activities they performed: soccer, break dancing, shopping or music, rather than likes and dislikes, hopes and dreams, or personal triumphs and tribulations. I found myself wondering: is this related to age? Most of the students were between 14 and 16. One student who was older, almost 18, wrote a very in-depth personal account of her experiences working as a migrant farmer to help support her family and how these experiences shaped who she was.

I also wondered if maybe their reticence to divulge personal information came from their experiences as migrant youth? Had the need to keep their identities hidden in order to survive prevented them from sharing here? Or perhaps the drive to assimilate so as not to be caught forced them to hide some of their more personal experiences, experiences related to their lives as migrant Latino youth?

Reflection vs. Sharing

While it often seemed as though their personal reflections failed to fully express the richness of their lived experiences, I found myself regularly surprised by their willingness to share their work, even students who I would least expect to volunteer let alone stand up and talk about their work. At the close of most activities, I offered space for any student who would like to share his/her work and the stories it contained. On several occasions, the most shy, the most unwilling to

share in other activities bravely stood up and told us about their memory map, the portrait they'd taken, or the dreams they had for the future. For me, this reinforced the idea of empowerment through "being heard" (Greene, 1995; Phillips, 2003).

Their willingness to share may also reflect the power of a safe environment. Throughout the program, the LWL participants were quite close. Perhaps our art workshops significantly helped in the bonding process or perhaps they would have bonded either way? It is difficult to know what the outcome would have been under different circumstances. I think that our early art workshops helped break the ice in a creative way. Walking back to our rooms that night after that first art workshop, the atmosphere definitely felt as though it had shifted from one of acquaintances to one of friends.

The readiness with which the students shared their work in the context of our art classes made me feel proud. I would watch the students in their English classes in the morning shudder at the thought of showing their work, only to eagerly volunteer to share in art class later that day. In part, this might have been due to the way the students viewed the different environments. The English teacher was sensitive and personable. In many ways, he too cultivated a safe environment, but the classes were held in a university classroom, during the morning, and had a very academic feel to them. Perhaps without the formal feel or stress of "class", the students felt more open to share during art sessions.

Perhaps their willingness to share was further aided by the visual nature of their work. Visual work may encourage communication on two levels. On the hand it may provide an anchor point to begin from. By holding a tangible, physical piece of

art you are not standing alone in front of a group of people. You have an image to direct eyes towards, and a map to guide you as you speak, a comfortable base to return to if you get lost. On the second hand, visual arts are inherently symbolic. So much of visual art is related to manipulating shapes to represent other entities or ideas, or interpreting the symbol systems presented by an individual. Symbolism is by nature entangled with personal, social, and cultural values. For this reason, visual art may lend itself more to sharing in order to explain the symbols you present and the values they hold in your world. While there may be prescriptions for visual art practice, schools of thought, compositional does and don't, there may also be more perceived freedom for personal interpretation and variability than other more structured disciplines; a freedom that may provide students with confidence to share without a fear of "being wrong."

Reading Photographs

The process of "reading photographs" also speaks to the unique experiences of these students. In so many of the pictures, they saw elements of poverty, of the need to run, of sadness and loneliness. To open the door for less representational self-portraits, portraits conveying a theme or feeling rather than the more traditional face, we presented a series of portraits for the students to discuss. One particular example was composed of a person on a bed looking at a television, though the only part of the individual you could see were his/her feet adorned in Converse shoes, crossed at the foot of the bed. The room was otherwise sparse except for a closed suitcase perched atop a desk beneath the television attached to the wall. The environment and lack of possessions made many of the students think

this was a “runaway teen.” They then inferred that this individual was in poverty, sad, lonely, and meditative.



Fig 9. Self-portrait by artist Stephen Shore

Looking at the same photograph myself, the scene feels optimistic. The room is bright and filled with sunshine, as if the individual is about to embark on a new journey or turning point in life. I remember being surprised at the life situations the students inferred from these photos, the depth of analysis they gave to these images, and the many ways these analyses reflected their own personal experiences. Watching the students share their stories and beliefs through the guise of these “unrelated photos” I am reminded of Terry Barrett’s (2010) writings on the potential for art viewing to also be a venue for bridging social barriers and embracing diverse world views.

Personal Reflections

As I reflect on my own journey through these workshops I find my mind returning often to the lessons developed for the Young Lions in Thailand. After three years of graduate school and guided pedagogical analysis, I now see the many ways these lessons fall into the cookie cutter plan that often define less inspired art curricula. While the Young Lions lessons reflect good intentions, they also pose problems of reducing cultural traditions to ready made craft projects. The main one being that they offered too narrow a concept of multicultural artistic traditions. Having compassion for our role as growing educators, I value the opportunities we gave for individual interpretations. In preparing each lesson, we made a conscious effort to create activities that were open ended, giving students the freedom to express themselves through the constraints of the project. They spanned a wide-range of media and techniques and regularly offered an opportunity for students to interpret the lessons in a personal manner. As the project grew and our relationships with the students expanded, we also expanded the scope of the workshop model, moving beyond the travelling theme to focus on topics and ideas of interest to the students. In many ways, I still appreciate the idea of travelling and learning about the world through art, yet am reminded of the dangers of limiting cultural nuances to bullet points or presentation slides.

Thinking about the broader benefits of these Young Lions, I am also reminded of the different types of learning a lesson may invoke. Although the stated goal of the project was to create a space for art making open to a broad range of participants and to “travel the world through art,” the implicit lessons being taught

were much more complex. While it is likely that the students will forget many of the facts we presented about different world nations, they are unlikely to forget the friendships formed, the interactions with volunteers from foreign countries, and the art processes they found most interesting. Even further, they may carry the creative lessons learned in these sessions throughout life, using the confidence gained through arts based activities as a platform for continued creative exploration.

The Power of Creative Space

In their individual nuances, each of the projects above illustrates the value of creating spaces that inspire creative and social interactions. These spaces don't need to be built anew. They may be born from existing sites: an office garden turned into a classroom, a public park turned studio, or an institutional building re-imagined. In the *Dialectic of Freedom* (1988), Greene discusses the absence of spaces in schools where students can engage in dialogue and "take initiatives to uncover humanizing possibilities" (p. 13). In many ways, these spaces may be lacking outside of the school walls as well. Though parks and public spaces exist, they do not always inspire conversations in and of themselves. Through community art workshops, these spaces can be repurposed to remind individuals of the diverse connections that exist in these shared spaces. The idea of "humanizing possibilities" is a central to the value of these sites—the ability for the art environment to allow participants to connect to the humanity of other participants. Through expression, art provides an avenue to better understanding the individuals behind a given work of art.

Play

Integral to freedom of expression is an openness to play. As the sites above may set the stage for positive interactions, the presence of play may help to break the ice between individuals, and between artists and the medium before them. It is only in hindsight that I realize how central play was in the lessons I developed and workshops designed. When I think of play I am almost immediately transported back to the jungles of Thailand, where every activity should be “sanuk” [fun], even work or school. When something is fun, people want to take part in it—a fairly common sense point of fact—but one that may easily be lost in the seriousness of professional lives. Asking participants to play with a new medium, play games with one another, or play with the artwork created (such as hunting for sculptural treasure in the Atlanta woods) invites them to have fun with the interaction. It invites them to take a break from the seriousness of daily life, a holiday of sorts from “regular life”. This playful atmosphere has the immediate benefit of fun in the given moment, but may also lead to a desire for more playful, positive experiences of this sort in the future.

Lessons Learned

With all three workshops, it is difficult to really know what the lasting outcomes will be. The focus of each workshop was primarily on the experience; the opportunity and growth that existed in that moment. In hindsight, it would be interesting to interview the participants before and after the different workshops. Many of my conclusions are derived from observations, inference and informal conversations, rather than formal evaluation. With so much focus on conversation and dialogue, I forgot to engage participants in questions specifically related to

these experiences. Informally inquiring what participants thought of the workshops, I missed the opportunity to gather more nuanced reflections.

What strikes me most about the three projects is the surprise I felt in their success, and the many ways they exceeded my expectations. Though I believed in the potential benefits of each workshop from the beginning stages, I was consistently surprised by the investment of the participants. More so, I was pleasantly surprised by the way the participants contributed to the spirit of the workshop in a way that allowed each workshop to grow and expand beyond the boundaries of its original creation. Even more so, they seemed to forge the divides that often separate people from the art world. Leadership Without Limits, for example, was not only beneficial for the participants, but also introduced the J.W. Fanning staff to the wide offerings of art making, which exceeded their own perceptions.

Ultimately, there are two main lessons I've learned from these workshops. The first is that there is always room for growth and transformation. Each of the workshops I've discussed was a success and carried with it learning outcomes that I had not even considered in my planning, but only through reflection do we see the opportunities for improvement. Looking back on the lessons, I am more aware of the areas where my actions or guidance may have limited creativity rather than expanded it; in other areas I find the wisdom in choices I was unsure about at the time. It serves as a powerful reminder of the "humanism" in teaching. Every lesson or project is governed both by our role as teachers and by the lives and experiences of our participants. One of the aspects I love about these workshops with

participants from diverse backgrounds is the opportunity to learn from my participants, and to witness the unique ways in which each individual contributes to a group.

The other thread that runs through these projects is that of Maxine Greene's (1995) idea of giving voice to the voiceless. In many ways I observed the themes she mentioned: the inability for the marginalized to recognize their own oppression, a lack of opportunity to voice this oppression when recognized, and the acceptance of the status quo by those who are privileged. This was most present in the social interactions of the Young Lions. In an odd way, the actions of the students were both accepted and rejected by the students themselves. While the students fell into the same social divisions as their parents, there was some apparent discomfort with this: a hushed request to move tables, or a subtle remark in passing. In being confronted with the other's position, both the marginalized and privileged gained more insight about their own condition. In the case of the Young Lions, our migrant youth gained equal footing. In this group, they were not on the margins but rather at the center, and their participation was vital in maintaining the group. In this setting too, the privileged became more open to a shift in dynamics, observing through time that giving respect to the marginalized students did not threaten their own situation, but rather offered a bridge to new friendships and better communication overall. In the words of Maxine Greene (1995):

Yes, becoming literate is also a matter of transcending the given, of entering a field of possibilities. We are moved to do that, however, only when we become aware of rifts, gaps in what we think of as reality. We have to be

articulate enough and able to exert ourselves to name what we see around us—the hunger, the passivity, the homelessness, the ‘silences’. (p. 111)

These workshops also reinforce the beauty of interpersonal interactions. My own interest in community art stems from a love of witnessing the amazing feats that groups of people may accomplish when they come together. It seems so important to create avenues to share stories and value the individual lives that cross our paths. The enthusiasm that such diverse participants had in three fairly different workshops speaks to a common desire to create and share. Again, I see reflections of Maxine’s Greene’s discussions on freedom and imagination. According to Greene (1988):

It suggests that freedom shows itself or comes into being when individuals come together in a particular way, when they are authentically present to one another (without masks, pretences, badges of office), when they have a project they can mutually pursue. (pp. 16-17)

I believe that all three of the projects provided a space for the participants to interact “authentically”. Part of asking artists to share dreams, stories, and ideas validates this authenticity. It recognizes the value of each individual’s story, which is key in developing compassion as well. The process of inviting participants to engage in one another’s stories serves as a reminder of the successes and hardships that each individual faces in life, which, like in the case of the Young Lions, can also help individuals to move past prescribed differences in order to recognize the humanity of each individual. As social beings, our survival is contingent upon the strength of our group bonds. And, just as art may have played an evolutionary role in the

strength of these bonds, it too may play a role in developing positive group dynamics in our contemporary lives.

As I leave these workshops behind and look to future projects, I hope that the participants carry some of these lessons with them. I hope that on the one hand they have found more confidence to pursue their own creative interests. Along these lines, I also hope they are a little more attune to the beauty in the world, both aesthetic and interpersonal. Personally, I can't imagine a world without color, art, beauty or expression. In this way, I hope the participants feel empowered to cultivate that which they too find beautiful. Most importantly, I hope these workshops empower participants to trust in their own voices; trust in a way that inspires them to invest in the best worlds that they can imagine.

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Appendix A
Young Lions Workshop Photographs, September 2010-July 2011

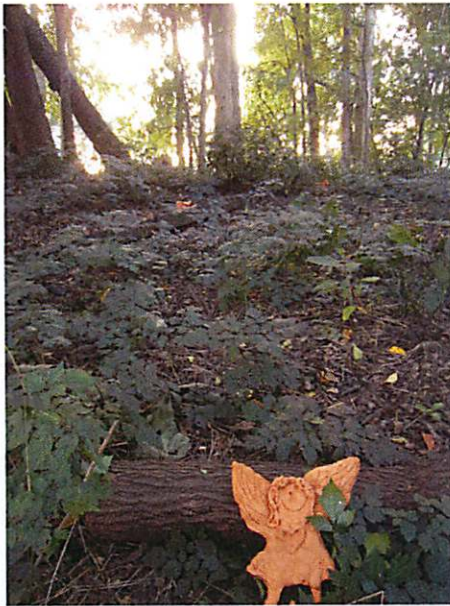






Appendix B
Art on the Atlanta Beltline Workshop Images, August 2013





Emerging World Ceramics August 18th Workshop 23
Artist Name: James Donahoe
Email: J.Donahoe2@btinternet.com
Telephone: 404-575-3250
Description of Piece / Artist Statement:



Each sculpture was integrated into the environment of the Beltline. Some were hidden in nooks and crannies while others were more easily found, creating a whimsical art treasure hunt.



Art on the Atlanta Beltline Project Proposal

Emerging Worlds
Collaborative Ceramics Project
emergingworldceramics@gmail.com

Narrative:

Like the trails of a beehive, the city Atlanta is a maze of unique, independent neighborhoods. In order to create a cohesive living environment these separate communities must communicate and collaborate. Our project seeks to provide a forum for such communication and collaboration. The project begins with a free community art workshop in Little Five Points, where we will set up an outdoor table for passers by to stop, create a ceramic piece, chat, and get to know their neighbors. Through this venue we invite participants from all walks of life to engage in the workshop. Participants will have the opportunity to share their stories by creating sculptures based on the theme: "if you could be anything for a day what would you be?"

Each piece will be kiln fired to make it stronger and protect from environmental concerns. We will then place these small sculptures along the Beltline in the Reynoldstown Neighborhood, utilizing railroad tracks, wooded areas and other site specific elements. Through an online blog participants will have the opportunity to follow the trail of their own piece. A photo of each sculpture will be uploaded to the blog with information about its location on the Beltline. By exploring this shared space, we invite patrons to cross neighborhood lines and connect with other members of the greater Atlanta community. In their journey to find their own work, we hope participants will be inspired to discover new areas of the Beltline and interact with one another's stories.

Summary:

Our project engages Atlanta residents in creating individual, reflective ceramic works that will be displayed collectively along the Beltline, fostering stronger community connections and interaction with art on the Beltline.

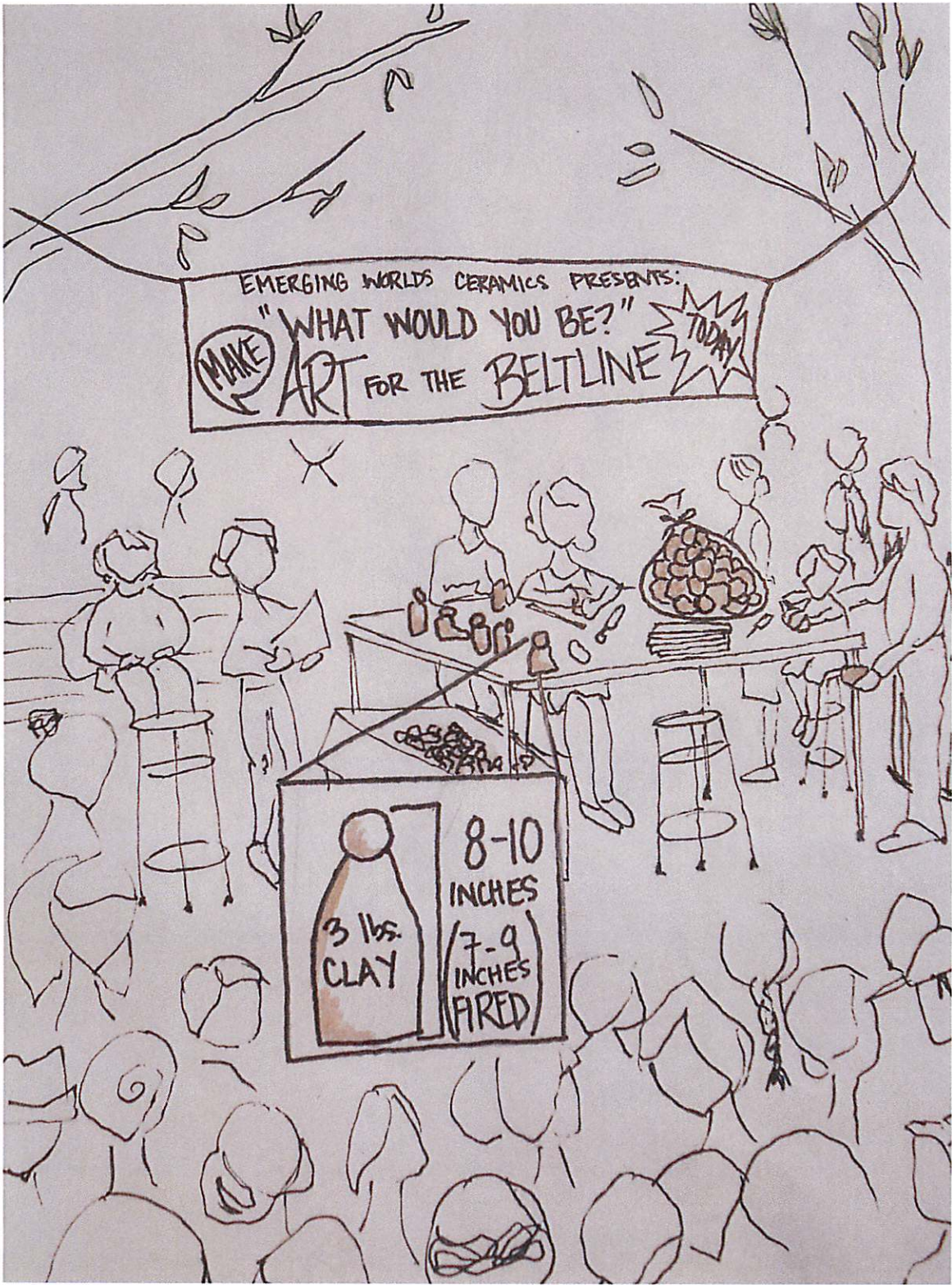
Project Sketches:

1. Installation in wooded areas along Beltline



2. Installation on rails and metal fixtures along Beltline





1111113. Little Five Points Workshop

Biographical Information:

Kira Hegeman is a graduate student in art education at the University of Georgia. Before attending the university she served as the Art Director for Art Relief International, a Thailand based non-profit dedicated to empowerment and education through the arts. While working with Art Relief Kira became involved in several collaborative community art projects, including building a playground, an interactive maze to raise awareness of human trafficking, and several site specific murals. Kira believes strongly in the power of the arts to bring people together, and build stronger communities. As an artist she works primarily in printmaking, but has recently began exploring ceramics and interactive installation.

Brittany Ranew is an Atlanta native living in Athens to pursue a master's degree in art education. A year after completing an undergraduate degree in sculpture she went abroad to travel and teach. After a year in Korea she settled in Atlanta. At the time she volunteered at the Center for Puppetry Arts. Brittany participated in their Xperimental Puppetry Theatre (2010-'12) as a puppeteer and seamstress. This led to work as a teaching artist with CPA for three years. She has been a part of performances for Theatre de Reve (The Red Balloon with director Park Coefield, 2011), FLUX (Hotel Tableaux with director Amy Rush, 2010) and International Puppetry Festivals (2010 & '11). Brittany's work as an artist coincides with being a teacher, each aids in the development of the other. Through both avenues she aims to encourage art making and art appreciation for everyone.

Emerging Worlds is a collaborative pairing which began when Kira and Brittany met in August of 2012. Both are eager to work together in community engagement. Through Art on the Beltline they will delve into the complexities of handling the art of others with care and respect. Both artists are drawn to ceramic work and will be able to guide people of all skill levels through the process of working with clay.

Installation:

Step 1 - Community Engagement; Early August

We will set up a table in Little Five Points to solicit community participation in creating small ceramic works (around 8-10 inches high). Each participant will receive a pre-measured 3 pound ball of clay in order to hand build a sculpture or figurine based on the theme: "if you could be anything for a day what would you be?" We will provide appropriate tools and clean up supplies. While the clay is wet, holes will be made in the bottom of each piece for installment purposes.

Step 2 - Blog; June

Participants will be given information cards with a link to our blog. There they will find more detailed information about installation on the Beltline. They will also be notified that installation will be ongoing throughout the Art on the Beltline exhibition. The first and largest round of installation will be in August. With additional pieces added throughout the exhibition (to replace any pieces that may go missing and to keep the installation engaging throughout the exhibition period). A photograph of each piece will be uploaded to the blog with an identification card stating the creator's name and statement about their piece (unless they request to remain anonymous).

Step 3 - Firing; June/July

We will arrange a bisque and final kiln firing to make pieces weather resistant. Figurines will be fired without alterations or glazing to maintain authenticity.

Step 4 - Installation stage 1; Throughout the month of August

The first round of figurines/sculptures will be installed on the Beltline with the help of volunteers. The installation will utilize site-specific elements including railroad tracks, wooded areas and pedestrian walkways.

Step 5 - Blogging and Monitoring; August-November

We will update the blog regularly throughout installation with information about each ceramics piece and its location on the Beltline. We will also encourage visitors to share their stories and photographs about interacting with the work on the Beltline. We will monitor the installation bi-weekly throughout the duration of Art on the Beltline and add new sculptures or replace any that might be claimed by their owners throughout the course of the exhibition.

Budget & Materials:

Materials	Unit Price	Total
Davin's Ceramic Center Clay (cone 6)	\$215 / 500 lbs. makes ~167 sculptures @ 3 lbs. each	\$215
Davin's Kiln Use	\$120 large load 23.38" x 27" kiln, bisque and final fire	\$240/ 2 loads
Folding Table for art making	\$40 *Possible donation	\$40
Basics ceramics tool sets	5 sets at \$17.95 each *Possible donation	\$89.75
Water Buckets	Donation	
Magnets for installation	\$7.99/ 1 pack of 50 magnets	\$23.97/ 3 packs
Wire	25 ft, 16 gauge; \$1.97	\$2
Wood glue	\$3.00/ bottle	\$3.00
Miscellaneous Supplies	\$100	\$100
PR (blog, posters, information cards)	\$0.10/sheet bw printing	\$15
Gas	\$35 round trip from Athens	\$140
	Subtotal:	\$868.72
Artist Fee (20%)	\$43.44 x 2	\$86.87
	Total:	\$955.59

Appendix C
Leadership Without Limits Tape Sculpture Images



LWL Closing Exhibition Images





Leadership Without Limits Workshop Plan

LWL Program: Day 1: *Getting to know you and introduction to Art Workshop*

Aims:

- Get to know each other better
- Collaborate on a creative piece
- Invite participants into art making process in a fun, non-threatening way
- Introduce on going art workshop

Materials:

- M&Ms
- Questions for game
- 15 rolls of clear tape
- Scissors
- Paper
- Pens and Pencils
- Newspaper
- Photos of work by Mark Jenkins

Activity Plan:

M&M Getting to know you game:

With eyes closed choose an M&M. Before you eat the M&M, answer a question that corresponds to the color of the M&M. See the color chart for reference Answer the question (e.g. what is your favorite superhero character? Would you rather go to space or the bottom of the ocean? Why?;, etc.).

Collaborative Tape Sculptures:

- Now that we know each other a little better we're going to work together to create collaborative tape sculptures (in the same groups) to represent your group.
- Guidelines: Each group's sculpture must contain an element from each person (e.g. arm, leg, hand, etc.); each element incorporated into a final piece
- Demonstrate technique for taping body parts (show example)
Begin layer with sticky side of the tape facing away from you. Tape around the part that you want to cover -lining up the tape so that it overlaps the strip above it. Once you have a single layer around your selected area turn the tape over so the sticky side is facing down. Tape another complete layer. Once you have two to three layers cut the remaining tape off. If taping a body part- carefully cut the tape mold off in a straight line. Now re-tape the seam of the sculpture. Combine to make fun, group sculptures!
- Creation time (45 min.)
- Groups should also write a short statement about why they made the piece they did. How does the sculpture represent their group?

- Share Final sculptures
- Exhibit around dorm?
- Introduce self-portrait project- lead in: each member of the group has a unique and valuable identity. Similar to creating a collective sculpture, the self-portrait is a means to express your story/who you are
- Clean-up

Day 2 Memory Mapping

(Wednesday June 5, 8-10)

Objective:

- ♣ Engage students in reading photographs
- ♣ Provide context for taking photographs later in the workshop series
- ♣ Address basic ideas of concept, narrative and photographic tools (framing, symbol, timing)
- ♣ Draw out important memories and stories through body mapping
- ♣ Brainstorm for self-portraits

Materials:

Paper 11x14

Markers

Colored Pencils

Regular pencils

Pastels

Glue

Scissors

Body Silhouettes

Printed Photographs (20 4x6)

Digital version of photo

Projector and Screen

Intro Activity: Reading Photographs-self-portraits (45 minutes):

- ♣ What is a self-portrait- Traditional examples (painting) + Non-traditional (photography, digital, collage, sculpture)
- ♣ “Making a self-portrait is a great way to express and explore your identity. It’s not about what your parents, friends, teachers, brothers or sisters think you should be. It’s about who you think you are.”
- ♣ Might include: Memories/experiences/places, influence of family/friends, passions, likes/dislikes, ideas, dreams, values, etc.
- ♣ Break students into groups of 4 or 5 (5 groups)
- ♣ Project photo 1 onto the screen (print out 12 8x10 copies of photo to hand out if projector not possible)
- ♣ Have groups list all of the things they see in the photograph. Who can find the most things?

- ♣ Talk about the photo as a large group. Begin by listing interesting things seen in the photograph. Guiding questions: Who is the subject? What aspects of the photo make you think this? Where is the camera? What does the background tell you about the subjects? What about their clothes, expression, body position? How does the camera position affect your reading?
- ♣ Have students return to small groups and create a story for the photograph. Write 1-2 sentences to describe your story.
- ♣ Guiding questions: What happened before the photograph was taken? After? Who is the photographer? What makes you think that?
- ♣ Show photo # 2 (Representational Self-portrait)
- ♣ Discuss as a large group: How does this photo differ from the previous one? What does it make you feel as the viewer? What does it tell you about the subject? What ideas might the objects in the photo symbolize? Can you find a story?
- ♣ Powerpoint: Examples from Self-portrait UK

Main Activity Memory Mapping:

Body Maps

- Hand out 11x14 sheets of paper to students
- Ask students to draw their silhouette
- Students can use a pre-printed silhouette if they prefer (*need to print)
- Ask students to label their pictures with memories they associate with different body parts (eyes, ears, knees, hair etc.)- can show example
- If time: Ask students to pick 3-5 memories that stand out the most. Where did they take place? Was anyone with them? (Possible return to the maps after taking the self-portraits and add in place and people to talk about community/home)
- Ask if anyone would like to share a part of their map
- Homework: Think about what you would like to represent in your self-portrait

Introduce Self-Portraits (if time- or talk about at the beginning of the next session)

- Show examples (maybe some non-traditional/symbolic)- Self-portrait represents something about you, not necessarily a picture of your face
- Our selves are made up of many aspects (body, mind, family, history, environment, experiences). We are all complex beings who exist in relation to others
- Using body maps as inspiration to generate ideas for your own photographic self-portrait

Day 3: Taking Photographs

Sunday June 9 1-4

Self-portraits

Materials:

- Cameras (work in groups of 2 or 3)
- Paper
- Drawing/writing supplies

- Sample Self-portraits
- LTP guide
- Computer and projector
- Computer to get photos for printing

Intro: Introducing photography basics and talking about self-portraits (1st hour)

- Prepare 3 sample portraits ahead of time. Show photos that highlight different ways of creating a self-portrait (e.g. photo of a photo, symbolic representation, a portrait that is more than just picture of a face, ie. What does it say about the person in the picture)
- Discuss use of:
 - Framing
 - Symbols
 - The choices we can make (Literacy and Justice Through Photography pg.68)
- Have students look at their list of self-portrait ideas. In pairs, work together to discuss how and where they will create their self-portraits.
- Facilitators walk around and discuss location/composition with students as they plan out their portraits

Activity: Taking Photographs

- In groups of 2 (or more depending on cameras) students go out and take their pictures
- Students can choose a location around Fanning. If they would like to go farther make sure a mentor or staff member can go with them.
- One instructor can stay in the classroom as a base camp- students can come back in work in the classroom as needed. They can also show their pictures to instructor and decide if they need to take more

Follow-up:

Choosing and printing photographs

- Students work with their partners to choose two photos (for each person. *Maybe one depending on printing costs) for printing
- Students either email their top 2 photos if taking from a phone or load to one of our computers
- Print photos before Tuesday

Activities if we have extra time:

- **Students choose a word from a hat and create a photo representing that word (should we do this as a warm-up photo activity? Should we do this on the first day instead of the tape sculptures?)**
- Students create photos to represent community
- Continue mapping activity- map home

Day 4: Tuesday June 11 8-10pm

Materials:

- Printed photos for each students
- Paper
- Drawing supplies
- 8.5x11 paper for zine
- scissors
- glue
- paint

Reading each other's portraits

- Have students exchange self-portraits with a partner
- Students list what they see in their partners photograph
- Create a narrative about the person in the photograph
- Return the photo and writing to the photograph's owner
- Students then write a narrative or poem about their own photograph

Creating a final piece

- Discuss with students how and what they would like to share with others (both inside and outside of the group)
- Suggest the idea of creating a zine (Show examples) as well as displaying photos and writing inside Fanning, outside, in a gallery when they come back to campus
- If students decide to make a zine have them begin creating their zine page

Additional Ideas:

Connecting to home or community:

- Revisit mapping. Draw a map of a place you have lived. List the memories you have at this place in their corresponding spots on the map. Write about home- connections to self-portrait?
- Connect self-portraits to ideas of community- LWL community (could take indoor photos)

Day 5 (June 12 8-10 pm)

Finish Zine/exhibit

Reflection and evaluation

Can also do: found word poetry, final journal type activity, exquisite corpse as a warm-up or just a fun game

Create a blog...