

**EXPANDING HORIZONS,
EXPANDING SELF**

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**AN INCENTIVE TO GET OUT OF THE CLASSROOM
AND START USING ART TO EXPLORE YOUR COMMUNITY WITH
PLACE-BASED ARTS INVESTIGATION**

A THESIS BOOK BY ERIN POINDEXTER

Expanding Horizons, Expanding Self:

An incentive to get out of the classroom
and start using art to explore your community with Place-Based Arts Investigation

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for The Degree Master of Arts (MA)
Art + Design Education in the Department of Teaching + Learning in Art + Design of the
Rhode Island School of Design

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This year of research has provided me with multiple lenses through which to reflect on my life experience. In the process, I have become ever more appreciative for being raised in a family who values the arts, the earth, and above all else, each other. I would like to thank Dr. Paul Sproll and Professor Nancy Friese, who have been such present and inspiring leaders this year. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, senior critic Ernesto Aparicio who opened my eyes to the particular beauty of graphic design, and Jamie Zuckerman who labored over the intricacies of my thesis research during the editing process. Special thanks to those who shared their stories with me this year in the form of interviews, internships, and adventures; Rick Enser, Dr. Richard Johnson, Jung Joon Lee, Mariani Lefas-Tetenes and the RISD Museum of Art, Gwen Strahle, Janet Zweig, Nancy Fincke, Julie Bernson, Scott Lapham, Lynsea Montanari and the Tomaquag Museum, Maria Molteni, Olivia Hartnett, Mother Caroline Academy, Raquel Robinson, Andy Brooks, 17 Benefit, and my beautiful cohort.

I dedicate this book to my Grandmother, Jewell C. Elium, who taught me that flowers were grown to be parceled in nosegays and painted at the kitchen table.



Previous page: *Figure 1*

Floyd Elium, 1927-2010

Winston-Salem, North Carolina, September 1991

Family snapshot #1, Erin, Justin, and Grandmother Elium, painting in the kitchen on Furman Drive

Photograph

4 x 6 inches

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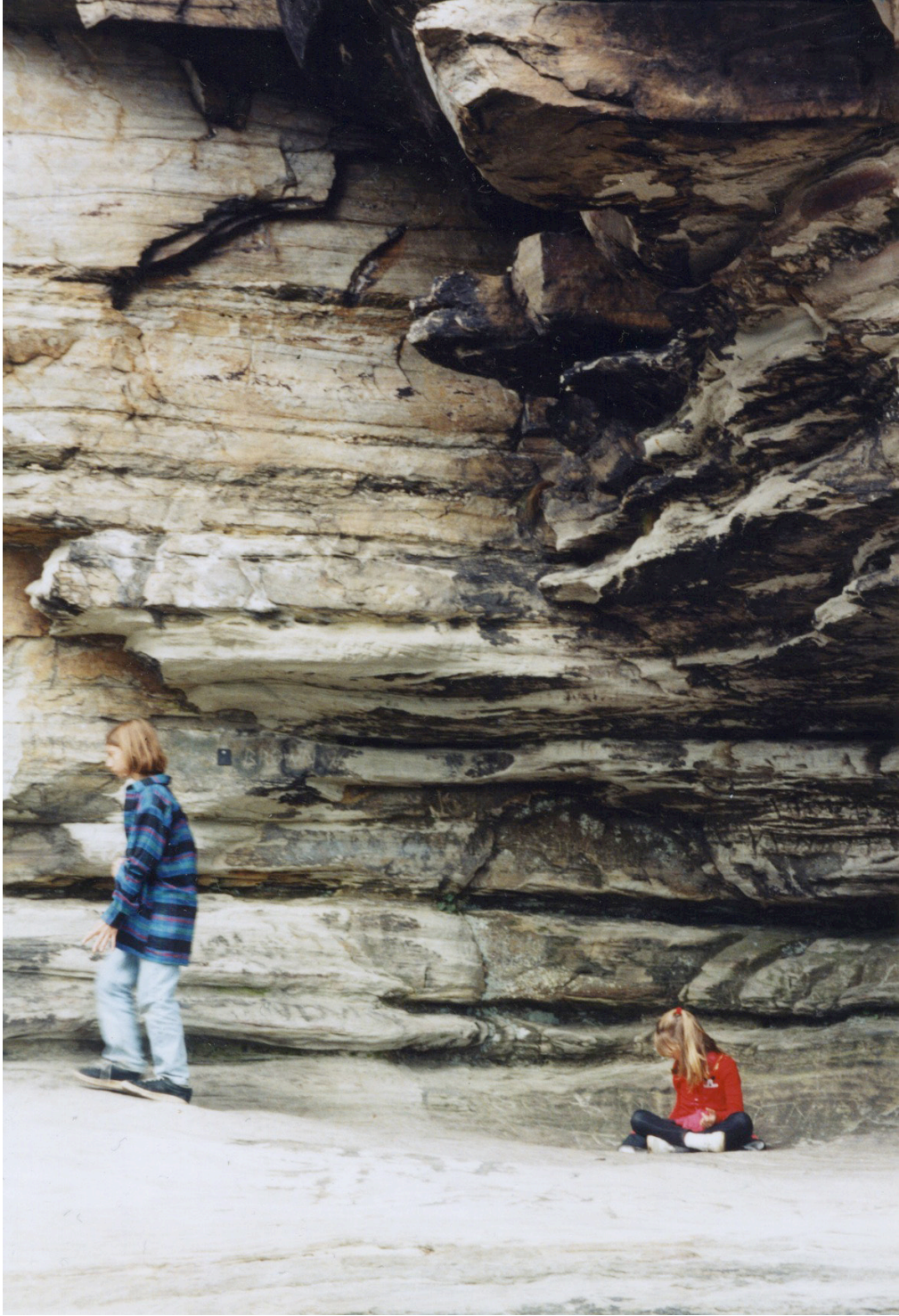
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ABSTRACT

The three primary components of Place-based Arts Investigation (PBAI) are an understanding of place, arts-integration, and arts-based research, each with a heritage in and of itself. These ideas work in tandem to form the keystones of PBAI, a model for interdisciplinary arts-based learning that utilizes the multiple languages of art as methods of inquiry and self-reflection without stifling curiosity. Developed with the intention to provide a true model for ‘arts integration’ in teaching and learning, PBAI uses the distinct advantages of visual art education to engage the learner through multiple modes of inquiry while providing periods of guided reflection (Gude, 2007). PBAI purports that every community performs as a microcosm of the world at large. Upon further inspection, the community (the place, the people, and the ways in which they are connected) will elicit the same natural history, power struggles, and ethical questions of any standard curriculum. By a community’s particularity, it becomes accessible and relatable. Supported by case studies and qualitative research from personal histories and interviews, this thesis book explores PBAI within the context of three facets of ‘place’ in depth: Urban Wild, Downtown or the Built Environment, and Centers of Culture. Adherence to the principles of PBAI has the capacity to empower student learning, develop empathy for environmental and social justice, and to build engaged citizens who are invested in the future of their community.



PREFACE

“You should know a lot.”

—SCOTT LAPHAM, *Personal Interview 2016*

This is me in fourth grade, on a family trip to Pilot Mountain in North Carolina where we often went in the fall. The Blue Ridge Mountains are famous for their fall foliage. It is the closest mountain to the house in which I grew up on Lewellyn Drive, where I’m thankful my parents still reside. I remember this day well because my black jeans and long sleeve red shirt with the silk collar made me feel like a grown-up, and even though they were new school clothes, I wanted to wear them hiking. My mother didn’t mind; she wears her Revlon *Sugared Plum Lipstick no. 48* from the mountains to the sea and everywhere in between. I remember leaping from rock to rock, urging my legs to grow just one more centimeter with each leap as I raced my older brother up the mountain. I don’t remember this specific quiet moment my mother or father captured on film, but I am almost certain I know what I’m doing.

Around this time, back in the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, I would attend after-school care at Friendly Avenue Baptist Church (even though we weren’t Baptist), and at recess, my friend and I would hide in the giant ceramic tunnels on the playground. Children love finding little ‘hideaways’ that suit their size, especially the shy kids. And every day, my friend and I would walk the length of the playground to gather rocks of various colors before returning to the tunnels

where we ground them up into little piles of dust.

Working up some saliva in the mouth by sucking our cheeks and scooping the tongue left to right, we took turns trying to guide one slowly falling droplet of spit into the center of each pile, mixing it up and finger painting on the cool mud-colored walls as though we were native peoples leaving our marks, telling our stories for future little girls like us to find and translate. On our walks, we found dusty pinks, gray-blues, burnt orange from scattered pieces of broken brick, and much to our dismay, most rocks, no matter what they looked like—produced a white powder when ground into a fine pigment. Trying to assemble the full army of the rainbow, I had my eye out for rocks wherever I went, from the playground to Pilot Mountain, to the sidewalk outside of the Post Office. The ultimate prize was to get my hands on the source of that luxurious dioxazine purple from my grandmother’s paint chest.

I’ve always romanticized the ‘good ol’ days of yore,’ working from scratch and often doing things the hard way. I now understand how this has contributed to my development as a *process driven* artist, maker, and educator, but I come by it honestly. As a young person working alongside my grandparents in the garden, we were farm-to-table before it was cool. We worked from scratch because that’s how it was always done. The earth

gave richly, and we honored those gifts by taking pride in the ways in which we used them. My grandmother's pie from the crabapple trees in yard is miles better than any restaurant or grocery store pie. They always add so much sugar you can't taste the apples. The secret is to let the tartness of the green apples shine through, honor the source of the flavor. I applied this logic to my experiments in the tunnel; if we bought paint from the store, *could we make that, too?* Maybe ours would exceed the store quality, like the pies. If we could just find the right rocks, the right pigments, we could keep it pure and honor the source.

Despite my best efforts, the quest for unlocking the secret ways of the olden days by fabricating my own art materials couldn't be solved with rocks and spit alone. A material change was in order, and the poison of the raw pokeberry was put to the test. "Stay away!" we were told, "not for eating!" *Well, if not for eating, then for what?* Crushing those little black berries between my fingers—first a pop!—then a slow roll of that glorious purple from my mind's eye, running down my hand between my thumb and forefinger and landing in a splat on my white tennis shoe. A little bit pinker than the dioxazine from Grandmother's paint set, but *better!* My older brother, Justin, and I crushed those little black berries in old baby food jars. We painted picture after picture with that godly pink juice. "We've made watercolors!" proudly showing my grandparents pictures we had painted of the family dog, of the house, of each other.... but as they dried, that electric beet-red began to fade, ultimately turning to brown. The quest was not yet over. Now that we've made paint....*how do we make the color stay?*

As I reflect on this memory, I recall a time eight or ten years later when my grandfather and a bouquet of day lilies in the hospital helped me to answer this question. I like to say I was "half-raised by my grandparents in the country." It's hard to say that phrase without a southern accent, and when I say it, I am immediately transported to dirty bare feet and my Carolina roots. When my brother and I were young, Papa took us exploring—down the red dirt road, past the blackberry bushes and the old goat with the yellow teeth, to a small creek at the bottom of a great hill where we'd go fishing for minnows. I have it perfectly mapped out in my head, even if the landscape has changed a little now. Those were the best times, but Papa was often sick in his later years, and

so we brought the outdoors to him in the form of orange day lilies from the yard. Papa leaned in for a sniff, and when he brought his head back his nose was covered in burnt sienna colored pollen. We laughed at the joke the flowers had made, and I offered him a corner of the white bed sheet, which to our astonishment turned the most potent golden-yellow that you've ever seen! More yellow than the old goat's teeth, a Kraft Mac n' Cheese kind of yellow: technicolor!

Flash forward a few years and I'm in my first year of teaching art in a tuition-free private middle school for girls in Boston. The students were working in teams to design a modern gown for the Greek goddess of their choice. We had a relatively small art budget and a lot of random materials from donations through the years, but what felt at first like a handicap, provided an opportunity for some more creative exploration in material making. "Our goddess wears purple," they said, "she's royal." However, there was no purple fabric to be had. I dug in the cabinets for some construction paper, and a student asked if we could dye some white fabric with food coloring. "Well I have no idea, but I'd love to find out! Bring it in, let's give it a try." The next day I also brought in a bag of frozen cranberries that didn't make it into Thanksgiving dinner and a couple mordants for dyeing—alum and cream of tartar. This step I learned from the day lilies, when Grandmother helped me to dye the tiniest scrap of fabric with the pollen from all the lilies in the yard.

Ask any teacher: December is equal parts grueling report cards, waiting for the holidays, and wild excitement, but you still have to "teach the children something" every hour of the day. And even for a young idealist in their first year of teaching, December had proven to be a tad more exhausting than I expected. Standing with the students around the pot of boiling cranberries, watching and stirring with eager, expectant faces, the joy of teaching returned as I watched them innocently exploring the world. The berries cooked to a delicious pink, and one by one, I saw fingers slip into the pot and journey upwards towards twisted faces with squinted eyes as the tartness of the cranberries reached their tongues. We tried multiple types of paper and fabric—raw cotton, polyester blends, and lace, notebook paper, drawing paper, and higher quality stonehenge (this one worked the best), but each reacted differently. As the pink strips hung from a makeshift clothesline

in the art room, I saw pride beaming in each of my students' faces, and I felt it too. Later that afternoon, I checked in on the strips to find that the baby pink of the cranberry dye had become a warm, light blue. Recalling the experience of the young Pokeberry Painters, my heart fell in my chest anticipating the disappointment in my students' faces. All of a sudden Anicia, from the Cranberry Guild, popped her head in the door on the way to the bathroom, and I brought her to the clothesline: "Ah! It's *better*, Miss! It's like magic! *Do you think it will mold?*" Trying to hide my astonishment with nervous laughter, "Time will tell!"

Although the making of artist materials such as paints and dyes hasn't become a main focus of my studies, I love how these memories bleed into one another. Each exploration leads naturally to another question, which then requires more research and exploration, leading to yet another question. 'How do we make paint?' becomes 'How do we make the color stay?' becomes 'How can we dye fabric that will withstand the test of time?' This is the kind of curiosity spiral that we want to encourage in our students because that spiral builds a lifelong learner.

This little experiment didn't make it onto those grueling December report cards. More importantly, it was a moment of growth and learning that came from having a new experience together, a communal exploration. Now I understand that this kind of responsive teaching and learning method in which the teacher encourages the student's natural curiosity by offering structures for inquiry (i.e. cranberries, mordants, an old hotplate, and a borrowed pot from the cafeteria) is *constructivist learning*, a method frequently used in Reggio Emilia nursery schools. We stopped our experiment here and the next day, went back to designing gowns. I have to admit, at the time I was a little relieved, as we had already maxed out what I knew about dyeing fabric. Thankfully, the students were eager to have a fashion show. I actually can't remember if the cranberry fabric made it into one of the dresses or not, but it almost doesn't matter. That experience of communal research and discovery was 'magic' in the words of my student and most definitely not without merit.

Now that I have a few more years of teaching and learning under my belt, I am no longer embarrassed that my knowledge of fabric dye processes maxed out



Page 12: *Figure 2*
Ed or Susan Poindexter
Family snapshot #2, Erin and Justin on Pilot Mountain
Pilot Mountain State Park, North Carolina, Fall 1996
Photograph
4 x 6 inches

Above: *Figure 3*
Erin Poindexter
Dorchester, Massachusetts, Winter 2011
The Great Cranberry Experiment #1: 6th grade students dye lace polyester blend with fabric
Digital Photograph

Figure 4
Erin Poindexter
Dorchester, Massachusetts, Winter 2011
The Great Cranberry Experiment #2: 6th grade students sew fabric rose petals during a collaborative fashion design project for the modern day Aphrodite's gown.
Digital Photograph



Figure 5, Student Work, Dorchester, Massachusetts, Winter 2013, *Puddingstone in Franklin Park*, Digital Photograph

in one art period with those 6th graders. In the words of local Providence photographer, Scott Lapham (2016), “You should know a lot. You will only be a professional in areas where you’re a professional, but *you should know a lot.*” From where I stand today, if I were to relive what I now dub as the ‘The Great Cranberry Experiment of 2011’ (the more I write about it, the greater it becomes), a few things would be different.

Firstly, I have had some time to study with Dr. Richard Johnson, a botanist and professional landscape architect, and renowned New England Ecologist, Rick Enser. Exploring the New England landscape with these specialists, I have come to know many more local plants and their traditional uses. I am eager to experiment with plains tickseed, *Coreopsis tinctoria*, and Dyer’s greenweed, *Genista tinctoria*. I quite holistically stumbled upon the dyeing capacity of the white oak, *Quercus alba*, while making acorn flour (see p.36, Figure 10). Acorns contain tannins, which have a naturally occurring bitter taste and need to be removed. This dark brown substance, when rinsed out over time is actually the namesake for the process of tanning leather and stained my cheesecloth a nice light brown.

I came to this discovery while pursuing the particular history of the place in which I live, engaging my own

curious spirit. When the teacher remains a student of the world, he or she will always be growing in their capacity as an educator. I now have new methods of inquiry with which to engage my future students. Not only can we look into our kitchens for dye, but we can venture outside. For example, gathering and processing acorns from a local park invites students to a richer experience of both the dye process and the resources available in their community.

Also, I am no longer embarrassed at not having an exhaustive knowledge of everything art adjacent, and speaking to Lapham’s point, I am sure that *I do know a lot*—including when it is time to bring in the experts. So that is what should follow the question of ‘*how do we dye fabric that will withstand the test of time?*’ (a.k.a. *sans mold*). We could bring in a local textile artist, watch a relevant documentary, visit a fabric manufacturing plant— maybe even all three! *There is absolutely no reason* that the conversation has to end at your (or my) level of expertise.

Lastly, I see the Great Cranberry Experiment of 2011 as an experience that provided just as much new knowledge, discovery, and the kind of team-building mentality as I was trying to achieve with the Greek goddess group design challenge in the first place. Those experiences

are of equal importance in my mind; however, only the goddess dresses showed up at the art show, and the many cranberry papers that didn't get taken home ended up dusty and eventually in the recycling.

Taking another note from the Reggio Emilia framework, when exploring in this rhizomatic fashion, it is important to keep track with documentation. In a traditional Reggio classroom, the students are young and so it falls to the teacher to take lots of photographs, record student comments and questions, to keep that line of research open until interest wanes. With older students, such as my 6th graders, or even as young kindergarten, this could easily and succinctly be documented in a sketchbook, either in real time, or in the five minutes at the end of class. When *researching* feels so much like *playing*, it is not always apparent that we are truly widening our view of the world. Often times, we might not make those connections until much later when we take time to reflect, as I am doing now. Recounting experiences and making connections as I write, I realize have always been interested in capturing the colors of nature in a much more experiential way than my usual landscape paintings might suggest. Now I have to ask, *'How can this specificity of local color enrich the experience of making (and ultimately viewing) my landscape paintings?'*

Drawing from this collection of memories, I lay the foundation for this book:

1. Nature is an inexhaustible resource of information.
2. The languages of art (such as painting, dyeing, fashion design, etc.) are an excellent way to access that information.
3. Learning is an all day, lifelong affair. It is not reserved for school hours or time spent behind desks in the classroom; it follows inspiration and a quest to solve real problems. As educators, let us not restrict ourselves to the confines of our classrooms when there are mountaintops, playgrounds, hospitals, and warm kitchens calling our names.
4. And of course, *you should know a lot.*

You know that famous John Lennon saying, 'Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans?' I believe this sort of *'second fiddle' story line* developing right alongside you can be an asset in the classroom. In

truth, it's kind of the way that interdisciplinary learning happens when you're making art: we just need to embrace this second narrative. Are the strips of dyed blue paper in The Great Cranberry Experiment Art with a capital A? No. It's not even art with a lower case 'a.' It's a discovery more akin to the scientific method than it is an expression of personal voice like that of a Van Gogh painting or a Christian Lacroix haute couture gown. But if the 6th graders weren't in the middle of a fashion design project and thinking about fabric in such specific, hands-on ways—if they did not have an immediate need for the purple fabric that was not in our possession—*would we have had these great moments of learning about natural dye processes?* Probably not. We need an instigator. New questions arise while we're busy trying to answer other questions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis is qualitative research that has been gathered in an effort to identify inspiring models of interdisciplinary arts learning and a desire to get to know my new city of Providence, Rhode Island as a graduate student. Selecting coursework to sharpen my interests, I became engaged in learning in ways that I had not previously anticipated. For instance, I was able to synthesize more environmental science this year than I have previously in all of my cumulative years of schooling because it was all in service of art—everything had a potential and very near next use. Rather than trying to work within the confined space of a single subject area, I was free to let my research wander. I felt for the first time that my capacity for ‘knowing’ was limitless, and I found myself, once again, looking for the metaphorical rocks of my childhood in every corner of the world (*see Preface*), this time in the form of a literature review of borrowed books, database searches, and museum collections. I learned to look for connections out into the world, in the stories of other people, and within my own personal history. Critical discussion ignited periods of self-reflection through art, writing, and peer-presentations that highlighted a wealth of knowledge I had always taken for granted. In fact, I discovered that by having grown up “country” (i.e. gardening in season, following the path of stream with bare feet, collecting beautifully unusual specimens), I had experiences that are *ways of knowing*—and they are all entry points into the worlds of science, art, and local history. Botanist, poet, and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) wrote, “To name and describe you must first see, and science polishes the gift of seeing” (p.48).

This thesis contains an interdisciplinary educational model I have come to describe as Place-Based Arts Investigation (PBAI). PBAI was born from my desire to build community and camaraderie between students in my art classes through shared experience. Central to the development of PBAI is the belief that all people—my students, myself, and all members of the community—are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, but storytellers and researchers in their own right, each bubbling with unique personal histories and his or her own ways of knowing. Without boundaries to limit curiosity we will find that the place in which we live is a virtually inexhaustible space of discovery.

PART ONE

PREPARE YOUR KNAPSACK WITH PLACE-BASED ARTS INVESTIGATION



ALUM

TARTER



— 2 MIN. —

— 6 MIN. —

16 MIN

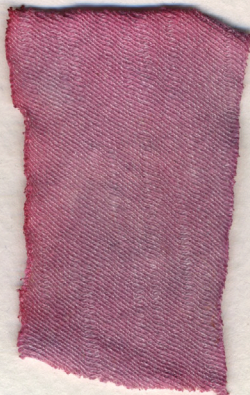
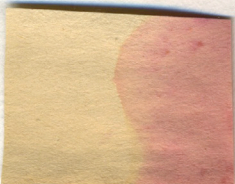
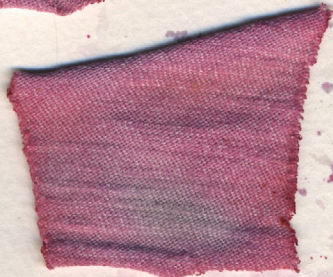
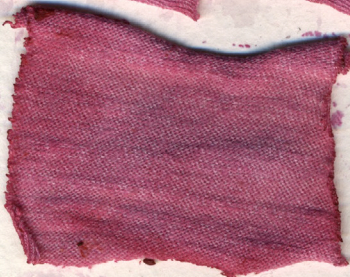
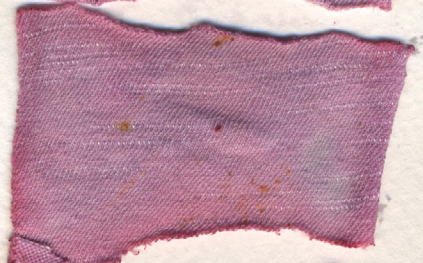
Any blue spots
scrapped when
laid on this
paper into damp.
Does to acid
to leach in
white paper
when it pink?

cream colored
MATBOARD

MANILLA
CHEAP
DRAWING
PAPER

Sketch Book Paper

BOTH MORDANTS
↓ dyed in the
time it takes
2 wash
a pot.





INTRODUCTION

*“Every experience is a moving force.
Its value can be judged only on the grounds of
what it moves toward and into.”*

—JOHN DEWEY, *Experience and Education*, 1938

I don't think I ever felt truly connected to a community until I became a teacher, until it became my responsibility to ensure that each and every student in my classroom felt as though he or she had a *place* and felt as though each *belonged*. Not until I had a new vantage point as a leader was I able to see that the feeling of disconnectedness that had haunted my youth was in fact not unique to my own experience, but indeed ubiquitous among my students.

Humans are a social species. We need to build that connection with people and see the world from different perspectives in order to truly understand what it means to be a thinking, feeling being in our world. To achieve this heightened state, we need to share a multitude of experiences, to have real-life adventures in which we discover things bigger than ourselves and develop new ways of seeing. In expanding our horizons, we broaden our understanding of what is possible, and raise our expectations from ourselves to something greater. Isn't the central goal of education to nurture the human condition and propel the next generation ever forward? Let's start by taking our class out of the classroom and explore our community with Place-based Arts Investigation.

Place-based Arts Investigation (PBAI) is the sustained investigation of the place in which one lives through arts-based research. Developed with the intention to provide a true model for 'arts integration' in teaching and learning, PBAI uses the distinct advantages of visual

art education to engage the learner through multiple modes of inquiry while providing periods of guided reflection (Gude, 2007). Adopting Edward Steichen's idea of "the universal through the particular" which inspired his 1954 photographic exhibition 'Family of Man' (Szarowski 1994, p. 23), PBAI purports that every community performs as a microcosm of the world at large. Upon further inspection, the community (the place, the people, and the ways in which they are connected) will elicit the same natural history, power struggles, and ethical questions of any standard curriculum. By a community's particularity, it becomes accessible and relatable. Rather than being standards driven, let's match the content of our teaching to the specific needs of the communities in which we serve so that we may ground them in multiple concrete avenues for success now and in the future (Marquez-Zenkov, 2007). Acknowledging the limitations and advantages of the communities in which we serve, let us invite our students to the experience the richness that comes from a deep understanding of the world in which they live through engagement with their community. Let us help our students to negotiate a greater sense of self by providing multiple modes of inquiry and opportunities for self-reflection. In the words of education director Nancy Fincke (2015a), "Wherever you are, being aware of where you are," we must look deep into whatever it is we are looking at and ask questions. *Where are we, what does it look like? What can we find out just*

by looking? What happens here on a regular basis? What has happened here in the past? Who comes here and why? Questions such as these driven by investigative and reflective exercises in the arts will help us to become ‘aware of where we are,’ able to negotiate our place in it, and develop a deeper sense of self as a result. However, we must look both *deep* (into one area) and *wide* (seeking multiple perspectives and disciplines). Adherence to the principles of PBAI has the capacity to empower student learning, develop empathy for environmental and social justice, and to build engaged citizens who are invested in the future of their community.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Think of this research as a road map. It outlines opportunities and methods for PBAI inspired by places, people, and stories from my experience, supported by case studies of exceptional programming across the globe. I encourage you to seek of the ‘universal through the particular.’ As you read, try to identify some particular places in your own community that might spawn inspired arts-based curriculum relevant to your students’ needs. I hope that my explorations of Providence, RI, coupled with the ideas contained in this book will help you explore your own community. Together we can come to a shared understanding of bringing true, arts-based, interdisciplinary learning into action with pedagogies such as place-based and culture-based, design thinking, and visual arts education. I have included several pages of arts-based research from my own “Visual Arts Process Diary” a term coined by A. Cutcher (2013, p. 236), an educator attempting to bring the principles of Reggio Emilia to a high school environment in Australia.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of positive programming, but I have tried to touch on several key areas of a child’s potential well-being that I believe should exist in education today. With encouragement to step outside of the classroom, I offer a rationale you can give to your principal, headmaster, or superintendent to help gain approval for your many field trips to come. Most importantly, you will have a rationale to share with your students in their quest to resolve the dichotomy between their lives inside and outside of school as they begin to

look from themselves to something greater. These tools will enable you and the students to explore and find value in your community and to become an example of heightened awareness for the classroom and the school. Isn’t the power of teaching and learning better with excitement in one’s path? I always thought so.

Page 20, *Figure 6*
Erin Poindexter
Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016
PBAI Process Journal Page #1: Cape Cod
Cranberry Dye Test
Mixed Media: Ink, Cranberry Dye,
Paper, Cotton,
8 x 10 inches

PLACE-BASED ARTS INVESTIGATIONS IN CONTEXT

“Place is a space that has been given meaning by people”

—GRAY & GRAHAM, *This is the Right Place*, 2007



The three primary components of PBAI are an understanding of *place*, *interdisciplinary learning*, and *arts-based research*, each with a heritage in and of itself. These ideas work in tandem to form the keystones of PBAI, a model for interdisciplinary arts-based learning that utilizes the multiple languages of art as methods of inquiry and self-reflection without stifling curiosity.

PLACE

In writing, I struggled with whether to call this pedagogy Place-based Arts Investigation, or Art-based Place Investigation. Which is more important? What you study or the way that you study it? One can get caught up in a ‘which came first, the chicken or the egg?’ mentality. I settled on PBAI because a body is always somewhere—*there is no escaping place*. Art-based research provides the rose colored lenses with which to spiral out from the center and make meaning.

According to Gray and Graham (2007), key thinkers in the discourse on place-based pedagogy in Utah, “*place is a space that has been given meaning by people.*” How does this definition fit into the PBAI model? In the

search to understand *place*, we focus our investigations on three distinct but ultimately intertwined areas: the natural environment, the built environment, and the people in our community who bring meaning to these spaces.

The first area of study in our understanding of place is the *natural environment*. Nature is the world’s oldest and most important motivator in our quest for understanding. We depend on it to survive, and as such, we as humans are capable of having a huge effect on it, be it positive or negative. Whether you live in a rural environment or an urban center, patches of nature in its wild state exist. When we study the natural environment, we are looking at multiple systems working together to provide just the right conditions for our survival. Nature teaches us humility in a world that feels unlimited (Louv, 2008). We start with surveying the lay of land, landforms, bioregions and how they were shaped over time. We learn to respect the life force that is nature by identifying individual plant and animal specimens and studying the reciprocal qualities of the food chain and decomposition. We follow seasons, weather, sunlight,

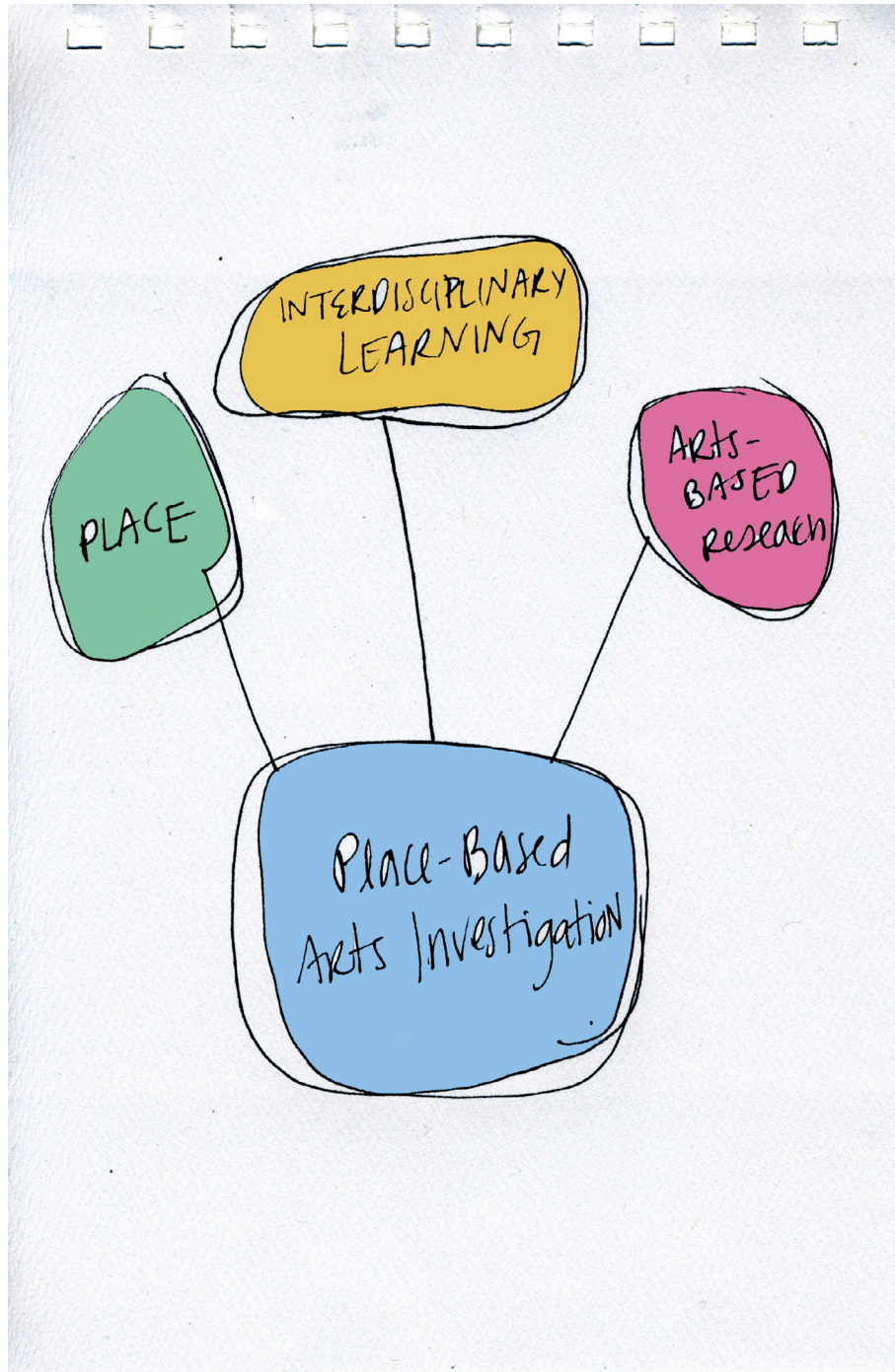


Figure 7, Erin Poindexter, Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016, PBAI Diagram, Digital Design

moonlight, and observe how nature records the passage of time. Whether it is deliberately cultivated or not, we all have a relationship with nature (Zuckerman, personal communication, May 2016).

The *built environment* is everything touched by human hand, a veritable record of human experience. Upon examination of the built environment, we can study architecture from tepees and log cabins, to graveyards, Greco-Roman design motifs, and our own bedrooms. The built environment also addresses landscaping as a marker of human history: built systems such as public transportation, food production, water, and electricity that we depend on to survive in the ways in which we are accustomed. Research questions we can ask here are: *What does the place in which we live look like and what goes on in these spaces? What has happened in history to shape the world in such a way? What do we expect will happen next and how do you, as an individual, feel about it? How can we contribute going forward?*

The third area of understanding place lies in *people*. People are the activators. They are the ones that turn the natural environment into the built environment and often try to put it back again. They are the ones that turn buildings into institutions and centers for knowledge such as museums, botanical gardens, and corner stores. We look to people in our community as resources of information, but also as resources of how to be, the different kinds of people and jobs that it takes to make up a functioning community. They are primary sources who make history and culture come alive with first-hand experience as we question who writes the history books. But most importantly, people are *potential partners*—who can be co-collaborators in our search for understanding.

Community is a tricky word that requires a little defining because it is used in so many disciplines interchangeably. I have a community of red salamanders living beneath the English ivy in my front yard. One often thinks of a neighborhood as a community, or a school, or church members—namely people united by one place. The ‘needs of the community’ often come up in discussion around public art. This notion of creating ‘site-specific’ work implores people to go out and get to know the community in which they create their work. But does that refer to the place as well as the people who occupy it—the people and their unifier? What about ‘communities of mythic unity’ that exist without the

physical link of a common land or building? An example of a community of mythic unity is ‘the homeless’ who get grouped together because they are assumed to have similar needs and obstacles, i.e. need a home but don’t have one (Kwon, 2002). Just because there is a homeless person in Santa Fe, New Mexico doesn’t mean that he will ever actually meet a homeless person in Providence, Rhode Island.

Other examples of mythic communities include ‘urban kids,’ ‘art teachers,’ or ‘Hispanic Americans.’ We can learn from those connections too, can’t we? Also, people can leave a community, they can move or have a shift in needs. If that person in Santa Fe finds a home, then are they still a part of the homeless community? That person has a deep understanding of the needs of that particular group, but they no longer belong in the same way.

Expanding on the first time I felt truly connected to a community, I was leading a group of gangly, giggling fourth grade girls through Franklin Park in the inner city neighborhood of Dorchester, MA, sketchbooks in hand. I was in my first year teaching full time, still fresh from my move to urban Boston from rural North Carolina, and they were all new too. Each student had left her comfortable elementary school where she had been the oldest and the smartest in her grade, to a new pond, an advanced school for girls in grades 4-8 from low-income families, where she was at the bottom again with a brand new pecking order. It was the fall and we brought chalk pastels to do some ‘plein air’ sketching. Franklin Park has mounds of ‘Puddingstone,’ also known as the Roxbury Conglomerate, an unusual looking sedimentary rock laden with smaller ‘plum-like’ stones, that slid down to Massachusetts around 600 million years ago during the ice age (Skeehan & Ring, 1982). They provide perfect, if petit, mountains on which to sketch a bird’s eye view of the park. Desiring to get to know my new cohort as we sketched, I asked them about their lives and was astounded to learn that the majority of the students never got to come to the park to play even though it was walking distance from the school and it was a condition of admittance that they live in the area. But it was not for lack of desire on their parts. The school day was long—7 am to 7 pm for some of them with early drop off and homework help—and for most of the year in the northeast, it is dark after 7. Others said that their parents worked late or on the weekends and couldn’t take them;

others said that they babysat their younger siblings and couldn't leave the house. Due to the advent of "stranger danger," none of them were old enough to go to the park alone or even with a friend. I, on the other hand, rode my bike for miles after school and in the summer without getting into any serious trouble from at least age eight. I watched their self-conscious body language as we climbed down the petit mountain of conglomerate rock and began sketching, getting out some nervous energy by jumping around and drawing trees in different places along the sidewalk, *working together*. In this moment I decided to use the park and the greater Boston area as much as possible in my teaching. I saw the opportunity for an exchange: the students, even though they didn't get to go to the park often, knew a lot about Dorchester and the different cultures that lived there and they could share with me. I knew the special nature places in my neighborhood of Jamaica Plain such as the Arboretum and the pond, as well as the art museums that I could share with them. We could figure out where to go next after that. I knew my community, they knew theirs, but we came together as a new community in the fourth grade class with me as their fearless, caring leader. By joining forces and having shared experiences, our community grew exponentially that year. So we will use this memory to provide a working definition for the purposes of this book: community is an idea and/or a place that connects a group of people and is most definitely a model that is constantly in flux.

SENSE OF PLACE

"A sense of place is a virtual immersion that depends on lived experience and a topographical intimacy that is rare today both in ordinary life and in traditional educational fields."

— LUCY R. LIPPARD,
The Lure of The Local, 1997

The contemporary artist's idea of discovering his or her own sense of place has been around since the 1970's, but is currently experiencing a much needed and culturally rich revival in interdisciplinary pedagogy (Graham, 2007). Alan Gussow coined the term to describe the new work of 1970s American landscape painters. While

the landscape has been a common theme among painters throughout history, Gussow's contemporaries were approaching the subject with an artistic "sensitivity to the direct experience of nature" (Geske, 1975, p.6). A sense of place arises from the senses; the sights, sounds, and smells of an environment which we come to know and expect, particularly as children. Lippard proposes that the desire for a 'sense of place' is directly related to a "sense of displacement" (1997, p.34). Amidst our multi-centered society, we have a desire to belong to something greater than ourselves. One can develop a sense of place through the acquisition of intimate knowledge such as the stories of people and places within our community. It takes time, energy, and *investment* to develop a sense of place.

A favorite teaching resource of mine is a PBS video from 2013 entitled *Local USA: Sense of Place*. I found it while co-teaching a literary arts course at about the same time. This particular episode explores several artists or storytellers who investigate a specific place and how the locale, be it naturally built or of human origin, inspires them. In *April*, a short film by Alan Spearman, we hear a poem, intensified by the low hum of traditional African American church music and visuals that swim in and out focus as a poem rolls along. It tells the story of young Tennessee girl and her magical tree who "can see things." As April describes the tree, she scans her eyes from its thick trunk up to the tiny branches reaching out into the blue sky, and her thoughts linger there in the open space, wondering what it might be like to be the wind, or the bird in the wind. She tells us about periods of violence in her neighborhood and feeling frightful, but remembers climbing into the hollow of the trunk as the tree becomes her safe place. The tree functions as the constant in the story which allows the narrator to change timelines and go between the voice of a little girl and that of an older woman, who are possibly the same character. The older woman comes back to the tree and it looks different, but it still elicits those memories. Also featured in the video is a member of the Ponca tribe in the Midwest who uses the of gravestone of White Buffalo Girl to talk about the history of her people, and a theatrical game out of Australia that allows one to see their city in a brand new way. The central idea behind developing your own sense of place is evidenced primarily by the girl and her tree. In this highly localized sense of place,

we move from a larger idea of place as a unifier of people and community, to a single specimen which, over time, is able to catalogue personal experience with layers of meaning that create a rich history. The tree poem ignites the humanization of nature. Nature becomes a time-keeper in which April can structure her memories. The physicality of the tree holds a record of its own, i.e. it blooms, drops its leaves, gets cut and graffitied, etc. This film would make a very valuable introduction to a work of art in which students identify sacred places within their own homes.

PLACE-BASED LEARNING

Place-based education is a model which seeks to unite children to their community through a curriculum rooted in the local history, people, and natural environment of the place in which they live. It was developed to counter the sense of displacement of which Lippard spoke. In an exceptional example of community cooperation, described in Gray and Graham's 2007 article "This is The Right Place;" the Springville Museum of Art in Utah exists to serve the 22,000 town residents through Community Partnerships, public programming, juried art shows for all ages and abilities, professional development, and more. The key to their success is featuring the local town history, which was founded on farming, landscape, and religion while supporting local artists and art making. The rationale behind continued museum investment in the community and vice versa with continued community investment in the museum, is that it connects and grounds both parties in the place that they live. The museum itself developed in the early 1900s as a grass-roots movement to keep art collections at the local high schools. This collection grew and eventually became the most well-respected art museum in all of Utah. Springville uses a place-based education model to "strengthen.... connection to others, to their region, land, and to overcome the alienation, and isolation that is often associated with modern society (p.304)." Springville itself is a town of only 22,000 people and the museum exists to serve them through Community Partnerships, public programming, and juried art shows (from children to amateurs, to accomplished local contemporary artists). Volunteer opportunities exist for teens and adults to serve in a variety of positions from receptionists and docents to board members. The

museum also sponsors a children's art week, a senior portfolio review college access program, high school art show, and teacher training programs which exemplify the city's continued investment in (particularly) secondary school artwork.

Although the article speaks only briefly about the rationale for place-based education, Gray and Graham address the human condition and our need for connectivity in a very straightforward and eloquent way. Place-based learning's "transformational agenda (p.304)" is launched from the museum, but carries out its work all over the community. The article speaks about the changing missions of museums across the country. The museum is becoming less like a "shrine" and more like a "forum" for discussion (Gray and Graham, 2007, p.305). In my opinion, I believe that the museum should be one of many learning centers. The museum preserves cultural traditions and values, but often does not speak for everyone. The cultures represented in artwork shown is up to the curatorial staff and collection of work. As we know that communities are living, breathing, changeable entities, this is especially true in older museums when the collections were gathered by people long ago based on their values, which may be different than the values of the community in which the museum exists today. This speaks to the larger issue at hand that all work that has been collected or saved during the course of history is reflective of the values of those who held power and deemed it important, anywhere from last Thursday to Mesopotamia. We must gather all we can from one source and balance it against another resource within the community. The most pertinent idea in the Springfield model is the use of the teacher as a *broker or guide of community resources* (p.304). This sentiment is echoed in a similar program in Minnesota in which the teacher provides a balanced look at the history of place by bringing students to many Indigenous experts (of the old ways and the new ways) as well as sacred sites and battle sites to facilitate a balanced perspective and more complete sense of the history of a place (Bequette, 2014). Through place-based education, we identify the complexities of our community and invest in its success. By beginning to value our home, we value ourselves and our experience in it.

ARTS-INTEGRATION: INTER, MULTI, CROSS & TRANS-DISCIPLINARY LEARNING

If visual arts education is taught properly, it is inherently interdisciplinary (Sproll, 2015); the questions that arise in art making often lead one outside the art world before coming back again. Art is not simply the act of making—artists are always ‘making stuff about other stuff’ (Sproll, 2015). Art details the intricacies of this world, bathing them in light, and inviting us to participate in a richer experience through multiple ways of knowing. For example, the landscape painter attempting to match the direct fall of the sunlight on the tree will test multiple combinations of yellow, green, and purple in a manner not dissimilar to the scientist. The artist must then negotiate the brush in hand as they analyze the different textures and densities of the natural world. *The sunlight flows through the thin, new leaves, but seems to reflect off of the white birch bark with an intense flash of light.* The skills of careful looking, experimentation, and resilience as exemplified by the landscape painter are also the skills needed of a scientist. Unfortunately the boundaries of traditional discipline-based education, with segregated subjects such as U.S. History, environmental science, literature and art, are short-circuiting true curiosity and hindering our opportunities to the rich experience that comes from a life with art. The experience of art, of life, is not organized in such a manner. These socially constructed boxes urge us to categorize our experience of the world as ‘either-or’ which we know is limiting (Dewey, 1997). Can we really say that major artistic and scientific discoveries were not historically influenced? (Zuckerman, 2016). Evidence of this cross-discipline pollination can be seen in the Expressionist paintings of the late 1890s with such artists as Chaim Soutine and Oskar Kokoschka. As photographic processes became easier, cheaper, and more accessible; paintings no longer held sole responsibility for realistically depicting the world. They became free to wander.

Arts integration initiatives such as STEAM are on the tongue of many educational professionals looking to transform the current status quo. People value the arts for their ability to provide inspired solutions, deemed “innovating,” in the STEM field and a part of the 21st century skill set (Zande, 2011). Artists and designers such as Stephen Glassman of Los Angeles are finding creative

solutions to global issues with such works as *Urban Air*, a work of art that transforms outdated highway billboards into bamboo gardens that float high above viewers heads. This visually striking art is also a solution, adding oxygen producing plants to the highway landscape to help to alleviate some of the environmental stress caused by automobiles in downtown LA and provoking discourse about climate change (“Urban Air,” 2016). He uses his art to reflect on the state of the world in which he lives. As a public artist, Glassman assesses the needs of the community and finds that both the people and the environment are wanting. Trading the traditional tools of landscape paintings for living plants allows him to creatively put back what he saw was missing from the landscape. *Urban Air* also has the potential to create free wifi for an increasingly technologically driven society, and share information on climate change through his website.

But arts integration seems to run around with many different names; interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary learning. While each has its own specific history, the various nomenclatures popped up around the same time due to multiple discovery or simultaneous invention theory. This happened with the advent of photography. Dagguero in France was just a hair faster at exhibiting this new technology than Talbot, his British contemporary, and thus has been credited as its inventor. Looking at the root of the words used to describe learning modalities that might integrate the arts, reveals a common theme: the Latin prefix, ‘inter’ means ‘between’, ‘multi’ means ‘many’, ‘cross’ means ‘across’ or ‘spanning multiple boundaries,’ and ‘trans’ is intended to work through, or to ‘transcend’ disciplinary boundaries (Jacobsen & Sndergaard, 2010). Essentially, each term strives to remove the boundaries of traditional disciplinary studies in order to come to a greater understanding by utilizing multiple ways of knowing. For the purposes of this article, I will be using the term *interdisciplinary* because I favor Homi Bhabha’s suggestion that identity, or meaning-making as situated within the self, happens in the ‘in between’ space (Bhabha, 2004). I am a woman, but that does not encompass my whole being, my whole identity. I am a woman and an artist. When the idea of the ‘artist’ is introduced, a dichotomy exists and invites negotiating the space of the in-between. I am somewhere between

woman and artist. If one opens the discussion even more—researcher, educator, and lover of nature, etc.—you will begin to see a clearer picture of who I am. There is power in negotiating the ambiguity that comes from seeing the world through multiple lenses. It provides us with a richer experience and understanding of our subject. So *interdisciplinary teaching and learning*, or learning that occurs ‘in between’ the space of the disciplines. To understand the development of *Urban Air*, we need to negotiate the space between art, environmental science, technology, politics, and advertising—we need interdisciplinarity.

During the Arts Education Partnership National Forum that took place in September of 2002, thirteen arts education partnerships from around the U.S. were invited to talk about arts integration. The forum first looked at *defining the term*, which they found held various meanings for each participating group, even though from the outside perspective, people thought they were generally working towards the same goal with the same parameters for integration. The definition of success that the parties settled on is as follows: interdisciplinary education “enables students to identify and apply authentic connections between two or more disciplines and/or to understand essential concepts that transcend individual disciplines (Arts Education Partnership, 2003).” At its best, interdisciplinary learning mimics processes used by Stephen Glassman, who adds to the needs of the community and environment, using art as a tool or mechanism for activism. At its worst, interdisciplinary learning uses art as an afterthought, such as teaching the weather unit as it is written in the textbook and coloring in charts and graphs or illustrating types of clouds with cotton balls. In these oh-so-familiar cases, the true critical thinking that contemporary artists use in their own practices is not being taken advantage of. There is no learning ‘through’ the art; the teacher is just keeping their hands busy. Painter and political rights activist Faith Ringgold says that her art is her fantasy, and no one can stop her from changing a story from her life into one that *feels good instead of bad* (Ringgold, More Than 60 Years Lecture at RISD Auditorium, April 6, 2016). Therein lies the power of art: it is an invitation to create a new world, through suggesting an alternative storyline, or it offers a new perspective, or it provides creative design solutions. These should be powerful motivations for education to

provide tools and opportunities for arts-based interdisciplinary learning in schools.

ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

Another key ingredient in PBAI is Arts-based Research (ABR), which I perceive of as being part visual arts pedagogy, part interdisciplinary learning, and which borrows ideas about experiential learning from John Dewey, project-based learning, and children’s potentiality for multiple languages from the Reggio Emilia school of thought. But instead of trying to define ABR in traditional terms, we need to rephrase the question to emulate the kind of learning that such an approach sets into motion. Not *what is it*, but *what does it do?* (Boulton-Funke, 2014) In ABR, we move from the traditional educational model of representing and regurgitating information about some person, place, or thing to the actual doing of that thing, or *experiential learning* (Dewey, 1997).

In a visit to the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, in Lincoln, Massachusetts, I was privileged to interview its Deputy Director of Learning and Engagement, Julie Bernson (2015), who shared the most concise example of ABR that I have yet to encounter. The children— pictured here at ‘the Hive’ summer camp, a one-week immersive arts learning camp, which takes place on the museum grounds—have worked collaboratively to create a giant pinball machine. As they erect the installation, the interdisciplinary themes of ABR surface naturally. For instance, a large-scale sculpture automatically initiates the engineering mindset. Principles of physics are at play: how do we make these materials stand up? How do we emulate the system of the pinball game with non-traditional materials? How do we utilize the changing elevation of the land to our advantage? And in the context of the outdoor park, environmental science is inevitable. *If our sculpture is outside, what will the weather be and how do we format our installation to withstand the elements?* It is important to note that these children for the most part do not identify as artists. Yet they are all engaged, thinking critically, and all have something to offer during the process. Just as in The Great Cranberry Experiment of 2011 (see preface), this is another instance in which researching feels like playing. It would be interesting to know how many models and iterations they made before settling on this one. The success of the model is evidence that guided reflection took



Figure 8, Maria Molenti, Lincoln, Massachusetts, Summer 2015, *Arts-based Research at “The Hive” summer camp at The DeCordova Sculpture Museum*, Digital Photograph, Courtesy of the artist

place as they streamlined the design. One might look at these children playing down the hill and think ‘that’s not art’ much in the same manner that someone walking into my classroom after *The Great Cranberry Experiment* of 2011 might look at the sheets of dyed blue paper and fabric and think ‘that’s not art either’. And they might not be wrong. But this undeniably engaged interdisciplinary group experiment was inspired by a great (and by great I mean both cool and enormous) work of art. They needed the work of art to spark their thinking, just as we needed fashion design to spark dye experimentation. Is it a work of art? Maybe, maybe not...yet it certainly is learning, collaboration, and critical thinking. For sure they

are using the languages of art, or more specifically the design process, in which they creatively problem-solve while negotiating a set of circumstances (i.e. materials, elevation, impending weather, etc.), fabricating iterations through a series of trial and error, ending in either a final piece or, in this case, a prototype. What would take it to the next level? A couple hundred thousand dollars and attention to surface detail? *Oh and wouldn’t life-sized holograms be a fun addition!* The imagination and curiosity are limitless resources in children.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

“Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be

judged only on the grounds of what it moves toward and into.” (Dewey, 1997, p.38) This quote illustrates the difference between simply having an experience, such as taking a trip to the sculpture park, and activating that experience into a meaningful learning opportunity. In the pinball example at ‘The Hive’ summer camp, the students at the deCordova were inspired by a large-scale contemporary work of art on the museum grounds; however, it almost doesn’t matter which specific sculpture, led them on this path. In this case, they were inspired by the context in which they were creating the work: large scale sculptures towered over them throughout the park and a great big green space as a huge and unusual new canvas. The idea of pinball machine could have been a real one that a student saw at a pizza restaurant last Thursday. Inspiration is everywhere, and the most innovative ideas are cross-pollinated from a variety of experiences. Therefore, we must look to experience as a means to education that can be gained through critical reflection (Dewey, 1997).

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-based learning (PBL), like visual arts pedagogy, is inherently interdisciplinary. This is the most frequently used method for experiential interdisciplinary learning. What is commendable about this approach is that it has brought back the actual “doing” into the classroom. Usually employing design thinking, PBL challenges are often collaborative in nature and allow for students to have real and authentic learning experiences. Directly integrated into the STEAM movement, PBL can be employed in any number of disciplines requiring lengthy investigations into one area that ultimately cumulate in a product of some sort. The Fashion Design project which resulted in the Great Cranberry Experiment of 2011 was project-based, and the pinball machine sculpture at the deCordova is also be considered project based. Quality visual arts curriculum was project-based before there was a term for it. Additionally, the course in which I first located *PBS Local:USA Sense of Place* was a project-based literary arts course in which students spent months creating content for the journal, and spent the other part of the time acting as editors and graphic designers— checking for errors in spelling, making campaign posters to call for submissions, and creating timelines which would allow for sale at the year

end art show. They have plenty of guidance from their teachers as well, in this case, an English teacher and myself, but seeing a project through from start to finish provides students with a chance to experience challenge, problem-solving, and build great pride in their work. In the case of the literary arts journal, they get to explore creative careers while also getting some experience in the world of publishing as a business or a nonprofit.

VISUAL ARTS PEDAGOGY

Visual arts pedagogy is the true lynchpin in PBAI. The process of art making is the funnel through which one’s ideas are distilled as we make sense of the world and our place in it. Art allows us to become comfortable with the unknown (Gude, 2007) as it engages us in the journey. Through new strategies of inquiry, contemporary and cultural discourse in the study of art, students “will learn that they do not know many things that they once thought were certain” (Gude, 2007, p.14) We take three main components of visual arts pedagogy in the development of PBAI: (1) *the heightened awareness of the artist’s eye*, (2) *frequent self-reflection*, and (3) *materiality as multiple ways of knowing*.

HEIGHTENED PERCEPTION: Participation in visual arts processes has the ability to slow time, allowing students the space and encouragement they need to make sense of the world (Marquez-Zenkov, 2007). To draw, is to see, is to know. When drawing or sculpting from life, one must learn to ‘slow the eye,’ observe the subtle curves and intricacies of the subject in order capture a likeness. This heightened awareness or ability to perceive information applies to the act of viewing art or media as well. A key phrase in the Black Mountain College manifesto is to “look longer, see how something was made, and understand how visual information can be manipulated” (Institute of Contemporary Art, 2015). Inspiration is everywhere, and we must always be on the look out.

SELF REFLECTION: According to Gude (2007), 21st century visual arts education should “teach skills and concepts while creating opportunities to investigate one’s own experiences—generating personal and shared meaning” (p. 6). This aspect of visual arts education nurtures the social and emotional well-being in our

students, helping them to become more empathetic to the needs of the others, both human and non-human, in their community. The creative process of developing an idea over time, revising, reflecting, interrupting, and ultimately seeing it through to an unanticipated finale provides a structure, although a malleable one, with which to negotiate the space of the unknown. The curiosity spiral of ABR manifests in the self-reflection stage of art making often functioning as a process for personal discovery and identity formation. “Identity is never a priori, a finished product” (Bhabha, 2004). In a course with Rhode Island School of Design’s ‘Project Open Door,’ my partner teacher and I initiated a “human check” at the beginning of each class with local high schoolers. Before approaching the goals of the day, in a round-table fashion and both students and teachers share something that has been on their minds to provide a little insight into where each individual came from that day. This small space of honesty and acceptance can provide connectivity in a disconnected world, and it often becomes the impetus for art making as well. Olivia, a 10th grade student, mentioned that she had seen an upsetting documentary about the lack of rape convictions in undergraduate universities, and wasn’t sure that she wanted to attend college if people ‘weren’t going to be held accountable for their actions’. Olivia injected this theme of social justice in her art making, taking time to focus on an issue that affected her life now: exploring women’s equality and eventually creating a book of experimental photographs which detail the multitude of feelings that she has felt when watching her brother, who identifies as LGTBQ be marginalized in her community and in the news. A cyanotype from her photobook is pictured in *Figure 9*. Through revision and constantly bringing in the idea of the personal experience, Olivia was able to examine her own code of ethics in the context of her community through art.

MATERIALITY OR WAYS OF KNOWING: The third component of Visual Arts Education on which PBAI draws is materiality. Art history is littered with ways of knowing: drawing, sculpture, painting, design, photography, video, and those are just the discipline-specific categories. Each one comes with its own set of rules and opportunities to learn various mediums and techniques. Additionally materiality is growing as fast as people

can experiment, creating new technology such as a styrofoam-like mushroom compound that is good for the earth, or ‘International Klein Blue’ a specific pigment that was invented and trademarked for use by one artist only (Sooke, 2014).

Within just drawing alone, the possibilities for discovery are limitless. For instance, Adams and Baynes (2004) in the UK produced a series of publications entitled *Drawing Power: The Campaign for Drawing*. These instructional books feature student work in primary and secondary schools and investigate the drawing of place and space through perception, communication, and invention. In a single book, over twenty drawing strategies are listed for student and/or teacher use. Some examples of strategies listed speak directly to PBAI’s ideas of surveying and deeply knowing the land, such as bird’s eye view, specification, field sketching, panorama, x-ray section, and observational drawing. Also included are various perspectives and themes from which one can draw: artist, architect, town planner, landscape architect, public artist, interior space, illustration of spaces and memories, animation, and mapmaking. The book clarifies the abstract notion of place as “a part of the environment that has been *changed by feelings*” (2004, p. 4). This echoes Gray and Graham’s idea of place as “a space that has been given meaning by people” (2007) except that *Drawing Power* encourages a more personal, one-on-one understanding of place and invites one to have *feelings*. Although this seems like a odd thing to note, simply acknowledging the human condition, that we have feelings, is something that is often lost in today’s society. This book is an excellent resource for an arts-based place-specific pedagogy. There are projects and methods listed which can be used to generate understanding in various applications. The most inspirational avenues for PBAI pedagogy involve mapping the use of space by following children’s patterns of running on the playground, associating colors with feelings and using it to map your experience of spaces within spaces, and creating a series of quick sketches to document favorite experiences on a trip. Also included is a sumptuous page of arts-based research from a high school sketchbook that features photographs, sketches, and writings of plants and patterns; it is very clear evidence of critical thinking around a fashion design inspired by nature. This work



WE ARE FEMMEY



has served as an inspiration for the pages of arts-based research that accompany my studies in this book. As you read, I hope that you will be inspired to capture your experience in this way as well.

REGGIO EMILIA AND THE CONSTRUCTIVIST CLASSROOM

“The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.

A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling, of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.”

-LORIS MALAGUZZI, Founder of the
Reggio Emilia Approach, *translated by Lella
Gandini* (“Innovative Teacher Project ::
Reggio Emilia Approach :: The Hundred
Languages,” n.d.)

Reggio Emilia nursery schools are founded on the values of the natural gifts of each child and encourage the ‘curiosity spiral’ inherent in arts-based research that breeds lifelong learners. *How do we make paint?* becomes *how do we make the color stay?* becomes *how can we make fabric* where each student is encouraged to follow her own learning interests, supported by periods of reflection and new modes of inquiry from their instructors. Pedagogies that help to facilitate this are small group work or making learning visible for the students with methods such as the Visual Arts Process Diary (Cutcher, 2013) or wall displays. This kind of learning cannot be effective without proper reflection time for teachers in addition to the students. At Lincoln Nursery School in Lincoln,

Massachusetts, for example, the teachers meet for at least an hour after every 3-4 hour day. Communication with parents is key as well (Fincke, 2015a).

Alexandra Cutcher is an educational researcher in Australia who has been asking the same kind of questions that I have been asking throughout my research: What does Reggio Emilia look like for “the big kids”? In her 2013 article, Cutcher declares that all children, no matter their age, have a right to “express their humanity” (p. 320) through critical investigations in the arts. All people are innately curious and capable, but somewhere between young childhood and adulthood, they lose this curiosity and bravery. It is our job as educators to get it back (Cutcher, 2013). In any school system, it will be challenging to initiate a revolution such as the Reggio Emilia approach; however, a lot of these skills and practices of project-based learning and reflection are currently employed in art rooms across the country. Such skills and approaches should be used more— we (art educators) should be used more.

The importance of the environment as a third teacher is another way to introduce these principles. Each child has the right to work in a beautiful environment, and caring for that environment will come naturally if they create it together. Australian schools are situated to take this step before their American counterparts due to the extensive value that Australian culture places on time spent in the outdoors (Cutcher, 2013). Although their climate certainly facilitates a lifestyle and education that fully embraces the outdoor environment, even chilly New England must account for the fact that the environment is both relevant or important to a child’s development.

In another principle of Reggio Emilia, documentation of learning is essential for students and for teachers to know where they have been, what they have learned, and where to go next. This is the visual counterpart to the curiosity spiral of ABR. “The discipline of documenting learning, reflecting upon it, thereby creating an authentic learning artifact, is an act of metacognition that in itself is a learning event” (Cutcher, 2013). Cutcher introduces the idea of a ‘Visual Arts Process Diary’ much like that of the ABR sketchbook page in *Drawing Power* (2004) to record critical and constructive thinking, observations, reflections, and ephemera of interest. The process diary is not just to be used solely by the student, but is meant

to be a method of communication with the teacher as well. We know much more than our words alone allow us to express. This is especially true when working with ESL (English as a second language) students who frequently get lumped in with low-performing classrooms. The process diary invites us to look further in the moment and make sense of it later.

PARTNERSHIPS

The growing school partnership model develops relationships with community learning centers such as museums, herbariums, the corner store, etc. For example, at Lincoln Nursery School, a Reggio Emilia school, partners with the DeCordova Museum. Nancy Fincke, director at Lincoln Nursery had this to say about the nature of partnerships:

“As educators, we have the responsibility to create a multiplicity of relationships for children. Opportunities are everywhere: the teacher in the next classroom, libraries, cultural organizations, maintenance folks, shopkeepers, public sector employees, are all potential partnerships that may support, connect and enrich our work. Partnerships are both inspiring, challenging and require time and commitment. They operate on a continuum.” (Fincke, 2015b)

In “A Rationale for Collaborative Curriculum Development” Jackson (2013) discusses the potential of art museums to enhance literacy based on the presence of the imaginative or interpretive cycle between images and reading in the brain. The author proposes a collaborative program model between a museum educator, a curator, and a 3rd grade public school teacher to introduce a weekly work of art related to the reading goal which would be introduced in class and studied at length with discussion during a weekly visit to the museum. With this analysis, the author argues the importance of a united community to raise child literacy, investment, and engagement as informed future citizens. (Jackson, 2013) Jackson puts forward a very convincing argument for collaboration between institutions in the community. The side-by-side data of underperforming students within a few miles of the museums with shared budgetary analysis is very provocative in data form, as each institution brings in

millions annually. As an educator with nonprofit experience, I am always astounded at the number of incredible programs offered in urban centers that end up serving so few people. There are many contributing factors to the disparity between available partnership programs and school involvement, including the nature of an operation running on grant funding, communication and publicizing available partnership opportunities, and not knowing that funding is available until the time for proper promotion has expired. But we’re not going to try to solve those issues today. However, if we get out and begin to explore our community with PBAI, our connections across the city will grow. PBAI is about providing access to people, information, and resources for our students and ourselves— making a ‘multiplicity of relationships’ as suggested by Nancy Fincke.

Page 33: *Figure 9*
Olivia Hartnett
Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016
Legally Gay
Cyanotype
11 x 17 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Figure 10
Erin Poindexter
Providence, Rhode Island, Fall 2015
Acorn cap and pieces from White Oak, Quercus alba,
cheesecloth dyed with tannins
Digital Photograph





PART TWO

**WHERE TO GO AND WHAT
TO LOOK FOR**



Lasdals Drive dr

where? Yellow dye, combine w/ "Wood" (Cedar) to make green.



Genista tinctoria
"Dyers Greenwood"
"Waxen Wood"

last step, put thru coffee grinder just before use

Quercus alba
"White Oak"
Fruits every other year, late fall



leaves, lobed: 5-6" long.



Coelepsis tinctoria

"Plains Tickseed"

used by Pueblo peoples to make red-bran dye for yarn. edible Plains!

AREA 1: URBAN WILD

“To name and describe you must first see, and science polishes the gift of seeing.”

—ROBIN WALL KIMMERER, *Braiding Sweetgrass* 2013

GROWING A RATIONALE FOR ECO-ART EDUCATION

Eco-Art, or *ecologically minded art* education seeks to generate new ideas and creative procedures for joining individual well being with global sustainability (Weir, 2016, Tereso, 2012, p.23). Through embodied experience and attention to the specific ecology of the place in which we live, nature illuminates our experience as unique specimens of the here and now with that of prehistory; an expanse of time that neither art history nor the built environment are able to reach. For millennia, humankind has participated in a mutually beneficial relationship with the natural environment. Industrial and technological advances of the last three centuries have caused us to fall out of sync with the original system. Somehow, we have forgotten to reap only what we sow. Thankfully, nature persists and “islands of wildlife” (Louv, 2008, p. 247) dominate the natural landscape of the urban community. PBAI approaches these tiny ecological systems with Steichen’s idea of ‘universal

through the particular’ (Szarkowski, 1994) , or ‘community as microcosm’ for rooting global understanding in local, tangible experience. But the true foundation of global sustainability lies within the value systems of each individual. The most important function of Eco-Art is to provide an arena in which to have an authentic experience of connectivity.

Nature is the ultimate symbol for connectivity. It is a system of systems, each one dependent upon the other and which can be entered into from any point. For example, we enter the system of day becoming night becoming day. You step outside from the school building and the glare of the afternoon sun hits your eye, causing you to squint. Your body’s physiological response was crafted years ago through evolutionary processes that began in specimens not even remotely human who leapt up from the sea and needed eye lids to combat the brightness of the sun, just as you do now. *What other parts of our genetic make-up were designed to combat the sun? Why*

does my skin burn more easily than my brother's? Than my friend of another ethnicity? Squinting in the sun also connects us to the intangible parts of the universe. At 92.95 million miles away, the Sun, our closest star, forced our eyes to close. *Do the other stars have an effect on us as well?*

Many mediums for art making have been developed to analyze and reflect the world and our particular view of it. I have found that experimenting with a new medium can dramatize this system of connectivity and provide an avenue for discovery. My living room has a large south-facing bay window. The afternoon sun passes over my houseplants and creates the most beautiful shadows on the wall (see *Figure 13*). If the window is left open, and the wind is blowing, their shadows shiver in the most beautiful ballet. Anna Atkins (1799-1871) was a trained botanist and photographer who captured botanical specimens for her 1843 book, *British Algae: cyanotype impressions* (“Anna Atkins (British, 1799 - 1871) (Getty Museum),” 2016). When I was introduced to her work and the process of making cyanotypes; I immediately thought of the wall shadows. Previously, I had made videos and taken digital pictures, but I had not yet been able to convincingly convey the sparkling, quiet, delicate aesthetic of the Philodendron dancing in the open window. I taped the pretreated cyanotype papers onto the wall and waited. The shadows did not show up. It was as if nothing was there at all. Like an artist or a scientist trying to master a new skill, I identified and tweaked one variable at a time. First I tried to capture the shadow at various points in the day when the sun might be stronger, like high noon—I noticed that the shadows move to the floor at this time of day, with the sun directly overhead, but again, hardly any information from the Philodendron was recorded (see *Figure 12*). Next, I varied the amount of time that I left the cyanotype in the sun, but no success.

After failing to capture the shadows multiple times, I began to hypothesize that the UV rays of the sun were passing through the shadows of the plant, preventing a clear print. At this point, I remembered my mother who told me to wear sunscreen even when sitting in the shade. The convergence of these two pieces of information (current observations and past experiences) led me to further my research. Dr. Jose Martinez- Lozano confirmed my suspicion and the ‘old wives tale’ by placing

a UV monitor under a parasol on the beach. He found that:

“up to a third of cancer-causing UV rays still reach the skin even when you are sitting in the shade. Although a parasol stops direct beams, it is no match for diffuse radiation - rays that have been scattered in all directions on their way to Earth. These find their way under the umbrella and on to the skin” (Couzens & Macrae, 2010).

Just as the 6th grade fashion design project encouraged The Great Cranberry Experiment of 2011, the desire to capture the beauty of the shadow on my wall through cyanotype generated my research question and subsequent hypothesis about the power of UV light.

PBAI can help to facilitate meaningful experiences that will act as a conduit for students to develop a personal relationship with nature situated within the larger picture of global sustainability and build camaraderie while doing so (see *Introduction on Roxbury Conglomerate in Franklin Park*). To develop an environmental consciousness through art, we must engage students with nature through the multiple lenses of art, science, history, lived experience, and career studies. In this section we will look at some key concepts in which the study of art and nature intertwine in a community that embraces PBAI learning.

1. Each student experiences a unique reality which can be revealed through the study of environmental aesthetics. *Erzen (2005) teaches an environmental aesthetics course in Turkey in which art highlights the evolving relationship between humans and nature by developing an acute awareness.*
2. Entering any natural space is a full-body, multi-sensory experience. *Salwa (2014) describes the garden in terms of a theatrical performance.*
3. One can study the history of people through traditional uses of plants and markers within the landscape. *The pokeberry plant encourages multiple modes of inquiry. A landscaped tree on the sidewalk reveals a century of human history.*
4. Designing with STEAM offers students an



Page 38, *Figure 11*

Erin Poindexter

Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016

PBAI Process Journal Page #2: local natural dyes and photograph from visit to Lonsdale Drive-in in Lincoln, Rhode Island

Watercolor, acrylic, acorn pieces, glue, photograph on paper

8 x 10 inches

This page, top: *Figure 12*

Erin Poindexter

Providence, Rhode Island, Winter 2016

Failed Cyanotype/ Absent Shadows

Cyanotype

11 x 17 inches



Center: *Figure 13*

Erin Poindexter

Providence, Rhode Island, Fall 2015

Wall Shadow: Erika's Basil, Ocimum basilicum

Digital Photograph

Figure 14

Erin Poindexter

Providence, Rhode Island, Winter 2016

Philodendron under glass, 12:30pm

Cyanotype

11 x 17 inches



opportunity to create work of consequence. Zande (2011) outlines design as a method for economic success and global sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS

The study of *aesthetics* is concerned with beauty and the overall look and ‘feel’ of an object whether designed by human or nature. It is a quiet but powerful part of an artistic mentality, often brushed over in the practice of arts integration. It doesn’t have quite the punch associated with engineering, but it is no less important. The study of aesthetics teaches the art of *perception*, or the ability to look, think, and make sense of what you see. Erzen (2005) attests to the importance of art and artists in society. He proposes that artists highlight the things that are normally overlooked; and frequently it is these small things, or the ‘invisible structures of the in between’ that provide a window into human consciousness.

Drawing on personal interests in nature and art in the 1970s, Erzen (2005) leads a collegiate level course in ‘environmental aesthetics’ at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. Based in the practice of phenomenology, which assumes that each person experiences a unique reality individual unto them; the goal of the course is to *highlight the evolving relationship between man and nature by developing an acute awareness within the student*. He divided the course into a series of four learning phases. In phase one students read texts about how other cultures engage with their environment. Discussions on such concepts as *shelter* provide a language and concept of ‘other’ by which the student can begin to negotiate their own experience. Phase two involves sensory activities and immersion in the outdoors with documented responses. In this phase, Erzen relates the importance of introducing the students to completely foreign environments so that they may be free from habit and able to see differently. He typically uses this opportunity to take students on an international trip. In phase three, Erzen introduces masters in the field of environmental art and engages the students in the form of short apprenticeships, providing a visual and artistic language from which to work. In the final phase, Erzen proposes a theme and allows space for students to express their own relationship with nature through the act of creation. In assessing student work after nearly thirty

years of teaching the course, he found that through the act of perceiving (an intellectual and sensory activity) students became more present and aware; two concepts that lead to greater consideration for self, others, and the environment (2005). The development of these concepts (consideration for self, others, and the environment) are central to the goals of PBAI.

THE GARDEN AS A PERFORMANCE

According to Salwa (2014), the garden is at the intersection of nature and art (or culture). The garden is commonly analyzed and spoken of in terms of painting (i.e. it is visually pleasing and historically used as subject matter), poetry (“decoding meaning” in metaphor through the cycle of life and death in nature, p.50), or architecture (creating structured views). Salwa proposed that these are insufficient matters to speak of gardens because it ignores the atmosphere, essence, and multi sensory experience inherent in entering a garden. These qualities can more assuredly be addressed with the language commonly used to describe a performance (Salwa, 2014). Just as a play has a creator, actors, technical directors, and an audience; a garden has a landscape architect, nature (flora, fauna, and the weather), groundskeepers, and visitors, respectively. However they are not exactly the same, as the audience-or-visitors in a garden are generally more participatory than those of a typical theatrical production.

The duality of the garden as “humanized nature (p.59)” or, curated nature is most clearly seen when considering the difference between a tree in a garden and a tree in a forest. In this instance, we should define the term garden as anything that has been planted, shaped, or tended to by the human hand, i.e. for our purposes, trees on the sidewalk are considered gardens as well. A tree in a garden is a performer, and a tree in the forest is not because it is not activated by human curation of view and experience. A tree in the garden is seen as ‘wild’ often because it differs from its garden counterparts. It has been sculpted to appear wild, and in turn, allows the visitor to appreciate its nature in a more focused manner than they could if the tree was in a forest among other wild things (Salwa, 2014).

Gardening is also an experiment in fortune telling. One must look far in advance in order to anticipate the way that the garden will unfold over time. A landscape

architect will never see the fulfillment of their plan in one lifetime. What's more, nature forces us to expect the unexpected in the form of tornados, drought, or other landscape architects who follow with contrasting views. We can never fully account for what nature will do as another actor 'on stage'.

Salwa (2014) poses an interesting theory of examining spaces, describing the "encounter" (p.42) and "spatiotemporal experience" of entering a landscape that can be applied to entering any environment be it urban, landscaped, or wild. "[I]t is unthinkable to enter the same garden twice: not only will the plants be older, but also what we experience will be different because, for example, the way sunlight falls will be different (p.47)." This lovely description emphasizes the unique experience of the individual. In my opinion, this description acts as a call to attention wherever it is that you stand, so as to not miss this unique experience. In order to do that one must slow down and focus their attention on the present. They must learn to see and to be present. This kind of slowing down the eye and the foot is helpful in the study of art and in developing a stage on which to study the history of the world and its people with PBAI.

THE LANGUAGE OF PLANTS

It takes time to learn to look in any discipline. As an artist who grew up in the woods, I thought that identifying plants for use in architectural landscape plantings would be a breeze, but I was mistaken. I found myself frustrated because the the systems for identification were imperfect. This is something I had not come to expect of science, a subject which I formerly found quite unrelatable due to its characteristics of numbers, data, formulas, and graphs. Frequently there are only slight differences in a *lanceolate* shaped leaf and one that is *very skinny* and *elliptical*. In time, I found that it is not the sole detail, such as the shape of the leaf, that will help you to identify the plant; but it is the many details which are used in tandem. The leaf shape combined with the size, the bark texture and color, the vein pattern, the texture, the time of bloom; all of these are important. "Science polishes the gift of seeing" (Kimmerer, 2013, 48). Now that I know what to look for and how to use that information, I find myself trying to identify each and every plant that I encounter; trying to recall the latin names from my studies, deciphering plant families by identify-

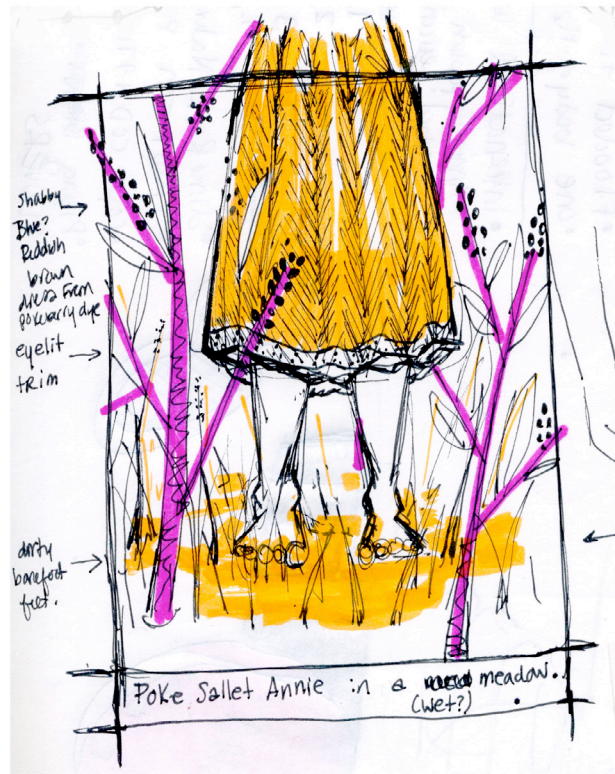
ing similarities in leaf, stem and flower, or using a plant manual to deduce the specific species. The study of plant materials has given me several new languages in which to experience, research, and make meaning in the world, thus expanding my consciousness.

The science of plant identification came easier to me after I spent time researching the use of the plant in question. I needed to have a personal connection in order for that knowledge to be relevant, thus important. My entry point into plant science was through their participation in the story of human history. What are the traditional uses of the plants in the forests? Which plants have been used as medicines, which are edible, or ceremonial? Which plants feed the birds that I like to hear singing in the morning? When can I plant them to encourage the birds to take up residence outside my window? Robin Wall Kimmerer, a poet, botanist, and citizen of the Potawatomi nation recounts the beginnings of her formal botanical studies, "I should have been told that my questions were bigger than science could touch" (Kimmerer, 2013 p.45) She wanted to know why goldenrod, Solidago species and purple asters, Asteraceae novae-angliae 'looked so beautiful together'. The answer to this question took her through her own natural curiosity spiral wherein she researched how the eye perceives complementary colors, and how complementary colors attract bees, thus ensuring the plant's survival. I, too have felt this way in a purely scientific environment. 'Wintercreeper' is a common landscape plant in my neighborhood. When I learned its latin name was *Euonymus fortunei*, discovered by and named for Scottish botanist Robert Fortune in the 1800s, the plant ceased to become a shrub or a ground cover, and instead became a window into human history. Now every time I see the plant, I think of an explorer in a great wooden ship who was a part of a complicated time in Colonial American History. It is not that scientists are cold, it is that, I think, perhaps, that most scientists have not been trained to look beyond their specialty. They, too could benefit from multiple languages.

PLANTS, PLACE, AND PEOPLE

In depth plant material studies connect nature to people and place and can provide the impetus for art-making in the form of material-culture studies (*see p.59*) and narrative painting. *Figures 15 and 16*, are two arts-based

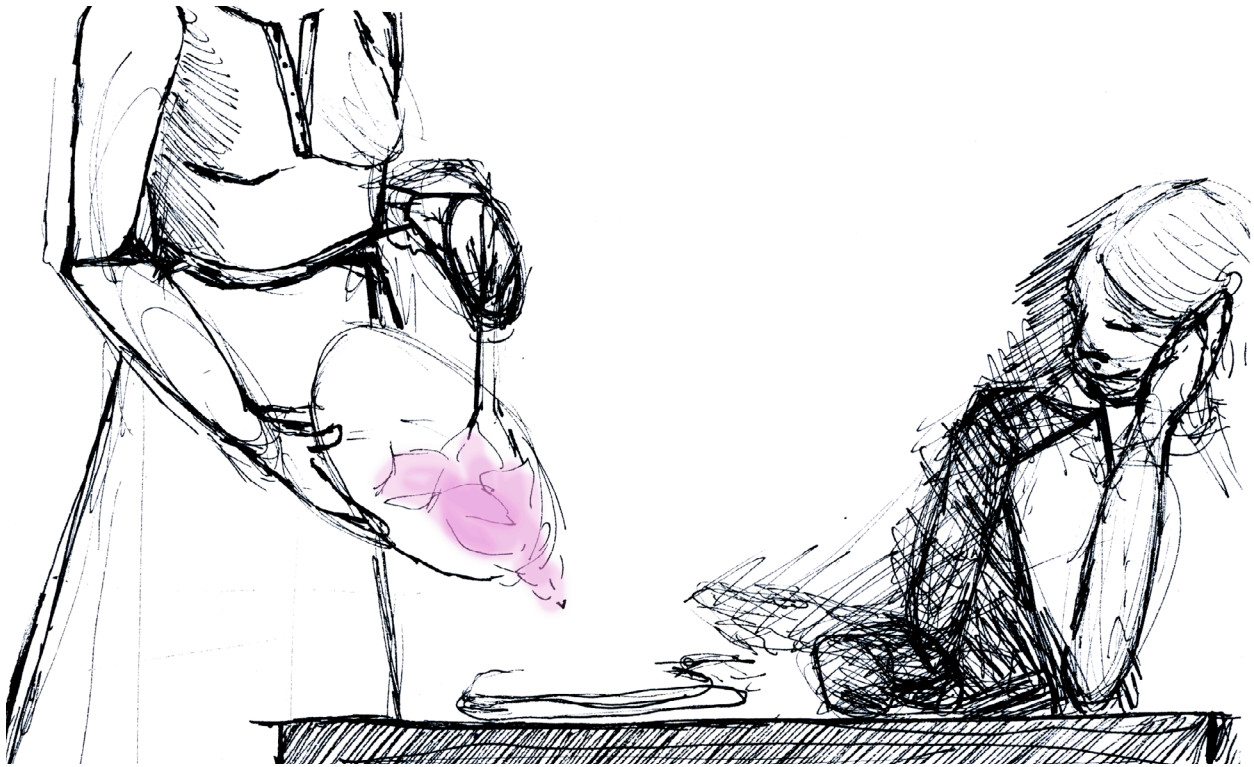
research drawings of the pokeberry plant, *Phytolacca americana* situated in American History. It is the same plant from my childhood watercolor explorations in my grandmother's kitchen (see *Preface*). Surprised to see it in New England, I looked into its history. The Pokeberry Plant, a.k.a. Pokeweed, Inkberry, Poke, Pigeonberry, and Garget is native from Maine to Florida and out into the Midwest. Centuries ago, settlers enjoyed the plant and carried the seeds back to Europe and North Africa (Gibbons, 1973). With a history that extends to three continents, I was surprised and delighted to discover so many others had also grown up with this 8 foot tall gloriously pink-purple weed at the bottom of the garden, squeezing the berries, and perhaps painting all on their own. My grandmother was correct in her warning, the berries are quite poisonous, sometimes deadly if ingested raw by children; but in some Southern Appalachian cultures "Poke salad," a savory dish made of cooked leaves and stems of the young plant was considered a menu staple! This fact simply astonished me, as I grew up spending quite a bit of time in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina, but this was not a part of my family's traditions. Researching the plant further, I discovered the Pokeberry, or "Poke Salad" had a history in Southern music as well. In 1968, Musician Tony Joe White wrote and recorded *Poke Salad Annie* in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, subsequently inventing a new genre of music entitled 'Swamp Rock.' The following year it hit number eight on the Billboard Top 100 ("Polk Salad Annie," 2016). The Pokeberry was a fixture in pop culture, Southern Appalachian Culture, my own personal history, and a traditional Native American food source. What a legacy! *Figure 15* and *16* are preliminary sketches for a painting series on 'Poke Salad Annie,' in which I weave my own personal history of using the berries as an art material (*Figure 15* "brown dress from Pokeberry dye") with that of Southern Appalachian culture and the Swamp Rock tune. In the sketches, I imagine what it might have been like to grow up in the deep south eating Poke Salad. As you can see in my notes on *Figure 15*, my new language of plant materials is encouraging specificity of landscape in artistic decisions and further research questions, "a wet(?) meadow?"



This is the kind of connectivity to place, people, and personal history that PBAI seeks to reveal through the deep and wide study of a particular plant.

LANDSCAPE NARRATIVES

The landscape as a whole can also be 'read', or examined as a record of human history. Just as 'Puddingstone' or Roxbury Conglomerate in Franklin Park (see p.16, *Figure 5*) is visual and experiential evidence of the ice age; landscaped plants, or gardens, can tell stories. Lilac Trees, *Syringa vulgaris*, are markers of human history because they are not native or naturalized (Dr. Richard Johnson, personal communication, Fall 2015). That means if one is encountered anywhere in America, a human has been there. They dug a hole with his or her own hands, and intentionally put it there; perhaps in efforts to beautify the landscape and entice the senses with the intoxicating late spring fragrance of the Lilac bloom. Ecologist and educator Rick Enser frequently gives environmental lectures across New England. The most common question he is asked at these talks is "why are there stone walls in the middle of the forest?" (Rick Enser, personal communication, Fall 2015). These too are markers of human history. They indicate former property lines. When land is settled for farming, the first step



is to clear the rocks from the earth so as not to damage farm equipment or hinder root growth. It was common to turn that pile of rocks into a fence (Enser, 2015).

Much like the forest will reclaim old farmland that is no longer in use, single plant specimens in the city can illuminate the power struggle between man and nature. There is a Red Maple tree, *Acer rubra*, on the sidewalk in my neighborhood in which one can track over a century of human intervention in the landscape. There are bricks embedded in the tree from 100 years ago. The tree roots absorbed the material in its massive growth much in the same way that a vine curls around a metal fence. Thirty years ago when the brick sidewalks were replaced with concrete slabs, but the bricks within the tree remained.

WORK OF CONSEQUENCE: SUSTAINABILITY IN THE STEAM ROOM

The landscaped wild can become an entry point into civic duty and STEAM through design for sustainability. The Red Oak tree that I described above has caused the sidewalk to lift off of the ground about twenty inches. The landscape architect who replaced the bricks with concrete slabs should have used a more porous material like asphalt (Johnson, 2015). The tree itself is grow-

ing strong, but the concrete has become a hazard in the highly populated city. I actually witnessed a person tumble due to the poor engineering. In the PBAI classroom, this tree provides a new research question into engineering for persons with disabilities, city planning, the science of building materials, and ultimately, *better* design.

Zande (2011), currently an associate professor at Kent State University in Ohio and member of the NAEA Design Board, argues that integrated design curriculum in today's schools will contribute to social responsibility and the economy. Zande defines design as "the human capacity to shape our environment in ways that serve our needs and give meaning to our lives (p.1)" She asserts that design is both an innate ability (we chose our clothes, decide where to get tattoos and piercings, we mow our lawns and plant flowers) and a learned skill. The first argues the importance of including the latter. The design process is much like the scientific method. In the design process, you identify a problem, assess needs and constraints associated with that problem, ideate and experiment, build a model or prototype, evaluate the effectiveness of the design, try again, rinse, repeat until the design is a success. A global economy will point us

outwards indubitably, but we should start where we are. Teaching design through the lens of social responsibility “pushes students to think about the ways in which design might improve the world (Zande, 2011, p.32).” Taking a closer look at the local issue at hand necessitates research into “social, political, economic, and aesthetic issues that surround a design problem (p.33).” Sustainability within our own community comes from localized resources. That includes using our own energy and effort to invest in the spaces, people, and systems that we occupy. In honoring our community, we honor where we came from and ultimately, who we are.

In order for students to become economically productive citizens, Zande argues that they develop the ‘21st century skill set’. This skill set includes five principle themes which should be included in education: innovation and creativity, flexibility and adaptability, collaboration and working as a member of a team, problem solving and critical thinking, and communication. These five themes correspond to and are cultivated by the design process (Zande, 2011). Today’s students need work of consequence in the classroom. Designing for sustainability offers students an opportunity to solve real world problems such as faulty landscaping projects in their community, or on a school-wide level, for example, students could design an easy to use composting system in the cafeteria. This also introduces students to various career experiences, which, we hope will contribute to interesting work of consequence as adults. Students, particularly from traditionally low-income families have seen their parents work exhausting menial jobs. They want more for their future (Marquez-Zenkov, 2007) and integrated design curriculum in the schools is one way to access this future.

The ultimate goal of a PBAI classroom that explores the Urban Wild would be to embrace the values of Eco-Art Education, joining individual well being with global sustainability.

In a teaching scenario, we can reinforce students’ unique experience of the moment by turning our attention to permaculture. A curriculum which follows the rules of permaculture; i.e. particular seasons, the cyclical and linear nature of time, and specific plants

that occur, bloom, and die overtime (seasonally, to make room for others, and over a longer period) would provide students with a greater understanding of the place in which they live and the various needs of their community throughout the year. A sustained study of a particular space in the urban wild, such as a nearby park, a school garden, the playground; documented 3 times per season throughout the school year (photographs, drawing, and writings) would make for a very interesting cumulative picture of our place of learning (city, local park, or school).

As the classroom translates from personal relationships with nature to global sustainability, perhaps a PBAI classroom would be to identify design problems within their own community. For example, if PBAI students encountered the ‘Red Oak Sidewalk Disaster’, ideally they would design multiple solutions, and *implement* a structure which will allow for the tree to grow and provide for citizen safety at the same time. It is unlikely that in a city such as Providence, Rhode Island that students would be able to implement the improved design, but for many projects that take place on school grounds; this is absolutely a possibility. Alternatively, PBAI students could submit design proposals to the city, taking the opportunity to research the city council representatives from their district and what it takes to effect change in their community.

Large scale design projects take time and resources to complete, in some cases a project such as the ‘Red Oak Sidewalk Disaster’ could take an entire year to come to full fruition. But doing real work of consequence prepares them to take action in their future and instills them with the persistence that they will need to see the job through in the future. Ultimately, we want to students to believe that they can effect change on the world. I firmly believe that life-long confidence in one’s own abilities can begin with identifying and solving small design challenges in the community. In conclusion, design thinking offers students a new perspective from which to look at the world.

Page 44, *Figure 15*
Erin Poindexter
Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016
Pokeberry Narrative sketch #1
Ink and marker on paper
3 x 4 inches

Page 45: *Figure 16*
Erin Poindexter
Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016
Pokeberry Narrative sketch #2
Ink on paper
6 x 8 inches


WHY WHY DO THU COLLAPSE? WHY WAS IT ABANDONED? WHO PAID 4 CLEAN UP? WHY did the artist think this was a beautiful or interesting photograph?

WHERE WOOD - TIMBER FROM NC + SC FORESTS. WHERE ARE THE PPL IN THE PHOTO? SPAIN, LOCALS IMMIGRANT? WHERE IS THE PHOTO TAKEN? NIN DO I THINK IT IS BEAUTIFUL? I like seeing the structure - + makes me think of

WHO WHO IS THE ARTIST? WHO ARE THE WORKERS? HOW LONG WHERE WAS GLASS MADE? BRICKS? WHO PAID 4 CLEAN UP?

WHEN WAS THE PHOTO TAKEN? WHEN DID IT COLLAPSE? THE CLOTHES LOOK early 2000's, maybe late 1990's bc of the guys' busy pants. WHAT WAS THE ARTIST GOING? ARE THE PEOPLE SCARED OF BUILDING COLLAPSE?

WHAT BROKEN CAPLES "EMPTY BUILDING" BRICKS BROKEN WOOD LADDER. HAD THAT - DANGEROUS METALS? IS IT DANGEROUS? PHOTO BLANK WHITE. WHAT IS THE POINT OF THEIR PANTS? WHAT IS THE POINT OF THEIR PANTS?



HIGH BUILDING PLANTS GROWING? COLLAPSE? WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS WAS THIS? WHAT TIME OF DAY? SAVED ON THE JUNGLE? WHAT? WHAT MUSIC WAS PLAYING WHEN THIS BUILDING SEASON? LOOK! WOODEN BEAMS - BROKEN MULTI-~~THICK~~ PAVED WINDOW NO MARKS. GRAFFITI IN CORNER CAN WE TRACE THE STYLE?

HOW MANY PEOPLE WORKED HERE IN 2004? OVER TIME? HOW LONG IN DISREPAIR? WHEN BUILT? INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. WHO WAS PRESIDENT? GOVERNOR? MAYOR?

WHAT DID THE UNIFORMS LOOK LIKE? WHAT DO THEIR CHILDREN, GIRLFRIENDS + PETS LOOK LIKE? HOW MUCH DO THEY ALL GET PAID? IS IT ENOUGH TO INSTANT?

WHERE HAS PHOTO BEEN SHOWN? PROVIDENCE, RI. WHAT NEIGHBORHOOD? WHERE DID I FIND IT? WHY WAS THE ARTIST HERE? PASSING THROUGH? WHY B+W? WHY DO THEY CROP THE EDGES OUT? HUBES. STEM TOBACCO WIRE-HOUSES. NINSTON-

Design of Building Structural Elements: Ripping for Division

WHERE DID THE ORIGINAL PPL WORKED HERE LIVE?

Figure 17, Erin Poindexter, Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016, PBAI Process Journal Page #3: Reframing Research (Reeve, 2014) with Brick Salvagers, Narragansett Brewery #1, demolished 2005, by Scott Lapham, Ink and superimposed digital photo on paper, 8 x 9 inches

AREA 2: CITY WALK

“Awake or asleep? Conscious or unconscious?”

—DR. PAUL SPROLL, *Personal Communication*, 2016



LEARN TO SEE WITH DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

As adults we often think an experience like backpacking across Europe is the quickest way to step outside of ourselves and alter our perception through new experiences. But in fact, it can be much simpler than that, for, just as humans have the capacity to grow, environments are changing right along side us. This point is well illustrated by Mateuszi Salwa (2014) in a discussion on entering familiar spaces: “It is unthinkable to enter the same garden twice: not only will the plants be older, but also what we experience will be different because, for example, the way sunlight falls will be different.” (p. 47)

“Will you be awake or asleep? Conscious or distracted?” (P. Sproll, personal communication, September, 2015) After the harshness of winter has passed in New England, I am confronted with this “asleep/awake” dichotomy. Just before spring, when the snow has really begun to melt and the biting cold breaks, I walk home

from the train and see such rich color in the world. ‘Did they paint their house? I never noticed that color before.’ Then I walk a little more and see another house that looks like it has a fresh coat. *Did everyone paint their houses?* What I think really happens here is that no one is painting their house. It is too much of a coincidence. But as the air warms up, you take your hood off, relax your shivering shoulders, begin to walk a little slower, and most importantly: *look up*.

The New Englander’s experience of color in the early days of spring and the wonder of travel can be accomplished in the classroom much more easily. Documentary photography is a way to explore the world through visual research. In its attempts to honestly depict people in their natural environment, it has the distinct ability to make the world at large more accessible to its viewers. Frequently documentary photographers are sent to war zones in the form of photojournalists and return with

photographs so visceral that it spurs the viewer into action. But if a documentary photographer were to scale down his or her area of research and focus in on a particular community—perhaps a small group of people, or a specific area of the landscape—what could we discover through the work? If we adapt this research methodology to the classroom, what could we discover about our own community?

Exceptional PBAI pedagogy uses documentary photography as a method of ABR in the urban environment. Students may focus their explorations on the *built environment* or the people in their community. Utilization of some or all of the proposed curricular methods in this section would be beneficial in facilitating such an experience for a group of students.

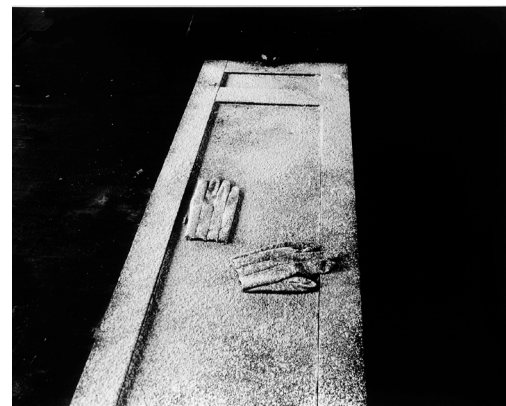
1. A studio visit or visiting artist lecture with a local photographer offers students a new perspective and an aesthetic point of entry into their community. *Scott Lapham shares his artistic inspiration and personal connection to the history of “emptied out spaces” within the built environment. His work invites continued discussion of the industrial revolution, economics, and family histories.*
2. The study of contemporary and historical documentary photographers can be used to instigate this process as well. *Susan Meiselas’ series “The Prince Street Girls, 1976-1978” presents multiple photographs of a group of teenage girls in her community over a period of several years. When the photographs are displayed together, they create a multi-dimensional portrait of the group and its members. “The Prince Street Girls” invites continued discussion of universal socio-emotional themes in human nature as such as joy, anger, bargaining, and friendship.*
3. ‘Reframing Research’ is a diagrammatic system designed to guide students through deep contextual analysis of a work of art. *It is a way to access the history of the industrial revolution in Lapham’s photographs as well as the human condition in Meiselas’ work.*

4. ‘City walks’ in which students use documentary photography to explore their own community heightens awareness of their surroundings and empowers them to tell their own story. *Lapham, a teaching artist, shares two techniques for introducing documentary photography to students. On a city walk, students photograph ‘things they have never seen before’ as a way for students to ‘learn to look’ with the eye of an artist. He encourages students to photograph their family and friends, empowering them to tell a story from their unique perspective because “you know where the good pictures are in your community, no one else is going to tell it like you can.” (Lapham, 2016)*

My hope is to illustrate how documentary photography, an accessible pedagogical tool, can be a powerful PBAI approach for the classroom.

SUSAN MEISELAS: A HISTORY OF A PEOPLE, NOT A PLACE

Through the sustained photographic study of the Prince Street Girls (PSG), photographer Susan Meiselas was able to develop a comfortable relationship with her photographic subjects that allowed for an honest and naturalistic look into the girls’ lives. This series, taken under the guise of documentary photography, is a truly intimate portrait of this small community of teenage girls who live, play, and learn how to treat one another in Little Italy in the mid to late 1970’s. Photographing the girls in multiple situations over time, Meiselas is able to capture various dynamics within the group, which provides a more complex portrait of its members. Framing the girls in their own environment provides some context for the images, but this is “a history of a people, not a place” (Meiselas, 2013) When sharing the pictures, either in book form or exhibition, Meiselas includes notes from the PSG and her own personal diary entries delineating interactions and conversations with the girls right alongside the photographs (Meiselas, Lubben & Johns, 2008). By incorporating the voices of her subjects, the viewer develops a running dialogue in their head complete with the (now dated) teenage syntax that was the zeitgeist of the era; Meiselas engages a secondary



sense within the viewer and completes the portrait of the group.

John Berger, well-respected artist and critic, identifies Meiselas as a great artist and triumphant activist in the context of art history whose photographs send a great message to the world. He says that her photographs remind the viewer of the resilience of the human spirit. Berger (2008) expresses this sentiment about her Nicaragua series, but the same lens can be applied to the PSG photographs. As viewers, we see the push and pull of emotions between the girls. We witness a physical fight in *Dee and Lisa Fight on Prince Street, Little Italy, New York, 1976*. The body language—concern in her eyes, the flex of her arm muscles and tightly closed lips around her teeth— all contribute to the drama of the photograph. Although Lisa and Dee are not involved in a crisis of national identity, as is the focus of much of Meiselas' documentary work, this photograph showcases a rift in the group identity. A small (in the scope of the world) but very real encounter of what is likely rage and fear existing between the two girls. When paired side by side with another photograph, such as *Dee, JoJo, Frankie, and Lisa After School on Prince Street, Little Italy, New York, 1976*, in which the girls wear the same clothes on what is likely the same day, we see that the argument is temporary. The combination of such moments builds a sense of community, place, time, and culture.

SCOTT LAPHAM: EMPTIED OUT SPACES

Northeastern native and local teaching artist Scott Lapham uses photography to explore Providence. He searches for the silent spaces of the city, the “emptied

out places...whose inhabitants are unable to tell their stories” (Lapham, personal communication, March 2, 2016). Many of the abandoned factories and mill houses in Lapham's series, *Demolition of the Industrial Revolution* have since been demolished and turned into shopping malls, or simply left empty. When I visited with the artist, he began to deconstruct the building ruins. Speaking on behalf of these spaces, he said the building had been built from “trees from forests in North and South Carolina that don't exist anymore. Now they only exist as timber in the old mills, but they too are being torn down now. Just look at them now falling through the roof.” Lapham says that all of his work is rooted in his own personal history, having grown up in Massachusetts with family members who worked in mills just like those in ‘Demolition’. In a Providence Preservation Society exhibition, Lapham's often haunting black and white images of broken beams and collapsed rooftops were inducted as a record of the Industrial Revolution and its eventual decline. The images invite the viewer to imagine what happened between Providence's once booming industrial economy at the end of the nineteenth century and the return of nature to these forgotten spaces (Lapham, 2005). Lapham's photographs invite story; they are, for me, perfect entry points from which to map and discuss local history and economics in an engaging, and accessible fashion in a classroom setting.

Lapham has also been a teaching artist for a number of years, even founding the photography program at renowned Providence, Rhode Island community art center, AS220. I sought his advice on how to focus an exploration of the city with documentary photography in a classroom setting. He told me that when he first gives a

student a camera, he asks them to photograph something that they have never seen before. In familiar circumstances, such as our own neighborhood block, we need to adjust our vision to see differently, as artists. (Lapham, 2016)

“I say if you’re going to run a marathon tomorrow, you wouldn’t be able to do it...You have to train your body for that. And as photographers...*we have to learn to see* and it’s different than just opening your eyes. [You] have to be *looking hard and thoughtfully ...you have to try*” (S. Lapham, personal communication, April, 1, 2016)

Lapham’s comment illustrates the process of how one can encourage the development of this ‘sixth artistic sense,’ the heightened awareness of an artist. He also emphasized the importance of the personal experience in photography.

“*You know your life better than I do.* [I]’m a professional photographer, but if I went home to your house and said guys, don’t worry about me, I’m just taking pictures, it would be weird. [I]’m just a stranger to [your] family. [B]ut what would happen if you had a camera, what kind of pictures would you get? They’d be like: “Oh I’d get my little brother joking around.” Whereas if I were there, your mom would be like, “straighten up.” [Y]ou’re going to get a very different kind of picture, and [those] are the interesting pictures. [Y]ou know the pictures that are good in your neighborhood, and in your family. I want you to tell your story, because nobody else is going to do it.” (Lapham, 2016)

Lapham feels passionately about these prompts because they give the power to the student to generate real art with authentic voice (Lapham, 2016). Photographic prompts such as these; *photograph something that you’ve never seen before*, and *you know your life better than I do*, *tell your story* are powerful pedagogical tools because they focus the student’s research lens. *Looking becomes looking for connections*. Open ended prompts such as these encourage students to remain alert and conscious

in their present experience, empowers students to curate their own story through self reflection, and lastly, encourages flexible thinking as students begin to approach ‘the familiar’ and anticipate surprise.

REFRAMING RESEARCH

Reframing Research (RR) is a studio-based model for contextual research developed by Julia Reeve(2014) in an effort to engage her collegiate students in the theory of art and design. She argues that visual and kinesthetic techniques, such as the RR model, that mimic the kind of thinking processes that naturally occur in studio-based art making provide a more imaginative and relatable avenue to research the history and lineage of an art object. Adopting Pat Francis’ technique of “Context Circles,” the RR model begins with a central image, and radiates outward with literal frames each featuring a question: *What? Where? Who? When?, Why?*

In *Figure 17*, I have followed Reeve’s approach using Lapham’s photograph *Narragansett Brewery #3, demolished 2005* an abandoned brewery on the outskirts of Providence, Rhode Island. These abandoned buildings from the turn of the century are primarily located here, an area that was chosen to access the river for shipping purposes. I have come to see how connecting RR with Lapham’s photograph is not too different to critical looking strategies used by museum educators to engage visitors in decoding a work of art. In this case, we begin with the “*What*” frame, and start by naming parts of the image (empty building, bricks, men in hard hats), after which we proceed to “*When*” where we draw conclusions based on what we see, i.e. the baggy pants and un-tucked white undershirt lead me to believe that this photo was taken sometime in the late 1990’s or early 2000’s. But, beginning the curiosity spiral of ‘arts based research,’ I then begin to use my imagination and answer that question of “*When*” with other questions: *When was this building built? When did it collapse?* and perhaps “*Why is it in disrepair?*” As I continued to work through the RR method, I found myself jumping between frames and between the span of over a hundred years, trying to make sense of what happened in the unfolding history. *Where were the bricks made? Are the men in the picture local or have they immigrated to Providence? What are their families like? Who worked in this factory and how many people did it employ? What did their uni-*

forms look like? What did the artist find interesting about this scene that urged him to take a photograph? What do I like about this photograph?

RR exhibits the wealth of information that can be accessed by a work of art and, in the case of this particular work of art, the wealth of information that can be accessed through the examination of the ‘emptied out spaces’ in one’s own city. An “embodied form of writing,” RR “captures...the associations around an image/object in a tangible, physical manner” (Reeve, 2014, p.273). Compared to traditional research papers which progress in a much slower, linear method with the intention of narrowing focus, RR encourages students to embrace the rapid rhythm of rhizomatic thinking. As I looked critically into the photograph of the old Narragansett Brewery and tried to make meaning, my observations sometimes led to questions, other times they led to connections in my personal history which led to other questions. For example, this ‘emptied out space’ reminded me of the ‘emptied out’ tobacco warehouses that I used to explore in downtown Winston Salem, North Carolina; which in the brief span of ten years, have predominantly been transformed into chic industrial loft apartments. *Is this brewery a loft apartment now, also?* The RR diagram makes no distinction between the hierarchy of observations, connections, or questions, encouraging students to embrace the unknown and nurture their curiosity in a safe, personal space. RR rewards the curious spirit, as each question is accompanied by a potential research journey all of its own. I did not exhaust the meaning of the work of art in *Figure 17*, I ran out of room to write on my paper.

As a method for true interdisciplinary arts-based research, RR facilitates unbounded mental reach in search of connections. When RR is combined with an active photographic exploration of one’s community (examining people or places) the two processes, I am certain will awaken our students to the richness of experience that is the particularity of our community. In a PBAI classroom, perhaps students could photograph buildings in their neighborhood that they have never noticed before, and then use RR to facilitate critical thinking as they contextualize their new findings. The next step in RR would be to seek out the answers to some of these

questions we can not answer by looking into the photograph and our own personal history alone. For example, Lapham’s photo leads us to a discussion on economics and the industrial revolution. If this were my classroom, I would need to consult experts to discuss these topics at length. This can also provide opportunities for students to continue to be constructive in their methods of meaning making. Students could interview local community members, historians, and governmental figures, take a trip to the public library, or do an internet search. Additionally, visiting artists, preservation societies, and documentary photographers provide an opportunity to talk about careers in the arts.

If our community is always in a state of flux (with people and seasons changing the landscape and adding to the stories) then we will continue to have more discoveries wherever we look. To borrow a phrase from Phillip Yenawine’s *Visual Thinking Strategies*, a method for discussing the inexhaustible meaning of a work of art, *what more can we find?*

All page 51, left, *Figure 18*
Scott Lapham
Rhode Island
Freshly Fallen Snow,
Narragansett Brewery #1,
demolished 2005
Digital Photograph
Courtesy of the artist

Center, *Figure 19*
Scott Lapham
Rhode Island
Narragansett Brewery #2,
demolished 2005
Digital Photograph
Courtesy of the artist

Right, *Figure 20*
Scott Lapham
Rhode Island
Gloves, Thurston Manufacturing,
demolished 2004
Digital Photograph
Courtesy of the artist



Figure 21, Erin Poindexter, Providence, Rhode Island, Spring 2016, PBAI Process Journal Page #4: Multiple voices on July 14, Collage, watercolor and superimposed digital photo on paper, 8 x 9.5 inches

AREA 3: CENTERS OF CULTURE

*“But it is just a story we have told ourselves
and we are free to tell another, to reclaim the old one.”*

—ROBIN WALL KIMMERER, *on the market
economy as a social construct, Braiding Sweetgrass, 2013*



MULTIPLE SOURCES, MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

I don't quite know where the fault lies. Could it be the history books in my second grade classroom, the vivid imagination of a child reading a 'history book' as if it was 'yesterdays news,' or maybe it's the Disney renditions of *Peter Pan* and *Pocahontas*? It could be that my only interaction with Native Americans growing up was a field trip to the annual Pow Wow in Jamestown, NC, a ceremonious event where the Cherokee and Lumbee peoples often wore traditional regalia. Whatever the source, as a child I had some extensive misconceptions about Native Americans. I remember standing alone at the edge of the woods and wondering just how deep you had to go before hitting reservation land, *a perfectly preserved version of Pocahontas' magical forest*. I couldn't quite comprehend the timeline, but I understood that people with skin that looked like mine were in the wrong. It is important that educators acknowledge their own ignorance about the history of a particular culture, as it is common to develop "ethnocentrism and dysconscious racism" (Bequette, 2014, p.219) in youth. However, simply acknowledging the immorality behind the attempted genocide of a specific culture or race does not preclude any substantial understanding of the culture itself. It certainly doesn't mean that said people are treated equally today, just because the constitution dictates it

so (Davis, 2013). Castagno argues for a critical pedagogy that encourages "understanding of power, privilege, and oppression within and between groups" (Bequette, 2014, p. 216). Seeking to broaden my own horizons through social justice education and an aesthetic appreciation for the intricacies of a cultures' story, I began my search. I consulted contemporary methods for teaching culturally responsive arts education, as well as primary and secondary sources in my community to examine how the study of art might encourage the development of a wider and more accurate understanding of contemporary local indigenous culture. I have found that:

1. Visits to multiple cultural centers (sites and people) combine to provide students and teachers with a more democratic understanding of the history of their community. *Project Intersect (PI) introduces students to the history and contemporary perspectives of the indigenous population in their community by consulting many perspectives such as indigenous artisans, historians, elders, museum professionals, and historic sites.*
2. The bias of a secondary source can be illuminated in a work of art through critical discussion. *At the Rhode Island School of*

Design Museum of Art, students discussed Alonzo Chappel's 1857 painting Landing of Roger Williams in 1636, and discovered that the artist did not record an accurate portrayal of the event.

3. Primary sources in the form of personal histories provide an individual entry point into contemporary cultural understanding. *At the Tomaquag Museum, in Exeter, Rhode Island, artist, storyteller, and museum guide, Lynsea Montanari sheds light on the continued oppression of the Native American people.*
4. Traditional material-culture studies such as basketweaving with local natural materials can be used to research many “culturally acquired behaviors, such as dependence on local biosystems for aesthetic expression and production” (Bequette, 2014, p. 220). *Engaging students in the full process of gathering and curing natural materials for basketweaving, such as the Common Cattail, Typha latifolia, will provide a more contextualized understanding of their environment and the indigenous cultures who came before them.*
5. The introduction of contemporary art making practices into culturally responsive art making provides an avenue to explore themes of social justice. *Artist Faith Ringgold creates politically motivated paintings that use her lived experience of the riots in the Civil Rights Movements to reframe the story Contemporary America.*

CULTURE-BASED ARTS INTEGRATION

In “Culture-Based Arts Education That Teaches against the Grain: A Model for Place-Specific Material Culture Studies” James W. Bequette (2014) of the University of Minnesota presents Project Intersect (PI), a case study of an interdisciplinary, place-specific, culture-based model for art education with an eye to social justice. This program evolved out of a desire to break down stereotypes in American history and allow the local indigenous peoples to teach history from their own perspective. They found that CBAI (Culture-Based Arts Integration) increased engagement in students and

teachers while providing them with a new appreciation for “the place they live and the history of the people who have been living there for millennia (p. 215).”

The most important factors in the creation of this curriculum were the use of available indigenous resources to assure authenticity of information and provide the opportunity for examining history accurately. Sources included artisans, historians, elders, historic sites, and museum professionals. The study took place in 50 classrooms between two public schools. The teachers there created highly effective, sometimes yearlong curriculum. The use of contemporary as well as historical artistic resources was discussed and proved to bring about a larger discussion of social justice awareness through art for both the teachers and the students (Bequette, 2014). PI hinges on teacher engagement and has the potential to be dramatically life changing for all those involved. Not only does the program challenge social norms for the children, but it also provides learning opportunities for the teachers as well.

PI's place-specific curriculum had an exploratory nature that included bringing the children to new learning spaces such as a visit to talk with an unnamed local contemporary artist and Ojibwa-Finn elder who shared his paintings of Ojibwa people “‘clothed and in modern dress’ to counter the ‘naked Native’ paintings of 19th century Anglo-America.” (Bequette, 2014, p. 221). Another new learning space was the regional bus tour, the goal of which was to identify historical and contemporary sites of indigenous people's history and included a walk in the woods with a lecture on gathering natural materials and a visit to a contemporary reservation store that makes and sells traditional goods. The article outlined inspired teacher-driven lesson plans such as role-playing a traditional fur trade on sacred Indian ground which launched critical discussion for a fourth grade class (Bequette, 2014). These explorations combine to provide students and teachers with a more democratic understanding of the history of their community.

SECONDARY SOURCES AT THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN MUSEUM OF ART

Interning with the education department at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum of Art, I observed an eighth grade tour and pre-tour classroom visit



which featured the ‘Art of The Americas.’ The students came prepared with knowledge from their history books about the landing of colonist Roger Williams, who ‘discovered’ Providence, Rhode Island. Through critical discussion led by the museum educator, students deconstructed Alonzo Chappel’s 1857 painting *Landing of Roger Williams in 1636* (see Figure 23) in order to find out “[W]hat... primary and secondary sources can tell us about historical events” (“Dig: The Museum Planning Form” 2016). The painting, created over two hundred years after the landing based off of a written account, features the chief of the Narragansett tribe handing a peace pipe to Roger Williams who stands on the edge of a boat, each man with numerous people behind him. In reading the painting, students identified both white and native children who were hiding behind their mothers, or in some cases being hidden out of view by their mother’s strong arm, keeping them firmly out of sight. This led the students to believe that both sides were scared of one another. The students brought lots of prior knowledge to this painting, including the fact that Roger Williams is generally thought of as one of the ‘friendly settlers’ who came to America seeking religious freedom. It was clear from the discussion that the history

books only provided the European side of the story. The museum educator pointed out that even though Roger Williams was not violent in the usual manner associated with settlers arriving in America, he still sought to convert the Natives to Christianity; thus declaring their religion ‘unfit’. The museum educator also pointed out several stereotypical discrepancies in the painting, such as a headdress typical of Western Native Americans, not Narragansett peoples. This discrepancy caused students to see that while the painter was very conscious of Roger Williams’s characteristic details, he did not treat the Narragansett peoples as individuals. Recently historians have been debating whether or not this meeting happened at all (“Dig the Museum Planning Form,” 2016). These falsities contributed to the rich discussion of the painting. I believe that the students left the conversation with a more complex understanding of this time in history, and more questions about the past than we began.

TOMAQUAG INDIGENOUS MUSEUM: PRIMARY SOURCES

On a visit to the Tomaquag Museum in Exeter, Rhode Island, I met young artist, storyteller and member of the

Narragansett-Niantic Nation, Lynsea Montanari, who guided me through the museum's collection. We first looked at some traditional beadwork, and then gesturing towards a framed newspaper article on the wall she spoke on behalf of the museum, "we like to show how native peoples are continually being oppressed" (Lynsea Montanari, Personal Communication, March 11, 2016).

In 2003, the Narragansett tribe wanted to build a smoke shop on tribal land where they could sell cigarettes without tax. Tribes all over America have done this. "It is something we have been told that we could do," she said, "[W]e are our own sovereign nation, shouldn't we be able to make up our own tax just like each state can make up the tax for their land?" (Montanari, 2016). The ultimate opening of the smoke shop was a joyous occasion, and members of the tribe attended to celebrate the incoming steady stream of revenue with families in tow. But when her mother showed up with her newborn baby brother, and her father, a tribal police officer, whispered "I'm not sure what is going on here, but you two should go." The police showed up without a search warrant and raided the place. "There were kids there, pregnant women were pushed to the ground, they arrested our chief!" Lynsey tried to help me put it in perspective by comparing the position of chief to governor. "[He's not] the president, but you don't just do that!" (Montanari, 2016). An article in the Providence Journal (2013) covers a gathering of Tribe Members on the 10th anniversary of the raid: "I can close my eyes and see everything," said Paulla Dove Jennings, who was inside the store a decade ago. "I can see the shelves being emptied. I can see a news reporter with a video camera. I can hear my son say, 'Just don't hurt my mom.'" Jennings said the police slammed her against a door and broke the foot of her son, Adam Jennings. After much legal wrangling, a jury in 2008 said a state trooper did not use excessive force when he held Adam's ankle during the raid." (Davis, 2013) The Narragansett tribe was in court for years over the incident, and they still don't have a smoke shop. They arrested Lynsea's father over an alleged assault charge, which was proven to be false through the new reporter's video. Many innocent people were arrested (Montanari, 2016), which even if not charged, results in lost time, lost wages, lawyer fees, and emotional strife. Lynsea closed the story of the raid from a politically neutral stance "whether or not you

agree with untaxed cigarettes, the way things were done was not fair" (Montanari, 2016). Lynsea's story, which takes place within the last fifteen years, reinforces the need for social justice education in today's schools.

ARTS INVESTIGATION

With multiple sources and multiple perspectives from members of the indigenous community in tow, let's think about how to activate these new perspectives through art making with our students. What does culturally responsive art inspired by Narragansett-Niantic culture look like? Two ideas come to mind that have the potential to honor the historical perspective with handmade Native American crafts or the contemporary perspective of Native American politics.

TRADITIONAL MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES: BASKET WEAVING

Lynsea Montanari showed me one of her favorite exhibits, a cabinet overflowing with baskets. She picks one up and gestures towards me, "You want to be proud of what you make. Traditionally the things that we [Native Americans] were making were considered art because no one was taking the time to make things [with the care] that we were" (Montanari, 2016). Material-culture studies such as the art of basket weaving celebrates the Native American tradition of taking pride in the things that one makes and could also offer students an opportunity to work with local natural resources and native plants. According to Gibbons (1962) 'Cattails', *Typha latifolia* are the "supermarkets of the swamp" (p. 55). Every single part of the cat tail can be cooked and eaten through all stages of growth: the fresh green shoots of May and June can be cooked as a vegetable, the pollen follows which makes a good flour, at the end of fall the roots (although quite difficult to dig up) can be cooked and eaten as a starch (Gibbons, 1962). There are many more ways to eat a cattail, and each should be given adequate attention in a unit researching natural resources native to our community. For our purposes, the long basal leaves of the common cattail are used to make rush seating for chairs (Gibbons, 1962) and baskets. "[T]he leaves are gathered when full grown but still green, and the midrib is removed and discarded. The four to five foot long leaves are hung in bundles, under cover, to dry in the shade. Before using they are soaked to make them soft and pliable.

The strands are twisted together by hand” (Gibbons, 1962, p. 59). The cane basket in *Figure 22* from the Pima or Papago peoples of the southeastern United States used cattails as well as willow and black devil’s claw in the construction of this basket. Material culture studies are not limited to the study of indigenous cultures, but can be used to research many “culturally acquired behaviors, such as dependence on local biosystems for aesthetic expression and production” (Bequette, 2014, p. 220). But a museum visit is only one way to access traditional material-culture studies in basketweaving.

Picture books are often overlooked as teaching tools for students once they pass the fourth grade. In a way, historically focused picture books are heightened forms of arts-based research, requiring authors and illustrators to seek out historical sources as they bring the stories to life. In *Circle Unbroken*, (legitimized by an extensive bibliography), author Margot Theis Raven tells the history of the Gullah peoples of modern South Carolina using the ‘sweetgrass basket’ as the constant point of connection. The book itself models place-based material culture studies, beginning with a girl and her grandmother selling and weaving baskets in a street market scene. Raven takes the reader through the ceremony of the basket so tight it “held the rain” (p. 11) in their homeland on the West African Coast to Charleston, South Carolina where the Gullah people were sold into slavery for their specialized knowledge of rice fields. After the Civil War when the Gullah were freed from slavery, they continued the basket tradition which is provides a livelihood for many Gullah people today (Raven, 2004). I have been anticipating the seasonal change so that I can harvest cattails for basket weaving. Any artist, regardless of age, increase her appreciation for the traditional baskets, culture, and the resources of her specific environment a greater understanding and sense of place with such art-making. If students take part in the collecting and curing of the basket weaving materials, I suspect that they will look to nature with more appreciation for the kind of richness that it can bring to our lives if we take care of it.

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES: ART IN THE TIME OF WAR

Calling to attention the continued oppression of the Native American peoples (Montanari, 2016), students

could make politically motivated artwork inspired by the contemporary Narragansett-Niantic experience. Artist Faith Ringgold often makes political commentary through her art. She was active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s and created a body of work during that time entitled *The American People* which encourages people to look at themselves and reflect on their experience. “The more they look, the more they see.” she says (Stamberg, 2013).” In *American People Series #20: Die, 1967*, Ringgold paints her experience during a riot. At an artists’ talk during the Martin Luther King, Jr. series at Rhode Island School of Design, Ringgold spoke of the photos in the newspapers covering the riots, saying they couldn’t quite capture the violence, just how much blood was spilled (Ringgold, 2016). Several of the paintings within the *American People* series feature blood thematically. Blood is a powerful motivator that reminds a body that its success in this world is conditional upon the cooperation of many outside forces. In *American People Series #18: The Flag is Bleeding, 1967*, you can see how Ringgold has taken the symbol of the American flag, which typically stands for freedom and imbued it with her signature drips of blood. The flag imagery overlays three people, seemingly Americans, of different races linking arms. The red stripes pass across their faces. Without going straight out and saying it, Ringgold invites new narratives to Civil Rights movement. Is she saying that the fight for freedom is rife with violence? Or that the values that America stands for are in danger? Are false? Are the people who hold hands in the background are the ones who are in pain?

A work of art can be interpreted in many ways, but one thing is clear: Ringgold reframes the traditional picture of a free America, and forces the viewer to evaluate their role, for better or worse, as people who are capable of feeling and/or causing pain.

In *Figure 21, PBAI Process Journal Page #4: Multiple Voices on July 14*; I have attempted to combine notes from my recent studies of Contemporary Narragansett-Niantic Native American culture. As a starting point, I selected to work with *Native American Sachem, ca. 1700 by an Unknown American Artist*, a portrait featuring the traditional look of a Native American. This portrait is specific to the Narragansett-Niantic tribe. A print of the portrait is on view at the Tomaquag Museum. The actual painting is in the collection at the RISD Museum

of Art and was featured in the eighth grade lesson of which I spoke. I knew that I wanted to weave the stories together to mimic the processes of basket making and lived experience, so I selected two news stories, one from the Providence Journal at the 10th anniversary of the smoke shop raid (Davis, 2013), and the other, an official statement from Governor Carcieri at the time of the raid (RI.gov, 2003). From my own experience, and value systems, I added a digital rendering of *Put it Back*, an original work of public art that I hope to make in the future wherein I build a glorious mountain in the middle of the city. It is to be a glowing symbol of the natural landscape that is now lost, but could exist in the future. When I looked at this work in the context of colonialism and the original Native American landscape, I see that the principles of ‘taking’ and ‘putting back’ are similar. While I do not, at this point, completely understand the land trust issue, it is a political issue which I am interested in learning more about. I believe there is a history of false generosity on behalf of the US government. The current plan for *Put it Back* allows for a traffic tunnel to pass underneath the mountain. This could speak to the fight over Native American land that has been taken away and partially returned in the form of land trusts, but then not having full access.

While I intend in no way to speak for the Native peoples with this work of art; the kinesthetic act of putting the work together, reading the articles and identifying key phrases, offered me time to reflect on my growth on my journey towards cultural competency. I see *Figure 21*, as more of a process sketch or research page than a finished work of art. It is a learning process in and of itself. Reflecting on *Figure 21*, I find that I am unhappy

that the Sachem does not have a face. It could be read as though he is meant to speak for all Native Americans, which we know to be problematic. It is in fact, the impetus for this entire PBAI exploration—to bring specificity to Cultural understanding. I also feel as though the contemporary stories are not as prominent in the work as the traditional indigenous figure. The work itself, still manifests in bias, revealing that there is more work to be done within myself as well as more work to be done in the classroom.

Culturally responsive art education should always alternate between looking back at history and looking to the future. We also need to look here, within our community, to find our own primary sources. We need to get to know the stories of individuals, find out what makes them unique and look for similarities among us that will connect and strengthen communal relationships. The story of indigenous peoples needs to be explored in every area, but the key principles of CBAI and the methods I have discovered researching regionally based arts and history can be extended to any culture: Haitian Americans, Russian Americans, Vietnamese Americans, African Americans, etc. Look around; we are a community of many cultures and many traditions that have touched each other throughout our shared history.

Page 57, left: *Figure 22*
Pima or Papago
United States, Arizona, 19th–20th century
Cane Basket (cat tail, willow, black devil's claw)
H. 11 5/16 x Diam. 12 1/4 in. (28.8 x 31.1 cm)
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,
Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979
Accession Number: 1979.206.921

Page 57, right: *Figure 23*
Alonzo Chappel
American, 1828-1887
The Landing of Roger Williams in 1636, 1857
Oil on canvas
50.8 x 61.3 cm (20 x 24 1/8 inches)
Museum Works of Art Fund 43.003

Following page: *Figure 24*
Erin Poindexter
Dorchester, Massachusetts, Spring 2013
J's on The Slide
Digital photograph



PART THREE

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

MOVING FORWARD

If we capitalize on the tools already being employed in the historical and contemporary educational models formerly mentioned, the student outcome will be tremendous. The potential benefits of PBAI can be streamlined to three major areas: to empower student learning, to connect students and teachers to their environment, and to build engaged citizens who are invested in the future of their community.

EMPOWER STUDENT LEARNING: PBAI will increase student agency in a lifelong process of learning and challenge the status quo as students cultivate their ability to formulate their own questions. With the self-reflective nature of art and evaluating new perspectives, students will become more self aware.

CONNECT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT: Not only are the students and teachers growing internally, but they become a part of something bigger than themselves, be it a community, a communion with nature, or both. A connection to the environment psychologically soothes and stimulates simultaneously. In beginning to value our home and where we come from, we begin to value ourselves as well.

ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP: In looking closely and experiencing various aspects of the locale, the students will become aware of the precious system that helps a community to function and will want to work to protect it. With increased environmental awareness, there are many opportunities to contribute to ecological initiatives now and in the future. Students become aware of ways that they can contribute to society in the form of volunteer opportunities, internships, and career trajectories.

If we can funnel the tools of critical place-based education and arts-based research through experiential learning, we have a real chance at propagating a multitude of meaningful learning experiences for our students and for ourselves. PBAI is about creating a deep understand-

ing and connection to the place in which one lives and the people coming together to make it a community. It's about letting curiosity guide, and finding one's way—*feeling* the way to a deeper understanding of the place where one lives and our place in it.

All in all, I feel as though PBAI's ability to create self-aware, empathetic, and engaged citizens who are invested in the future of their community will be such a strong model that it should serve as the primary educational endeavor in the school day. It doesn't have its true home in an art class, and certainly doesn't fit into a 45 minute science block. The interdisciplinary nature will only be activated if we remove the limits of segregated studies. This is how we make meaningful connections. This being said, I still expect certain fundamental skills to require supplemental conditioning such as math, literacy, and learning a musical instrument. I will set a limitation here, assuming that these skills are being cultivated elsewhere in the school day. In "Reggio Emilia for the Big Kids", Cutcher proposes some very reasonable changes to school structure in order to accommodate such a change. She urges schools to utilize their art teacher(s) as a resource for the rest of the curriculum development. Schools need an artist who specializes in integration, a resident artist or atelierista who can focus on teaching art techniques, methods and materials; and an educational specialist, ideally someone who values student centered learning and can aid in professional development. With these skills and attitudes would serve them well in further education and as citizens

As we move forward and disperse into our communities with sketchbooks, watercolors, and collection jars in tow obstacles will undoubtedly step into our path in the form of traditional thinking, budget cuts, and time. However, we must remain hopeful for our idealistic compass only points to greatness through connectivity and resilience of spirit. Change begins in small forms, teacher to student, teacher to teacher, so keep heart and make art, together. So let us expand our horizons, and expand our selves with PBAI.



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