

Copyright

by

Amanda Ashley Batson

2011

**The Thesis Committee for Amanda Ashley Batson
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:**

Intent Versus Outcome of International Mural Exchange

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Paul Bolin

Christopher Adejumo

Intent Versus Outcome of International Mural Exchange

by

Amanda Ashley Batson, BFA

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August, 2011

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to one student whom I met in Uganda, Brian. Even with his soft voice, he made his voice heard. My encounter with Brian served as a metaphor for the mission of our program and the driving force behind the work I hope to do in my life. Without his story and his insight, I would not be who I am today.

Acknowledgements

Without Fred Mutebi, Lesli Robertson and Rebecca Schaefer, this thesis would not have been possible. Their dreams and visions to create a better world through art has been evident in my time working with them and have been daily inspirations. It is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis possible including Dr. Christina Bain and Dr. Paul Bolin who have made their support available to me throughout the years offering their sage advice and encouragement to dream big. Lastly, I owe my deepest thanks to The John Anson Kittredge Educational Foundation for believing in this project and assisting me in the process.

Abstract

Intent Versus Outcome of International Mural Exchange

Amanda Ashley Batson, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Paul Bolin

Abstract: In an attempt to rectify the issues and concerns on the impact of an international mural exchange created by the organization Let Art Talk in 2008, I traveled to Uganda to pursue a similar community based, environmentally themed art workshops and *Talking Mural*. This theme-based mural was created and then given to a school in Plano, Texas to complete. My role was to investigate the work being done and the potential effects of learning on participants involved and to gauge the communication and learning exchanged between the participants in two varied communities. Through the creation of a mural using case study methods, it was also to be determined if the mission and goals of the project were accomplished. This study was focused on the following

question: In what ways and to what extent is the purposeful intent and meaning of the artwork made by students in Uganda--as part of a mural exchange program about environmental issues that occurs between students in Uganda and the United States--understood by the students in the United States who view and respond to this artwork?

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction to Research.....	1
Research Question	1
Problem Statement	2
Motivations for Research	3
Definition of Terms	5
Limitations of the Study	8
Benefits to the Field of Art Education.....	9
Chapter Two: Review of Literature.....	11
Conducting a Case Study	11
The Continent, The Country	13
Education in Africa	14
Let Art Talk	18
Possibilities of Cross-Cultural Communication	18
Art as a Tool	20
Art Education for Social Transformation	21
Chapter Three: Program Description.....	30
Project Development	27
First Days in Africa	27
Our Mission	32
Initial School Visits	32
The Welcome and the Workshops	37
Completion	39
Chapter Four: Data Gathering from Uganda	43
The Interviews	43
Day one	43
Day two	49
Chapter Five: Data Gathering from the United States.....	57
The Mural Exchange	57
The Initial Interviews	59
Revisiting the American School	62
The Final Interviews	65
Chapter Six: Data Analysis.....	72
Effects of The Mural Exchange	72
Cultural representation, othering, and stereotypes.....	77

Meaning.....	80
Recommendations.....	83
Ideas for Future Research.....	85
Conclusion	86
Appendix A: Interview Questions	90
A1: Proposed Interview Questions.....	90
A2: Follow Up Questions to Ask Students	91
Appendix B: Sample Consent Forms.....	93
B1: Administrator Consent Form for the Participation of Children	93
B2: ASSENT FORM	96
B3:Informed Consent to Participate in Research.....	97
References	101

List of Figures

Figure1: Let Art Talk, <i>Talking Mural</i>	17
Figure2: Map of Africa.....	28

Chapter One: Introduction to Research

Artists, community groups, teachers and organizations often design programs with the specific intent to create social dialogue between two or more groups. More often than not, these programs are not analyzed in a significant way to determine the impact of said program and to find out whether it had any positive effects on the participants. It is necessary, when developing programs in art education that are designed with specific social and cultural issues in mind, to try and determine if the intended outcomes and successes of the program resonate with all participants involved. If not, the program should be re-evaluated to implement the anticipated goals that were originally proposed. With these beliefs directing this investigation, I researched the *Talking Mural* projects of the organization Let Art Talk. I traveled to Uganda for the purpose of creating a mural exchange with the help of this organization. This mural exchange occurred between participants in Uganda and the United States, using a common theme of “environmentalism.” My research was undertaken in an attempt to determine if the stated goals and intents of this program were achieved and understood by those individuals who participated in and received this program.

Research Question

This study was focused on the following question: In what ways and to what extent is the purposeful intent and meaning of the artwork made by students in Uganda-- as part of a mural exchange program about environmental issues that occurs between

students in Uganda and the United States--understood by the students in the United States who view and respond to this artwork?

Problem Statement

Artists and teachers often use art as a way to create a greater understanding of deeper social issues in their world—designing their curriculum, artwork, or programming with the goal of expressing how a specific social issue that is affecting one community impacts another. Using this pedagogical method can presumably create an open dialogue through art between two communities that could address issues and broaden a student’s art experience and intercultural competence.

There has been little research done in the field of art education to investigate the effects of these types of socially aware, art exchange programs. There has also been a strong lack of clear, researched evidence explaining if the curricula or programs have the impact that is intended by the educators or people who design such programs. This case study targeted this lack of evidence and aimed to ascertain if the original intent of the Ugandan participants--international communication about environmental issues--actually transfers to those individuals completing the mural exchange in the United States. With these findings, future art education programs could better shape their curriculum and prepare to meet the needs of all involved, to benefit everyone and help to better meet the project’s mission.

Motivations for Research

In fall 2008, while completing my undergraduate work at The University of North Texas, I designed, along with a fellow professor and colleague, a series of family art nights for local public elementary schools in the Dallas area. These theme-based art nights, while locally based, focused on a global concept of sustainability and involved international help. We were fortunate enough to support the travel of the well-known printmaker, Fulbright scholar and founder of the organization Let Art Talk, Fred Mutebi, from Uganda to Texas to participate in these art nights. Our primary goal was to teach the students about the culture and to make them aware of environmental issues faced by the people in Uganda, which in many ways are similar to their own.

We created multiple stations for the students to make art and learn about the interconnected nature of their culture and that of those students in Uganda. The various art stations were designed to promote the concept of sustainability, while incorporating traditional Ugandan materials and crafts. The stations created were as follows: Printmaking with Bark Cloth--a traditional Ugandan material; recycled bead necklaces; found object woven bookmarks; sculpture planters; t-shirt designs, which were created by both communities; a cultural information station with video and Ugandan craft. The entire enterprise culminated in a collaborative mural. It was via these simple stations and crafts that we were able to both raise environmental awareness and equip children for tackling these issues in the future, with an eye towards creativity and cultural cooperation.

The most exciting aspect and pinnacle of the project was the creation of a mural, which led to an international mural exchange between students from Texas and students that Fred Mutebi worked with through Let Art Talk, in Uganda. The mural spelled out the words “Commit to Passing on a Cleaner Earth for a Beautiful Future.” The students wrote words and/or statements from this theme, with then more words emerging from these, thus promoting the shared ideas the students have about the environmental concept (see Figure 1). A mural with the same theme was created in Uganda in efforts to complete this global conversation.

Working with close to eight hundred students, parents, and educators throughout this process brought up questions of whether these exchanges made any clear and significant educational difference in the lives of the students involved. The efficacy of the project in relation to the mission was not evaluated. It would have been most beneficial if the program were analyzed to determine if these art activities and the mural exchange, indeed, had been a vehicle toward cultural awareness and shared perspectives. Or, it would have been useful to analyze if the project had succeeded or failed to do what was intended: to tie two cultures together creating notions of a global community based on issues related to the environment.

Following the conclusion of this project in November 2010, I was invited to teach students in the local communities of Uganda in the same way that I had in 2008. In an attempt to resolve the questions of the previous project I made it a goal to determine if the mission of the project was in fact being taught and learned by the children. My focus then shifted to researching the experience and meaning-making that was occurring from

the *Talking Mural* project. This time the mural would be initiated in Uganda and then be sent to Texas for completion and reflection. The art making stations and mural were centered on an environmental theme once more--to effectively evaluate the project and concept that was not done in 2008.



Figure 1. Let Art Talk, *Talking Mural*, 2008 Photo credit: The University of North Texas. Reprinted with permission.

Definition of Terms

Action Research—Educators who inquire about their own teaching practices through research to enhance their own practices (May, 1993).

Bark Cloth--“Bark cloth is a non-woven fabric that’s produced from the bark of *Ficus Natalensis*, or Mutuba, a rare fig tree species that’s indigenous to Uganda. Since the 13th century, bark cloth has been produced in the Buganda Kingdom and used for commercial, ceremonial and ritual purposes by the Buganda. Since the 13th century, bark cloth has been produced in the Buganda Kingdom and used for commercial, ceremonial and ritual purposes by the Buganda” (Schiller, 2001).

Boda Boda--Motorbike taxi’s.

Chapati--Flat unleavened bread.

Culture--An active engagement of one's own life and the life of others, seeing, respecting and learning about one's own beliefs, ways of life, and values and those of others. The term can be described as ideas, traditions, products, and language, passed down from each generation within a society (Nyman, 2002).

Community--Parameters of commonalities in interest or values despite literal geographic boundaries (Adams, 2002).

Kabaka--King of the Buganda people.

Let Art Talk--a grassroots organization designed to implement art practices as a tool to create change within communities. The organization's mission focuses on reaching out to different communities in search to find commonalities within diverse groups through art education. The organization's founder is the African printmaker, Fred Mutebi.

Matoke--Ugandan plantains fried with dried smoked fish and beef stock and created into the texture of mashed potatoes.

Matatu--Van Taxi.

Mzungu--Swahili term for someone who is constantly on the move, be it traders or tourists. Now it has become the common name for all white people in Africa.

Global Village--“When what is done/happens on one side of the sphere in spite of distance affects or will affect the other side of it.” Quote from Fred Mutebi on February 25, 2011.

Study Abroad--Studies occurring overseas that are intended to “promote mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and the peoples of other nations” (Conference on the Fulbright Program in the Eighties, 1980).

Sub-Saharan Africa--Countries occupying the region south of the Sahara desert. These countries are: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe (Countries List, 2002).

Random Sample--Group drawn from a specific population that has an equal chance of selection for use in the research process.

Limitations of the Study

To narrow the scope of my research, the project only allowed for the creation of one mural that would be shared between the participants in Uganda and Texas. Because I could not anticipate who, at any given time, would be working with me in Uganda other than educator Fred Mutebi, Lesli Robertson, and Rebecca Schaefer, I had to open the interview possibilities in both geographical locations to educators, parents, and other members of each community who could potentially be involved in the mural process or involved in overseeing the mural exchange.

Also, due to the fact that the project began in another country where I was only a visitor, I had to limit the time allotment for the completion of the mural in Uganda. I allowed time necessary to feasibly finish the mural during my two-week stay. I was not able to work with and talk to the exact same participants in the mural project everyday in Uganda, so my interviews were semi-structured.

A potential difficulty I had to overcome in my study was the language barrier. Most of the students I worked with were fluent in the language of Buganda and were also learning English. The students were not completely comfortable speaking in English in response to many of the interview questions, therefore many the Ugandan students wrote down answers in their local language, which was then translated into English.

Benefits to the Field of Art Education

The theme of the 2010 National Art Education Association's (NAEA) annual spring conference was *Art Education and Social Justice*. This perspective expands on the recent notion that a primary purpose of art education is to create a classroom environment that embraces issues of social importance. Teachers "have become curious about the possibilities for learning about the Other in cross-cultural classroom encounters" (Palfreyman & McBride, 2007, p. 143). The previous year the same NAEA conference was constructed around the theme of "Environmentalism," which also contributes to the direction in which the field is trying to guide teachers, to be more conscious of social, political, and environmental issues throughout the entire world today.

There is a strong desire in art education to have learning settings that embrace issues and focus their instructive practice with less of a Discipline Based (DBAE) approach in teaching art, and to embrace an issues-based method of practice. This research could essentially provide some analysis needed to help assist our field in negotiating the path it is trying to navigate.

In an attempt to rectify the issues and concerns on the impact of an international mural exchange created in 2008, I traveled to Uganda to pursue the same community based project with the help of the organization Let Art Talk. A parallel theme and concept were used to try and determine if, through the creation of a mural, the mission and goals of the project were accomplished.

The research was completed using case study methods to determine if the meaning and intentions of the students in Uganda were translated into the mural created

for and brought to a community in Texas. I was able to incorporate the use of semi-structured interviews across a range of participants, which included educators and mural participants who were primarily students of primary school ages in Uganda and Texas. I documented their responses to specific questions related to the mural exchange in a field notebook and through their handwritten notes. A more thorough discussion of this methodology follows in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The following chapter provides explanation and description of the type of research measures taken to gain conclusive data for my initial research question. The study was performed using qualitative methods of data analysis such as interviews and personal testimonies documented through field observation. The chapter also provides background literature analysis on the ideas that initiated the study and developed throughout the course of the research.

Conducting a Case Study

My qualitative research used case study methods to help gather appropriate data in order to compare the findings I received through semi-structured interviews in Uganda and Texas. It was important, as a researcher, to make sure the questions used in the interview process are relevant to the theories and hypotheses I wanted to understand as an educator. According to Bassey (1999) the contribution made through the use of case study research is a perfect strategy for developing educational practices that help develop educational theories and policies. It was imperative in this case study to form a clear evaluation of how this particular educational program is structured in order to understand its workings and potentialities. It was essential to use these findings to help create a more clear understanding of how programs can be successful in their mission to improve social and cultural awareness (Eide, 1970).

These qualitative methods of evaluation are needed in order to help educators focus on their personal teaching pedagogies, wherein educators create themes from the specific research as it emerges in order to make the research valuable to practice: “Artistic approaches to research are less concerned with the discovery of truth than with the creation of meaning” (Eisner, 1985, p. 183). The research for my thesis is more focused on determining the level of meaning in the lives of the participants created from programs like Let Art Talk. Using case study methods with a program that has already been established and has had much experience in their current practice can make powerful suggestions and generate further insight that could be put to use for future projects. Let Art Talk is an excellent program for evaluation through this narrative case study. When looked at, evaluated and granted the ability to grow from quality research, Let Art Talk can potentially grow as an organization, create usable answers to programmatic problems and strengthen their educational mission.

As Stephens (2009) states, “The interest of the stakeholder perspective when assessing a particular programme or intervention is one contributory factor, as is an interest in assessing the *processes* of such programmes and a recognition that assessment is as much, if not more, an art than a science” (p. 49). For this reason, it is important to acknowledge my role as a key player in this organization in order to guide myself away from any particular bias toward evaluation of the data. The knowledge gained from the research is of particular value to see the program flourish, but at the same time realizing that our model could have particular weaknesses that need to be discovered.

The Continent, The Country

Most of Africa exists today in fifty-four territorial states defined by Western imposed expansion (see Figure 2). In an attempt to gain independence from colonial power and oppression in the 20th century, the continent of Africa has struggled with the creation of a national whole because of the subdivisions of many nation-states. The various states that were created through Western colonialism have in turn led to eleven million square miles of a population of people who are “multi-lingual...and multi-ethnic” (Simpson, 2008, p. 2), speaking hundreds of languages.

The communities within Uganda are crowded with dwellings made of mud with thatched roofs, in a collective village with all occupants inhabiting space in very close proximity. These homes often do not have doors, separate rooms, or window coverings and lack the financial resources for running water or central air conditioning. Those who are privileged to exist with more affluence, live in compounds made of mud walls or brick with iron roofs. These residences are outfitted with tall security fences with broken glass or barbed wire lined atop to prevent illegal entry. Each of these home are designed with windows, kitchens, iron doors, custom floors tiles, and toilets and showers with warm running water. These compounds often have a fair amount of land, gardens or banana groves on the property and are often equipped with house workers and maids. The two extreme types of establishments create a great divide between neighbors for the two types are often next to each other.

With an average per capita income roughly \$1 a day (US), sub-Saharan Africa remains the poorest region in the world (Moyo, 2009). The United Nations Human

Development Report concluded that the forty-seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa will take up one third of all poverty in the world by 2015. People under the age of fifteen years primarily occupy Sub-Saharan Africa and statistically one out of seven children in these countries will not live past age five. One of these sub-Saharan countries is Uganda. According to Dambisa Moyo, over one trillion US dollars have been sent to aid Africa from other countries since 1940. With corrupt governmental practices however, and conditions set by donors themselves, aid has not disseminated to the countries in the way it was intended. Policy is often determined by outside funders leading to a shift away from African policymakers. Aid flow is perceived as a permanent income, and has made Africa dependent on such help (Moyo, 2009).

However, regardless of the many differences between communities, the people share common ideas of creating the best possible post-colonial future for their countries.

Education in Africa.

Article thirty of the Ugandan constitution states that education is a human right entitled to all. Though education has not always been available to all children in Uganda, due to attempts to provide education primarily to the elite or because of disruption from the rule of Idi Amin. Because of the ruler's influence, the importance placed on formal educational training for all children did not ignite again until the 1980s.

The various African governments speak about the value and need for the education of all people. They believe education will create harmony within Africa that will contribute to the development and growth of their countries: "Economic

development helps ensure a good quality of life for the population of a country. In addition, educated citizens, satisfied with the quality of their lives, are more likely to maintain the political stability in their country” (Walugembe, 2009, p. 3). Uganda, in particular, has a history of challenges that have ultimately helped the country become stronger in its advancement as a nation. Like other countries within Africa, Uganda has dealt with a myriad of struggles aside from colonial problems, thus causing an unstable political climate and creating internal military conflicts. The country also struggles with lack of adequate healthcare and clinics to treat the growing population. But, “the talent, energy, and motivation of the Ugandan people has been the force driving the country toward progress” (Walugembe, 2009, p. 6). This development in education has correlated greatly with the economic progress shown throughout Africa, and “for this reason, educational research can and should be used as a valuable instrument for African decision makers in starting new initiatives meant to improve the quality of education in their countries” (Walugembe, 2009, p. 13).

At the present time, students attend seven years of primary school (P1-P7), which is considered required. Uganda has approximately 13,000 primary schools, mainly owned and administered by the government. Many schools in Uganda are international boarding schools that train students with top tier teachers and conditions. Parents of these children range from diplomats, embassy workers, or are from families who work three to four jobs just to provide what they believe is quality education for their children.

Instructional methods are interactive, wherein teachers encourage pupil participation and use heavy discussion in the classroom. However, this style can be

harmful to the learning taking place due to the high student/teacher ratios in these government schools. In 2001, the average student to teacher ratio was fifty-eight to one. These schools focus their curriculum on English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies (Muhwezi, 2003).

Most public schools are not constructed for this large school body. They are built of mud and brick with meager interior space. There are minimal supplies available for the population, a lack of seating, and in some instances not equipped with any type of teaching tools: “Some schools operate under trees implying that during rainy seasons, school programs are interrupted” (Muhwezi, 2003, p.13).

After completing primary school, students have the option to attend six more years of secondary school. The teaching methods in S1-S7 have shifted from discussion oriented to a teacher-centered approach, which allows for more lecturing from the teacher to students in a variety of areas with continued training in Mathematics and the English Language. The latter half of secondary school education is training for future vocations, with subjects offered in: Home Economics, Nutrition, technical drawing, woodworking etc... (Muhwezi, 2003). After this training, the pupil may desire to not immediately enter the workforce, and instead enroll in the University for three to five years. School terms begin at the end of January.

According to the Minister of Education for The Republic of Uganda, their country is the first in Africa to have free secondary education starting at grade five (Uganda Educational Statistics, 2011). Education, although somewhat provided by the government, has fluctuating attendance. Students who are fortunate enough to afford the

fees in public institutions attend regularly, however many circumstances contribute to a school's low attendance. For instance, many schools are miles from a student's home and this alone causes sporadic attendance. Illness, pregnancy, household labor needs, and money also contribute to low attendance among Ugandan school students. If a family cannot afford the semester payments for books or other fees, a child in that family may be absent for months. There is no strict policing of students and families to keep them in school. Reports indicate that head mistresses and teachers are the "main culprits for absenteeism and truancy in schools" (Lubanga, 2011). A statement made on The Office of The President website urges all teachers to be present in order to give proper teaching to the students so learning can happen.



Figure 2. Map of Africa. Image courtesy of (Nations Online Project, 1998).

Let Art Talk

Let Art Talk is an organization in Uganda that uses art as an educational tool to communicate with the many diverse populations in Africa. Internationally known printmaker, Fulbright scholar, and educator Fred Mutebi, who believes that art can be used as the driving force for positive change in the lives of people, founded the organization with the hope of educating multiple diverse cultures through common social issues. Mutebi believes that art can have the ultimate power for our world, leading to a more positive future and helping to develop strong international relations--believing that art can be the way to creatively communicate issues dealing with social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges that plague our global community.

Art can be used to help empower communities and people across national boundaries, and visual ideas can be utilized to help address challenges the world faces as part of a global village (<http://letarttalk.org>). Let Art Talk believes that visual art is something everyone needs in order to lead the best life possible. According to the mission of the organization, artists and educators should strive to let art speak--to determine possible solutions to these social and cultural challenges plaguing our world: "This is a crucial time to give art a chance to talk" (<http://letarttalk.org>).

Possibilities of Cross-Cultural Communication

There are many possible ways to gain mutual knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced throughout the world, as we inhabit one shared planet. Cross-cultural

understanding takes huge precedent in the core missions of organizations like Fulbright, UNESCO, and The Council on Student Travel. These groups believe that those who participate in any study abroad or type of educational experience within another cultural group should develop an understanding of the “differences and similarities between the foreign and home culture, and of his national identity within the context of his international experience” (Council on Student Travel, 1965, p. 43).

Founders of the Fulbright program believe there is no greater experience than spending time learning in an overseas environment, outside of one’s immediate community. This program and others like it have established their purpose as organizations to help facilitate mutual understandings between nations, to further peace and establish greater international communication with an investment in education. International education is intended “to establish friendly relationships between various nations, to promote mutual understanding between the peoples, and thus contribute to world peace” (Eide, 1970, p. 80). Direct immersion, with an intended purpose, into another nation takes the experience of travel to be legitimate and purposeful to one’s education, and then equally educates the greater population (The Fulbright Program, 1980).

Art educators have been inspired to erase the level of cultural and social ignorance through using cross-cultural methods of teaching about this notion of the “Other” by creating curriculum that is open to diversity. This curriculum intends to develop a population of students who are knowledgeable about other cultures as well as educated in their own. Culture is constantly undergoing change, by the ways in which we

communicate and mutually understand one another's own cultural system. It is what defines our everyday lives. Teachers are manipulating their practice to incorporate instruction about multiple cultures around the world, incorporating social issues that are dealt with globally as a tool to connect a range of people together in the classroom and community.

To develop this intercultural competence, culture needs not only to be discussed in terms of a set of geographical or political boundaries that separate nations, but through personal connections that create knowledge of culture as something everyone actively participates in and is a part of a larger whole. Individuals in this cross-cultural teaching environment are allowed to express their beliefs, ways of life and values, and will appreciate the cultural values of others (Palfreyman & McBride, 2007).

Art as a Tool

Art is the “most accessible cultural object due to its ‘made to be seen’ nature...art can be effective as a cross-cultural communicator” (Oscarson, 2009, p. 4) that can also improve international relations between the many nations in our global community. Instrumental to education, art can encourage and facilitate people to engage in the communication of deeper social issues. Through this type of interaction art can be used as a tool for change in our world because it “has the ability to provide both education about another culture, as well as the power to instruct people about their own” (Oscarson, 2009, p. 18).

It is extremely important that art be utilized as a communicative tool for exchange between cultures. With the hope of establishing relationships between diverse people, these exchanges that arise between communities uphold lines of communication that develop “eventual understanding” of each other’s unique qualities and commonalities. The question becomes whether or not these art exchanges help students gain more knowledge about social issues, and how the successes of these programs are gauged. The potential for meaning-making and cross-cultural dialogue is priceless for the continued positive exchange of ideas and education in a global world (Zaino, 2009). As Eisner (1985) believes, “The capacities for meaning are a part of the biological constitution of the human organism, the extent to which those capacities are actualized depend upon the forms of representation that humans learn to use” (p. 169). The potential these exchanges have for meaning-making depend on exposure to the visual experience that can generate communication of ideas, having profound and various meanings. As long as educators provide the conditions and programs that enable minds to develop, the creation of meaning will help to further a population that can learn in a variety of ways. Eisner (1985) summarizes: “The arts are not mere diversions from the important business of education; they are essential resources” (p. 212).

Art education for social transformation.

The classroom, in particular, provides a condition for students to learn about various cultures. The word culture can be interpreted to mean groups of individuals in society who share the same ideas in terms of their common practices, languages, beliefs,

and come from the same heritage. This word can also be interpreted to mean the knowledge and communication that people share, but also the evaluation and adaptations of actions to other individuals outside of a group. The ways that individual groups relate and engage with each other can be impacted through proper education.

Didactic pursuits in art education can provide the means to investigate one's own creativity through applied media techniques. Through open discussion of art history and visual culture, the art classroom can be the appropriate atmosphere to communicate ideas about the world through verbal communication, reflective practice, and visual non-verbal dialogue, which can take place intrapersonally and between classmates. Teaching about different cultures and world-views in the art classroom calls for self-realization of one's own culture and the cultures of others. Because an artist creates his or her own identity through the exploration of their own culture, multicultural art education provides a greater sense of one global community created from numerous cultures. Art enables these individuals from different backgrounds a singular, and also a collective, aesthetic voice to express themselves and develop much needed sensitivity and acceptance of the "others" we encounter daily (Nyman, 2002).

When the teacher broadens the art experience to incorporate themes that are not always considered in day-to-day core academic curriculum, students are able to learn from many cultures. Opening doors for students to experience multicultural art education expands the possibilities for greater dialogue among students about each other's similarities and differences, possibly leading to greater acceptance of the two. With these encounters in the art classroom, students boast greater possibilities to implement change

in society: “Once they are open, once they are informed, once they are engaged in speech and action from their many vantage points, they may be able to identify a better state of things—and go on to transform. Sometimes, I believe it is our only hope” (Greene, 1995, p. 59). Students gain a sense of purpose and start to understand the reason of other people’s existence; the hope of a global understanding through a multicultural art curriculum is what will bring about greater perception and tolerance in our communities (Adams, 2002).

Creating a broader definition of community is a necessity in today’s classrooms. Community should no longer be a geographical boundary that separates countries, but should be defined as sets of commonalities, regardless of geographic distance from one another (Adams, 2002). A sense of community has to be achieved by, again, creating the opportunity for people to discover together the ideas that are common among them. It should be a place, like the art classroom, where students have the capacity to imagine how each individual can become a part of something bigger, a global community, “reaching toward some common world” (Greene, 1995, p. 39), with common goals.

Commonalities among people cannot exist unless there is an exchange of ideas. This is the first step to create social change. A collective consciousness can enable people to understand their purpose by actively restructuring the roles we play together in the world: “The intent is not to preach to young people how they are to behave in one and another context, but collectively to develop new ways of making our society operative and equitable” (Lanier, 1969, p. 315).

The implementation of multicultural art education into learning environments would benefit the educational system and the world as a whole--and would eventually, through this knowledge, create a community of cultures who learn from each other and share ideas. People should be able to treasure their own culture, but, culture should never become a system meant to close off or exclude themselves from cultures that surround them (Freire & Macedo, 1987). To cherish one another is to truly become open to change. It is the duty of instructors to educate the needs of all students and to take an active role in creating a collective society that views all people as a part of his or her own community.

With this multicultural model of art education inculcated into the classroom students make greater connections to a larger world. Ideas that stem from social awareness and the gained knowledge of cultural differences can lead teachers and students to explore how art can respond to the needs of the world and the meaning of others: “Through artworks, students absorb the perceptions of others—situated in other times and places, embodied in other races, genders, ages, classes and abilities. Through art, the self becomes vitally interested in other selves, seeing the possibilities and problems of those selves within oneself” (Gude, 2009, pp. 9-10). Students who are provided the opportunities, through visual art, to explore new ideas that are unfamiliar to them can increase their self-awareness, therefore, strengthening their awareness of others. Art can raise understanding of a life outside their own culture, to start creating a collective, integrated, communal life.

For some, art is seen as solitary and individual learning experience between the viewer and the work of art. More recently, researchers and artists have provided evidence to support meaning generated from collective experiences with art (Gablik, 1995): “Inter-human relations and dialogue become a central part of the aesthetic process, in which art is contingent upon its environment and audience, who often become collaborators in the artmaking process” (Meban, 2009, p. 33). Through collective experiences, art can generate dialogue. It would be, then, the responsibility of those educating students to help them generate authentic ways to reply to their shared worlds, providing them a place in the classroom to construct meaning through shared learning. These learning communities are made of people who possess a common purpose and through collaboration and social unity can create new knowledge. Promoting the meeting of art and society for the hope of merging communities in the classroom is a duty educators must respond to.

In this chapter, the role of the researcher was presented and explanations for the use of case study methods throughout this qualitative study. The chapter discussed background information about Uganda and the current state of education in Africa. Because I am trying to determine meaning made from multicultural art programs like Let Art Talk and the effects on the participants, investigation was needed on the effects of multi and cross cultural art education programs, focusing on their specific teaching strategies and theoretical frameworks. Let Art Talk has a vision to develop nations of people who come together through theme-based learning, and in response art education

for social justice was looked at in depth. A review of literature related to these foundational ideas was needed before continuing a discussion of my research

Chapter Three: Program Description

This chapter contains an explanation of the program that was developed with the assistance of Let Art Talk for two sites in Masaka, Uganda, defining the project and the mission of our teaching. It describes the experiences of being in a foreign country and what needed to be accomplished before we could begin teaching. Outlined here are the steps and events leading up to the project and the processes we went through in order to teach and create the *Talking Mural* with the community.

Project Development

First days in Africa.

When I arrived in Africa from Texas, after a grueling nineteen-hour flight, I was apprehensive about our upcoming project and the mounting research that would need to be sifted through to find answers pertinent to my study. Hours into the flight the journey seemed to become more real. I was hit with excitement and hope that our mission in working with Let Art Talk and the people of Uganda would truly exceed our expectations. This project we valued and believed in was one that had been developed through two years of trial and error in the United States. With all these thoughts, I almost missed observing where the coast of The Mediterranean Sea and the great continent of Africa met. I then realized we would soon be at our destination. Still gazing out my window, I spotted The Sahara Desert, captured by unexplained sudden bursts of fire in the midst of an endless body of sand and became mesmerized by the tremendous crop

circles that were created on the African plains. Finally, we landed on the tarmac, signaling our arrival at Entebbe Airport in Africa. We had arrived, shed our Texas winter layers, and prepared for the two weeks ahead of us in the capital city of Kampala and surrounding districts.

The capital city of Uganda is comparable to other large cities in the sense that you feel hustle and bustle all around. Ugandans crowd the streets, and a never-ending chaos of traffic is everywhere you turn. The pollution is thick and the environment is not as clean as a rural neighborhood. This is typical of most capitals; however, there were some immediate differences that I became aware of as an American. The pollution crisis had no apparent remedy. Trash lined the streets, ditches, and was situated in the roadways. There was not a system for recycling trash like is available to Americans; trash is simply burnt—filling the air with a distinct odor.

It was invident to me what exactly was causing the smells wafting through the city until my driver informed us of the growing problem of pollution from the burning of trash, petrol fumes, and the pollution that comes from being an extremely overcrowded city. According to the 2002 census, 32 million people reside in Uganda, and 3.6 million people occupy Kampala on any given day. Not only are the streets crowded with people, matatus, and cars, 50,000 seemingly reckless boda boda drivers take over roads. Traffic jams are a common complaint of the Ugandan people; sometimes when just trying to drive a few blocks we were stuck in a jam that lasted over an hour. The rapidly expanding number of residents in Uganda has been a central reason for unmanageable conditions in the city. According to the mayor of Kampala, only 40% of the garbage can be collected

every day, thus contributing to the piles of trash lining the streets (Kato, 2010). The scene was a unique dichotomy. Lush, green hills and vibrant red dirt covered with heaps of trash, and homes built literally with sticks.

Bright eyed and mission driven we spent the first few days in Kampala becoming acquainted with our surroundings. This started with acclimating ourselves to the amount of pollution and for the extreme weather conditions in Uganda. It was humid, hot, and rainy. These were prime conditions for the inescapable mosquitoes that enjoyed the arrival of Mzungus. We planned our trip to be at the end of Uganda's rainy season. It was probably to our advantage; when it was not raining the sun beat down with great intensity and rain was relief. The short, hour-long rains cooled us when we needed it the most.

Time was allotted for meeting the people—learning more about the culture and ways of life for people who seemed different from us. Traveling to Africa does provoke the same reaction as someone visiting Italy or Greece. Africa, simply put, has a status of being a third-world country surviving impoverished, conflicted with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Disorder), and is still haunted by the reign of Ide Amin Dada's decade-long presidential tyranny, which led to more than just civil war. A Westerner recalls eerie tales of tourist kidnappings, slaughter of their people, and sheer brutality caused by teenaged boys from the Lord's Resistance Army. As a first-time traveler to Uganda, I was fearful of the unknown. Yet, these issues should not cloud the reality of Africa as a whole. The country is a welcoming, generous, and kind country, despite any setback. Chinua Achebe explains that, "The writer is often faced with two choices: turn away from the reality of Africa's intimidating complexity, or conquer the mystery of

Africa by recognizing the humanity of African people” (Dowden, 2009, p. xiii). I was immediately comfortable in my surroundings and began to learn that reputation is not always indicative of actual experience one could have in a country.

We gorged ourselves on the local food, devoured fresh pineapples, and ate chapatti, matoke and grasshoppers, and an exorbitant amount of Irish potatoes. These foundational days enlightened us about the hearts of the Ugandan people and the country, despite its perceived hardships and limitations. Every person we interacted with treated us with tremendous kindness and taught us so much about their country. Fred Mutebi quickly informed us that the term *mzungu* is in no way a disapproving, racial term for white people. It was simple, “You are white, we are the opposite in color; it is a Swahili word that means someone who is constantly on the move, which is associated with tourists or people coming for a purpose. You will hear the kids screaming it to you, they love seeing *mzungu*.” Stephanie, Fred’s three-year-old daughter referred to me as “Sarah” most of the trip. Fred told me this was a clear sign she liked me. The only other white woman Stephanie had built a relationship with was named Sarah. As Fred explained, any white person that Stephanie trusts and likes takes on this title.

Our friends familiarized us with some basic phrases and cultural understandings of the Buganda people, to use in helping communicate with people in the villages. Practicing our greetings in Luganda, like “Wasuze Otyanno,” which means good morning, always invoked a roar of laughter from the one receiving it. R’s take on the pronunciation of the letter L, which was something we needed to learn quickly. My partner Rebecca was called Lebecca. I also had a rather humorous name to the children.

Amanda, when spoken in Luganda, means charcoal. This quickly became one of the biggest jokes around the schoolyards. When talking with someone it is polite and strongly encouraged to ask about ones family. Unlike typical exchanges in the United States, Ugandans genuinely listen to what your responses are and use your words to better get to know you. In Uganda, it is never acceptable to immediately discuss certain bad news: “The Baganda have never known anything else and, whatever else is going on beneath the surface, they live as if life is always good. Being with people, talking, making others laugh are what matter” (Dowden, 2009, p. 14). There was a clear sense of excitement from the people we met that we were actively engaging with them in their local language. This is important to build trust and a reputation with the people.

We quickly learned that what the majority of Ugandans value above all else is their faith, their family, and their food. The majority of Uganda practice some form of Christianity or are Muslim, with a small sect of people who still engage in pagan rituals. I immediately gained respect from those I interacted with as I am the daughter of a Christian minister. I was treated like part of a family in each house where I resided. Evening meals were a common gathering place for all members of the extended family. Homes were places of family interaction into the wee hours of the night. We also learned never to refuse food offered to us—this would be a sign of disrespect. I quickly gained ten pounds.

We also spent time getting to know the individuals and learned from the artists in the community as well as the physical environment of each school and the school leaders we would be working with. One artist in particular, Ivan Yakuze, whose work on bark

cloth was being shown in the traveling exhibition accompanying the project, worked with us closely as a teacher in our workshops.

We found ourselves, like many Westerners who arrive to Africa for the first time, who “suddenly find themselves cracked open. They lose inhibitions, feel more alive, more themselves, and begin to understand why, until then, they have only half lived” (Dowden, 2009, p.1).

Our mission.

Our goal was to teach the students from both Uganda and Texas about the concept of environmentalism, and that as part of a global community we share the same world. We set out to teach the students how important it is to treat our world respectfully through environmental practices. Each culture was to learn something about the other through the use of a mural exchanged between the two of them, and we wanted to learn how successful such cross-cultural teaching could be.

Initial school visits.

Crowded together in a small four-door car we departed on an unpaved, bumpy dirt road one hour away to the district of Masaka, headed out to meet the community. The occupants of this car, assistants to the project, were: Lesli Robertson, my former fibers professor at The University of North Texas; Rebecca Schaefer, an art teacher at Rasor Elementary School in Plano, Texas; Fred Mutebi who was our fearless driver and brain-child behind the community projects and mural exchanges; and the Ugandan artist educator Ivan Yakuze.

Driving through groves of banana trees, dodging potholes, we eventually came across a small path that led us to our first teaching site, Kasota Primary School. While

making the drive toward the school Fred spoke to us about what we could expect from some students in these rural villages. He mentioned that there is a lack of any art educational training in the school or in the home. Time in school is spent in academics and learning English. Art is not seen as important until secondary school and is taught for the purposes of strict training for university. He said we may find it shocking to see that some of the students might not know what a crayon is, or how to use it—they may even smell or taste it because of their lack of knowledge. He continued: “All of this will be a completely new experience for them. It educates them. They do not have enough teachers to do this kind of project without us.”

Members of the community, school children, and the headmistress Matilda Nakalema welcomed us at the top of the path. Swarms of children surrounded our car and all grabbed our hands to touch us as we stepped out of the vehicle. After a quick introduction the headmistress gave us a brief tour of the facilities and the gardens where students learn about healthy living and sustainability practices. Headmistress Matilda showed us the classrooms and exactly where on the compound we would be working with the participants. Viewing the classrooms before we were engaged with the children was important. Lesli, Rebecca, and I were not used to seeing classrooms with these conditions. We needed to experience what it would be like to teach in a setting not familiar to us. As Americans we were accustomed to governmentally funded schoolrooms filled with the latest technology, school bells, and the hustle and bussle of principals, teachers, janitors, and students. This school was much different than our Western experience, as this school was made entirely of concrete with openings in the walls for windows; meager benches lined the back wall of the room facing a dusty and cracked blackboard. Nothing else filled the room. Not one florescent light, not one trash bin or designated rooms. Surrounding these were varieties of trees and lush green nature;

the only thing on the horizon was a vibrant blue sky, an interesting contrast to the dull, lifeless concrete of the school. Next to the school was a thatched roofed, open-air room where people in the community come to prepare the local material, bark cloth made from the bark of The Mutuba tree. This fabric is used in the daily life of all Ugandans.

After viewing the facility at the first site, we traveled down the road to Buyoga Primary School. We ate a lunch of warm matoke prepared by the women of the community there with the headmistress Sarah Kalungi, and were given a tour the school grounds by Drake, the chairman of school management and highly respected elder in the community. This school appeared in slightly better condition than the other. This could be because it was closer to people's homes and nearer to the city center. There were more classrooms and more teaching tools in each classroom. These tools were bark cloth banners strung from the ceilings emphasizing a desired skill. Hand drawn plants on paper glued to bark cloth posters indicated science lessons were being taught to students.

There were paintings on the brick exterior of the school created with the help of Fred Mutebi during another project. On the grounds next to the school was construction for a new community center and a church. Members from The Teachers College were outside painting a mural while we were there with the words written across it "Stop electoral violence," which was appropriate for their current election time. Access to the location promoted these activities and community involvement. The school was situated in the center of the town, surrounded by residences and a major road. After gaining a greater understanding of the sites that we would be teaching in, it was time to prepare all the needed workshop materials.

When we arrived in Uganda we brought with us six large suitcases packed with contributions for our project and additional donations for each school that we would be working with in the community. Our host, and creator of Let Art Talk, explained to me

about the importance of teaching students how to use materials. His statement caused us to make a few adjustments to the way we were to approach our teaching. He said, “We cannot just freely give all of these donations to the schools, because they will go out and sell them. But, if we teach them how to use the materials, allowing them also to prove that they value it, then we can give it to them.” This led to more conversation about teaching students skills to set them apart from others. We were warned that these children want a taste of the Western world so bad that any Western commodity (like our donations) would be begged for, and possibly sold. Students would not take time on their own to know how something was made or how it could be used in their own culture without our guidance.

Items coming from the West would immediately symbolize wealth to the students. Fred explained we should never give anything in exchange for nothing. We should never let anyone know we were giving something away because it could cause great problems; we were not to tell them about our donations before they learned of their usefulness. To be Western symbolized a sense of accomplishment and the ability to have whatever you want. This great stereotype of what our culture represents, regardless of its truth, should be enlightening to some. Fred’s description about the students we would be interacting with continued with other warnings. Within this conversation the remark was made by Fred to make sure we do not bring any Ugandans back to the United States with us. He laughed and said, “Trust me, they will act like they love you to marry you just go to America, then desert you all together.”

The changes we made to our initial 2008 project were small. For example, each station still kept our original theme with consideration of the environment—this, our team agreed, was a popular worldwide idea. But in Uganda, we wanted to teach the students not only how to make art with a variety of media and ideas, but to provide them

with skills they could eventually use to sustain their life through selling art in tourist trade. This decision was developed in Uganda, when speaking with Fred. In order for some students to value the skills we are teaching they need to understand how to develop their skills with materials that are readily available to them and see how they can market themselves to the tourist industry. The theme of “environment” was appropriate for Uganda. We used a majority of materials that were either considered trash--or could be found in nature--thus costing the maker nothing. Students in the United States could easily accept the idea, as well. However, our main mission was to make connections to the students in Uganda and in the United States. We wanted to teach them that we all live in one global community and have commonalities, which can be used to make the world a better place for those who inhabit it.

Each station was designed to require little instruction from a teacher promoting freedom of expression in the work; they were also designed so that students could freely move from one station to the next, having experienced each art-making opportunity. In the first station, students could create recycled beaded necklaces with paper that was found and thrown away, twine, and glue. We taught them how to create glue from things they could find in their community, like flour and water or how to create a paste from the sap of the native Mutuba Tree. The next station was designed to explore the many uses of the material bark cloth through printmaking techniques. The students were to use Irish potatoes to carve designs from their surroundings and print them on small pieces of bark cloth. They were taught how to create pigments from different materials they could find outside. Students would also have the opportunity to experiment with markers and crayons on canvas (a material that is hard to buy and is expensive in Uganda), allowing them to explore options. The final station, where my research begins, was a mural making station. We called this station *The Talking Mural* because the attempt was to

teach two different cultures about each other through art, words, and an exchange of ideas.

The welcome and the workshops.

The two days following the initial school visits we brought our traveling exhibition to each site. The showing was designed to inform the community of possible uses for the material bark cloth. Presented to them were art works made by students from Parson's School of Design in New York City, artists from Germany, South America, Uganda, and Texas. As a team, we had a strong desire to enable the community to see what an impact their local material has made on the rest of the world and to inspire the people to create even more work. Steven Kamyia Kyobe, brother to Fred, organized the students and parents prior to our arrival, to create their own unique art from bark cloth for the exhibition.

Each site prepared a welcome ceremony for us with hundreds of community members, students, a television crew, and a local political candidate. These two schools greeted us with songs, performances, and dramatic skits that interpreted the theme of environmentalism and sustainability that we were there to present. We were given the opportunity to speak about our exhibition and upcoming art workshops and to explain how important it is for them to practice sustainability in their villages. Dr. Venny Nakazibwe, Deputy Dean of Makerere University's Margaret Trowell School of Industrial Design, and friend of ours, gave brief talks about the importance of education and continuing their education at a university. She explained, in Luganda, the endless possibilities they could have if they had a college degree. At the conclusion of her speech, she made each group of students promise they would attend college.

On the first day of the workshops we tried to organize the session to the best of our efforts. However, nothing could prepare us for the hundreds of children who arrived at Kasota Primary School from four different schools. Everything was pre-cut, prepared for each child, and extra supplies were in order for the influx of students. Steven Kamyia Kyobe, Fred's brother and organizer of school participation, grouped the students to be rotated in the classroom to make art. Fred invited everyone in to quickly discuss the theme. The conversation readily changed to a discussion about the preservation of the bark cloth trees and shifted away from our original mission.

There was high concern from the headmasters and headmistresses from each of the schools for the students to behave and to gain great knowledge from each activity. One headmaster of a secondary school asked Fred if the students were "participating actively." He was making sure that the students were doing their part to gain the knowledge of skill sets and concepts being taught by us. I noticed that the style of teaching in Uganda is more rigorous because of this stress on academic achievement. There was a difference here from what we typically see in the United States, which is often art for entertainment purposes. Students would wait for instructions before proceeding with each activity, especially when working on the *Talking Mural*. Each student would raise their hands, wait to be called on to share their contribution, and take instruction from the teacher about when to participate.

The final day went better than the first, staying on track with the original mission. We gathered all students together at first for teaching about the "global village" and the exchange that would occur between Uganda and Texas. We discussed with the students what it means to be a community and to join together for a purpose. The students discussed what they could do in their community to help the environment, which could be something that others might do to make a better world. The kids were sent in to our

workshop twenty at a time, rotating in and out until each school had an opportunity to create an aspect of the mural.

Completion

It was amazing how quickly the workshops came and went. We discovered many issues in our project, along with a multitude of strengths. It was a poor possibility that we could expect to just arrive to teach a concept to these students and teachers without become emotionally invested with each of them.

It started to become hard separating myself as a researcher from the role of a teacher and a good-will ambassador. It was heartbreaking to hear the personal accounts from Matilda, the headmistress of Kasota Primary School, about the needs of her school and her students. Getting to know Matilda was extraordinary and put a lot of what I am used to in the Western educational system into a more holistic worldwide perspective.

Her school serves approximately six hundred primary school students with three teachers. One of these teachers, she explained humbly, she personally pays out of her monthly salary. She revealed during one interview how difficult it can be to be a truly affective teacher when the conditions are so bad and when there are so many students to guide. She revealed that she often sleeps in her small concrete open-air office at night so she can be there when she is needed, and as a way to be a respected headmistress she must be there at all times in order to keep the teachers there. On top of being spread incredibly thin, she disclosed to me that teachers with a college degree in Masaka make on average \$100 dollars (US) a month. There is just no comparison in the United States.

This information also made a deep impact on the teacher I was working with from Texas. Commenting on how much, in terms of budget, American teachers receive in comparison, created an overwhelming feeling of guilt in both of us. Teachers like Matilda clearly have a passion for education and will sacrifice themselves so that maybe someone in her school can have a future. Her story is similar to most teachers I encountered in this process.

Then, I met Brian. One of the days we were presenting the traveling exhibition, typical of most days in the community, we were swarmed by children from the community. A young fourteen year old boy named Brian approached me during this chaos. He immediately started introducing himself to me in his most proper English, welcomed us to the village, and continued talking with me so that he could practice his English. Aside from his broken English, he also had a stutter that seemed to make him ashamed. He made a wonderful impression on me that day, but it was the day of the workshop that was most memorable. Due to family finances, Brain was no longer enrolled in a school that was participating in the workshops but he hung around, peeking in the windows of the schoolroom as if he was soaking up as much of the experience as he could.

On this final workday, Fred and I went to the *Talking Mural* station to work with the students. Fred started asking the group questions to lead a discussion and brainstorming session about the theme and what it means to be part of a global village. The crowd was having a hard time coming up with ideas that had not already been said by their peers. Out in the distance, past the other children who were supposed to be there,

I noticed Brian shyly raising his hand. No one else was speaking up and I called out his name to hear his ideas. Everyone turned around to look at the boy, who knew no one in the group. He started speaking in a soft, timid tone that we could hardly hear. His voice stuttered and started answering Fred's questions about what a global village is and what he could do to help the environment. Although shy, his intelligence and insight spoke louder than his words, and the other students began discussing these ideas.

When the day was over, the students all walked away and I called Brian back and thanked him for his contribution to the project. I asked Fred to translate in Luganda a message for Brian from me. Fred eloquently told Brian that he was a smart young man and that he has the opportunity to go many places in life because of this intelligence. Brian, with tears in his eyes, shook my hand, told me thank you in English and said goodbye to me.

I can't help to wonder what will happen to Brian, and the many others like him in Uganda--children who no longer can attend schools and grow in their knowledge and understanding. Those students who do not have the experiences and resources that many children have in other nations. Will they continue to dream big and keep their promises to Dr. Nakazibwe? What will happen to schools like Matilda's if she were to leave or become exhausted from being understaffed and underpaid? Through the experiences of the workshops and exhibition, I was given a small insight into the real life of the people in the rural village, their access to education, and their passion for it. They exemplified excellence in ways beyond calculation or assessment, but will the knowledge transmission last in the months and years ahead, and was our mission reached? Can art

truly teach to a global village in the same way to make our one world a better place?
“There are so many children here who are ready to learn; they just need someone with the tools to teach them. I’m trying to learn how to get the most from these children. My goal is to do more than just interact with them; I want to help them learn and improve...I will give it all I have” (Sweikar, 2007, p. 35).

This chapter outlined the program that was created in Uganda in November of 2010. Describing the experiences of three Americans entering Uganda to work with artists, community members, students, and the organization Let Art Talk. The mission of the program and what we hoped to accomplish through our teaching was documented along with our experiences teaching the workshops and personal reflections after completion. Changes to the original program were detailed and the design of each workshop station was described.

Chapter Four: Data Gathering from Uganda

The following chapter presents data from the program that was undertaken in Masaka, Uganda. Qualitative research was accomplished through interviews with participants in the project in order to gather data about what participants were learning through this program. Data was also secured regarding what the students in Africa hoped the American students would learn through this mural exchange process based on an environmental theme. Each work day is described, along with offering the participants' ideas, thoughts, and words.

The Interviews

Day one.

I spent the night before the workshops preparing myself for the following day of engagement with the students of Masaka. Unable to sleep, anxious and restless, I reviewed over and over again the copious amount of notes I had taken for months in advance of the program. I made it a priority to memorize specific questions to ask participants during my interviews, reread notes to myself about multi-cultural art education, brushed up on Lugandan art vocabulary, and visualized the event. The reality of the programming was different from what I expected.

While enjoying a nice meal of fresh fruit and chapatti at The Hotel Zebra with my team the following morning, I positioned myself next to Fred Mutebi to discuss his thoughts and his mission for the days ahead. Still trying to prepare myself for every interaction and possible insight I would have from the participants--before actually being

in the field--I asked Mutebi what he desired the American students learn as a result of this international mural exchange with the Ugandan students. As he drank his African Coffee, Mutebi began to discuss his thoughts. He expressed a strong belief that everyone in the world shares the same issues, and it is only a matter of time before we all can collectively realize our united situation and are able to join together to make a difference and create change. His hopes for the project set out to introduce to the community how art can be the vehicle to make positive changes in our world.

He also responded by saying that he anticipates the American students would learn some of the Lugandan terms and therefore make a greater connection with their exchange partners on a cultural level. He hoped that the mural exchange would give American students insight on a world they are not familiar with, and make connections to their similarities through the theme of “environmentalism.” Fred believed that if the American participants look critically they would gain a curiosity about how the two cultures relate to each other in terms of a community need. Each culture shares similar issues in their environments like the effects of pollution, deforestation, the suffering of severe droughts, and so forth. Mutebi explained that he hopes these American children would learn the importance of collaborating together in order to make change happen for sake of a greater global world. Mutebi articulated that these are not simple aspirations, but the more communities work together and educators provide opportunities for dialogue and education through art, the greater the possibility for significant change. He considers the children who participate in these programs to be imminent stakeholders of the future. These participants have the power to use these learned artistic models of

expression and communication to make a meaningful difference in the world. Mutebi expressed that it is “our responsibility, because we were given the gift of being educators, to give guidance to those we encounter. Nobody wants lost sheep. When we have knowledge, gifts and excitement, you have to follow through with them.”

Before working on the mural, students were asked by Fred Mutebi and myself, what they hope the participants in the *Talking Mural* from the United States will learn from this mural exchange. The Ugandan participants were also asked questions throughout the process (see appendix); these responses helped me gauge how beneficial the program was in their lives and if they were learning the ideas we hoped they would gain. These questions to the participants were specifically focused on identifying whether the Ugandans believed this type of international communication through the *Talking Mural* could create global dialogue. Did the Ugandans believe the American children would learn something from them through this exchange? Would this type of exchange create an impact on their lives? Could art really initiate change in the world? Did the students think that people in a different country could share the same environmental issues they do in their country?

On the first day of the workshops, through observations, informal interviews, and written answers to questions, the Ugandan students expressed their excitement for an opportunity to share an experience with people outside their own country. The students believed the Americans would learn from this experience in a few different ways. They hoped students in Texas would understand how to conserve trees and love the natural beauty that is all around them. Through the words placed on the mural they hoped to

teach the value of replanting and taking care of crops. They understood the importance that trees can provide communities in terms of clean air, medicinal value, and shelter, and wished the children in the United States would gain a greater knowledge of this through the *Talking Mural*.

The Ugandan students hoped the Americans would secure a greater understanding of bark cloth and the mutuba tree—encouraging students to plant them in their own community and create art from the material. The students did not know if this native tree was as well known to the American participants as it was in their country, and were unclear about the tree’s native roots. Regardless of their knowledge of the tree’s origin, they hoped the Americans would learn the significance and necessity of the material barkcloth. The participants expressed that students might be able to see the functionalities of the tree and therefore learn more about their own natural resources. They hoped to also inspire children in other countries to plant more trees and stop burning them down for the use of firewood or to build on the land.

These Ugandan students had a strong wish for the Americans to learn about their rich culture. The language, their education, the good conduct, and good behavior of the Ugandan people were important aspects of their heritage they believed Americans were not aware of and possibly uneducated about these positive traits. They wanted the participants to compare the two artistic styles of each country and the way in which each group wrote words on the *Talking Mural*. Students wanted to understand if they were each trained at school in the same way? Discussion quickly spread among the participants, fantasizing about what education was like in America and how different they

believed it would be to receive an education in the United States. Because English is taught at an early age in the Ugandan schools, the participants believed that the students in America would learn some of their language that was written on the mural and use the words in their daily lives.

When I asked Rose, who taught nutrition at the Kasota School, if people from two different cultures could communicate through art she said, “Yes, Yes Yes! Art has good ideas behind it...many ideas and many different expressions. Oh yes! Expressions from art is the system that he or she can use to barf out the brains!” One student articulated that using words on the mural could immediately help to change someone’s mind about how they are personally treating the environment. The Ugandan students hoped that the American students would understand how everyone in the world can work as a group through cooperation and brainstorming to solve a world problem. Americans will learn that everyone can become comrades through the sharing of common issues. The use of artistic expression in a collaborative mural process, according to one secondary school girl, would provide a sense of empowerment within both communities.

One of the Headmistresses, Matilda, indicated that she knows the students from her school gained something from the mural project, and they also learned skills from which they can make a living. The students learned beneficial skills to promote their well-being. It seemed very important to the participants that they learn something that will prove to be a financial gain in their lives. They believed the American children will also learn traditional Ugandan skills to make a living and contribute to their families financial well-being.

At the conclusion of the first day, I spoke with many of the participants again with follow up questions concerning the project and the ideas they were hoping the Americans would learn from this mural experience. I came across many students who had reservations about the ideas presented. Some started to discount their previous statements from the day and said it was hard to imagine the students in the United States learning anything from them because they live so far apart. After inquiring about these statements to a greater depth, hoping to gain clarity in their responses, many students felt that, “America does not have the same environmental problems” they have in Uganda. Some of the students recalled seeing pictures of America on television or in schoolbooks with images that, in their opinion, seem to reflect a very different, pristine environment, very different from their own.

The Ugandan students also questioned whether the students in Texas could learn about the Ugandan people from their contributions to the mural because of the language barrier. One student asked if, “Americans would just think that the words were made up” because they would not be able to read it, and thus believe the Ugandans were not educated. Another student thought that Americans have superior aptitude in their writing and artistic skills and would potentially dismiss the work the Ugandan participants contributed to the mural.

Revisiting answers from earlier in the day, I asked the students if the two different cultures could become partners in fixing global problems? Their response changed drastically once again. They became excited about the opportunity they were given to send something they had worked hard on to America. In their minds, these contributions

and acknowledgment of another country could potentially create pen pals for the students in Uganda. They would gain “friends that can send them to college.” From these ideas they began to envision a result from the international mural exchange that would provide an exchange of money to help them with a financial need.

Day two.

Because of the disconnected nature of the students’ learning the day before, our team decided to begin day two of the workshops and *Talking Mural* with a group meeting. We wanted to make sure we were giving the participants enough information about the project and the potential outcomes of an international mural exchange.

We gathered the students, teachers, and community members who would be participating in the workshops and *Talking Mural* in one small classroom. Fred Mutebi wanted to introduce the community to the concept of a “global village.” He asked, “What does it mean to be part of one global village and what could the community do to collaborate with one another and people all over the world to create change?”

Initially, Mutebi drew a map of a village on the chalkboard of the schoolroom. The picture showed small, hand drawn houses surrounding a village illustrating the design of a community. With the help of the people in the room, Mutebi elaborated on what it means to be part of a community, and ask what is the function of a community. He then introduced the people to our team (Rebecca Schaefer, Ivan Yakuze, Lesli Robertson, and me), explaining who we were and why we were in Uganda. He then drew a map of the world on one side of the chalkboard and a map of Uganda on the other end.

Mutebi spent time discussing the geographical location of Texas in relation to Uganda. “Mzungus are similar to Africans, even though they come from far away...” he said, pointing to the map of the world he drew. He continued: “ we have some of the same problems and can contribute to curing a problem if we work as a team.” Fred then went into detail about how long it took for Lesli, and Rebecca, and I to fly to Africa. He mentioned the colder climate we left before arriving in Africa, and the amount of luggage we brought with us to be donated to the schools. He made it clear to the students and teachers that we would only give them the donations if they proved they were capable and worthy of using our gifts to create with themselves, and instructed them to not sell the gifts to others. The students were surprised that we came from a cooler climate, and intrigued to hear about the long flight. Nevertheless, the group proved to be most happy and excited about the possibilities of having gifts, in the form of art supplies, donated from people in the United States.

Mutebi asked the participants questions about what it means to interact with people from other countries, and how this action could contribute to world peace. Did they think our sharing of supplies contributed to that communal notion? Were Americans friends of theirs? The students looked at us, as we were smiling at them. They immediately shook their heads in response to Mutebi’s statement that we were all friends. He asked the students if they believed if people from different parts of the world have the same environmental issues experienced daily in Uganda. When students responded, the discussion was assorted with some students in agreement and other students who disagreed saying there is no possible way that people from the United States have the

same problems. Students mentioned to Mutebi that Uganda is considered a third-world country and that the United States is not, and far from being one. This statement was obviously difficult for some students to accept or understand. You could look around the room and see expressions on the faces of some of the students, who looked as if they believed that their country did not have any hope of losing this impoverished classification. The students expressed their confusions, if the United States is a country of such wealth and education, how could Americans have the same problems with the environment? Without hesitation one older student in the room raised her hand to respond, “Regardless of the country one lives in, the air is the same and the water is shared by all of us.” I scanned the room again and saw smiling faces, as if faith had been restored.

After this dialogue, Mutebi read the theme that is written across the mural outside the room. He explained that students would contribute to the mural by painting words about the theme, “Renewing Material: Nurturing the Handmade.” The question was asked of the group what those words represent. Mutebi explained the mural process and how it would travel from Uganda to Texas and be completed by students there. He asked the group how the students in the United States would interpret this mural, based on this particular theme, keeping in consideration the potential implications of interactions with children from another country and how it could one day contribute to peace in a global village. The room, which was originally filled with thirty people, had grown to sixty, and at least five children peering in each window, was silent. Mutebi’s voice and words were

observably captivating to the students, teachers, and community members who crammed themselves into this small classroom, to hear the words of a fellow Ugandan.

Because of the large amount of information Mutebi shared with the participants, we made the decision to begin the art workshops and wait on starting the mural so that the students had adequate time to process the ideas that Mutebi was discussing with them. The group of students from each school rotated, one by one, through each workshop station, creating art based on this environmental theme. Students who were not part of the schools, those who heard Mutebi speak, also snuck their way into this crowded room to participate. Of course, they were not turned away and were welcomed to join the experience.

Because of the varying opinions and confusion from the previous day, we decided to make every effort to provide students with information about our mission and the international exchange. Our team decided to create a new station lead by Fred Mutebi. This was an area in the classroom with a table holding paper and pencils. Here, he asked students to write out their answers to specific questions we were posing about the mural exchange before they could paint outside on the mural. Putting their ideas on paper and having one-on-one opportunities to ask the famous Ugandan artist questions about the mural exchange was beneficial to the experience and to my research. Having the opportunity to write statements on paper helped students categorize their thoughts about what they hoped the American participants would gain from their contributions to the *Talking Mural* into four main themes: Language acquisition, pollution and care for the

environment, gaining a communal sense of pride, and freedom of expression and creativity.

In these written documents, participants expressed strongly the impact words can have on the people who read them. The Ugandan students thought the mural would give Americans the perfect opportunity for someone to translate their language, promoting greater understanding of their culture. They were also forced to think about the theme that was written on the top of the barkcloth mural on which they would write. The theme was written in English. The students expressed that this process provided evidence of a greater understanding that this environmental concept is more of a global issue than it just being local. Students recorded that the process of writing the words out on the mural helped remind them of the issues they faced, but are choosing to not deal with in their communities. They wondered if through this mural making process and exchange, each community could strive to make a greater difference in the world, one community at a time.

The Ugandan students hoped that through this mural the American children would understand the importance of conserving the environment. It was very important to these students that Americans learn to practice judicious forestry by not burning down their trees, or cutting them down for land or firewood:

We have to conserve the environment by planting trees. We have to also stop smoking because that gas we smoke destroys the environment. We need to stop bush burning because it destroys our environment. We have to stop deforestation or at least plant trees when we cut them down.

If people must cut trees down for some reason, it is important to replant more for clean air, oxygen, shelter, for food (fruit trees, and avocado trees are a dominant source

of food in Uganda) and for animal habitats. One student thought that the workshop stations and *Talking Mural* station were helping them “to recycle and learn more about nature.” These participants also hoped that Americans would understand that not only is it important to replenish the tree population in each community, but to nurture and take care of the trees that already exist.

Participants were concerned with others comprehending how important the mutuba tree is to their Ugandan community. Unaware that the mutuba is not native to the United States, the participants encouraged the planting of this type of tree in order to continue its many functions in society. The Ugandans use the bark cloth, which is made from the fibrous bark of this tree, in most aspects of their daily lives. Bark cloth is used for clothing, floor coverings, mats, handbags, and hats. It is employed in funeral ceremonies and in the Kabaka’s induction ceremony and serves in other ways. The importance of preserving the mutuba tree was written numerous times and was said to me in countless interviews with the participants. In response to question about what he hoped the American’s would learn from the Ugandans through the mural exchange, one younger child wrote a poem:

Trees, you don’t know how wonderful you are, you are multi-purpose to human beings, you stimulate the environment, you provide bark cloth.

Another student drew ideas of images she could contribute to the mural. She wrote down the words: plant trees, plant crops, a woman is planting coffee, next to her drawings. Expressing through her imagery the importance of crop production in her community and how through the planting of crops in communities could sustain life:

“We need to plant trees because of the following: Trees attract rain fall. Mutuba trees provide bark cloth, and shade and trees conserve our environment.” Others, who were interested in drawing images, wanted to show women digging or someone planting a seed in the ground and repeated this idea in their pre-writing.

Pride was a consistent theme in many of the participants’ interviews and papers. Students were encouraged to consider how this mural could promote a sense of peace within their local communities, as well as world peace. The act of writing down words and ideas of how to help the environment promote a greater accountability among each other and each person who participates on the mural. Being involved in this mural as a group, who were working collaboratively, increased the admiration the students had for their country. They all cared for its well-being and the potential change they could make together. They hoped that the Americans could see this communal love for their region of the world, and would spark the same kind of group respect for the environment in their local communities. One contributor supposed that if each community could take pride in their own country as a whole, it would be easier to take pride in someone else’s. Then when a community comes to this conclusion, everyone in it will be telling those around them how to work together to accomplish a goal. Ideas will spread and change will happen. When describing the importance of community people banding together for a single cause, one teacher said, “Together we stand, divided we fall.”

Writing on the mural as a community increased the level of faith the participants had in each other and the ability of bringing change to their communities. One student wrote that expressing ideas on the mural would ultimately, “enrich our understanding

hence changing our lives.” Another student revealed in an interview that the mural, “will help people love things, like our world, together.”

A student and his guardian were asked what they learned from participating the

Talking Mural:

This has helped us to know more about our environment, to be more creative. To plant more trees—if you cut down a tree you must replant. More than five! We have to renew material in the environment and not burn the forest.

A parent who participated in the study offered the following:

Through renewing the environment—children will learn how to make money for themselves in the following ways: Buying simple things, paying money for learning centers, exchanging ideas with other people without knowing people (these Americans), and lastly being able to help ourselves while keeping the environment.

This chapter provided rich data from the research completed in the two community sites in Masaka, Uganda. The students were engaged in the workshops and enjoyed the art making activities, but the focus of my research was about their contributions to the *Talking Mural*, and the Ugandan students aspirations of the effects on the American children who complete this mural. Interviews and written statements were documented in order to analyze the effects of the program in the lives of participants. These participants were excited about the fact that Americans shared art supplies and art knowledge with them and were eager to exchange their mural with students in Texas.

Chapter Five: Data Gathering from the United States

The information provided in the following chapter sheds light on the second half of our project. Details from interviews with students participants are collected in this chapter, to view the potential impact of the mural exchange on the American children at Rasor Elementary in Plano, Texas. These students were asked a variety of questions and to present their personal experiences and self-reflections gained through a cultural art exchange. Information from their discussions on two separate visits are described.

The Mural Exchange

On the final day of the art workshops in Uganda, I was occupied with many questions to put forward to the participants in the United States. There was such rich discussion from the contributors in Uganda that I was eager to learn if the connections being made by the students were those intended by the mural makers. On the flight back to the States I began to wonder if the mission of the organization Let Art Talk, which I had been actively involved with for the past two years, was being met. Were we truly enabling students to experience social change through conversation about art through these mural exchanges? Could there possibly be greater issues to resolve before transformative experiences could occur?

During my flight home, I was reminded of Mutebi's visit to the United States in 2008, when I first met him. He was in town to help with the art workshops, which we were beginning in schools across the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. It was his principal role during these workshop events to lead a specific station where the students collaborated together on a mural that was to be exchanged with primary-aged students in Uganda later in the year. It was part of my duty as project coordinator to drive Mutebi,

with the help of Rebecca Schaefer, to each school participating in these art events. One particular evening, en route to an elementary school in an affluent neighborhood, Mutebi began to describe to the two of us the differences between his village and this neighborhood. At that time, Rebecca nor I had ever traveled to Africa and was only familiar with the country through our education and role in Let Art Talk. “Oh my God,” he said, “do people really need this big of a house? They must be important people.” Not knowing exactly how to respond to the obvious over indulgence that Mutebi began to notice of the people in the United States, I just laughed and he continued to question what he saw out his window: “Everyone here drives big cars. Do they really need them?” It was very uncomfortable to talk with him about the apparent privileges that many Americans consider necessities. Soon we arrived at the school and just laughed together about the conversation. While reflecting about this experience, I could now relate to what Mutebi was saying. I had just been a visitor in a community that looked very different from my own. I felt, at times, out of my element and comfort zone. Had Fred felt that same way? He noted the differences in the two communities, but wholeheartedly believed that we are all equal and all share the same world.

Prior to their contribution to the *Talking Mural*, the students from Texas were prepared with background information about the project. To their benefit, the art teacher at Rasor Elementary School has been one of the project coordinators, along with myself, for Let Art Talk since 2008. Already having this personal connection with project, the students were familiar with the work created in Uganda as well as their role as participants in the project. Ms. Schaefer made sure to teach her elementary school students about the many unique qualities of Africa that we both experienced on our trip there in November. She told them about her experiences as someone who has never left the States, and how much the experience shaped her life. We both were able to show the

students pictures from our visit and images from the teaching in Uganda. Both of us were fortunate to bring back artworks created by Fred Mutebi and Ivan Yakuze to show the students and to explain the meanings behind each work. The students from Rasor Elementary School also had unlimited access to computers and other forms of technology that enabled them to become familiar with Uganda while in Ms. Schaefer's classroom. Having their teacher as an active component in the project enabled the students to take advantage of her new knowledge of Africa, her experiences, and her insight on the project.

Akin to our arrival in Masaka, my appearance at Rasor Elementary School on the day of the mural exchange created an obvious excitement that encompassed the entire school. Teachers, parents, administrators, school district representatives, and a local newspaper came to view the unveiling of this African bark cloth mural, and have the opportunity to witness their students participating in this cross-cultural exchange. The students showed great intrigue and a sense of satisfaction that they would be able to make their mark on a mural that had been in Africa, a place where so few from this school had traveled. The thought of being a part of something that had been in another country was alluring to the students.

The initial interviews.

Classes came in to Ms. Schaefer's art room, one by one, on fifty-five minute rotations to view, talk about, and contribute to the *Talking Mural*. Each class was given time to review the work as a group and discuss what the theme meant with their classmates and teacher. The students were asked leading questions about Africa and the program, to determine their clarity and cognition of the project and the process they were involved with. We had the opportunity to translate and discuss the meaning of words on

the mural that were written in Luganda with the students at Rasor Elementary School. After viewing these words that were created on the mural by the participants in Uganda, the students in the art classroom brainstormed ideas for their personal contributions to the mural.

Kindergarten through fourth grade classes worked on brainstorming and painting on the mural in pairs, picking one word or phrase they thought would relate to the theme. A common thought stemming from this age group was the power nature can have to cause harm or provide benefits for people in the world. A fourth grade girl said to her partner that “nature is a powerful thing—if we keep it clean, we can save the Earth.” The pair sitting across from them discussed the contributing factors to pollution: “Did you know that by cutting down trees we contribute to pollution?” The boy responded, “Why? Do people in Uganda really have pollution? They don’t have cars.” Her answer to him was that they do have pollution, but “It will never be as much as we have.” Student pairs from another class agreed that they would add the words “don’t litter” and “reuse” to the mural. When asked what they were learning from the Ugandan contributions to the *Talking Mural*, students mentioned they did not gain any sense of hope for the environment to get better because people are going to continue to destroy the environment despite their personal efforts to recycle.

Two students in this fourth grade class stated they learned “more from their teacher about Africa and the environment, than from the mural’s words.” I asked the students to further explain what they meant, and what exactly they learned from their teacher. They responded by saying they were educated about the material bark cloth that was used for the mural, and about the artist we were working with in Uganda and his printmaking process. They said they learned ways to help the environment through their in-class discussions. I asked them what they thought students in Uganda could do to help

save the environment. These two students concluded that the Ugandans were better in their conservation efforts than the Americans, because they “do not have the choice but to use their natural resources” and were doing “great at recycling because they don’t have much else.” They believed that because American’s have so many cars and homes they were naturally polluting the environment. The students explained that their thoughts were determined from pictures of Uganda they viewed on the Internet.

I saw fifth graders next, and asked them if they believed American’s share the same environment with students in Africa. They responded that everyone in the world shares the same air and water; therefore it is the duty of people in the world to do their part to keep it clean. I then asked what, specifically, can we all do to help the environment. They responded by saying that people could ride their bikes instead of driving cars in town to reduce air pollution, and they could encourage their parents to stop smoking cigarettes. Also, they mentioned that everyone could reduce their use of plastic by reusing water bottles, and decrease the amount of energy we consume in a day by turning off electricity when not being used. The students said that an increase in recycling programs in the community and in their homes could contribute to a greater disposal problem, as they couldn’t understand where all the recycling would end up. Like the students in Uganda, they believed that everyone should plant more trees and stop deforestation and tree burning for cleaner air.

Because of the technology available to the school, we were able to call Fred Mutebi in Uganda through SKYPE and enable the students to video chat with him. Before the call we asked the students to write down individual questions they could ask Mutebi about the project, the environment, or about Africa. The students were amazed that someone in Uganda had access to this type of technology and became overwhelmed that they would be able to see and speak with someone from another country.

When virtually connected to Mutebi, a third grade student asked him, “Do kids in Uganda know how to save trees? How do they do it?” Mutebi answered that people in “Uganda do similar things that the Americans do to reduce the amount of paper being used.” He continued by saying that they do their part to reduce the amount of paper waste by using scraps to make things. He also explained that they are making efforts to take care of trees and replant as many as possible.

Revisiting the American school.

After reviewing the data from the interviews with the students at Rasor Elementary School, I began to recognize a lack of depth in some of my questions and saw areas of consideration that needed further discussion and input from the students. At that point, I felt that the answers stemming from my research were resulting in assumptions based on weak question and answer sessions. To conclude, I did not have the appropriate data to support these assumptions for the effects of the international mural exchange in the lives of the participants. My claims were not completely valid. In order to truly make my case it was important that I revisit the students in Texas and continue the earlier conversation. Three months after the first visit with the students in Texas, I traveled back to speak with them once more about the mural exchange.

During the four-hour drive from Austin to Plano, Texas, I thought about my experience when I entered the Ugandan schools for the first time and Mutebi’s experience in Texas. I will never forget driving up that winding, pothole-laden path that lead our team to Kasota Primary school. Mutuba, jackfruit and banana trees surrounded us and framed each hut in the community. It was like I was viewing pictures from books I once studied in school. After touring the grounds of the campus I walked away from our group, I managed to walk into an empty classroom without being noticed by anyone. This

moment was overwhelming. Immediately, I felt a pit in my stomach, an overpowering feeling of guilt, knowing how much I had been given and had also taken for granted throughout my education. Still alone in this concrete room, I imagined myself back in elementary school. There was never a moment that I, as a student in the United States, worried about not being able to attend school; it was routine and expected. I was never concerned about having school supplies or a teacher who would provide instruction. There was never a time I feared that I would not have a desk to sit at to do my daily work. I always had food to eat at lunch, and clean clothes to wear. Being in that classroom that day made me uncomfortable to know that there are students in this world who grow up without the certainties that I had as a child. The floor was made of cracked concrete, holes in the walls for windows, benches for students to sit on and a crumbling blackboard to provide instruction. There was no air-conditioning, school bells, or the security I felt when I attended school.

As I drove closer to Rasor Elementary School, I thought about how our team was welcomed by Kasota Primary School. The children, teachers, and community members greeted us with excitement, cheers, and singing and dancing. They seemed as if our team had knowledge to offer them and they could not wait to hear what we had in store for their community. Would I receive this same welcome from the students in Texas this time? As I pulled my car in to the spot marked “Visitor,” I kept thinking about what it was like in Uganda. Could I ever feel the same way here, in my own community? My experience was so powerful, unique, and enlightening in Uganda. Could it ever be the same in a community that I had lived in for so long, one that had so much in comparison? I walked up to the front door of the beautiful brown brick building and pressed a buzzer that was on the front door. This signaled to the front office that someone wanted to enter. The security camera turned its mechanical neck to give the front desk a digital view of

me waiting at the door, and I was finally let in the building by an automatic unlock “click.” Next, I had to stop at the front office where I was instructed to present my drivers license to the secretary, who proceeded to run a quick, computerized safety check to confirm that I was an eligible visitor. I was instructed to wear a sticker with my picture and name that the secretary printed, so that people in the building would be aware that it was safe for me to be there.

After all these administrative hoops, being frazzled and in a hurry, I almost passed by the finished mural. It hung on the wall in the entrance to the fifth grade hallway that branched off of the cafeteria/auditorium. Immediately, I questioned if others do as I did, and walk right by the mural without stopping to think about what it says or the meanings attached to it. Were people too busy, or in a hurry like I was, to notice the mural? I opened the door to the art room where my project assistant, the Rasor Elementary School art teacher, was busy assisting her class with their drawings. I made myself at home at her desk, waved to the class and Ms. Schaefer, then prepared myself for the group of students I would speak with throughout the day. I began to wonder if these students that I would be speaking with in Texas, understood the value of free education. Would they understand that cultural or economic differences are not something that separate us, but are something that can unite us as a global community if we take the time and make the effort to get to know each other? In addition to these questions, I wanted to specifically know if the students could remember the reason they participated in the mural exchange and if they learned anything explicitly about the environment, themselves and their community, or from the Ugandan participants. I was interested in discovering if they enjoyed working on the mural, if they felt they shared the same issues with people in other communities, and wanted to identify if the students thought that the project was important to their curriculum.

The final interviews.

Taking a moment between classes, I revealed some concerns I had about interviewing Ms. Schaefer's students. I was concerned that because she was their teacher, and in an effort to please her, they may not answer my questions candidly. I felt that this might have been the reason for the lack of quality data when I first came to the school to discuss the project. We decided that it would be in our best interest to model behavior to the students that would make them feel safe to be open about their opinions. When the students entered the art room we allowed them to sit in any seat that was comfortable to them, and we sat near them. I felt more comfortable speaking with the students this time. They recognized me from previous visits to their school and the pictures and stories from our trip to Uganda. I introduced myself again and had each of them introduce themselves to me, so that I could remember their names when talking with them.

We began the conversation by telling the students that they were speaking with me because I valued their opinions and their willingness to share their feelings. I explained how important their answers were to provide information for us to make the program better in the future. I encouraged them to answer honestly and informed them that no one would judge their answers--especially their teacher, Ms. Schaefer. The conversation and behavior of these eleven students changed almost instantly in comparison to my first visit. They began to have a more rich and open conversation with me about the effects of the mural exchange on them.

The discussion began by asking the students to explain why they participated in the painting of this mural that was brought back from Uganda. One girl sitting close to me raised her hand enthusiastically and said that their school was involved in the process because it would provide "communication between two different groups of people." I

asked her to expand on what she meant by communication. The majority of the words on the mural from the African students were written in Luganda, a language that no one in their school was familiar with. What type of communication was she meaning? She elaborated, “It was fun to try to learn words in their language, and to use them when we talked to each other.” I followed up by asking if she could tell me some of these words, and to my surprise, she could no longer remember them. “But they will learn English from what we wrote on the mural.” Ms. Schaefer reminded them that the mural would not be traveling back to Uganda.

Because the students forgot so much of the language, I immediately thought about my arrival to the school that morning. I was so preoccupied and in a hurry that I almost passed by the mural without seeing it. This mural was in their hallway. I asked them if they could remember the theme. Students all looked at the ceiling, began fidgeting in their seats, and started blurting out ideas: natural resources, saving the planet, being friendly, and renewing. To my confusion the word “exhaustable” was used to explain the theme. After Ms. Schaefer reminded her students that the words written on the mural were: “Renewing Material, Nurturing the Handmade”, they all said in unison, “Oh yeah,” as if they collectively remembered. I was still interested in how much the students seemed to not notice their own, internationally traveled mural. One girl spoke up and admitted that her peers, “don’t pay attention to it.” She explained how she was only interested in the words written in Lugandan, but could no longer remember the meanings of them. Slowly it became less important to her. She continued to candidly affirm that she does not think that anyone pays attention to the mural because people do not find it important. The student to the side of her said that maybe they have not noticed the mural on the wall because they are “always in a hurry to get to class on time and have other things on their minds.” Other students noted that aesthetically the mural does not stand

out to them and that the theme of the mural was too complicated for them to understand. Ms. Schaefer also stated to me that with so much “instruction” and build up to the mural exchange, students may have exhausted their interest. These words began to have a great impact on me. Were the students possibly too young, too exposed to information, over scheduled, or over stimulated to have this project hold their interest?

Soon another student raised his hand and said he participated in the mural exchange to “make a statement” to his peers. He hoped, “to send a message to save the Earth.” Following this statement, I asked if his painting helped make that statement. He replied, “I painted to show people that things effect us and other environments and could even effect my school.” At the other end of the room, two students shouted, “Recycling is important,” and “I did this because it was fun.” In order to accurately gauge the learning that was taking place while they were participating in an enjoyable activity, I thought it best to ask what they learned. Students continued to elaborate on how much fun they were having while painting: “The mural was so much fun to use paint on, it was something new I had never done before.”

One girl raised her hand, and in a confident voice said that through participating in the mural exchange she was helping the children in Uganda. She said, “Many children in Uganda are handicapped and the mural helped them through things, and through our funding we helped to make them happy.” I followed up this response by asking for clarification about all the children being handicapped. She said that she knows that many of the children in Uganda are in wheelchairs. Ms. Schaefer quickly said that there had been one picture shown to the class of a Ugandan student we worked with, who was in a wheelchair. Without imposing any information from my knowledge and experience in Uganda on the student, I continued to ask about this idea of sharing happiness with others: “I think they were excited to work on the mural, like they were jumping on the

inside or on the outside by just being able to paint.” Painting, and the freedom to create art in school, was something the students at Rasor Elementary School believed was not an opportunity the Ugandans had often. The students expressed they were happy that by participating in this mural exchange the American students were doing something for another group of people, and were able to instruct them because they lacked supplies and education: “They don’t have painting over there, so it is a big deal when they receive a painting.”

Then, I asked one young boy on the opposite end of the room to share what he learned. He said, “they learned more about kindness,” from the students in Uganda, in a quiet voice he explained to me that he felt that “life is harder for them over there. Their lives are not like ours, they live with half destroyed buildings. It makes me sad because I start to think about what we have, all of our supplies that we have here, and they don’t. I learned that there is more to the environment than what is out there.” The student next to him raised his hand quick when he mentioned the destroyed buildings. I asked him to respond and he said he learned “there are less trees in Uganda because they cut them down for wood and the cloth we used for the mural. It is a big deal because it hurts the animals in the wilderness, too.” Then, I started questioning the reason his thoughts were triggered by the building comment. I wondered if he thought of Uganda as a place without trees or buildings. What impression does he have about the country?

Because of this response, I wanted to find out if the students knew what the phrase “living in a global village” meant. The noted responses varied across the classroom: “A global village is a shared village, a world village.” Some students responded in similar ways illustrating the suggestion that the world is one large town, with all continents containing multiple villages around the world. “It means, when all the world comes together to save the world.” I pushed them to think if this was a possibility:

“It would take a long time. There is too much damage to the earth.” This particular student suggested that in order to make change happen, the world would have to recycle and carpool more to even begin to make a difference. This student, who had a band of followers, believed that the United States and Uganda were indeed part of the same “global village,” sharing the same environmental concerns. He said that being part of a village meant that the residents do not take the environment and people for granted. The global village was where people co-exist with nature and “live at peace with each other.” It was in those statements that a discrepancy emerged. One boy argued, “We are not a village. A village is a small place without big buildings, sometimes without buildings at all. Villages are small little towns with a bunch of people living without what we have.”

What else did the students think about the mural exchange and if it was an important project? Some said that their teachers and parents were proud of them for being part of something global, that made efforts to help people understand how important it is to do their part here on earth. They were using their art and words to “save the world, halfway across the world.” It was very important to some of them to be given the chance to read another language that was unfamiliar to them. Through translations, some of the students made connections about the “similarities between their culture and the culture of the Ugandan people.” But some thought the project shed light on many cultural distinctions: “I was able to think about our differences, and how it was over there. How different my life is compared to theirs.” It was important for some, to make connections with students from another country because it was something they never thought about doing at their age. “My mom goes to Uganda every year on mission trips. I always want to go with her. I see her pictures and hear her stories. This was my chance to go to Uganda and help, because I can’t really go.”

My next question came out of the need for clarification. Did the students see themselves as different from the Ugandan students? The majority of the class said that they were very different from the other, and identified specific areas of supposed differentiations. Their statements were that Americans have more water and a more plentiful supply of natural resources than Ugandans, because they are more educated on how to keep our communities clean they still have these resources. According to the students, the abundance of “things” Americans have in terms of technology, transportation and buildings, they do not know how to conserve electricity or prevent air pollution. “Ugandans do not have lights or TV’s, so they know how to save electricity better than we do, they also don’t drive in cars—so their air must be cleaner.” It is “calmer over there than here, they do not have as many activities like soccer scheduled like I do.” The students elaborated that Americans receive better education and have more qualified teachers than the Ugandan students. One student said, “Our teachers are more educated because of our technology.” Before moving on to the next question, one boy raised his hand to say, “We do have more money here and more buildings but we also have a President watching over us. They may have a king that may not care about them.” The girl whose mother has visited Uganda quickly raised her hand and said, almost agitated by her peers, “We are all humans. We are not different except for our language. We are all people wanting the same things, living together in the same world. We share the same earth and they go to school just like us to learn.”

I realized that the theme did not carry the same meaning for all who participated. Students from both Uganda and the United States had many different interpretations for the reason for participating in this mural exchange. As a researcher and key player in this program, I began to question the reason behind it all. Why did this matter? Can art truly make a difference in people’s lives? Can two different communities identify their shared

issues as part of one world, and see how they can work together to achieve a common goal?

Chapter Six: Data Analysis

The following chapter analyzes the data received in Uganda and in Texas to determine if the initial research question was answered. As a researcher, I was hoping to understand through these interviews and observations, the degree that the purposeful intent and meaning of the artwork made by students in Uganda—as part of a mural exchange program about environmental issues that occurs between students in Uganda and in the United States—was understood by the students in the United States who viewed and responded to this artwork. This chapter provides insight into the meaning behind the conversations that occurred in Texas and in Uganda throughout the program.

Effects of the Mural Exchange

From the conversations I had with participants in the mural exchange, both in Uganda and in Texas, I have come to discover something much deeper than anticipated. I conclude that before any community can make the connections that we originally hoped at the beginning of this program, further steps have to be taken toward cross-cultural discussion and unification. There are shared concepts important to discuss about both Uganda and in the United States that must be addressed before each culture can truly understand Let Art Talk's ideas of art changing the world. Specific issues of cultural representation and "othering" need to be addressed before art can make a collective difference. The individual communities need to establish unified thought on social issues in order to make collective change, then can begin to attempt to gain mutual

understandings about issues effecting the world with other countries. There are bigger social issues at stake that need to take precedence in our programming in order to achieve the organization's original mission for future projects.

When reviewing my personal journal I noticed a statement I made on November 11, 2010, before much research was conducted:

There seems to be a disconnect between the project and our mission. The project is not showing me how art can be used to communicate the real issues to help solve greater global concerns that we thought were necessary and important to the lives of people. The project seems to be localized, with a (seemingly) last minute international attachment. The program seems to teach more about learning a marketable trade than combating an issue of social justice through international communication with art. Because we did good doesn't mean we did well.

A young American named Elliot stopped by day two of the workshops to be an active onlooker. While observing the participants brainstorming about the *Talking Mural*, he shared his views and ideas about the effects on the participants. He mentioned that the "students seemed to have one perception about the project—the importance of planting, and taking care of trees. Many other ideas about the environment or the possibility of a global impact from the *Talking Mural* exchange were not as important or easy to identify with than trees." He also concluded that many of the participants, "do not have any understanding where America is located. Positioned in rural villages, the students have little access to Internet or television. This access to technology would offer the students a greater understanding of America." He surmised that the true outcome of this project, that was the mission of Let Art Talk, could not be met yet:

There are so many other things these students have to combat before they can understand that art can make a difference. When you leave they continue living from meal to meal not knowing how to make it. They will be far removed from

the idea that art could change their situation much less how they can learn from Americans who have it all.

The facts are obvious to all participating in the mural exchange; they are not the same as the other. Specifically for this study, individuals classified themselves different in terms of race, gender, economic status, and the development of their countries. Throughout my research it became visible that each community, in Texas and in Uganda, could not cast aside the notion that each group was different from the other. Rather than trying to identify with them, the majority of students still viewed the participating community as the Other. Each group of people had a distinct view about each other as the minority who needed to be educated, which needed to be given or receive something from the mural exchange beyond ideas. Words frequently used during my interviews were, “them” and “us,” and statements were made indicating that they were not like the other group, and were better for it. According to Stuart Hall (1997), “difference is both necessary and dangerous” (p. 234). As I have come to learn, difference does indeed matter to people, but meaning and purpose comes from dialogue about these differences. It can be dangerous for the sake of global unity to dismiss each other because of unique diversity and differentiation. It is important for Let Art Talk to see clearly, through this data, that greater social issues need to be addressed, in smaller increments, in order to one day make greater strides towards global unity through art. If a community can ultimately value diversity, then steps can be taken toward creating positive social change in the world. Let Art Talk’s global ideals are admirable, but not likely achieved, until these noted differences are seen as positives rather than negatives.

When trying to create a setting of communication, people will “not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs” (Hall, 1997, p. 56). Therefore, it is important that each group acknowledge their particular differences, but allowing themselves to relate to them in order to better understand the knowledge that can be gained through learning about one another. Fusion must occur within communities one concept at a time, through celebration of each other’s culture as members of one global village with shared goals.

Something to be taken into consideration is that only one member on our team is Ugandan. Immediately upon arrival to the sites where we would be teaching, we discovered how important it would be to spend time with the students, parents, and community members before we try to offer instruction. The cultural divides are so great, that it is important to shed light on our (those on our team that are not Ugandan) intended agenda in being in their country--working with them to achieve a global conversation. So often, groups come to developing countries to provide education or aid, which do not connect within the community. Programs are developed, carried out, and then begin to fade away because investments were not made in the lives and well being of the native people. Citizens need to be invested and engaged in a program before learning can take place. These disappearing programs also give the negative connotations that Americans, or other people who are providing a service to the community, are only interested in them for the duration of the program. In an effort to make a lasting connection with people in Uganda, as Westerners, it is extremely essential to be invested in the community and the program. It is imperative to not force our thoughts or programs on someone else who

does not want it in their community. Trust needs to be created. Communities must learn about you, the programmer, as someone with distinct differences as well.

Let Art Talk must reach out to the community and establish close relationships with the different groups. When these bonds are established, partnerships can be formed. If Let Art Talk is going to seek to make differences within communities, it is the duty of the organization to get to know very well, and gain mutual respect with the participants. After these partnerships are formed, Let Art Talk can plan with the groups in the community to understand their specific needs and introduce programming through art. Establishment of friendship and goodwill must be made between all of us in order for true, uninhibited learning to take place.

People of all countries can perceive someone's genuine enthusiasm, and notice if the individuals carrying out the program value in significant ways individual contributions. Presence in the community helps create trust and willingness to learn. So often programs that intend to make great change in a community hinder learning because of the lack of investment, follow up, and/or presence. In order to grow Let Art Talk's mission, it has been established through our time in Uganda, that programmers, like us, must not only become initially invested in whom they are serving, but continue to stay invested with the community even after the conclusion of the program. As long as Let Art Talk wants to create change in a community, and in the world, we must stay invested in these burgeoning ideas for change and do everything possible to engage learning.

Cultural representation, othering, and stereotypes.

When interviewing participants in both Texas and in Uganda, it came to my attention that many students do not have a clear understanding about the other individuals and groups participating in this mural exchange. It became increasingly more difficult throughout my interviews to remain a non-bias researcher. My inner teacher wanted to intervene and redirect some of the false notions students had about each community.

In the United States, conversations were focused on helping African children learn, instead of focusing on what they could personally gain from the project. The students repeatedly made comments to suggest the students of Africa were less educated because they were not as well off as the Americans. It was perceived that it was the duty of the students in America to teach and provide assistance to the students of Uganda. Comments from American children, although not all of them shared these beliefs, were revealing about what the real motivations were behind their participation in the program. Consider the student who thought children in Africa were handicapped and felt it was her duty to make them happier? Or, recall the student who believed that by creating a collaborative mural we were giving the people the opportunity to paint for the first time. Or, the girl who witnesses her mother going on mission trips to Uganda who said: “This was my chance to go to Uganda and help.” These ideas about their roles as helpers to those less fortunate was widespread in my conversations with the Rasor Elementary School students.

Frequently, when participants from Texas spoke to me about the African students, they had false information about the varying cultures, lifestyles, and education of their global neighbors. Students in Uganda had similar misguided ideas about the American children being wealthy, highly educated, and the kinds of people who just give money

that they seemed unable to learn from the other. Ugandans had difficulty believing that Americans could learn anything from them because of their language barrier, and thus Americans would think, “that the words were made up,” believing that Ugandans were “not educated” people. They also thought the education a student received in America was superior and could not value the contributions of the Ugandan students. Some Ugandans believed through this partnership they would develop relationships with students whose families could pay for their college education. Some students believed that results from the exchange would provide knowledge to Americans of the Ugandans need for aid. This aid-flow mindset has created great dependencies on help (Moyo, 2009).

Educational philosopher Emmanuel Levinas argues that all human existence rests in an ethical echo in which we are constantly confronted with notions of the Other and are, “held hostage by our obligation to the other...an obligation informed by an earlier voice (an ethical echo)...”(Christians & Merrill, 2009, p. 203). This ethical echo suggests that we cannot be one without the other. If we do not take care of the other we no longer can exist. This philosophical notion suggests that we are whom we are from our ability to learn from the Other. This echo calls people to have a feeling of duty, need or responsibility to one another and the ability to hear this echo and attend to it. We are then held responsible for the Other. The “face” of the other, Levinas insists, demands a response, we can affirm or deny this, but it will still be a response.

The ethical echo resonates with the American children, but they are still disengaged from part of Levinas’ theory that we are who we are from the learning about each other. They believe it is their obligation as human beings to help someone they perceive to have a need. They see the “face” of the Other, but do not consider what knowledge can be gained from the “face” of this echo or the knowledge from the Other. This ontological foundation of the self seems valuable, kind, and important to learning

about each other. Is this inherently creating more barriers to learning than it is connections? Will there always be struggle when making connections with people who are perceived in need of help, in the minds of students so young?

The American children grow up believing that everyone in Africa is representative of each other: being of third-world status, uneducated, and as the commercials on television depict--in need of financial aid in order to eat. As German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, also similar to Levinas, argues that one can only be themselves when in the presence of another self. Do these students think that they are more complete as a human, providing dutiful aid to the students of Uganda who “need help?” The ideas of learning with each other are far from the scope of their participation at this point. Greater education about people’s differences is important to include in the Let Art Talk curriculum and in all teaching outlets. The point should be stressed, that we all should need and be compelled to help each other, there should be a mutual obligation to help each other live together in our shared world in order to be human. This echo is mutual and can educate each other about the Other, in order to be a complete person. Then, maybe greater global issues can start to be solved.

Although these cultural ideas and misunderstandings were not unanimous among all participants, they were significant enough to hinder the mission of Let Art Talk. All misconceptions and cultural stereotypes played a role in the effectiveness of the program. With all of these judgments made about each other, the desires to merely help the Other, and the me vs. them mentalities, indeed, created landmines, blocking the learning experience. The interconnected nature of the project to create global conversation toward art making a difference about the environment was not met.

Meaning.

As the participants in this research study are discovering, all people are different from each other. It is important to understand ways in which each group interprets meaning. This can be unique for each community and each individual. Meaning is highly debatable: “There is no guarantee that everything in one culture will have an equivalent meaning in another” (Hall, 1997, p. 61). In the case of the mural exchange, to assume that two different cultures can view words from different languages and all come to the same conclusions and understandings about the theme is not possible until each community starts accepting and learning about each other’s differences.

The viewer, through unspoken dialogue between himself and what he is viewing, constructs meaning in the work of art. For a work of art to be understood the “spectator must first be the subject” (Hall, 1997, p. 60). By subjecting oneself, as a viewer, to this kind of power, they have the ability to be open to the meanings of the work. However, meaning cannot occur until the viewer can truly be one with the subject. In the case of the mural, the viewers cannot truly understand the meanings attached until they allow themselves to identify with the other, instead of labeling each other’s difference as a negative or a situation that needs “help.” But, with Let Art Talk’s *Talking Mural*, it is important to enable the viewer to become an active subject, and to also aid in translation of specific cultural meanings using them as teaching tools to show global similarities and try to achieve a greater appreciation of unique differences. Meaning is exchanged when there is access to a shared language (Hall, 1997), and in this case, the subject matter is the vehicle to create potential connections. However, appropriate education and translation of

ideas and cultural differences must occur among all participants in order to learn from each other. Let Art Talk must make an effort to bring light to cultural differences as learning opportunities instead of cultural separations.

Importance is also not universal. Just because this mural was created, said to be important by us, hung in a place of honor, like at Rasor Elementary School or on display for an exhibition, does not assure that people will find meaning in the mural. I am reminded of the 5th grade student from Rasor Elementary School who revealed that most of the students no longer stop and look at the mural in their school. Many of the students, who see the mural everyday could not recall the mission, theme, or reason for participation in the project. Significance occurs when students are invested and can create their own meanings in works of art. Again, we failed when we imposed a need on the participants. The hope of our programming was to instill greater global awareness and plant seeds of change in the lives of the participants. It has been discovered that not all participants had these deeper experiences. I have concluded, through this research that the intended goals were not met.

Meaning can suffer from projects that participants are not invested in them: “We all know individuals suffer when they have never learned to apply their own thinking and imagination to what they do” (Lowenfeld, 1954, p.91). One of the initial flaws in the design of the project was the fact that the need of these two communities was determined for them. They had opportunities to think about a presented theme, but were not given the opportunity to decide, as a community, which social issues really mattered to them. To reiterate, the goal of Let Art Talk is to use art, specifically through mural exchanges, to

communicate social issues, in the hopes of creating change within a community and the world. Because of this, Let Art Talk must first identify the specific need that a community is facing, determined only by conversations with participants, not by what we think they need. The autonomy that communities receive when determining their own need is important for participants to become more invested and learn more from the program. This will also help to establish a community whole, who can share ideas and viewpoints as a group. The social issues start becoming a group concern, which will create more importance in the ideas and work created with the help of Let Art Talk.

The creation of the *Talking Mural* should happen only after the community has come to similar ideas and conclusions about how they, as a group, can do their part to make a difference in their community and in the world. When these ideas are established the mural process can begin. While the participants are painting on the mural, the staff of Let Art Talk should facilitate discussion amongst the community members, students and teachers. These ongoing conversations throughout the process will help to solidify the understanding and provide the instructor's information needed to determine how much additional conversation needs to take place surrounding one issue.

In order for the Let Art Talk to meet its educational goals, it is necessary to have follow up visits to the educational sites in order to continue the community engagement in a conversation for change. Let Art Talk needs to continue to connect to the students after the creation of the mural to help reinforce the ideas of change that were first discovered at the start of the project. Through this process Let Art Talk can also evaluate the project in terms of educational effectiveness.

An attempt needs to be made to redirect teaching strategies to impact lives in the way we intended. It was clear that introducing an idea in mural form, in one week's time, was not producing the meaning and learning we originally hoped it would. The group needed instruction and time to brainstorm as a community the ideas that were being proposed, prior to the mural making. Also, continued discussion and follow up conversations need to take place after the mural exchanges in order to continue to reinforce the ideas that were introduced, "And we should really pay more attention to art that activates dialogues than to art that just makes us happy" (Bjornskau, 2011, p. 4). As stated earlier, it is important to establish a communal unity first, before attempting to create a global connection.

Recommendations

Researching the work and impact of the program Let Art Talk was beneficial in determining its current educational strengths, but it also provided me opportunity to decipher areas that needed to be improved upon for future work. It also enabled me to analyze the learning that was taking place through the mural exchange, providing a greater insight into effective teaching strategies that can help form relationships and generate the exchange of ideas between two communities. From my research I have concluded that in order to have sustainable programming in community arts education programs organizations must:

- Invest oneself in the community; establish a presence in each community your organization works with.

- Establish mutual trust with participants and program leaders.
- Be passionate about the program—truly caring about the educational outcomes rather than notoriety.
- All people in the program must have the same mission.
- Do not rush for “completion” of any program.
- Make awareness of cultural differences as learning opportunities.
- An organization must research the need and never impose a need on the community. Research takes place through conversation with the community members about what they value to be an important issue in their lives.
- Establish ongoing conversations with the community.
- Organization leaders should just be facilitators and let community create conversations, leading to the development of curriculum.
- An organization must continue to make follow up conversations with the community to continue the learning from the program. This also maintains the original bonds established.
- Use Action Based research methods to evaluate each program in order to improve each new program based on your findings. Continuously re-evaluate the organizational mission and objectives to see if they are being met.
- Use your action research as the stepping stool to expand your organization. Be cautious to expand too quickly.
- Share your work with others so that their organizations may develop also.

Ideas for Future Research

Through my research I realized that, in order to create local unions before attempting to create unity worldwide, Let Art Talk needs to alter programming. The project must make strong connections within its home community before stepping out into larger communities. In the future, our team needs to spend more time within the community, rebuilding relationships with the people and learning from them what they feel is a need. Then, Let Art Talk can develop programming and curriculum around a community concern, based on discussion and ideas generated from the people. My plan is to research the effects on the community as a whole and revisit the site to follow up with the community to gauge their learning.

Another area of potential research is launch another case study that would follow the lives of a few participants in the program over time. My goal would be to determine if the experience of participating in the program actually made an impact in the lives of the participants over an extended period of time. It would also be important to study if someone could actually gauge learning in the lives of participants so young like our current research. If the program was re-created for university-aged students, would the issues of difference not be so noticeable? Could change actually occur with participants who have had more life experience?

Conclusion

The following question was central to this research: In what ways and to what extent is the purposeful intent and meaning of the artwork made by students in Uganda--as part of a mural exchange program about environmental issues that occurs between students in Uganda and the United States--understood by the students in the United States who view and respond to this artwork? Through this investigation I came to the conclusion that my question could not be answered. Understandings of the *Talking Mural* were ostensible and never clear to me.

Although my question was not answered, other issues were brought to the forefront. Students in both countries could not reconcile their differences in order to make a global difference through art. What was noticed is that before an attempt is made to answer my research question, the communities must overcome their negative associations about the Other. Students were so disconnected from the start of this mural, that they could not imagine the possibilities of learning from each other.

There were extreme disconnections between the mission of Let Art Talk, and what the participants were actually learning. On day two of the Ugandan workshops, and during the revisit to Rasor Elementary School, it became obvious how much we need to educate about other cultures in our learning environments. It was a worthy, yet naïve desire to assume that students from two different places could band together through a common theme. This is not possible until communities can be unified in their own differences, and have mutual understandings about the positive associations of global difference. Let Art Talk made the error in assuming that people want to join together, that

they believe that they are similar, and, we assumed that issues with the environment affect each other in the same ways.

There are great concerns that stem from the Ugandan participants in terms of understanding how art can make a difference in their lives. The students we worked with could not understand how conversation through art could change their current situations. How could sharing a mural about the environment end their country's severe pollution problem, deforestation, or other countless issues that they see daily? It is easy to understand why these students believed that through expressing their concerns on a mural would be able to receive aid. I understood from the Ugandan students that what they hoped the Americans would learn from their participation in the mural was to raise awareness to the American children of their need, that is not the same as the Americans—providing an outlet to inform and collect funding, rather than to collectively work to create change. The many perceived differences that could not be separated from all participants, their lack of understanding of the Other, greatly discouraged their personal hope for change.

Ugandans intended that the American students learn about their culture, their struggles and their needs. The American students did not retain much information about the culture, developed stereotypes about the conditions of the people, and had misguided reasoning for their personal participation in the mural. In order for the original research question to be answered, each community must first value each other, understand differences as something to learn from, not to teach a different way of living, and truly see the benefits of art to make a difference. Although these ideas are not representative of

all participants involved in the *Talking Mural*, these issues were a concern to enough of the participants to conclude that these students need more than what we thought in order to learn the concepts of being one global village, using art as a vehicle to make great change in the world. The othering and lack of understanding about one another overshadowed the theme of the mural and spoke louder as the need to be addressed in future programming. Throughout this study the focus shifted away from determining the actual learning taking place to shed light on the knowledge that must be gained in communities in effort to create global social change in the future. The voices that have remained in my head as I have typed this document and have searched for answers to my research question were the voices of Matilda the headmistress, and Brian. Even if my original research question could not be answered at this time, there is no doubt to me that people desire to overcome their differences and use any means necessary to establish connections in the world. It has become clear to me that there are people all over the world, like Matilda, who do their personal best to mold minds to create a better world. No matter the struggles she faces daily with an overcrowded school and the lack of income—Matilda believes in the power of education and will do what it takes to provide that to her students. When students have access, like this, to education, they have the potential to create these changes and connections that Let Art Talk hopes. Even though these connections were not made in this study, I cannot say such connections will not occur in the future.

Through my time researching I have come to realize the importance children place on learning and express extreme desires to gain knowledge of the world. It is our

duty as art educators and organizations to provide children like Brian opportunities to make use of their minds for the greater good, even if we do not see results right away. Organizations like Let Art Talk must do what they can to combine action research throughout their programming in order to engage minds in an active and caring way, learning from what is working and what is not. An organization should always remember who it is that they are serving. In our case, we believe in the power of art to create a societal impact, but this change can only occur when we provide opportunities for authentic learning and discussion over time. Fred Mutebi, and the rest of the organization believe that students like Brian and those of Rasor Elementary should have the chances to experience art. Mutebi believes, “Each one of them can contribute. And with time—I can assure you that it will not happen quickly—it will create a better future. If you do not empower a young person with the skills of being creative, education will stop, business will stop, and culture will stop” (Schiller, 2011). These are the words of challenge.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

A1: Proposed Interview Questions

Participants in Uganda

- Do you feel that your country shares the same issues about the environment as the people in the States?
- What do you hope that the participants in the United States will learn from your country from this mural exchange?
- How can you use your art and words to express similar feelings about the environment with people of different cultures?
- Do you think this communication through art will make an impact in some way to someone in the States? How?
- How has this experience informed your own thoughts and impacted you?
- Has this experience changed you in any way?
- Do you believe that you can use drawings and words to express similar feelings about the environment with people of different cultures?
- Do you think this communication through art will make a difference to someone else?

Participants in United States

- Do you feel that your country shares the same issues about the environment as the people in Uganda?

- What have you learned through this project?
- How can you use your art and words to express similar feelings about the environment with people of different cultures?
- Do you think this communication through art could make an impact in some way to someone in Uganda? How?
- How has this experience informed your own thoughts and impacted you?
- Has this experience changed you in any way?
- Do you believe that you can use drawings and words to express similar feelings about the environment with people of different cultures?
- Do you think this communication through art will make a difference to someone else?

A2: Follow Up Questions to Ask Students

- Why did you participate in this mural exchange?
- What did you learn?
- How did you feel about making this mural?
- Did you learn anything from the children in Africa from seeing their paintings/words on the mural?
- Did you learn anything about the environment from this project that you did not know before?
- Do you think that art can make a difference in people's lives and how?
- What do you feel that you contributed to this project?

- Since, the two communities thought about the same theme, do you think you both share the same problems in your communities?
- Can art allow two different communities to communicate?
- When you were working on the mural were you thinking about the participants in Africa? How?
- Have you thought about the mural since you did it?
- Was this project important?
- Are there differences between Uganda and in America?

Appendix B: Sample Consent Forms

B1: Administrator Consent Form for the Participation of Children

CONSENT FORM

Intent Versus Outcome of International Mural Exchange

You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to determine how painting on a mural can communicate ideas with the other students in another country. I want to find out what the participants in Uganda hope that the participants in the United States learn about the mural. Can art speak to two different communities using a common theme that each other experience in two different communities? There will be a minimum of thirty participants from Uganda and a minimum of thirty participants in the United States who will participate in this study. Student participants will be creating a mural using words and images to represent the theme; the mural will be started in Uganda and sent to the United States to be completed in an afterschool program that takes place with consent from faculty at the school. A random selection (so no one is singled out) of participants, including students, administrators, faculty, and/or parents will be asked questions about their thoughts and learning that is happening in the process.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask your child to do the following things:

- All participants must sign appropriate consent forms.
- Students will contribute to painting the mural with other participants.
- Participants will be asked questions about what they are creating, learning, and hoping to communicate through their artwork on the mural.

Total estimated time to participate in study is One day at each school in Uganda and one day at the school in the United States.

Risks of being in the study

- The risks are no greater than everyday life. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

Benefits of being in the study

- No direct benefit for subject participants in this study. However, being involved in any way as an active participant or and observer in the mural making process being shared with other students has the potential to benefit society and make people more aware of each other's different communities. The study will benefit all students in education because the findings will determine how educators can create programs that contribute to knowledge of other cultures, and knowledge about the ways art can communicate around the world.

Compensation:

- There is no compensation for this study and will not cost you anything to be a participant.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- All interviews will be kept in the PI's notebook that will not include specific names of participants to protect their privacy.
- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.
- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your child's research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your child's participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your child's rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact **Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the** Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871.or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You may keep the copy of this consent form.

You are making a decision about allowing your students to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your students to participate in the study, simply tell me. You may discontinue his or her participation at any time.

Printed Name of (son/daughter/child/infant/adolescent youth)

Signature of Administrator

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Assent form for child between the ages of 7 and 12.

The child should be asked to sign a simply written separate assent form. A sample assent form is printed below. Modify it for your study. The title may be a simplified version of the title on the parental consent form.

B2: ASSENT FORM

(The Intent Versus Outcome of International Mural Exchange)

I agree to be in a study about communicating with others in another country by helping paint a mural that will be worked on by people in two countries. This study was explained to my (mother/father/parents/guardian) and (she/he/they) said that I could be in it. The only people who will know about what I say and do in the study will be the people in charge of the study.

In this study I will be painting a mural with other students that will be exchanged with another country. In the study I will be asked questions about what I am learning through painting a mural, and how I think I am communicating to people doing the same thing in another country about how I feel.

Writing my name on this page means that the page was read (by me/to me) and that I agree to be in the study. I know what will happen to me. If I decide to quit the study, all I have to do is tell the person in charge.

Child's Signature

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

B3: Informed Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) will describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study: Intent Versus Outcome of International Mural Exchange

Principal Investigator(s) (include faculty sponsor), UT affiliation, and Telephone Number(s):

University of Texas at Austin Department of Art and Art History
Amanda Batson-214-448-1408
Dr. Paul Bolin-512-471-5343

Funding source: Not Applicable

What is the purpose of this study?

My goal is to determine how is the intent and meaning of the artwork made by students in Uganda--as part of a mural exchange program about environmental issues that occurs between students in Uganda and the United States--understood by the students in the United States who view and respond to this artwork? There will be approximately thirty participants in this study who will participate in creating a mural using words and images

to represent the theme. They will be asked questions about the process and learning that is happening.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

This is not applicable to my study.

The Project Duration is:

The Project will begin November 13th and be completed in the Spring of 2011.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

The particular study's risks to the participant are currently unforeseeable.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

Not determined at this time.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

This study will not cost you anything to be a participant.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

There is no plan to provide compensation.

What if you are injured because of the study?

This is not applicable to my study.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and still participate in the mural activity.

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should you call if you have questions?

If there are anticipated circumstances under which the participant's participation will be terminated by the investigator without regard to the participant's consent: Anticipated circumstances under which participation may be terminated by the investigator without the participant's consent.

[Please include the bold statements below, exactly as they are written, and fill in any blanks where indicated]

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact the principal investigator: Amanda Batson at (214)-448-1408. You should also call the principal investigator for any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

If you would like to obtain information about the research study, have questions, concerns, complaints or wish to discuss problems about a research study with someone unaffiliated with the study, please contact the IRB Office at (512) 471-8871 or Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685. Anonymity, if desired, will be protected to the extent possible. As an alternative method of contact, and email may be sent to orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu or a letter sent to IRB Administrator, P.O. Box 7426, Mail Code A3200, Austin, TX 78713.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Your identity will be kept private and your name will not be used in this study.

If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review your research records, then The University of Texas at Austin will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

If the research will be **published or presented at conferences** then include, “If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?

Not determined at this time.

Signatures: *[Please include all of this bolded text:]*

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent **Date**

You have been informed about this study’s purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name of Subject **Date**

Signature of Subject **Date**

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

References

- Adams, M. (2002). Interdisciplinarity and community as tools for art education and social change. In Y. Gaudelius & P. Speirs (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in art education* (pp. 358-369). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, INC.
- Alasuutari, P. (1995). *Researching culture: Qualitative method and cultural studies*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Bjornskau, T. (2011, June 1). The missing link: An interview with Fred Mutebi. *Start-A journal of arts and culture in east Africa*, 10.
- Buda, S. L. (2011, Spring). Integrated curriculum and service learning: A platform for social transformation. *Journal of Art for Life*, 2(1), 4-18.
- Christians, C. G., & Merrill, J. C. (Eds.). (2009). *Ethical communication*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Council on Student Travel. (1965). *A guide to institutional self-study and evaluation of educational programs abroad* [Pamphlet]. New York, New York: Author.
- Countries list*. (2002). Retrieved from <http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countries40350.html>
- Dowden, R. (2009). *Africa: Altered states, ordinary miracles*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Eagleton, T. (2000). *The idea of culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Eide, I. (Ed.). (1970). *Students as links between cultures: A cross cultural survey based on Unesco studies*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute.
- Eisner, E. W. (1985). *The art of educational evaluation: A personal view*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Freire, P. & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. South Hadley, Maryland: Bergin and Garvey.

- Gablik, S. (1995). *The reenchantment of art*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Gardner, H. (1995). *The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools should teach*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Gude, O. (2009, November). Art education for democratic life. *Art Education*, 62(6), 7-11.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representation and signifying practices*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Kato, J. (2010, July 14). *High population that pays no taxes burdens Kampala*. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201007150285.html>
- Lanier, V. (1969, February). The teaching of art as a social revolution. *Art Education*, (6), 314-319.
- Lowenfeld, V. (1954). *Your child and his art-A guide for parents*. New York: The MacMillan Company.
- Lubanga, F. X. (2011). RE: Preparations for opening of term 1. In *Uganda media center*. Retrieved from Office of the President: Uganda Media Center website: <http://www.mediacentre.go.ug/details.php?catId=3&item=1217>
- May, W. T. (1993, Winter). "Teachers-as-researchers" or action research: What is it and what good is it for art education. *STUDIES in Art Education*, 34(2), 114-126.
- Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Muhwezi. (2011). *Uganda educational statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.go.ug/news/28.html>
- Nations Online Project (1998). *Map of the African countries with main cities and capitals*. [Photograph]. Retrieved from http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/africa_map.htm
- Nyman, A. L. (2002). Cultural content, identity, and program development: Approaches to art education for elementary educators. In Y.

- Gaudelius & P. Speirs (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Art Education* (pp. 61-69). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, INC.
- Oscarson, S. J. (2009). *The art of diplomacy: The use of art in international relations* (Master's thesis, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (AAT 1464768)
- Palfreyman, D., & McBride, D. L. (Eds.). (2007). *Learning and teaching across cultures in higher education*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schiller, R. (2011, March 10). *Material Evolution*. Retrieved from <http://www.handeyemagazine.com/content/material-evolution>
- Simpson, A. (Ed.). (2008). *Language & national identity in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Summary of conference proceedings. (1980). In *The Fulbright Program in the Eighties*.
- Sweikar, M. (2007). *Mzungu: A Notre Dame student in Uganda*. United States of America: Michael Sweikar.
- Walugembe, F. (2009). *Strengths and Weaknesses of Elementary and Secondary education in Uganda: Evaluation based on a teachers' survey* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio). Retrieved from ProQuest LLC database. (UMI No. 3364314)
- Zaino, J. (2009, September/October). Field-tripping goes virtual. *Instructor*, 34-36.