

Intergenerational Implications of Ritual in Art Education

“This community-based ritual collaboration brought people from all ages and backgrounds together for a culturally significant educational and artistic performance, which reinterpreted forms of historical and cultural ritualistic practice.”

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Abstract

This article introduces the concept of ritual and the role it can play in art education across generations from PK-12 schools to community collaborations. Three authors elaborate on research, personal experiences, and applications of ritual in their art education practice. The first introduces ritual within personal, historical, cultural, psychological, and sociological contexts. Then, relates these to art education curriculum and an intergenerational community collaboration. Author 2 shares experience with ritual-based artists using performance, body adornment and modification to communicate creative sacred/secular expression. Author 3 describes her hesitancy and eventual success in engaging preadolescents in ritual-based discussions. All these perspectives hope to inspire readers' ritual research and practice across generations.

Keywords

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We, the authors, have been friends and art education colleagues for nearly 30 years. From the time we met in graduate school to this current collaboration, one shared interest that continues to bring us together is the topic of ritual. Our perspectives of ritual have evolved over time, but art, art making, and material culture as components of ritual have remained common and continuous elements throughout our discussions.

What is ritual? What role can ritual play in art education across generations from PK-12 schools to community collaborations? These questions are elaborated on by each of us, based on our research, personal experiences, and applications to art education practice. La Porte introduces ritual within personal, historical, cultural, psychological, and sociological contexts. Then, she relates these to art education curriculum and a community collaboration. Speirs shares experience with ritual-based artists using performance art, body adornment, and body modification to communicate creative sacred/secular expression. McComb describes her hesitancy and eventual success in engaging preadolescents in ritual-based discussions culminating in the creation of personal shrines. We introduce our perspectives with hopes that they may inspire readers' research and practice across generations.

Ritual Across Cultures, Places, and Generations

Ritual has long reflected meaningful human experiences across cultures, places, and generations. Some of the earliest ritual studies focused on exotic practices, performed by people in isolated places of the world (Brown, 1980; Durkheim, 1912), and often included various art forms and material culture as essential components of ceremonial practices (Dissanayake, 1988).

Anthropologists continue to speculate about some of the earliest evidence of ritualistic behaviors in rock art from Northwestern and Central Australia (Michaelsen et al., 2000; Ross & Davidson, 2006) and 17,000-year-old sites in South Africa (Thackeray, 2005). The images illustrated on rocks depict rituals related to hunting, healing, and other unidentifiable practices that varied across cultures, places, and time periods. Dewey (1934) suggested that these early art forms were “an extension of the power of rites and ceremonies to unite [people], through a shared celebration” (p. 271). These historical representations of ritual in art have been mystical, religious, or secular, changing over time and reflecting aspects of the cultures from which they emerged (Brown, 1980, Dissanayake, 1988; Durkheim, 1912). Despite the passage of time, rituals persist and seem to historically parallel human productions of art and material culture (Dissanayake, 1988).

Defining ritual is complex, yet ritual often manifests itself through intergenerational practices. Whitaker (1980) asserted that ritual “must be symbolic, repetitive, stereotypical, and a complexly patterned event” (p. 316), while Brown (2005) suggested that it becomes “segments of our patterns of behavior which we have inherited and practice and pass on to our descendants” (p. 127). As scholars attempt to define ritual, intergenerational or not, there is no universal understanding. Relative to philosophical implications for art proposed by Grimes (1990) and others, a tangible definition for ritual is a religious or secular act, performed repeatedly or reactivated by a person or group that involves the body and/or the senses, sound, language, a level of meaning, and often includes material culture.

Although a ritual can be enacted by a single person in isolation, such as preparing a cup of coffee each morning, we focus on ritual and its implications as a concept for meaningful, artistic/creative intergenerational, and transformative art education curriculum. Rituals can be meaningful, since they are able to promote a sense of belongingness, reduce our anxiety, and bring a sense of cohesiveness to group participants. They are creative in the sense that we can draw on rituals for inspiration. They are transformative, as we can reflect on our own rituals and how they have changed us throughout history. We have grown to better understand the value of ritual in the transfer of historical knowledge and wisdom through generations, and now we strive to bring this rich content to art curriculum design.

Ritual as It Relates to Art Curriculum Across Generations

We explore the potential of ritual in art curriculum within and across generations, suggesting the potential value of ritual as a practice that provides humans with some sense of belongingness and reduction of anxiety (Xygalatas, 2022). Ritual as a theme for curriculum offers a potential to connect people across generations and backgrounds, as traditional rituals bring people together from the same community. As ageism continues to be one of the most prevalent biases according to Charlesworth and Banaji (2019), intergenerational approaches offer some potential to reduce age-related stereotypes (La Porte, 2011) and inspire one's own creative practices.

Ritual: Reflecting on the Personal as Inspiration for Art and Curriculum (La Porte)

The theme of ritual has been prevalent in my own life, artmaking, and art curriculum. My personal experience with ritual is rooted in my family history as a second-generation grandchild of Italian immigrants, becoming Roman Catholic, practicing gardening, canning fruits and vegetables, and celebrating with special foods. These experiences connect me to my grandparents and their heritage and persistently enter my curriculum and artmaking.

Ritual first emerged in my art curriculum when working with teenagers and older adults during my dissertation research in New York City's lower East Harlem using artworks that prompted questions, stories, and dialogue between generations. Older participants could easily connect with Horace Pippin's paintings "Saturday Night Bath" and "Christmas Morning Breakfast" as well as Palmer Hayden's "Midsummer Night in Harlem." These artworks prompted stories from the older adults about the rituals of bathing, special foods eaten on Christmas morning, and socializing outdoors during midsummer nights in Harlem while teens listened carefully and compared the past to their current day rituals. Although the program focused on oral history, intergenerational conversations, and art making, elements of ritual inspired dialogue, stories, and artworks (La Porte, 2011).

Years later, ritual manifestations evolved in my art installation titled *Mother, Mary*, which was part of the traveling exhibition titled, *In Response to Healing* (Speirs & Speirs, 2005-7). This installation took the form of an altar in response to my mother's battle with brain cancer and its potential link to aspartame consumption. I arranged artifacts (e.g., braided garlic, canning jars, shredded journal pages, MRI film, a radiation mask, and a can of diet caffeine free Coke cut into small pieces) in contemplative juxtapositions on an altar-like display connected to a motion

sensor that lit up an MRI scan embedded into a medicine cabinet door at the altar's center (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Mother Mary



Figure 2
Acustica di Italia



A more recent artwork, *Acustica di Italia* (Figure 2), also connected to ritualistic practice, was created for a faculty exhibition. That installation included a 44" x 62" digital photo on paper of an archeological site at the top of a hill in Mirabello Sannitico, Italy, featuring the church of Santa Maria di Monteverdi and the Benedictine abbey monastery. This was an ancient Samnite site near my grandparents' village, which has been repeatedly rebuilt due to earthquakes in the area. The limestone in the crumbling building and in the distant mountains repeated in the actual limestones in front of the photo on the gallery floor. Buried beneath the stones were a series of Gregorian chant recordings that my friends and I performed while on location in Italy, repeated from an iPod with speakers, reflecting the variety of architectural acoustic variations. Chant, prevalent in Catholic ritual, continues to be appropriated in my own practices performing with

friends of multiple ages and backgrounds at sites such as James Turrell's *Way of Color*, located at Crystal Bridges American Art Museum in Bentonville, Arkansas.

As ritual continued to evolve in my artmaking, it also emerged in my curriculum. Aspects of ritual were noticed while teaching art at a lower-income residential facility for adults, in my courses for university pre-service students, and within a mixed ability community arts program for adults with cognitive, developmental, and physical disabilities. A conference presentation I delivered prompted a high school art teacher to engage her own students meaningfully through the theme of ritual (La Porte, 2016), as high school students reflected on teenage rituals, such as Quinceañera and other family traditions. Teens also connected ritual to the simple act of putting on make-up every morning. My preservice art education students taught a unit on ritual to 4th graders at an Italian school in Rome, Italy. Each rendition of the curriculum began with a sharing of ritual examples based on student interests, community, or background of the teachers' secular rituals (e.g., camping & special food preparation). Curriculum included artists inspired by ritual (e.g., Lee Mingwei, Carmen Lomez Garza, Romare Bearden) and engaged children with questions about the artists' work, the contexts, and relationship to ritual. Students of all ages connected with ritualistic objects, places, and stories, whether religious or secular.

One of my most unique experiences with ritual occurred within a community collaboration at our university art gallery. The *Fundred Dollar Bill Project*, initiated by artist Mel Chin, was a collaborative artwork that started as a nationwide call for teachers to involve their students in the Fundred Dollar Bill curriculum. The primary goal of the project was to educate the public about lead pollution in the New Orleans soil, which had been causing devastating health issues, particularly in young children. In response, students were invited to design a \$100 bill. The aim was to create and deliver 3 million \$100 dollar bills to the U.S. Congress with a proposal from scientists to resolve the soil contamination in New Orleans. My effort in this endeavor started with organizing [state] teachers to participate (La Porte, 2010) and culminated in a ritualistic gallery installation at my university.

Faculty, students, and community participants were invited to draw a Fundred Dollar Bill to support the effort. The final collection provided a ritualized educational experience as we formed a New Orleans-style funeral procession to take the collected Fundred drawings from the gallery's bank safe installation guarded by students dressed in armored truck driver apparel to an awaiting armored truck that took the drawings to their final resting place in Washington, DC.

A closing reception included traditional New Orleans food and a chant written for the occasion by my friend, Ethel Simpson, including jazz music performed by university faculty and students. As the project concluded, we sang Ethel's original chant while students loaded the drawings onto a golden carrier. Then, students carried the Fundred drawings in a funeral-like procession, led by student musicians playing New Orleans-style music, followed by community supporters to the armored truck (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3
Loading Fundreds



Figure 4
Fundred Procession to Armored Truck



This community-based ritual collaboration brought people from all ages and backgrounds together for a culturally significant educational and artistic performance, which reinterpreted forms of historical and cultural ritualistic practice. Similarly, Peg Speirs connects her own research and implications for art education in the next section, introducing performance art, body adornment, and body modification as ritual and its cross generational implications.

Ritual: Reflecting on the Body as Inspiration for Art and Curriculum (Speirs)

I participated in ritual growing up in Catholicism but did not recognize the experience or process as a concept until I learned about ritual. When something is named or labeled, it signifies limiting, defining parameters that separate it from other experiences. Once I understood the parameters of ritual, they flexed and broadened to include practices beyond my immediate experience.

Two distinct associations with ritual transpired in my professional life and directly shaped my current perspective: an introduction to the work of performance artists while in graduate school and my current projects researching cultural practices of body adornment and modification. At first seemingly unrelated, the associations became stronger and more deeply intertwined the more I researched. Layered with my interest in the body as medium and subject matter in art, ritual became a framework to better understand the body as a means of sacred, creative cultural expression and transformation.

Ritual performance art came into my sphere of influence as subject matter for the art curriculum from the writings of art critic/theorist Suzi Gablik (1991) and feminist performance artist/author Suzanne Lacy (1994). Gablik argued for art as social practice and ecological awakenings. She proposed the artworld shift focus from consumerism to a more spiritual realm, citing artists' examples of performing rituals in collaboration *with* or on behalf of the earth. Lacy pioneered socially engaged public art performances, tackling issues missing from public discourse, such as sexual violence, poverty, incarceration, labor, and aging. I researched the work of ritual performance artists dominique mazeaud, Fern Shaffer, and Othello Anderson as examples of how art can serve as a means of transformation. Following the guiding principles of *intention* and *attention*, these artists performed ritual acts as gestures of healing through artistic interventions stemming from concerns for the ecological present and future of the planet and its inhabitants. mazeaud (2006) explained these two main ingredients of ritual:

Intention and attention are what unites all rituals, in every ancient and contemporary culture that follows, in one form or another, a ceremonial path. I believe that art derives from ritual, or maybe what we call art was simply ritual before ritual-based cultures went into a more materialistic stance. (p. 1)

These integral parts of ritual imply the concept of *stretching* by following a purpose (attention) and thoughtful progression moving forward (intention).

From 1987-1993, mazeaud performed a monthly ritual of picking up trash along the Santa Fe River, a tributary of the Rio Grande, in response to the ecological crisis she witnessed (Figure 5).

Figure 5
The Great Cleansing



mazeaud (2021) reflected, “With art, all components are important and if your work has anything to do with ritual, time is primordial” (p. 50). mazeaud selected a date that established the intention of time and set the ritual in motion. She admitted initially hoping her action would create a benefit before understanding “the river as her teacher” (p. 51). Over time, mazeaud recognized that ritual can invoke possibility. Transformation emerged from awareness that she was not separate from the river (Wilbur, 2006). Art educator Kate Wurtzel (2022) explained that releasing intentions of ritual performative acts can free us from predetermined outcomes to discovering fluid ways of responding and being. Walking along the river as a pilgrimage, *The Great Cleansing of the Rio Grande* became the precursor of ritual performances mazeaud would complete over the next 30 years around the world, participating with adults and children, in-person or invoked through representation, making art for the earth. For *The Most Precious Jewel*, mazeaud sat on the public square in Santa Fe the same day each month, silently beading a fabric globe while wearing a mask of anonymity. When curious children and adults gravitated toward her, mazeaud asked them to stitch a bead marking their favorite place on Earth. Children most often picked where their grandparents lived (See Figure 6).

Figure 6
The Most Precious Jewel



In another example of intergenerational learning, mazeaud collaborated with undergraduate students in a ritual performance for an audience of art education conference participants. Each student represented a threatened, endangered, or extinct animal by wearing a handmade animal mask (see Figure 7) and expressing concerns about the ways in which human behaviors harmed animals and the environment. mazeaud served as an elder, incanting messages of healing human relationships with animals as the audience repeated her words, chanting in unison. The performance ended with the students (as animals) presenting natural objects to audience members as symbolic gestures of gratitude for listening to their concerns. These gestures represented the animals asking for help. Many walked away deeply moved by the experience.

Figure 7
Mask



Fern Shaffer and Othello Anderson (personal communication, September 27, 2005) identified healing as the primary concept behind their rituals, which serve as spiritual and ecological interventions. Shaffer designed and performed shamanic rituals while Anderson photographed single ritual performances and longer ritual cycles on mountain tops, islands, in the ocean, forests, wetlands, vacant lots, rubbish heaps, and river headwaters with the intention of restoring the sites by drawing attention to them. The artists collaborated on constructing costumes worn by Shaffer during the performances, which reflected the issue and location, not the person performing. Costumes were constructed from raffia, shredded canvas, or industrial materials typically found in an art studio including bubble wrap. Completely covered, the costume hid her identity while allowing free movement of the body (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Nine Year Ritual



The Nine-Year Ritual series took place in the U.S. and Canada once a year from January 9, 1995 to September 9, 2003. This cycle called attention to concerns about ecological issues threatening the planet, including the preservation of old-growth forests and wetlands, protection of land and minerals from mining, and our ability to grow food and access water.

Studying material culture involving the human body reveals a rich, diverse history of traditional practices and contemporary interpretations ripe for unpacking in the art curriculum. Learning how and why humans adorn and modify their bodies over time and across cultures broadens student awareness about the ways in which these forms of expression are culturally determined; rooted in tradition, ceremony, and ritual; and deeply meaningful within the communities from which they emerge.

Researching body adornment and modification practices inspired me to create a unit of instruction, titled *Body Talk*, as an exemplar for teaching art to adolescents. I designed a first-year seminar course, titled *Body Adornment and Modification*, and created a film titled, *A Narrative of Women and Tattoo* (currently in production). I reference parts of all three in this article.

I introduced the first lesson in *Body Talk* to college freshmen in the first-year seminar course. Through this activity, students learned to identify and describe the differences between body adornment and modification and better understood each other. Discussions about rituals ensued, provoked by prompts and questions, such as: Why do humans wear head coverings, such as a hijab, crown, habit, kippah, war bonnet, turban, and wedding veil? Students discussed images of full-body wearables, including a wedding gown, a clergy robe or cassock, sports uniforms, and ceremonial clothing worn by indigenous groups. The images promoted storytelling to share experiences, memories, and associations. Images of body modification included examples of tattooing, scarification, lip plate piercing, tooth extraction and sharpening, gauges, foot binding, and infant skull reshaping. These images stimulated discussions about ritual, sacred practices, and cultural definitions of beauty. Students described concepts of permanence (modification) and impermanence (adornment), each requiring degrees of difficulty to remove or change, as identifying features. I recently facilitated this activity with in-service art teachers and student teachers, noting deeper conversations from different experiences/worldviews from a mixed generation audience.

The *Body Talk* curriculum has evolved over time, with a notable conversational difference occurring when I added the reading *Tattoos and Teenagers* (Blair, 2007). Student participation escalated as they discussed and shared personal stories of tattooing. These *tattoo narratives* (DeMello, 2000) led to discussing scenarios of teachers with tattoos in professional settings and the possibility of students and parents having tattoos, providing opportunities for growth through thoughtful questions and reflection.

Humans have modified their bodies with tattoos as a visual language to communicate identity and aspects of a person's life, passing down traditions and associated rituals for generations, and have been tattooed for a variety of reasons (e.g., rites of passage, achievements/status, ancestry, protection, in remembrance, as therapy, punishment, enhancement, in love/war).

For more than two decades, tattoo anthropologist Lars Krutak (2015) has researched indigenous tattooing practices around the globe and explained general perceptions:

Tribal peoples rarely describe tattooing as an artistic or aesthetic practice because there are no terms for 'art' or 'artist' in the majority of indigenous languages. Instead, tattooing is integrated into the social fabric of community and religious life, and typically speaking, it is a cultural, clan, or family-mandated ritual that anchors societal values on the skin for all to see. (p. 1)

Tattooing nearly disappeared in cultures around the world as the result of colonialism and forced acculturation that stripped away identities visible on the skin. Prevented from tattooing for generations has disconnected many indigenous people from their histories, spiritual practices, identities, power, and sense of place.

Krutak (2017) identified recent revivals of tribal tattoo traditions in the Philippines, native North America, and among the Arctic Inuit. In the Philippines, the custom of tattooing is nearly extinct, existing only in remote regions, despite the long history of heavily tattooed people. Generations of tattooed elders have passed, but 106-year-old Whang-Od, the oldest *Kalinga mambabatok*

(tattoo artist) from the village of Buscalan, is training her great-niece and other women from the community to be the next generation of artists to carry on the tradition (Krutak, 2010).

In the next section, Camilla McComb shares her perspectives on ritual in relation to standards-based teaching and the sixth-grade art curriculum. Analyzing sacred and secular rituals served as groundwork for studio explorations leading to intergenerational engagement.

Pre-Adolescents, Ritual, and Intergenerational Conversation (McComb)

I understood that when considering ritual as a rich and potentially transformative act, it is essential to include children in the conversation. Children develop an understanding of ritual at an early age. Graduating from diapers, eating with utensils instead of their hands, and taking responsibility for brushing their own teeth are significant rites of passage, which serve to “incorporate” the child into a life of the family (Van Gennep, 1960). Yet, it had not occurred to me to teach the topic of ritual in an art class until it became a requirement in the state revised visual arts standards. The grade-six responding/reflecting standard, number three, stated: “Explore and discuss how aspects of culture influence ritual and social artwork” (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, n.p.). I was intrigued by the new standard but wondered: How am I going to teach about ritual without violating the separation of church and state? Doing so required me to:

- step back to analyze my own assumptions around ritual.
- reach out to colleagues teaching social studies for support.
- design a learning progression (Popham, 2008) to engage students in talking about ritual without asking them to perform ritual in class.

Growing up Presbyterian, I was surrounded by ritual in the form of infant baptism, the taking of holy communion, and even the ritualistic cadence found in the order and sequence of a church service. Each part of the service followed a protocol. As part of the church community, I recited the Nicene Creed along with the Protestant version of the Lord’s Prayer. Citing this ancient prayer and affirmation made me feel connected to generations of worshippers. It felt sacred.

In stepping back to think about ritual I realized that another aspect of my life had also felt sacred. As a teen, I was active in 4-H, a youth empowerment program designed and supported by over 100 universities across the United States (4-H, 2023). As an active member in the Tumbleweeds 4-H Club, I was honored to represent the club by riding my horse, Charmer, in the community Fourth of July Parade Honor Guard. As one of four young women riding our horses down the street, people stood to honor the flags we carried. At 15, I had come to understand the power of civic pride. As an art educator reflecting back, I also realized that ritual was not only found in sacred religious practice but also in our civic and secular lives as well.

Understanding that ritual was both sacred and secular was a start, but I was still feeling uncomfortable with the idea of introducing discussions that included sacred practice in class. Fortunately, I found support in the school social studies curriculum. I learned that grade six students were already studying world religions, which meant that my efforts to spark discussion about ritual in a sacred context would not be new and unexpected; rather, it would support

learning happening in other parts of the curriculum. With renewed confidence, I implemented the ritual-focused learning progression with grade six students.

Children began by analyzing the routines of their lives. It became immediately evident that preadolescents understood routine as they reflected upon the cultural practices they participated in and then analyzed the purposes of those routines. Once students came to understand the purpose of routine, they were ready to be introduced to the idea of ritual.

Children understand ritual as sacred or secular routines that are so culturally significant that they require special treatment (Bell, 1992). For instance, in Christian faith, Baptism is a fundamental routine, albeit sacred practice. Families having their children baptized often purchase special clothing for the day and host a family meal after the ceremony. Most denominations recite prescriptive text and have specific protocols for handling baptismal water. Adolescents may also be confirmed, celebrate bar and bat mitzvah, and fast during Ramadan. By example and participation, children learn from their elders to understand directly, or indirectly, the cultural value of sacred ritual.

After analyzing sacred ritual, children were ready to examine secular rituals: cultural events or rites of passage deemed more special than the routine (Nelson, 2007). A Presidential inauguration, the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, and high school graduation are ritualistic. Students also made associations to the ritualistic ways families watch football games.

After discussing the sacred and secular aspect of ritual, children examined the concept of the shrine. Students observed differences between sacred shrines and artist-appropriated shrines, realizing that they too could make art to elevate, or make special, an aspect of their lives. We spent class time discussing ways to create a focal point, along with ways to use artifacts to create visual support of a theme. We wondered: How will a viewer know the purpose of the shrine? What might make the shrine look special, even sacred?

Using ritual as a lens to observe distinctions between the sacred and secular, students each designed a personal shrine relating to one of three themes (see Figure 9). To activate student thinking, I created an envisioning activity that centered on three reasons a person might create a shrine: as an act of remembrance, to pay tribute, or to express an intention. Once students considered the full range of possibilities, I asked them to focus on one area that captured their attention; one area they could not stop thinking about.

Figure 1
Envisioning Activity

Student _____ class code _____

Developing Concept

Remembrance

Name three people whom you often try to remember

_____ Relationship to you _____
_____ Relationship to you _____
_____ Relationship to you _____
_____ Relationship to you _____

Tribute

There are people in the world who impress us either through their accomplishments or their service. List three people (or groups) who you would like to thank for their accomplishments.

Person (or group) _____ : Explain why you are impressed

Person (or group) _____ : Explain why you are impressed

Person (or group) _____ : Explain why you are impressed

Intention

We often have goals for our future. As you think about your life, 1, 2, 5, 10 years from now...What do you wish for yourself?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My Choice

What category would you add?

Students remembered deceased parents, grandparents, and pets. Students paid tribute to their cultural heritage, favorite authors, family serving in the military or police force, and family members who had survived cancer. In thinking about the future, pre-adolescents saw themselves as athletes, musicians, working professionals, college students, and even as parents one day having their own families. Here, I have highlighted three student-created shrines.

One student was an active competitive gymnast (see Figure 10). A coach in the area was known for having trained Olympic gymnasts, so it was not unrealistic to see her express the intention of one day competing in the Olympic games. Her shrine was filled with trophies, photographs, and clothing encased in plexiglass to commemorate her achievements and to signal the intention of her dream.

Figure 10

Gymnastic Goals and Dreams



This lesson sparked the attention of a quiet and shy Asian American student who, during the previous summer, had visited relatives in Japan for the first time (see Figure 11). He brought in a huge box and worked non-stop researching and planning imagery for all sides with an opening that revealed the collection of imagery and artifacts collected on his family pilgrimage. The shrine enabled him to reflect upon his experience, considering how the time spent with ancestors would best be honored, represented, and remembered.

Figure 11
Japanese Culture



A most endearing shrine was created by a young man who wanted to pay tribute to his grandfather who had served in the military. I say endearing because he stood outside the door to my classroom one morning with his mother. His excitement was palpable as I approached. Before I could finish saying “good morning,” he began telling me about how he and his mom had combed through their family photos; how they had spent time talking with relatives and collecting stories about his grandfather. He continued to explain how each aspect of his shrine had been carefully considered, from the camouflage-patterned duct-taped exterior, to the plastic barbed-wire facsimile that obscured the military action taking place inside the shrine (see Figure 12). As he talked, his mother smiled with pride.

Figure 12
Military Heritage



In wanting to create a unit that was meaningful to pre-adolescents, I inadvertently created a pathway for them to meaningfully connect to multiple generations. Some of the intergenerational conversations occurred among like-minded individuals with similar goals, while many took place among generations of family members who took time to better understand their culture, heritage, and service.

Conclusion

In this article, we, the authors, presented ritual from three different personal/pedagogical perspectives. La Porte discussed the evidence of ritual across human history and geographical locations with its diverse, yet similar, manifestations among cultural groups. She then explored linkages between her life experiences/artwork with curriculum developed in the community and university settings, and how these inspired art educators and her students in their own K-12 teaching scenarios. In all cases, participants from diverse backgrounds and/or ages connected with their interests and with each other at a personal level. Regardless of the individual manifestations of ritual or how it has been defined, the concept traverses time, place, and people, provides meaningfulness to our life experiences, and offers endless connections to art making and art education curriculum. Speirs described ritual in relation to the body through performance art, the concepts of modification and adornment, and tattooing as frameworks through which to address ecological and social issues relevant to life and the art curriculum. Adorned and marked, the body serves as a ritual site to communicate values, ideas, or beliefs of individuals and society, connecting humans across time and cultures. Finally, McComb's work with preadolescents demonstrated that creating artwork around the topic of ritual is appealing and meaningful to young people as it promotes intergenerational conversation and cultural understanding. As anthropologist and cognitive scientist Xygalatas (2022) stated in his recent book, ritual is a "part of human nature . . . that helps us connect, find meaning, and discover who we are" (p. 268).

Incorporating ritual into these holistic approaches to art education (Campbell, 2011) afforded learners the opportunity to make personal meaning of the people, places, and objects they held sacred in their lives. Our hope is that in analyzing routine, and in better understanding ritual, that pre-adolescents, teens, and adults will develop a curiosity for understanding rituals new to them, thus becoming more compassionate in how they interact with practices and generations of people perceived differently from themselves.

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