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ABSTRACT

ART IN EVERYDAY PLACES: DEMOCRATIZING ART KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSFORMING ADULT IDENTITIES AS NON-ARTISTS THROUGH A VERNACULAR ART CURRICULUM

Liz Rex, Ph.D.
School of Art and Design
Northern Illinois University, 2016
Kerry Freedman, Co-Director
Kryssi Staikidis, Co-Director

Contemporary art education practices should democratize art learning by engaging students in understanding integral relationships between art and everyday life. The purpose of this study was to determine how a vernacular art curriculum might affect adults' perceptions of art and their identities as artists. Participants enrolled in a class that was designed by the researcher to broaden traditional, Western definitions of art by focusing on three areas of curricular content: 1) making special, 2) everyday aesthetics, and 3) vernacular art environments. The goal was to determine if broader definitions of art that sought to democratize art knowledge with more explicit connections to everyday life might affect adults' perceptions of art and their identities as artists.

The qualitative design for this study was a phenomenological, multi-case approach. This research drew upon data collected before, during and after a class in which participants explored the vernacular art curriculum. Three separate classes were offered that included a total of 15 adult participants. Participants self-identified as non-artists (n=9), artists (n=3), and art teachers (n=3). Participants completed a pre-class survey and pre-class interview to capture their prior attitudes about art and their artistic identities and also completed a visual journal and post-class

survey related to transformations in their attitudes about art and artistic identities through the class.

Findings from this study demonstrate that a majority of participants made explicit connections between how they perceived of art prior to the class and how strongly they identified as artists. Overall, participants had held conceptions of art that interfered with their abilities to identify as artists. For a majority of participants, the vernacular art curriculum provided new knowledge that disrupted previous notions about art and provided adult participants with knowledge that supported personal connections to artistic behaviors in their everyday lives. A subtle, but positive, transformation was observed in relation to how strongly participants identified as artists.

In this study, educational strategies and a vernacular art curriculum were analyzed to understand how explicit connections between art and everyday life might positively affect adult identities as artists. The participants' transformations through this process provide the field of art education with insights into the types of teaching and curriculum that encourage lifelong engagements with art and a framework for considering art as an integral part of everyday life. Recommendations are offered for art educators, art teacher education programs, and for further research possibilities.

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ART IN EVERYDAY PLACES: DEMOCRATIZING ART KNOWLEDGE AND
TRANSFORMING ADULT IDENTITIES AS NON-ARTISTS THROUGH
A VERNACULAR ART CURRICULUM

BY

LIZ REX
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Doctoral Co-Directors
Kerry Freedman
Kryssi Staikidis

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DEDICATION

For Nin
happy trails

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Contemporary shifts in the field of art education problematize art curricula that separate learning about technical skills and formal properties of art from personal, contextual, and social meanings and critique traditional hierarchies of objects and images considered relevant to art knowledge (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Freedman, 2003; Graham, 2012; Gude, 2000, 2004). In contemporary art education practice, the study of fine art traditions and objects are considered alongside the visual and material culture of everyday life (Bolin & Blandy, 2011; Freedman). New technologies and ways of making are explored along with traditional art mediums and production. These contemporary conceptions of art learning provide the potential to broaden student and adult assumptions about art and art production and create lifelong engagement with art beyond school contexts.

In this study, I examined the formal and informal art education experiences of adult participants prior to the study. Initially, I sought to understand how such experiences contributed to adult identities as non-artists and their proclaimed inhibitions toward art. In this multi-case study, an intervention, specifically a vernacular art curriculum, was conducted to determine if curricular content that democratized art knowledge by broadening traditional, Western-centric ways of defining art and artists and making explicit connections to art in everyday life might transform adults' artistic identities.

Adults who identify as non-artists provide insight into the far-reaching effects of formal and informal art education experiences. Through personal and educational experiences with adults I have found that many adults simultaneously feel both curiosity and respect for art as well as a deep sense of apprehension about their abilities to understand and produce art. This apprehension toward art, that appears common in adults, often takes root in earlier stages of artistic development. Adolescence in particular is marked by transitions from the uninhibited creative impulses of childhood to an increasingly self-conscious and self-critical mode of art production (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Michael, 1983). This apprehension is often expressed by adolescents and adults as an inability to draw or render realistic imagery. While the ability to render images through drawing is an important artmaking skill, there are numerous ways to consider and create art that might provide more inclusive entry points for a broader range of individuals. Thoughtful considerations about how art, artists and art production are represented to young people and adults might create conditions that disrupt common apprehensions about art and invite lifelong engagement with art in everyday life.

The vernacular art curriculum created for this study utilized three content components: 1) art as a behavior of making special, 2) everyday aesthetics, and 3) vernacular art environments. These ideas help broaden traditional or fine art conceptions of what is art (making special), help situate ideas about art within practices of everyday life (everyday aesthetics), and provide exemplars of engaging works of art, created by primarily self-taught artists, that are situated in everyday sites (vernacular art environments). These curricular ideas align with contemporary art education theories described above that indicate the study of art should help students understand and critically examine pervasive art practices that occur within the context of everyday life. This curriculum was created with the goal of introducing perspectives about art that might help adult

participants enter into critical discourse about previously held assumptions and knowledge about art with the goal of creating more inclusive frameworks for art that might positively impact participants' self-concepts as artists.

Researcher Perspective

Like many artists and art educators, I felt compelled to pursue artistic endeavors at a very young age. An abundance of encouragement from family, peers, and teachers set me on a path of pursuing a college degree in studio art that seemed natural. Despite my proclivity for art, I found that my progression through that program was accompanied by my own discomfort as contradictions developed between what I learned or assumed about the world of art and how I saw myself fitting into it. For a long time I thought that perhaps I had imagined or fabricated my own discomfort. This thinking aligns with Gablik's (2002) reflection on prevailing paradigms, specifically related to modern and postmodern ideologies of art, that stated, "many of the difficulties and conflicts we experience as personal in this regard are related to the framework of beliefs and standards of behavior provided by our culture to serve as guidelines for individual lives" (p. 3). Ideologies, such as those that shape understandings of art and art practices, are inherently hard to unravel because they exist as a natural or normal part of our worldview.

The most poignant paradigm that shaped my education as an artist was the art historical construct of modern art. The most often told historical narrative of modern art history begins with the work of Cezanne and is moved forward by a predominantly white, male cast, each of whom in turn stripped art of presumed inessentials, like narratives or subject matter, in an effort to create art in its purest and most abstracted form (Duncan, 1995). Duncan stated, "The modern artist, then, as a consequence of his moral-aesthetic struggle, renounce[d] representation of the

visible world in order to connect with an inspiring realm of purity and truth that lies beyond it” (p. 109).

This reductive rendition of modern art does little to represent the complexity and context of a rich art historical period; however, I chose this narrow recollection because it reflects deeply felt impressions on my own journey as an artist. At that time I was a 20-year-old female presented with a mirror of male heroes and exalted artistic traditions, unable to see anything like myself reflected back. In retrospect, the message from instructors, historical texts and sanctioned art settings, like museums, that left the biggest impression on me, whether intentional or not, was that a real artist needs to be prolific and that real artworks were made of a conceptual and formal quality appropriate to a gallery or museum. In this space, art could be experienced and interpreted outside of the circumstances of everyday life. Regardless of my frustrations, I was defiantly unable to relinquish my identity as an artist that I had been enthusiastically cultivating since my youth.

Broadening Personal Boundaries of Art

Many years after completing my undergraduate degree in studio art, I returned to college to pursue a degree in art education. My understanding of what it meant to be an artist was challenged and broadened in the very first text I read in an introductory art education class. In this text, Wachowiak and Clements (2001) explained, “When art celebrates ordinary experiences, these experiences take on new significance. By making events and things stand out from the commonplace, art transforms and reorganizes our conception of the world” (p. 4). This statement profoundly affected the framework that constituted my understanding of what it means to be an artist. I realized that my prior art education experiences did not reflect or support what I found to

be most fulfilling about creating. The types of art I found most fulfilling came from interactions with my home, family, and friends as components of traditions and celebrations in our everyday lives.

I began to think about the ways in which I felt fulfilled creatively by attending to my own celebrations, rituals, and ordinary experiences. Dissanayake (1995) stated,

‘Making special’ is a fundamental human proclivity or *need*. We cook special meals and wear special garb for important occasions...Ritual and ceremony are occasions during which everyday life is shaped and embellished to become more than ordinary. What modern artists do, in their specialized and often driven way, is an exaggeration, an extension of what ordinary people also do, naturally and with enjoyment. (p. 223, emphasis in original)

My own experiences in classes on art had not prepared me to consider the central role of making special in the lives of human beings nor to consider this an artistic behavior. By considering art to be also a behavior of making special, my experiences of art in everyday life were brought to the forefront and appeared to me as a valid creative practice.

In addition to my own experiences as an artist, two simultaneous circumstances really shaped my interest in the questions that guided this research. My family initiated a new annual tradition by holding a Halloween party at our home. This ritual was accompanied by intense creative collaborations as we prepared for a celebration that required elaborate decoration. After over a decade of performing this yearly event, community expectations created a need for more and more creative collaborations between family and friends. While I was identified as “the artist” and was often looked to for expert direction or advice, these gatherings were accompanied by unexpected creative endeavors enacted by non-artists including elaborately presented meals, tangent art projects initiated by other participants, storytelling or, more often, re-storytelling, and the acknowledgment of my parents’ extensive gardens. With a new lens for considering art, I

identified these activities as relevant artistic behaviors and ways in which a broad range of people participated by making special.

In addition to becoming cognizant of art practices integral to making meaning in everyday life, I began to be more conscientious of the apologetic stance that adults would often take when they found out I was an artist. It was not unusual for adults to apologize for their own inadequacies in art. These statements were almost always tied to their “inability to draw anything more than a stick figure.” I began to wonder about the art experiences and ideologies that shaped adult identities as non-artists and why they were narrowly tied to the ability to draw. Like my own experiences of art, were adult identities as non-artists shaped by ideologies that privileged certain forms of artmaking, like drawing? If this is the case, how could educational experiences in art challenge ideologies that inhibit lifelong engagement in art and the ability to envision art as an integral behavior of everyday life for adults who do not readily identify as artists?

In Spring 2012, I conducted pilot study interviews with three people I would consider outside typical definitions of a professional artist. None of them were formally trained as artists but articulated what they felt were their innate desires to create. Most worked in nontraditional art mediums like woodworking, polymer clay jewelry, or found object displays for the home that some might define as craft. Two of them hesitated to call themselves artists and one immediately claimed he was not an artist. In response to whether she would describe herself as an artist Sarah (a pseudonym) stated, “You know, I want to. And so many people have always said that to me, you know. But I’ve always had like a cringing feeling inside. Like, you know, I’m a wannabe.” During our interview Sarah talked enthusiastically about her jewelry, photographs and paintings, but repeatedly came back to insecurities about her art because she felt she could not draw well. It was apparent that the joy that Sarah experienced while making art, was hampered by what she

felt defined an authentic artist. Sarah's back and forth expressions about her identity as an artist made me wonder how art educational experiences might have empowered Sarah by validating everyday artistic behaviors in addition to traditional art forms, like drawing, or traditional indicators of being an artist, like showing work in a gallery setting.

Referring to Paulo Freire's belief in the liberating power of literacy and education, Heller (1997) stated, "Freire was interested not only in how writing affects thinking, but in how writing might more deeply affect the quality of people's lives, especially their perceptions of themselves as thinkers and as people who take action" (p. 10). Like Freire's observations of writing, the joy that surrounded the collaborative art experiences in my family's rituals carried over into other areas of our everyday lives, deeply affecting the quality of our lives. The personal experiences I illustrate here have informed my research and my belief that when art is more overtly connected to our everyday experiences, it can affect the quality of life for artists and non-artists alike.

Statement of the Problem

As someone highly motivated by art and artmaking, I found certain traditions of art to be inhibiting. For individuals who do not identify as artists, this exclusion can feel even more pronounced. Art is often perceived as alienating and inaccessible to adults who identify as non-artists. The specialized skills and knowledge necessary to participate in art, particularly as defined by Western, fine art traditions, create exclusionary conditions for those who feel unable to navigate them. Like many domains, at one end of the spectrum art can be an alienating force, seemingly understood and performed only by those possessing certain knowledge, language, or skills. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) stated, "Each person is surrounded by an almost infinite number of domains that are potentially able to open up new worlds and give new powers

to those who *learn their rules*” (p. 37) [emphasis added]. These rules of art are impressed upon adults as students in formal and informal art education experiences and shape their understanding of art and perception of their ability to take part in that domain. However, rules that define art domains are not static and can be challenged or represented in ways that create entry points for a spectrum of participants.

While specialized knowledge may be warranted for deeper understanding of many fine art traditions, contemporary art education maintains more inclusionary goals. Comparisons may be drawn here to distinctions Csikszentmihalyi (1996) made in his study of creativity where he interviewed 91 individuals who had made significant contributions to a major domain of culture. In this study, he differentiated between personal and cultural creativity. In order for cultural creativity, the individual’s accomplishment must be judged valuable by peers within a given domain and field. However, Csikszentmihalyi stated, “Even though personal creativity may not lead to fame and fortune, it can do something that from the individual’s point of view is even more important: make day-to-day experiences more vivid, more enjoyable, more rewarding” (p. 344). My personal experiences with adults who identify as non-artists, adults who see themselves outside of the domain of art, are that they often equate the identity of non-artist with assumptions and learned understandings of a fine art world that is narrowly defined by Western-centric values. For the reasons cited by Csikszentmihalyi, it is important that the field of art education continue to seek ways to broaden access to the domain of art that encourage these vivid experiences in everyday life for artists and non-artists alike.

The field of art education has changed. Contemporary shifts in art education emphasize the necessity to consider not only the artifacts that have been identified as fine art, but the variety of ways that artistic forms are a part of our everyday lives (Congdon, 2004; Duncum, 1999,

2002; Freedman, 2003). Duncum (2002) wrote that “everyday life includes routines and our taken-for-granted experiences, beliefs, and practices... Since we are all participants, such knowledge is inherently democratic” (p. 4). The study of art, and particularly artistic behaviors, in everyday life has the potential to democratize that knowledge and allow for more meaningful experiences for people of all ages, including those who identify as non-artists.

Theoretical Foundations

In addition to democratizing traditional kinds of content and knowledge explored through art education practices, this study drew on scholarship about teaching practices connected to democratic education ideals. In particular, adult transformative learning theory and situated learning were utilized as theoretical frameworks for conducting and analyzing data from this study.

Mezirow’s (2000) ideas describing adult transformative learning have become widely accepted and built upon in adult education for over twenty years (Jarvis, 2010). According to Mezirow, adult transformative learning theory shares tenets of education that embody democratic values. He stated that

transformative learning has both individual and social dimensions and implications. It demands that we be aware of how we come to our knowledge and as aware as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. Cultural canon, socioeconomic structures, ideologies and beliefs about ourselves, and the practices they support often conspire to foster conformity and impede development of a sense of responsible agency. (p. 8)

According to Cranton (2006), transformative learning is a self-directed form of critical reflection, often initiated by an outside event or teaching, in which adult learners critically reflect on their own assumptions that have been formed through past experiences. In this study, I introduced

knowledge (a vernacular art curriculum) to adult participants meant to create the conditions necessary for those adults to reflect on their experiences in art, evaluate their underlying assumptions about art, and transform how they identify as artists through critical reflection and discourse with other participants. By acknowledging alternative and more inclusive ways of understanding art, the participants were given tools to identify prevailing ideologies that may have been invisible and to construct new frameworks for art that affect adult knowledge about art and self-concepts as artists. In this study, democratizing art knowledge and practices for adult participants occurred on multiple levels and are explored more fully in future chapters.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine if participation in a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge by broadening traditional definitions of art to include everyday artistic behaviors of making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments might positively impact the artistic identity of adults who identify as non-artists. This study also considered the formal and informal art education experiences of participants prior to this study to better understand how those experiences shaped attitudes about art and artistic identities of students over time. In addition, this study sought to critically evaluate teaching of a vernacular art curriculum to understand how the conditions for transformation of adult attitudes toward art and their artist identities could be cultivated.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What is the impact of a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge on adults' perceptions of art and identities as artists?
 - a. In what ways do adults' prior formal and informal art education experiences shape their perspectives of art and identities as artists?
 - b. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as *making special*?
 - c. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as *everyday aesthetics*?
 - d. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as *vernacular art environments*?
 - e. What new knowledge about teaching practice emerges when an instructor self-reflects on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum?

Overview of Research Approach

The qualitative design used for this research was a phenomenological, multi-case study. The foci of this study were the formal and informal art education experiences that shaped adult participants' perceptions of art and identities as artists. This included attitudes and knowledge about art and perceptions about artistic identity shaped by art education experiences prior to the study and as participants in the vernacular art curriculum created as part of this research. A multi-case study was used to develop a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of particular groups of adults. In addition, action research was used as a methodology for examining teaching practices while instructing a vernacular art curriculum over multiple classes or cases.

This research drew on data collected during three separate classes for adults. Each class consisted of three sessions. During the classes, the participants engaged in conversations about the three content areas of the vernacular art curriculum and each class visited at least one vernacular art environment site. Participants completed a pre-class survey and pre-class interview related to their demographics, art education experiences, and identities as artists. During class, the participants created visual journals in which they reflected on what was learned, with connections to their own experiences. Following the class, the participants completed a post-class survey related to transformations in their attitudes about art and artistic identities. Additional forms of data collection included video- and audio-taped class sessions and the researcher's field notes.

Transcriptions of interviews, videotaped observations, field notes, visual journals statements, and pre- and post-class survey data were analyzed using multiple coding cycles (Saldaña, 2009). Data are presented for each participant, but are also analyzed between groupings of participants who were identified as having similarities in experiences useful in reporting findings. Given careful and systematic coding procedures using multiple data sources, findings were drawn in relation to the research questions for the study.

Delimitations

In this study, research was delimited to the experiences of adult participants who enrolled in the vernacular art curriculum classes created for this study. The class was offered three separate times and was limited to three sessions per class.

Limitations

There are limitations inherent in the use of case studies as a research methodology. Yin (2009) stated that “the case study...does not represent a ‘sample,’ and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (p. 15). A multi-case study was conducted to triangulate data across multiple cases and draw more reliable findings from the data. Given the qualitative foundation of this study, it is not statistically generalizable. However, readers may find the conclusions drawn from this study transferable to their particular circumstances (Merriam, 2009).

For this research, I wanted to examine the experiences of adult participants who considered themselves as non-artists prior to the study. However, two of the three sites chosen for this research were arts-related. This was problematic since an assumption might be made that art center program offerings primarily attract persons interested in or with some comfort level with art. This did produce a mix of self-described artistic identities (non-artists, art teachers, and artists) that influenced the way findings for this study were analyzed and reported. The third site, which was not offered through an art-related center, included the highest number of participants who identified as non-artists.

Researcher Assumptions

In this research, the following assumptions were made about the study:

- All participants would discuss their identities as artists honestly and participate in classroom discussions and activities in an authentic and truthful manner.

- Photographs and artifacts created or collected by participants would align with curriculum objectives and be representative of their ideas about art and their reflections on art in their everyday life.
- Adult participants would be able to perceive of and express transformations of their identities as artists through visual or textual means.

Recent research demonstrates interest in the importance of everyday aesthetic experiences (Melchionne, 1995; Palega, 2011; Tzou, 2009) and scholarly interest in the integration of everyday life and material culture in art education curricula (Bolin & Blandy, 2003, 2011; Duncum, 1999, 2002; Lai & Ball, 2002). This study is significant because the recollections and reflections about the art education of adults may provide the field and K-12 educators with an understanding of the ongoing effects of those experiences. In this study, educational strategies using a vernacular art curriculum were analyzed to understand how consideration of art in everyday life might improve adults' attitudes toward art and identities as artists. Because ongoing literature searches have revealed limited research on adults who identify as non-artists, the participants' transformations as a part of this process may provide the field of art education with insight into the types of teaching and curriculum, such as everyday aesthetics, making special, and vernacular art environments, that encourage lifelong engagements with art.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

Adult- An adult is someone who has reached an age that allows him or her to make autonomous decisions and take responsibility for those decisions (Mezirow, 2000). The age limit that will be placed on participants in this class is that they must be over the age of 18.

Art teacher- For this study, an art teacher is someone whose profession involves teaching art in a school setting and who self-identifies as an art teacher.

Artist- For this study, an artist is someone who strongly self-identifies as an artist.

Everyday aesthetics- Everyday aesthetics broadens aesthetic interests that predominantly have focused on fine art to include the experience of sensations in response to objects, places, or events that are situated within the often mundane or taken-for granted practices of everyday life (Leddy, 2005; Saito, 2007). Although instances of aesthetic experience in the everyday are boundless, examples may include responses related to the home, shopping, the workplace, daily commute, hobbies, play, etc. (Duncum, 2002; Leddy, 2005).

Everyday place- Cresswell (2004) noted that place “is a word wrapped in common sense” (p. 1), meaning that its familiar usage makes it both tangible and at the same time harder to define. Tuan (1977) stated simply that “space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning” (p. 136). For this study, the definition of place is interwoven with the meaning that is brought to it by humans and will be considered through this lens as a “meaningful location” (Cresswell, p. 7).

Formal education- For this study, formal learning prior to adulthood includes structured educational experiences in school settings. In the context of adulthood formal learning may include professional development or continuing or recurrent learning in higher education settings (Jarvis, 2010).

Informal education- Informal learning is learning that is initiated by adults in response to everyday life, which may include problem-based, self-initiated, or independent pursuits (Jarvis 2010; Tight, 2002).

Making special- In her research, Dissanayake (1988) took an ethological point of view by looking at art as a human behavior. She posited that making special is a human proclivity.

Dissanayake stated,

When *shaping* or giving artistic expression to an idea, or *embellishing* an object, or recognizing that an idea or object is artistic, one gives (or acknowledges) a specialness that without one's activity or regard would not exist. (p. 96)

By defining art as a behavior of making special, Dissanayake broadens traditional understandings of art to include how humans deliberately attend to making meaning in their everyday lives.

Non-artist- For the purposes of this study, non-artists were self-defined as people who consider themselves as outsiders to a perceived domain of art. They may actively be involved in creating art-like objects, but resist defining what they do as art.

Vernacular art environment- Vernacular art environments are artistic endeavors often created as additions to the artist's home or yard, sometimes completely engulfing its interior or exterior, or even both. They are often, but not always, created by self-taught artists. They take many forms and utilize a wide range of materials including concrete, found objects, shells and glass, painted signs, metal, natural materials, or even glitter. The environments frequently appear to have emerged from an obsessive compulsion and are typically years in the making. The reasons for creating these environments are as expansive as the materials they require and may reflect personal, moral, religious, political, or imaginative visions.

The variety of names and descriptions used in an attempt to define and categorize vernacular art environments are indicative of their unique and varied nature (Beardsley, 1995; Ludwig, 2007; Nokes & Jasper, 2007; Sloan & Manley, 1997; Umberger, 2007). Naming works of art that defy easy assimilation into the realm of fine art is not uncontested. To this point, Beardsley stated,

Many skirmishes have been fought on the semantic front and numerous alternative terms proposed: outsider, isolate, eccentric, grassroots, vernacular, naive. All such terms have advantages and limitations: all correctly imply a distance from the conventions of academic art and “high” culture, but all can be pejorative as well, especially in the way they reiterate the marginal status of these creations. (p. 8)

For this study, I chose to use the term vernacular art environments because it suggests an expression that is indicative of the specific time and place inhabited by the artist (Umberger) and is primarily created outside of academic understanding of art. This notion coincides with the goals of this study to create a curriculum that resituates art learning within everyday life and places.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 provided a brief introduction to this study and situated the identified problem, purpose and significance of this research within broader contexts and goals for contemporary art education practices. In addition, I provided initial descriptions of broader frameworks for democratizing education, including the theoretical frameworks for this study: adult transformative learning theory and situated learning. I also acknowledged and described my own perspectives and experiences with art and art education practices that have informed and initiated my interest in this research topic. An overview of the research design is introduced in this chapter, including the limitations and delimitations of the study and my own assumptions as a researcher. Finally, a list of definitions of vocabulary and terms relevant to this research are provided.

In Chapter 2, I provide further context for this study through a thorough review of relevant research studies and literature. The remainder of this study is organized into four chapters. In Chapter 3, I describe the research methodology for this study and the methods for

data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the three classes in which the vernacular art curriculum was conducted and subsequent teaching reflections on those experiences. In addition, I describe the art education experiences, attitudes toward art, and artistic identities of each of the participants in the study prior to taking part in the class designed for this study. In Chapter 5, I provide a detailed description of each participant's responses to the vernacular art curriculum. Chapter 6 includes a discussion and analysis of findings, including recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The purpose of this phenomenological, multi-case study was to explore how a vernacular art curriculum that democratized art knowledge by making explicit connections to art as an integral part of everyday life might impact adult perceptions of art and their identities as artists. The vernacular art curriculum, designed by the researcher, was presented to participants in a three-session class titled, *The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places*. Specifically, the vernacular art curriculum engaged adult participants in considering three curricular ideas: 1) making special, 2) everyday aesthetics, and 3) vernacular art environments. In this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the impact of a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge on adults' perceptions of art and identities as artists?
 - a. In what ways do adults' prior formal and informal art education experiences shape their perspectives of art and identities as artists?
 - b. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as making special?
 - c. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as everyday aesthetics?

- d. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as vernacular art environments?
- e. What new knowledge about teaching practice emerges when an instructor self-reflects on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum?

In this chapter, I provide a critical analysis of literature that contextualizes and informs my study. The major areas of literature that will be discussed include modern and postmodern ideological influences on art and aesthetics, recent paradigm shifts in the field of art education, the vernacular art curriculum utilized in this study, research on adult knowledge and learning in art, and the theoretical framework for this study, which include democratic education, situated learning, and adult transformative learning theory.

Modern and Postmodern Ideologies

Ideologies are the shared values and systems of belief that exist within cultures and create frameworks and justifications for action in everyday life (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). Given their ubiquity, ideologies may appear natural, self-evident, inevitable, or even desirable, making them difficult to detect, evaluate, and imagine other ways of existing. Brookfield (2005) stated that “critical theory holds that individual conduct must always be understood as shaped by dominant ideology...even when we think we are exercising our freedom as individuals, we are living out ideological battles and contradictions” (p. 51). Because ideologies significantly shape a person's understanding and actions in the world, they require critical and reflective attention.

Modern and postmodern ideologies have significantly shaped current ontological and epistemological ways of existing and thinking in the world. These two ways of knowing have also profoundly affected the construction of a so-called “art world” and how art education has

been considered within these contexts (Neperud, 1995). Adults who identify as non-artists inherit these ideological values, which in turn shape how they continue to engage with art in their everyday lives. For this reason, I devote some space in this paper to a brief overview of modern and postmodern ideologies in which current theories of art and art education are situated.

Modernity grew out of 18th century Enlightenment belief and optimism in the power of rational and scientific thinking. This reliance on rational thought was a reaction to traditional modes of knowledge that were predicated on superstitious systems of belief (Blake, 1996). Central to modern thought was the belief that human beings were unique, autonomous individuals, capable of shaping their own existence. Sturken and Cartwright (2009) stated that “the breaking down of traditions allowed people to have a sense of infinite possibility yet also generated fears about the loss of the feeling of security and social connectedness that came with those traditions” (p. 99). While modernity brought newfound conveniences and comforts afforded by the industrial age and the liberation of individuals from the rule of traditional customs and authority, it also brought disconcerting regimentation, distance from or dominance over nature, and devaluing of traditional or folk practices (Dissanayake, 1995).

Modern thought was built on Enlightenment beliefs that objective and universal truths already existed and could be uncovered through reason and rational pursuits of knowledge. Blake (1996) stated that based on Enlightenment ideals “rationality was the disinterested pursuit of knowledge; and if its paradigm was the pursuit of the natural sciences, then these were an appropriate model for social science and an inspiration to social reform” (p. 47). Social and scientific progress was considered a linear, forward movement, equivocally tied to technological, scientific, and industrial advancements (Barrett, 2008; Sturken & Cartwright, 2009).

Modernist ideologies were created in response to prior, traditional systems of belief that were deemed irrational, unjust, and no longer viable. In much the same way, postmodern thinking positioned itself in opposition to modern ideologies. Postmodernity is characterized by a resistance to the metanarratives that were a prevalent part of modernist views of the world (Barrett, 2008; Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). Instead postmodernism posits a multi-vocal and interpretive view of knowledge and our understanding of reality that is situated or contextualized within many different social, historical, and personal worldviews. To this point, it is not only expert knowledge that is valued, but also local, non-expert perspectives that may include concrete experience or folk and traditional understandings (Hamblen, 1995). Within a modernist framework, reliance on objective truths creates taken-for-granted myths about knowledge and ways of being that appear natural or given. Postmodern theory posits that by deconstructing these myths, social constructs that appear inevitable can be critically examined for their potential to reinforce inequitable power relationships (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996).

Aesthetics

Modern and postmodern ideologies have significantly shaped the philosophy of aesthetics. Aesthetics refers to a sensuous or imaginative apprehension that is experienced as a person perceives things (Fenner, 2008; Leddy, 2005). Aesthetics is often thought of as synonymous with the conditions and criteria for judgments of art (Saito, 2007). Shifts in thinking about aesthetics have been influential to how art is defined, interpreted, judged, and taught (Barrett, 2008). In this section, I discuss modern and postmodern influences on the understanding of aesthetics.

Modernist Aesthetics

Modernist thinking influenced aesthetics in a number of ways. Within a modernist framework aesthetic experiences should be decontextualized and disinterested. This aligned with a modernist agenda that knowledge could be gained through objective reasoning. As Freedman (2003) noted, “The modernistic notion of aesthetic experience was a closed concept, based on a limited general human experience with imagery, conceptualized as disinterested and sublime, and shaped by the assumed existence of an inherent aesthetic quality” (pp. 31-32). In this way, true aesthetic judgments should be based on properties of the object that were bracketed from any subjective, cultural, or contextual influences.

During the modernist period, aesthetic judgments about works of art were predominantly based on formal properties, such as line, shape, and color, consigning any social or historical content as irrelevant or impure (Wolcott, 1996). Fenner (2008) stated, “From the basic objective properties of lines, colors, proportions, contrasts, and so forth, we develop a view of an object’s aesthetic qualities, and from an aesthetic description of the object, we determine the object’s aesthetic worth” (p. 27). Particularly influential to art education in the United States has been an emphasis on formal aesthetic qualities, prevalent in modernist considerations of art that separate the experience of objects from any sociocultural or historical context or meaning (Freedman, 2003).

The modernist dismissal of accessible cues like representation or narrative created disconnect between art and everyday audiences so that artistic judgments were relegated to elite circles of art critics (Clark, 1998). Aesthetic experiences were achieved by assuming a disinterested or non-subjective stance toward perceived objects. Barrett (2008) stated that “‘disinterested’ does not mean ‘uninterested’: On the contrary, it is a special kind of heightened

interest” (p. 111). These kinds of disinterested aesthetic encounters, based solely on formal properties inherent in objects and detached from subjective and contextual experience, required a certain level of expertise. This elevated the educated art critic as the authoritative voice in how one should experience a work of art.

The Western art world itself was transformed by modernist aesthetics, as artists and art critics exalted work that whittled itself down to a form that was, so-called, pure. What this meant was that what was present was only a form essential to an aesthetic experience. The mantra “art for art’s sake” emerged from this modernist perception that art should be an entity onto itself, devoid of any social or cultural justifications or distractions (Fenner, 2008; Gablik, 2002; McEvelley, 2006).

Modern Aesthetics and Art Museum Education

The art museum represents a unique entity that traditionally has housed sanctioned works of art and sought to educate the general public about those art objects and their art historical contexts. Educational and curatorial choices in art museums reflect broader philosophical stances on art, the role of the viewer when engaging with art and goals related to educating audiences about art. In an informal art education venue, like an art museum, visitor experiences of art are often shaped by modernist ideologies. Within a modernist framework, museum goers are considered “passive receivers of curatorially sanctioned interpretations” (Mayer, 2007, p. 44). In the modernist museum, personnel were considered the experts who provided information that was deemed factual or the most relevant with little emphasis on engaging viewers in constructing meaning through personal or contextual connections (Mayer 2005; 2007).

In addition to content or interpretive devices, the sanctioned space of the art museum itself can be both comforting and imposing to adult visitors. Soren's (2000) qualitative study of visitor experiences in the Tate Gallery in London revealed that some visitors compared their experiences of the gallery with places like cathedrals or libraries where reverence or quiet respect was anticipated. Visitors responded to this environment in a variety of ways, including intimidation, annoyance, or positive feelings of nostalgia or inspiration.

Weltzl-Fairchild, Dufresne-Tassé, and Dubé's (1997) study of 90 adult visitors to an art museum looked at whether these adults' feelings of dissonance in an art museum hindered their ability to construct new knowledge. This study was primarily focused on illustrating ways art museum curators could address visitor dissonance related to such things as labeling, organization, or expectations. However, more illustrative for the current study were reports of dissonance by adults who felt ashamed or perceived they lacked enough knowledge about art. For example, one participant responded to a work of art by stating, "It's my ignorance probably, of art, you know, of painting, all... There must be something, for certain, for it... for it to have gained its place there [in the museum]" (p. 162). In this example, the adult visitor felt the authority of the museum was more valid than his/her own response to the artwork. Art museums, which in some ways legitimate what is defined as art, often remain elusive to adults who feel they do not possess the kind of knowledge necessary to interpret art (Congdon, 2004).

The previous examples of art experiences in museum settings are illustrative of modernist influences that favored an authoritative and uniform stance toward interpreting and defining art. Like all art educational venues, museums today are challenged to critically reflect on and weave multiple perspectives into the kinds of knowledge they sanction (Conlan, 2010; Karp & Lavine, 1991). The upcoming section will discuss how postmodern ideologies critically consider barriers

to interpreting, experiencing and even defining art that were prevalent within modernist ideologies and how postmodern ideas have influenced the role of the audience in constructing meaning.

Postmodern Aesthetics

Postmodern theory is often criticized for its inaccessible language, ambiguity, and general lack of clarity (Barrett, 2008). However, there are visible and viable shifts in art and art education that have taken place in the last several decades as ways of contesting or talking back to hegemonic, Western-centric codes of modernist aesthetics. Postmodern art resists the hierarchies of modern authority about art and attempts to subvert such modernist claims as individuality, originality, universality, and the repressive hierarchy of high art establishments. Postmodern theories position art within the context of everyday life including social, cultural, and political worlds (Barrett, 2008). Postmodern art pushes modernist boundaries in relation to formal properties self-contained within individual works of art and the centrality of the artist as the original and defining author of a work of art. Instead contemporary artists employ postmodern strategies like appropriation, juxtaposition and recontextualization that attend to the ways layers of information related to objects, images and materials can be combined to construct meaning within a work of art (Gude, 2004). Additionally, postmodernism questions the notion of metanarratives and the hierarchy of the artist as author that are prevalent in modernist thinking (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). Subsequently, art viewed within a postmodern framework is considered a text whose meaning is subject to context and the active participation of the audience or reader.

Postmodern Aesthetics and Art Museum Education

Postmodern ideas have also influenced the ways art museums, and museums in general, engage with audiences in constructing knowledge related to objects and works of art. These changes represent a significant shift in how knowledge is represented and constructed within a museum setting and reflect broader shifts in education and art history more generally. As an informal site for learning, art museums also play a role in constructing adults' ongoing interactions with art beyond early school contexts. In contrast to modern influences, postmodern museum educators have attended to the role of viewers in interpreting and constructing knowledge in museum settings, the ethics and transparency of representing objects and knowledge, and how knowledge is socially constructed and situated within larger frameworks of equity and power.

Learning and teaching in museums have been influenced by shifts in education from a top-down transmission of expert knowledge to actively engaging and guiding learners in the construction of knowledge (Ebitz, 2007). Guided by the work of theorists such as Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky, constructivist learning in the museum is marked by engaging viewers in personally and socially navigated connections and narratives through objects while situating that knowledge within cultural contexts (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; Mayer, 2005, 2007). Bridging theory and practice in the museum setting, Housen and Yenawine developed a museum interpretive practice, *Visual Thinking Strategies*, in which museum facilitators used guiding questions to engage audiences in interpretations of works of art that created discussions that were subjective, collaborative, promoted democratic interactions, and ultimately encouraged multiple points of view supported by evidence observed in artworks and objects (Housen & Yenawine, 2000; Yenawine, 2003). This type of interpretive action reflects

postmodern influences on museums where the role of the educator is to guide viewers in co-producing knowledge that is ambiguous, complex, multi-vocal, and unfolds in unpredictable and unscripted ways (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005; Hubard, 2007). This type of teaching and curriculum places museum audiences at the center of learning.

Postmodern ideas have also influenced the ways in which museums curate and present knowledge and narratives to viewers. Conlan (2010) stated that

Museums embrace, enable, and legitimize specific knowledges while simultaneously excluding and rendering illegitimate vast areas of human experience. The parameters of possibility are mapped along lines of class, race, gender and sexuality. Omission from the museum does not simply mean marginalization; it formally classifies certain lives, histories, and practices as insignificant, renders them invisible. (p. 257)

Recognizing that knowledge, culture, meaning, subjectivity, power, and identity are interwoven, museums have increasingly become self-conscious of the social and ethical ramifications of the narratives they represent, misrepresent, or disclude as well as the presumed authority of the museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Lavine, 1992). While the evolution of museums continues, a variety of innovative strategies have been utilized that make choices about exhibition content, objects and display more transparent and interactive.

Numerous museums have used object labels, a traditionally authoritative component of an exhibit, to invite viewer participation by personally creating or responding to these texts in an exhibition setting. This provides an opportunity for multiple points of view to be displayed, enhances engagement, and makes transparent the voice behind these seemingly straightforward object labels (Gurian, 1991; Nashashibi, 2003). For example, at Jane Addam's Hull House in Chicago, Illinois, viewers were provided with and asked to comment on three different versions of a text label for a portrait of Jane Addam's longtime partner, Mary Rozet Smith (Adair, 2010). Each text provided different language and variations on how explicitly the nature of their

intimate relationship was narrated. This museum strategy not only made the ways knowledge can be narrated or manipulated by museums transparent to the viewers, but engaged viewers in dialogue about contentious topics, like sexuality, that are often ignored or left hidden in museum settings.

In addition to responding to existing exhibitions, community members outside of museum personnel have been called on to help curate and design exhibitions, taking into account varied and insider points of view from the start (Tchen, 1992). Other exhibitions have been designed to deliberately engage viewers in questioning antecedents of modern thinking, like truth and the idea of scientific objectivity (Livingstone, 2003; Pedretti & Soren, 2003). In light of postmodern theories, efforts have been made in museums to present artifacts in ways that are more complex and create dialogue situated in contexts of power and equity around a range of social and cultural issues. These shifts are woven into broader changes related to art, education, art education, and adult learning. In the following section, I describe shifts in the field of art education that are relevant to this research study.

Art Education Paradigm Shifts

Over time, justifications for and manifestations of art education have undergone numerous transitions. In the early 19th century, the common school movement was initiated in the United States in an effort to provide public schooling for all young people and produce skills like reading and drawing that were seen as lacking in workers and necessary to meet the needs created by the Industrial Revolution. In addition, the common school movement was implemented to counter consequences of the Industrial Revolution brought on by the insurgence of the working poor living in city slums and the growing immigrant populations (Efland, 1990a).

From these earliest inceptions of public schooling, art education, and particularly drawing, was considered central for “intellectual, moral, and economic reasons” (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 10). Ultimately, school was a place in which to cultivate cultural unity, and art education practices were employed as part of those broader goals for education.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, progressive educators advocated for more democratic goals for education that would produce citizens capable of critically re-envisioning, versus reproducing, social circumstances and structures. Two important and ongoing justifications for art education emerged from progressive ideas, including an emphasis on child-centered art and creative self-expression (Efland, 1995; Lowenfeld, 1987) and social reconstruction, through which art education is a means for students to construct knowledge through experiential learning to cultivate community and critical awareness and their roles as agents of social justice and change (Siegesmund, 1998). These early justifications for art in public school settings continue to influence teaching and curriculum in art education today. In the following sections I provide more detailed descriptions of prevalent contemporary art education practices that represent modern and postmodern influences on the field of art education and provide relevant context for this study.

Discipline-Based Art Education

Modernist ideologies influenced major educational reform in art education following the 1957 launch of the Soviet artificial satellite, Sputnik. Set against Cold War sentiments, this event positioned science as the model for educational reform (Efland, 1990a). To demonstrate that a subject was legitimate or warranted as part of educational goals in schools, it needed to be

regarded as a disciplined subject of study (Efland; Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Siegesmund, 1998). Efland stated that

the definition of a *discipline* came from the sciences and referred to such attributes as having an organized body of knowledge, specific methods of inquiry, and a community of scholars who generally agree on the fundamental ideas of their field. (pp. 240-241, emphasis in original)

In the mid-1980s discipline-based art education (DBAE) emerged with tremendous support and resources from the Getty Center for Education in the Arts in response to child-centered art education models that emphasized the free expression of children unhindered by adult influence (Stankiewicz, 2000). In contrast, DBAE placed emphasis on redefining the field of art as a disciplined area for study. To position art as a subject that could be studied, DBAE integrated content from four disciplines: aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production (Gaudelius & Speirs). A discipline-based curriculum was meant to balance these four disciplines within the content of art curriculum as well as to utilize systematic and sequential instruction that would guide students from naïve to sophisticated. Greer (1988) stated,

The educational end-in-view will be educated adults with a sophisticated understanding of the arts. Students acquire knowledge of the subject matter or content of art, the concepts and generalizations that mark the discipline, and the procedures or techniques used by competent professional, who devote their lives to art. (p. 115)

The goal of DBAE was to maintain art as a relevant subject of study in schools. Recognizing limitations on resources, DBAE initiatives included support for professional development that would allow art and non-art educators to provide comprehensive art instruction where student outcomes could be assessed and teachers held accountable for student learning related to clearly outlined knowledge considered relevant to the discipline of art (Greer).

Discipline-based art education was deeply influential to the field of art education, and its influence is still visible in current art education practices. DBAE reflects many tenets of

modernist ideologies that have been criticized in light of postmodern shifts in art education.

DBAE has been criticized for its emphasis on Western fine art exemplars (as determined by art experts), while ignoring and in turn devaluing a wide range of aesthetic possibilities. Hamblen (1988) noted, “Due to this selectivity, the life-world aesthetic experiences of many students are ignored or made to adjust to what is designated worthy of study” (p. 24).

In addition to a focus on art content driven by top-down expert knowledge, DBAE privileges measurable and predictable outcomes that can be efficiently assessed through standardized measures (Hamblen, 1995). What emerges is a curriculum represented as objective, neutral, and value-free (Efland, 1990b; Freedman, 1995). For students, curriculum is presented to students in a pre-packaged and nontransparent way that greatly limits any critical or personal student understanding of how knowledge is shaped and can be reshaped. According to Hamblen (1987), “In DBAE the focus is on the integrity of the content presented to the student rather than the student’s method—idiosyncratic or otherwise—of dealing with that content” (p. 74). The student is a passive recipient of sanctioned knowledge and similar outcomes in learning, and art production are considered desirable outcomes, versus problematic, in that they limit complex and student-centered interactions with art. Values that are reinforced by a DBAE curriculum have lifelong effects that reemerge in adult expressions of alienation in relation to art education that caters explicitly to expert knowledge and practices.

Visual Culture Art Education

Beginning in the 1990s, increasing numbers of articles and conference presentations related to visual culture art education signaled that a new paradigm shift in art education was underway (Dorn, 2005). This shift reflected influences of postmodern ideology and art.

Important contrasts between visual culture art education and discipline-based art education reflecting postmodern ideologies include valuing local and non-expert objects and knowledge; recognizing that meaning is constructed, subjective, multi-vocal and contextual; and emphasizing that art education should promote democratic ideals and help students develop tools engage with social, political, and ecological concerns (Hamblen, 1995).

Freedman (2003) described visual culture as “all that is humanly formed and sensed through vision or visualization and shape[s] the way we live our lives” (p. 1). This includes the fine arts but also addresses prolific visual forms, like mass media, that are highly persuasive and didactic and play increasing roles in shaping our knowledge and identities (Duncum, 1997, 2001, 2015; Freedman, 2000; Tavin, 2003). A visual culture approach to art education posits that students need to develop deeper and more critical understandings of their visual culture so they can become cognizant of how it shapes our culture, society, and personal identities (Freedman, 2003). A visual culture approach to art education shifts the curricular focus from solely engaging with expert-sanctioned works of fine art to a broad range of artifacts that include and recognize intersections of high culture and popular culture forms (Wilson, 2003).

In addition to the objects central to art education investigations, there is also a shift in how students are expected to engage with visual culture and the outcomes or goals associated with this type of curriculum. When engaging with visual culture objects and art production in the classroom, a visual culture approach resists a focus on disinterested formal analysis prevalent in modernist understandings of art. Instead social, historical, and political contexts along with subjective, multi-faceted points of view are considered central to interpreting and creating artifacts (Duncum, 1997, 2001; Freedman, 2000; Tavin, 2003). Given the impact of visual culture on identity and understandings of the world, made pervasive by new technologies and

mass media, a visual culture approach to art education focuses on providing students with the capacity to think critically about how to navigate this information and any stated or understood claims to neutrality or the natural order of things (Darts, 2004; Tavin; Wightman, 2006). In addition, a visual culture art education fosters students' abilities to engage in resistance, social justice, and democratic values through dialogue and meaningful artistic production (Cummings, 2006; Darts, 2006; Staikidis, 2006).

Material Culture Art Education

The shift in the field of art education to an emphasis on visual culture has broadened the arena from which art educators might draw for curricular investigations. This includes an interest in examining the role of art in local communities and everyday places and in considering the cultural implications of material culture objects prevalent in these sites. According to Bolin and Blandy (2003), "material culture is...a descriptor of any and all human-constructed or human-mediated objects, forms, and expressions, manifested consciously or unconsciously through culturally acquired behaviors" (p. 249). A material culture approach to art education further broadens the scope of potential investigations by considering the visual along with all human-mediated, multi-sensory experiences, forms or expressions. Bolin and Blandy noted that "material culture studies [are] directed toward exploring the truly commonplace objects, forms and expressions that people in the past and present experience on a daily basis" (p. 252). Such study provides students with an opportunity and the skills necessary to recognize personal and communal narratives and critically interrogate hidden ideologies embedded in the material culture of everyday life that may otherwise go unnoticed or under examined (Bequette, 2014; Blandy & Bolin, 2012; Burkhart, 2006; Ulbricht, 2007). In addition, a material culture approach

democratizes art-learning experiences and outcomes by promoting inclusiveness of forms and expressions relevant for study and making broader cultural and civic connections (Blandy, 2004).

Art education curricula that focus on these everyday forms and expressions can include examining urban and community landscapes and built environments and the social, cultural and historical narratives they embody (Powell, 2008, 2010; Kraft, 2006) or creating lessons around such everyday objects and expressions as stickers (Keys, 2011), children's dolls (Chung, 2011), bottles (Kager, 2003), home yard-spaces (Waterstreet, 2014) and decorative art objects from museum collections interpreted using a material culture lens (Feldhusen, 2008). Congdon and Bolin (2005) recommend the study of objects traditionally considered kitsch in art classrooms.

They note that

what has been called “kitsch” is deeply rooted in issues related to aesthetics, gender, culture, class, economics, race and ethnicity, and politics; all of which are integral to the study of material and visual culture. Even if one thinks of it as “bad art,” its prevalence makes it relevant to art education curricula. (p. 208)

They discuss examples of kitsch as important sources of liberation, plurality, and resistance and use the placement of objects at sites to memorialize such events as the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Towers. A study by Woywod (2015) even suggests that art teachers critically examine the material culture of their own art classrooms to understand the intended, or unintended, values and ideas that they convey.

Research studies provide additional examples and implications for the myriad of ways that everyday experiences and objects can be utilized in art education curricula. Vallance (2009) assigned 60 students in two sections of an undergraduate education course the task of describing and interpreting downtown shop windows in a way that was comparable to art critiques of still-life paintings. Although Vallance did not describe any systematic analysis that was used in this study, she suggested that anecdotal evidence indicated these art-novice students felt more

inclined to notice art qualities in everyday circumstances following these repeated, semester-long assignments. Vallance provided evidence of student proficiency in describing shop window displays using art-appropriate language and creating “defensible” interpretations of these arrangements (p. 47). Although this study drew attention to familiar everyday sites, it was primarily used as a resource for formal artistic interpretations and descriptions.

In contrast to the formal artistic influences applied to shop window displays in the study by Vallance (2009), Burkhart (2006) investigated everyday materials as sources for investigations of cultural and historical meaning. Using two sixth grade classes, Burkhart created a two-day lesson that focused on bicycles. Following lessons that introduced students to historical circumstances and sociocultural narratives related to bicycles, students designed their own bicycles using drawing. Although this lesson was limited in duration, a questionnaire given to students following the lesson indicated that half the students liked learning about the history of people through objects and the other half enjoyed learning in general about the objects themselves.

I outline these shifts in art and art education and the ideologies that inform these shifts to illustrate the ways educators in the field continue to reconsider the content teaching and goals for learning in and through art. Informed by postmodern ideologies, art educators seek ways to reconnect art and art education experiences to the circumstances of people’s everyday lives and to provide students with the tools to recognize and critically engage with the visual and material cultures that shape their knowledge, behaviors, and identities. These shifts in art education helped shape the vernacular art curriculum that was designed as an intervention in the current study. In the following sections, I provide a description of each component of the vernacular art curriculum, including relevant research.

Vernacular Art Curriculum

For this study, the researcher designed a vernacular art curriculum that reflected postmodern shifts in art education in response to personal observations of adults who identify as non-artists. It was observed that adults often held narrow conceptions of art and artists that seemed to undermine their own ability to see themselves as consumers and producers of art. As the researcher, I created a vernacular art curriculum that included a focus on making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments. Each of these curricular components was meant to help adults develop a deeper understanding of art as both artifacts and behaviors that are not separate from but are integral to everyday life to potentially improve adult identities as artists by disrupting previous conceptions of art and artists inherited from modernist frameworks. In the following sections, I provide detailed information regarding each component of the vernacular art curriculum.

Making Special

In this study, I note that modernist frameworks have distanced experiences of art from everyday life. As art education continues to be influenced by postmodern ideologies, it is important to reflect on alternatives to modernist definitions of art and instead enable adults who identify as non-artists to consider the role of art in their everyday lives. Dissanayake (1988) addressed the role of art in human life from a biobehavioral perspective. In her work, Dissanayake does not deny the influence of culture on art, but posits that the origin of art was a pre-cultural, or biological, agent that was an important part of our evolutionary past. This perspective casts art as an important and unique human behavior, one that predates, but also includes, our modern Western-centric understandings of art.

The human behavior that Dissanayake (1988, 1995) identified as a common denominator of art is making special. “Making special implies intent or deliberateness” (p. 92). In this way, circumstances of reality are elevated or given significance or import and made distinct from practical life. Dissanayake (1980) noted that another way to think about making special as an artistic behavior is

to recognize that *meaning is aesthetic*. Ordinary day-to-day life is formless, incoherent. When shaped and embellished or transformed as in ritual or play or art it takes on a greater or more significant reality so that when we find something to have coherence it seems to be “aesthetic.” (p. 404, emphasis in original)

Making special does not necessitate any cultural understanding of what it means to make good art (Dissanayake, 1980). Dissanayake (1988) explained, “Positing a human need or tendency to make things special allows us to explain why many people are able to live quite contentedly without *good art*” (p. 97, emphasis in original). By providing a way of thinking about art as a behavior of making special, Dissanayake invites renewed considerations of how adults who identify as non-artists might begin to envision artistic behaviors in their everyday lives.

Dissanayake (1995) identified the human behavior of ritual as closely related to the behavior of making special and suggests that perhaps each influenced the evolution of the other. For example, the ritualized act of making special is found in behaviors related to memory and loss. Sloane’s (2005) study considered the public and private ways people memorialize loss. He identified a more recent shift in displays of mourning, which he stated are more “participatory, democratic, and individualistic” (p. 64) and resist modernist influences to simplify and rationalize expressions of mourning. Sloane identified roadside and spontaneous memorials, where flowers, signs, objects and photographs might be displayed, as immediate expressions near sites of public or private mourning.

Contemporary art educators have also considered how connections between artmaking behaviors and ritual celebrations can be used to create relevant art curricula. In an introductory course for pre-service art educators, Gradle (2006) directed pre-service art teachers to create a multi-media artifact that also incorporated “artful rituals” used to elaborate on important everyday memories like getting new glasses, celebrating a pet’s birthday, and family relationships (p. 16). The artifacts themselves were meant to invite new rituals around everyday events that pre-service teachers might imagine as relevant to children’s worldviews. Smith-Shank (2002) advocates for the inclusion of traditional and contemporary community celebrations within art education practices. While recognizing some art teachers prefer to “play it safe” and avoid addressing cultural celebrations in schools, Smith-Shank argues, “education sites are never ideologically or politically innocent” (p. 63). She notes that community celebrations are signifiers of shared experiences and identities and can be important sites of critical inquiry. Celebrations and rituals represent relevant points of entry for students and adults alike, particularly when explored through the lens of art as a behavior of making special.

During the implementation of the vernacular art curriculum, I provided examples of making special in everyday life related to the home, yard spaces, or other community places, assuming these would be relevant sites for adult participants to consider. Additional studies have been conducted related to how humans construct meaning in these kinds of everyday spaces. Chang (2011) studied decorating practices in the home as they influenced the cultural identity of adolescents living in mixed heritage families. In this visual ethnographic multi-case study of eight, Asian mixed families, Chang found that these everyday visual culture practices in the home created informal learning situations for adolescents to construct and critically navigate their hybrid cultural identities. Interestingly, Chang also found that adult participants initially felt

their home decorating practices did not influence understanding of the cultural identity of their adolescent children. However, Chang stated that “after reporting the associated stories or events of their highly valued home visual culture items, the parents of these mixed heritage adolescents realized that they subconsciously or intuitively chose specific ethnic visual items to decorate their homes” as didactic reminders of their children’s ethnic culture (p. 221).

Lai and Ball (2002) conducted an ethnographic survey of yard spaces in a town in upstate New York to gain insights from particular placed-based artistic practices evident in this area. While the prevalence of yard art in this town was very noticeable to the researchers, interviews with residents revealed that they had not given it much thought or felt the abundance of yard art was “nothing special” (p. 520). In this way, these places were taken for granted as important sites where behaviors of art and making special were practiced. The intersections of individual and community aesthetic behaviors were also reflected in Jacob’s (1992) study of yard ornamentation in two suburban communities in New York. Contrary to popular sentiments that homogenous environments, like suburban spaces, influence conformity, Jacob found much resistance through personalized yard spaces. Through 15 semi-structured interviews, Jacob found that yard ornamentation was not just reflective of consumer impulses, but was most significant for representing personal identity or narratives. Additional studies identified the decoration of yard spaces as seasonal ways of making special (Jacob, 1992; Sheehy, 1998) and as expressions of cultural identity and unity (Kent & Gandia-Ojeda, 1999; Manger, 2000; Sciorra, 1989).

While these studies identify practices of making special in relation to significant places, they do not seek in-depth understanding from the participants of whether they see these as artistic practices or how they influence their identities as artists. I suggest that these sites and behaviors of making special are important for adults who identify as non-artists as they broaden

their definitions of art and artists and learn to consider how artistic behaviors, or making special, may already be integral to their everyday lives.

Everyday Aesthetics

The study of aesthetics has predominantly focused on the classification and appreciation of objects deemed in some way special or separate from everyday life and has often been aligned synonymously with a philosophy of art in its most modern and Western sense (Haapala, 2005; Light & Smith, 2005; Mandoki, 2007; Saito, 2007). Considered broadly, aesthetics refers to our sensory experiences of objects, environments and events and perceived qualities and judgments of such phenomenon. Saito notes that this realm of the aesthetic includes “any reactions we form toward the sensuous and/or design qualities of any object, phenomenon, or activity” (p. 9). More recent shifts in the study of aesthetics have broadened the scope of objects and phenomenon worthy of consideration for the aesthetic experiences they produce to include those embedded in the routines and behaviors of everyday life.

In art education, a growing interest in the study of aesthetic experiences is taking place not only in response to objects designated as fine art, but within the realm of our everyday lives (Bolin & Blandy, 2003; Duncum, 1999, 2002; Lai & Ball, 2002). Examples of everyday aesthetic focus may include the home, garden, workplace, shopping centers, amusement sites or parks (Duncum, 2002; Leddy, 2005), popular media like television, fast-food venues, and community festivals (Duncum, 2002). Everyday aesthetic experiences are prolific and familiar and, as stated by Duncum (1999), “more significant than experiences of high art in forming and informing one’s identity and view of the world beyond personal experience” (p. 296). These ubiquitous everyday sites are important because they are often taken for granted or not

understood as profound shaping devices in our lives (Saito, 2007). Explorations of everyday aesthetic investigations in art education classrooms and research have included examining the functional, social, symbolic and design qualities of everyday objects like chairs, cars, and bridges (Vande Zande, 2007); critically looking at teenage bedrooms as sites for identity formation, with special attention toward the influence of popular and consumer cultures on these environments (Grauer, 2003), and for engaging students in developing an awareness of the aesthetics of everyday, urban spaces, including ethical, cultural, and socio-economic implications, to help cultivate civic engagement related to built environments (Vianna, 2002).

Three dissertation studies that specifically focused on everyday aesthetics were found in a search of relevant research. While each study was conducted in different academic fields: art education (Tzou, 2009), psychology (Palega, 2011), and philosophy (Melchionne, 1995), they all noted traditional emphasis in aesthetic theory on fine arts and a need for more attention to everyday aesthetic experiences. Melchionne's study was a philosophical study, but for the purposes of this literature review, I provide details of the two studies that specifically utilized empirical research.

Tzou (2009) conducted a multi-case interpretive study of four participants who had adopted Chinese-style clothing in their daily life. The purpose of this study was to determine whether aesthetic experience played a role in participants' clothing choices and what meaning or value was gained from these experiences. The researcher found that while aesthetic experiences related to clothing choices were not initially considered, interviews and observations revealed that experiences in daily life played an important role in the participants' aesthetic systems. Although this study was not meant to be educational, the researcher noted that through this process participants "seemed to realize that through their daily consumption of commodity

goods, they actively sought aesthetic satisfaction and enrichment” (p. 186). Although the researcher cautions against watering down everyday aesthetic experiences by trying to examine too much, Tzou’s study does have implications for the educational value of asking students to reflect on the aesthetics of their everyday experiences.

Using in-depth interviews, Palega (2011) conducted a phenomenological study to determine how participants narrated their own everyday aesthetic experiences. Palega emphasized that most scholarship on aesthetics is devoted to places meant to provide heightened aesthetic experiences, like art museums or galleries. The 11 participants all worked at a botanical garden in New York City. Given the researcher’s field of study in environmental psychology, the researcher felt this was an appropriate site since it emphasized environmental education and would most likely have an influence on the participant’s everyday aesthetic experiences. However, this site choice contradicted the goals of the study, since one might consider a botanical garden, even as a workplace, similar to a museum setting in which heightened aesthetic experiences are expected. Palega found that participants were engaged by multiple layers of everyday aesthetic experiences that included personal, shared, and public levels. Like Tzou (2009), findings from Palega’s study suggest that participants found everyday aesthetic experiences quite valuable and felt they contributed to quality of life.

These examples and research findings support the importance of postmodern shifts toward situating aesthetic experiences in everyday life and the inclusion of everyday aesthetics in art education curricula. As part of a vernacular art curriculum, thinking about everyday aesthetics provided an opportunity for these adults to make taken-for-granted artistic behaviors in everyday life visible.

Vernacular Art Environments

The third component of the vernacular art curriculum created for this study included vernacular art environments. While these creations and their makers are certainly not homogenous, vernacular art environments were utilized for this study because of their connection to everyday sites, like the home, and often the non-academic ways these artists enter into artmaking practices. A brief overview of vernacular art environments is provided below. A more thorough overview of specific artists and vernacular art environments that were shared with participants is discussed in Chapter 3.

Serious consideration of the home as an everyday environment where meaningful artistic interactions occur can be best introduced through unique exemplars. Vernacular environment artists transform a specific place, often the home, by creating art that significantly changes the way a person might experience that place. Unlike a framed painting that might be moved from place to place without significantly altering the intention of the artwork, each object created in a vernacular art environment exists as part of a specific place and in turn redefines that environment. The artists' reasons and intentions for creating these altered places vary widely; however, what is similar is that "each [environment builder] developed a symbiotic relationship with her or his home ground in response to a unique and heartfelt vision" (Umberger, 2007, p. 49). For example, these artist-built environments have consisted of concrete or welded metal sculptures and tableaus that overwhelm the area of a yard and a home in which the surfaces of all the walls and ceilings were covered with elaborate patterns of glitter. For many of these artists, the impulse to re-envision their everyday world is inspired by transitions in life, such as retirement or illness, ideas about healing and the afterlife, sharing a didactic message, or entertainment and the opportunity to connect with onlookers. For others, the impulse to create

appears more mundane but the creation of something that starts out small is such a pleasurable experience that it inspires the impulse to create more or to simply pass time. Regardless of the medium or the motivation, the artists use their work to manipulate and bring new meaning to their lived-in environments.

Postmodern considerations of art have inspired renewed interest in vernacular works of art in general, including vernacular art environments. Numerous resources provide art historical or biographical perspectives and information about vernacular art environments and their makers (Bandyopadhyay & Jackson, 2007; Beardsley, 1995; Goldstone & Goldstone, 1997; Krug & Parker, 2005; Kupsch, 2008; Manger, 2008; Manley & Sloan, 1997; Nokes, 2007; Umberger, 2007). Given the site-specific nature of vernacular art environments, additional resources present information about these works from a tourist perspective or as potential road trip options alongside other roadside novelties (John Michael Kohler Arts Center; Kirby, Smith, & Wilkins; Mason, Murphy & Mayberger, 2002).

A number of art educators have advocated for the study of folk, self-taught, vernacular and everyday artists or makers because they invite discussions that challenge and broaden traditional definitions of art and artists, making art more accessible and empowering students as makers themselves, and help situate art within local community and cultural contexts (Congdon & Blandy, 1999; Delacruz, 1999, 2000; Heise, 2010; Muri, 1999; Neperud & Krug, 1995; Ulbricht, 2000). Several articles also advocate for the inclusion of vernacular art environments in art education curricula (Buffington, 2007; Krug & Parker, 2009; Rex & Woywod, 2014). Additional research related to how vernacular art environments influence student and adult understanding of art and artists in relation to broader cultural and community contexts is warranted.

For the field of art education, vernacular art environments provide a unique and underutilized focus for examining art in the context of daily life. Congdon (2004) stated that “many of us identify ourselves by the places we live. People who have lived in the same area for a long time often alter their spaces, making the environment more and more their own” (p. 25). In this study, adults who identify as non-artists were introduced to the work of vernacular environment artists as a way to inspire serious consideration of their own everyday places as sites in which they may already be acting on artistic behaviors of making special.

Adult Experiences with Art and Art Education

In this study I posit that the experiences of adults who identify as non-artists can provide the field with a deeper understanding of ways that art education can create authentic, lifelong practices of art in everyday life. Given the changing demographics in the United States to a growing population of aging adults, significant interest and research has been devoted to addressing this shift. This includes a growing interest in understanding the role art can play in the health and wellbeing of adults. Although a majority of research within the field of art education has focused on K-12 settings and art as it relates to children, there is also an increasing interest in lifelong applications of art education experiences, including those that extend beyond formal school settings. In the following sections, I review relevant literature and research related to adult experiences of art including experiences with art objects and attitudes toward art as well as health, wellbeing, and aging.

Adult Experiences with Art Objects

For adults, viewing art objects presents both challenges and benefits. As described previously, museum personnel have taken special interest in examining how adults interact with art objects in museum settings, particularly noting how feelings of dissonance can inhibit adult interactions with art and their ability to construct new knowledge in relation to art (Soren's, 2000; Weltzl-Fairchild, Dufresne-Tassé, & Dubé, 1997). In response, art museum researchers have invested efforts in understanding how they can make museum engagement with art enticing, accessible, relevant, and interactive (Levinson, et al., 2008; Rubin, 2001). Interest in adult experiences of art also extends beyond the museum setting. In one study, art was used to create aesthetic experiences to enhance reading and writing acquisition of a new language for immigrant adults by encouraging shared meanings and contextual knowledge (Azevedo & Gonçalves, 2012).

For over 30 years, Housen (2001) has done extensive research on how people experience art and how these aesthetic skills are developed and might be fostered and transferred as usable skills in other subject areas. Housen used open-ended interviews with participants, including adults, to define five stages of aesthetic development. Housen and her colleagues have since developed Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a curriculum that helps novice art viewers move more comfortably through stages of aesthetic development (Housen, 2007; Housen & Yenawine, 2000). Although Housen's work has been extended to adults (Egenberger & Yenawine, 1997), most of her current research focuses on its effects on children in schools (Housen, 2001-2002).

Adult Attitudes Toward Art

Adult attitudes toward art have been given some attention in research studies. Luehrman (1999, 2002) conducted a survey of 225 school principals to identify their influential art experiences and current attitudes toward art. Through surveys and interviews, participants described art experiences that shaped their attitudes toward art including crystallizing experiences (Gardner, 1983), like museum visits or working with unique mediums, and more extended experiences with art, like family influences and art classes. While no causal links could be established from the research, Gardner notes it is important to consider lifelong implications of art experiences, particularly as they may benefit or undermine art education advocacy efforts.

In a multi-year study, Zakaras and Lowell (2008) sought to understand how learning in the arts (including performance and visual arts) cultivates demand for the arts and how demand for the arts impacts nonprofit cultural sectors. The study was conducted by analyzing theoretical and empirical research related to arts education, youth and adult arts programming, national data related to state arts agencies, and interviews with arts education and industry experts.

Researchers for this study found that education level in general and arts learning in particular strongly correlated with arts involvement as adults. They also concluded that arts learning and early exposure to arts in childhood are strong indicators of adult involvement in the arts. Both studies suggest that early arts experiences may impact lifelong attitudes toward and practices in art.

Aging Adults, Art, Health and Wellbeing

A number of empirical studies with adults and aging adults reported on work related to therapeutic or quality-of-life issues and goals that can be fostered by art (Kennett, 2000; Reynolds, 2000, 2002). Additional scholars from within and outside the field of art education have focused on ways art can be used by older adults to improve quality of life by visualizing significant memories (Smith-Shank & Schwiebert, 2000), creating traditional art to overcome the challenges of depression experienced by Filipino elders in institutionalized care facilities (de Guzman, et al., 2011), and exploring and enlivening life experiences related to aging and illness by responding to art in group settings (Barrett, 2011). Two additional qualitative studies asked midlife adult women to self-report on the benefits of creating crafts, specifically jewelry making and quilting (Adams-Price & Steinman, 2007; Piercy & Cheek, 2004). In both studies participants reported benefits to their wellbeing related to feelings of generativity, social connection, stress relief and increased self-esteem. Engagement with visual art and the arts more broadly by adults and older adults has also generated much interest from gerontology and health professions, adding to a body of knowledge about the benefits of the arts and creativity for older adults (Cohen, 2006, 2007; Fisher & Specht, 1999; Fraser, et al., 2015; Greer, Fleuriet, & Cantu, 2012; Reynolds, 2010).

In related work on the benefits of art for aging adults, researchers and museum educators have explored ways to utilize art to address issues of wellbeing for persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia-related diseases as well as their caregivers (Flatt, et al., 2015; Rosenberg, 2009). Basting's (1998, 2001, 2004, 2011) work with persons with Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases has substantially contributed to developing strategies that successfully engage this adult population in creative storytelling processes, often using visual images for inspiration.

Art educators have advocated for research and quality art experiences that attend to the unique cognitive, physical, and psychological needs and assets of adults and older adults (Barret, 1993; Hoffman, Greenberg, & Fitzer, 1980; Jones, 1980; Lawton & La Porte, 2013). The previous studies extend understanding of adult development of cognitive skills related to viewing art. They also expand understanding of art's potential to benefit therapeutic or psychological conditions for aging adults. However, this overview of adult-related studies is meant to highlight the need to examine the experiences of adults who identify as non-artists to better inform the field of art education about how adults situate authentic artistic practices in their everyday lives and how art curricula might improve connections to these practices for adults.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, adult participants were instructed using a vernacular art curriculum. The goal of this study was to determine if this kind of curricular intervention affected adult participants' attitudes toward art and identities as artists. The theoretical frameworks used for analysis include adult transformative learning theory and situated learning theory, each of which represents facets of a democratic education. In the following sections, I provide a brief overview of democratic education in relation to art and more detailed descriptions of situated learning and adult transformative learning theory.

Democratic Education

The influential philosopher and educational reformer, John Dewey, advocated for the role of education in a democratic society. Democracy is not an end goal, but an ongoing process that must be supported and nurtured by developing democratic values and capacities of its citizenry

through education. Dewey (1944) stated that “a curriculum that acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest” (p. 192).

Educators suggest that art is a powerful means for promoting democratic values and engagement (Blandy, 2011; Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Gude, 2009; Freedman, 2003; Stewart, 2012). When carefully considered, learning through art cultivates heightened and critical awareness that lends itself to expressing and understanding personal identities, agency, and the capacity for change. Gude states that “the artistically engaged individual couples intense awareness with a strong sense of agency. This belief in the average person’s creative power lies at the root of any democratic society” (p. 7). Educating for democratic goals through art requires that educators consider both the content and forms of their teaching that make learning relevant to lived experiences, cultivate critical thinking about personal beliefs and unexamined ideologies, and highlight pluralistic points of view and forms of knowledge. In the following sections, I introduce two learning theories that frame this study and ways educators can provide access to art and cultivate critical dispositions for adults. Adult transformative learning theory provides insight into the ways in which adults critically examine their own belief systems to help guide future action. Situated learning elevates the importance of knowledge that is gained through interactions with everyday contexts and communities.

Adult Transformative Learning Theory

Adult transformative learning requires not only the accumulation of new knowledge and skills, defined by Kegan (2000) as “informative learning” (p. 49), but a repositioning of

underlying assumptions and beliefs that affect adults' perspectives on their world. Mezirow (2000) explained,

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (pp. 7-8)

Through critical reflection, adults can examine ideologies that have informed how they think about art and their identities as producers and consumers of art.

Brookfield (2000) stated, "Ideologies are manifest in language, social habits, and cultural forms. They legitimize certain political structures and educational practices so that these come to be accepted as representing the normal order of things" (p. 129). Becoming cognizant of these assumptions or long held belief systems is a difficult task (Cranton, 2006). Belenky and Stanton (2000) noted, "Most adults simply have not developed their capacities for articulating and criticizing the underlying assumptions of their own thinking, nor do they analyze the thinking of others in these ways" (p. 73). In transformative learning situations, educators create and maintain the conditions necessary for transformation to occur. In these learning situations, it is necessary for educators to foster group dialogue, create environments that protect the learning process, and diffuse power relationships within groups, including those between teacher and student (Cranton; Mezirow, 2000). Transformative learning can lead adult participants toward greater autonomy and a sense of empowerment. This greater autonomy is not an end in itself but a means for continual learning. Mezirow explained,

Autonomy here does not represent a fixed goal to be achieved or an arbitrary norm, but a movement in the process of transformative learning toward greater understanding of the assumptions supporting one's concepts, beliefs, and feelings and those of others. (p. 29)

Ultimately, transformative learning allows participants to examine and alter their self-concepts (Cranton).

This study sought to create the conditions necessary for adult participants to reflect on their experiences in art, evaluate their underlying assumptions about art, and transform how they identify as artists. In this study, adult participants were asked to reconsider conditions (i.e., schooling, informal classes, media, museums or other public institutions) that have informed how they define art and their ability to produce art. A vernacular art curriculum was introduced to adult participants to help them critically evaluate their underlying assumptions about art and potentially transform how they identify as artists.

Situated Learning

Situated learning theory seeks to reposition learning within authentic contexts and cultures through action within a social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Kirshner and Whitson (1997) stated,

One source of inspiration for situated cognitionists is the robust expertise that ordinary folks regularly display in ordinary situations. Against the backdrop of an educational enterprise that too often fails to engage students and develop their competencies are the multifaceted ways in which people succeed and learn in all sorts of out-of-school settings. (p. 4)

For adults who identify as non-artists this means reexamining the ways that art and art knowledge are produced and learned in their everyday lives.

Hendricks (2001) stated that “traditional schooling, then, is based on the idea that children can be taught concepts outside of their specific uses to increase general learning so that broad transfer to many situations can occur” (pp. 302-303). While this type of learning may appear unproblematic for young people who become accustomed to producing whatever is

required within a school context, it becomes problematic when adults cannot see how art is integral to their everyday lives outside a school context. In addition, by abstracting knowledge about art production into discrete skills and information, children grow into adults who feel they are not capable of producing or interpreting art outside of a school context. Lave (1997) explained that

it seems probable that learners whose understanding is deeply circumscribed and diminished through processes of explicit and intense ‘knowledge transmission’ are likely to arrive at an understanding of themselves as ‘not understanding’ or as ‘bad at what they are doing’ even when they are not bad at it. (p. 34)

In this study, situated learning theory was used as a lens through which educational experiences were created that engaged adults in recognizing a broad range of authentic artmaking practices in their everyday life.

Art has often been taught through discrete skills and practices that ignore the integral role of art in everyday life. In 1976, Efland discussed what he described as a school art style, which he stated, “does not seem to be a pedagogical tool for teaching children about art in the world beyond the school, though this is its manifest function, to be sure” (p. 39). Within schools, contemporary shifts in art education continue to examine the pedagogical importance of creating connections between sociocultural meanings and art learning in schools. Some scholars in the field of art education have also begun looking at the ways children initiate and sustain their own art learning and art production outside of school contexts in what Lave and Wenger (1993) would describe as “communities of practice” (p. 98).

Quay (2003) noted that “democracy is fundamental to situated learning because learning, leading to full participation, is dependent upon access” (p. 109). Lave and Wenger (1993) also acknowledge that access is an important component of situated learning and communities of practice may actually inhibit full participation by newcomers. However, I suggest that newcomer

perspectives or assumptions about those communities of practice may also inhibit participation within these communities. By shifting participants' understanding of what defines a community of practice in a so-called art world, adults who identify as non-artists may more readily enter into those communities of practice, or participants may recognize their own experiences as relevant ways of learning and knowing within an artistic community of practice they were formerly unable to identify. For example, an artistic community of practice may consist of trained artists who frequently show work in gallery settings or, with knowledge gained from a vernacular art curriculum, may be the ways in which neighborhood communities alter the everyday aesthetics of their local environments.

Examples of research related to communities of practice in art include networks of fan-based artists who create in response to favored popular media (Manifold, 2009) and other youth art sub-cultures (Freedman, Heijnen, Kallio-Tavin, & Karpati, 2012). My interest was to understand if and how adults identify and participate in communities of artistic practice in their everyday lives beyond school contexts. I feel it is important to consider whether prior art education experiences have created barriers for adults who identify as non-artists to situate that learning in their everyday practices, rituals, and celebrations. In this study, I initiated curriculum and instruction to situate art learning in the everyday practices of adults who identify as non-artists and might not recognize the relevance of art outside of school contexts.

Summary of Relevant Literature

Through this literature review, I have discussed transitions in the ways in which art, aesthetics, and art education have been considered over time. Contemporary art education practices reflect ideological shifts about art and aesthetics that situate and validate art making

and learning in relation to a much broader range of practices. These include greater emphasis on popular culture and modes of artmaking that are closely tied to everyday routines and life. While this shift has most prominently been considered within the art education field as it applies K-12 settings and curricula, it may also have much broader implications for adults and the impact of cultivating lifelong engagements with art.

Building on postmodern shifts in art education, a vernacular art curriculum was developed particularly for adult participants. In this chapter, I reviewed literature related to the three components of the vernacular art curriculum: making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments. This curriculum drew on contemporary theories of art education and contrasted with traditional art education practices (within schools and museums) that have focused narrowly on fine art, expert knowledge, and an emphasis on discrete and rote forms of artmaking. It was assumed that traditional, modernist art education practices and theories of art and aesthetics would have been most influential to these adults, and particularly to adult participants who identify as non-artists.

Given the growing proportion of aging adults in the United States, there has been significant interest in adult participation in the arts. A growing body of research has been done, particularly in health related fields, about the benefits of the arts to the health and wellbeing of aging adults. Additional research related to adults and arts has examined adult preferences, perceived benefits, and learning in informal settings like art museums, and non-formal practices, like quilting groups. There has also been interest in how art experiences cultivate adult support and participation in art and cultural events. This study acknowledges that considerations of adult attitudes toward art and their own artistic identities are important and should be examined carefully by the field of art education. This study extends research related to adults and art by

seeking to understand how art education experiences impact adults and how an art curricular intervention that builds upon contemporary, postmodern considerations can create greater access to art for adults.

The goals of this study were ultimately to democratize art learning for adults. The literature review for this study included a brief overview of democratic education and its relationship to contemporary art education practices. A review of literature then described two learning theories that each reflect tenets of democratic education and are particularly relevant to adults and the goals of this study: adult transformative learning theory and situated learning. In particular, these learning theories are rooted in the notion that education should provide learners with tools for critically reflection and that learning should be situated within everyday practices and communities.

In Chapter 3, I provide detailed information related to the research methodology and methods used for this study. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I provide detailed descriptions of the pre-class and post-class data, respectively. Chapter 6 provides an interpretation of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Contemporary art education practices should engage students in understanding the integral relationship between art and everyday life (Bolin & Blandy, 2003; Duncum 1999, 2002; Freedman, 2003; Lai & Ball, 2002; Rex & Woywod, 2014). People use artistic behaviors to create meaning and elaborate on everyday experiences and environments (Dissanayake, 1995). Theories about contemporary art education practices problematize art curricula that focus disproportionately on Western frameworks for fine art and discrete technical and formal skills disconnected from authentic artmaking experiences (Efland, 1976; Gude, 2004). Privileging this type of learning in art can undermine the understanding of art as a rich, meaning making endeavor and an integral part of everyday life.

The purpose of this phenomenological multi-case study was to examine how a vernacular art curriculum, including the content areas of making special, everyday aesthetics and vernacular art environments, might reframe and democratize understanding of art as an important part of everyday life and influence the artistic identity of adults who identify as non-artists. In turn, this might contribute to shifting goals and practices within the field of art education that include lifelong engagement with art and extend connections to art in everyday life. In addition, action research was used as a methodology for the researcher to reflect on, re-shape, and examine new

knowledge that emerged from teaching a vernacular art curriculum. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. What is the impact of a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge on adults' perceptions of art and identities as artists?
 - a. In what ways do adults' prior formal and informal art education experiences shape their perspectives of art and identities as artists?
 - b. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as making special?
 - c. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as everyday aesthetics?
 - d. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as vernacular art environments?
 - e. What new knowledge about teaching practice emerges when an instructor self-reflects on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum?

Overview of the Chapter

In Chapter 2, relevant literature was critically reviewed to frame this study within the context of current research related to contemporary and historical art education theories and practices, democratic education, adult transformational learning theory and situated learning. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology for the study. This discussion includes a rationale for using a qualitative approach and, specifically, for conducting a phenomenological multi-case study. The research design will be described, including an alignment model between the research design and the research questions that guide the study, description of the sites for the study,

overview of the research participants and sampling technique. A description of the vernacular art curriculum is also provided. This is followed by a detailed description of the data collection and analysis methods. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and a chapter summary.

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

The design for this study was based on qualitative approaches to research. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) stated, “Qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants” (pp. 7-8). Qualitative research in particular investigates how meaning is constructed by persons within the actions of everyday life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 2009). This kind of inquiry is informed by what Erickson described as the “*invisibility of everyday life*” (p. 121, emphasis in original). He contends that “we do not realize the patterns in our actions as we perform them” and it is through the reflective practice of the researcher that we “*make the familiar strange*” (p. 121, emphasis in original). Through systematic endeavors to observe and interpret actions in the world, qualitative researchers seek to render meaning visible.

In a qualitative research design, individual meanings are honored (Creswell, 2009) and interpreted to better understand how participants make sense of their experiences in the world (Merriam, 2009). To answer the research questions proposed in this study, an understanding of the point of view of participants have and any transformation they experienced as a result of the vernacular art curriculum were important. All participants’ experiences were complex and situated within their own unique sets of circumstances.

Phenomenology as Methodology

The particular qualitative design for this study was a phenomenological, multi-case study. According to Mertens (2010), phenomenological research “seeks the individual’s perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience” (p. 235). The phenomena examined in this study were the formal and informal educational experiences, both in the past and as part of the educational intervention in this study, that influenced the participants’ attitudes about art and their capacity to identify as artists or non-artists. The researcher assumed that participant identities as artists could in part be understood by examining the ways those participants’ attitudes about art had been shaped by prior and ongoing experiences with art. These experiences were bracketed alongside a vernacular art curriculum, and the results of the interactions that took place during the study were interpreted through their subjective understanding of and reflections on those experiences.

Collectively, the artwork and discussions generated by participants in this phenomenological multi-case study provided insights into the “essence of human experiences about a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2009, p.13). According to Thompson (2014),

Phenomenological studies begin in description and move through a reflective process in which the concrete particulars of the situation are documented, considered in their uniqueness and their connections, and finally described in a way that begins to make evident their existence as meaningful phenomena. (p. 84)

For this study, understanding how the participants’ lived experiences of art and art education had contributed to their identities was an important context that was described in detail and analyzed for patterns and relevant insights and as a way to frame transformations experienced as a result of the vernacular art curriculum.

Case Study

Case studies are relevant to research that seeks an in-depth explanation of a current phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). A case study relies on the researcher to determine that the object of their study is a specific, intrinsically, bounded system (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000). A case study was applicable to this research because a comprehensive understanding of specific experiences of particular groups of adults, collected from a variety of data sources, was necessary to address the proposed research questions and gain insight into the ways in which a carefully designed curricula might impact participants' self-described identify as artists.

There are strengths and weaknesses in conducting case study research. Most notably is that the assertions made in case studies are not generalizable to broader contexts and conditions. However, a qualitative case study that looks at particular phenomena within a specific case provides opportunities for researchers to make assertions about the meaning of lived experiences, particularly as they may illuminate broader sociocultural conditions (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Merriam (1998) noted, "Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (p. 41). These holistic accounts are particularly useful in applied fields of study, like education, in which a case can provide implications for improving practice (Merriam).

While case study findings are not generalizable, the specific insights provided by examining in-depth and complex responses by participants can provide relevant understanding of a phenomenon instructive to other educational contexts (Davenport & O'Connor, 2014). In this study, each class offered by the researcher represented a case. The class was offered and

replicated three separate times, forming three cases within one study. Yin (2009) encourages research designs that incorporate multi-case studies (instead of single-case studies) whenever feasible. A multi-case design is less vulnerable and provided the basis for more powerful conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of independent cases.

Action Research

Action research is a type of applied research in which the researcher seeks to improve practice within a particular setting through a process of systematic reflection (Hendricks, 2006; Klein, 2014). This type of research is especially conducive to educational settings where the goal is to improve practice. Action research often involves participants as part of the research process, where evaluations and reflections are constructed in conversation between participants and researchers. Action research is an emergent process in which new knowledge is achieved through cycles of planning, observation, reflecting and then acting upon a revised plan (Koshy, 2005).

In this study, a phenomenological, multi-case methodology was used to answer research questions related to changes in participants' attitudes about art and artistic identities as a result of experiencing a vernacular art curriculum. The final research question in this study sought to find what new knowledge was gained based on reflections and changing practices of the teacher/researcher as a result of conducting three successive classes of a vernacular art curriculum to adults in this multi-case study. For each class, changes were made to the teaching and curriculum as a result of reflecting on enacted curriculum. Evaluations of the classes were based on the researcher's observations and reflective memos, in-class discussions with participants, visual artifacts created as part of the class curriculum, and participant responses to a post-class survey. In Chapter 4, a thorough description of each class, researcher/teacher

reflections, and actions taken to improve successive classes and enact ways of teaching and curricula that further democratize art knowledge and processes for adult participants are presented.

Methods Overview

This research drew on data collected during classes for adults that included a vernacular art curriculum created by the researcher. The curriculum for this class was aimed at broadening participants' definitions of art so they might consider art as it occurs and is produced in their everyday lives. This class particularly focused on significant everyday places, like the home, as sites for artmaking in everyday life. Vernacular art environments were used as exemplars of primarily self-taught artists who chose to use objects and art production to engage with their own homes and everyday environments in meaningful ways.

Each class consisted of three sessions. During that time, the participants engaged in conversations about the three content areas for the class: making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments. Each class visited at least one vernacular art environment site. Prior to the class, the participants completed a pre-class survey related to their demographic information, art education experiences, and identity as an artist. This information was also gathered from participants during a pre-class interview. During the class, participants created a visual journal in which they reflected on what they learned during the class and how it connected to their own everyday experiences. Each of the participants shared and discussed his or her visual journal during the final session. Following the class, the participants completed a post-class survey related to any transformation in their attitudes about art and their identity as an

artist. Additional forms of data collection included video- and audio-taped class sessions and researcher field notes and reflections (see Figure 2.1).

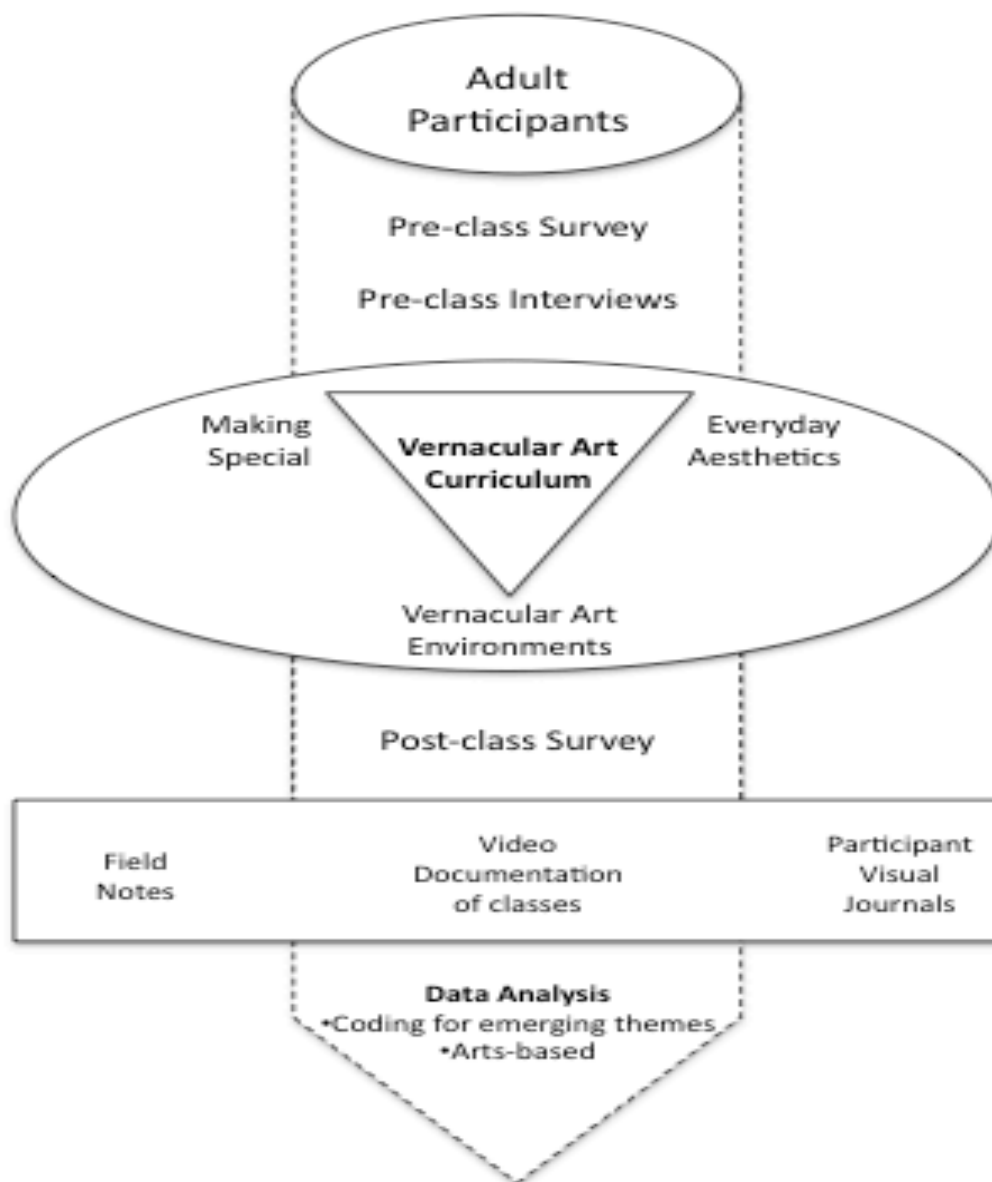


Figure 2.1. Visual model of methods and overview of the study.

Sites for the Study

The location of the classes used to collect data for this study were the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC), located in Sheboygan, Wisconsin; Nick Engelbert's, *Grandview*, located in Hollandale, Wisconsin; and a reserved meeting room in Spring Green, Wisconsin. JMKAC and *Grandview* were chosen as sites for this research because they are each guided by missions to protect, preserve, and educate about vernacular art environments. Originally, two separate classes were scheduled for JMKAC, but participants did not sign up for the second round of this class at that site. As a result, a third class was advertised at a new location where the researcher had access to resources through a relative who lived there.

Access to Sites for Research

An important consideration for qualitative research is the ability to gain access to sites for research (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Mertens, 2010). In Spring 2011, I interned in the education department at John Michael Kohler Arts Center to establish a working relationship as a potential site for research. JMKAC was chosen as a site for this research because it has established as a main part of its mission to collect, preserve, and develop educational programming connected to vernacular art environments (JMKAC, 2009). During initial communication with the Education Department Head and an Education Specialist at JMKAC, we outlined goals for my internship that would be beneficial to my general understanding of museum education in an arts center, contribute to goals and projects at JMKAC, and provide support or inroads for my own research. It was through education programming during this internship that I was also introduced to the Director and Head of

Education at Nick Engelbert's *Grandview*. This relationship provided an opportunity to conduct my study at a second site. Upon successful completion of my internship, I began inquiring about the possibility of offering a class for adults at JMKAC and *Grandview* as a venue for collecting data for this study. JMKAC and *Grandview* were ideal sites since a variety of arts classes are already offered on a consistent basis for all age groups, including adults, and the organizations maintain proper facilities for art instruction.

Site One: John Michael Kohler Arts Center

The mission of John Michael Kohler Arts Center is due in large part to the vision of the museum's long-time director, Ruth DeYoung Kohler, granddaughter of the museum's namesake, John Michael Kohler. While JMKAC exhibits contemporary and regional exhibitions of art, it was in the 1980s that DeYoung Kohler's collecting emphasis for JMKAC on bodies of works by self-taught or vernacular artists really took shape.

A tip from the Milwaukee Art Museum about a large collection of art work that was outside of their own collecting mission led DeYoung Kohler to the home of Eugene and Marie Von Bruenchenhein. DeYoung Kohler described her first visit as, "the most astonishing and moving experience in the arts that I have had" (Umberger, 2007, p. 17). The small home was stacked with hundreds of paintings, photographs, and real chicken bone sculptures created by Eugene. It was then that the Board and staff of JMKAC decided to begin collecting works of "interrelated components of art environments that could not be saved in situ so that, although displaced from their original setting, the visions of the artists could be understood and experienced" (Umberger, p. 19).

A description of JMKAC's permanent collection (Artist-Environment Builders, n.d.) states that today JMKAC holds

well over 10,000 individual works of art by 27 vernacular environment builders, the Arts Center is the world's leading center for research and presentation of this complex and unique work and is the only institution to make it the focus of its collecting effort.

During the time the class for this study was offered, JMKAC had utilized one full gallery to create a significant exhibition of the work of Emery Blagdon, a vernacular environment builder whose work was part of JMKAC's collection. JMKAC also maintains a number of works by artist-environment builders on permanent display on the grounds of the arts center. In addition, the arts center is located close to and maintains James Tellen's *Woodland Sculpture Garden*, a vernacular art environment that is cared for in its original location. I had established a prior relationship working in the education department of JMKAC and had negotiated offering the *Artist Within* as part of their selection of summer classes for adults.

Site Two: *Grandview*

Working closely with JMKAC, the Kohler Foundation was established in 1940 with the goal of "supporting education, arts, and preservation initiatives in Wisconsin" (Kohler Foundation, 2011). Currently, its primary focus is preserving artist environment sites or collecting entire bodies of artist works (primarily from self-taught artists), thus preserving the original scope or nature of the artist's work (T. Yoho, personal communication, April 27, 2011). The Kohler Foundation conserves the artwork and then gifts it to a county, municipality or museum so that it can be accessible to the public. Nick Engelbert's *Grandview* is one of the sites that was restored by the Kohler Foundation and then gifted back to community stewards of the site. Today the site is managed by the Pecatonica Educational Charitable Foundation, whose goal

is to promote and conduct art workshops in a building located onsite (Welcome to Grandview, n.d.). The workshop area is located next to the Engelbert home, which maintains photographs and historical information about *Grandview* and provides a space for artmaking and easy access to viewing the art environment.

In 1915, Austrian immigrants Nick and Kathryn Engelbert established their eight-and-a-half acre home and farm in Hollandale, Wisconsin. Overlooking the rolling Wisconsin pastures, Nick dubbed their new home “Grandview.” While Nick and Kathryn and their four children raised cattle, ran a dairy business, and maintained large gardens, they also made time for evening sessions of music and storytelling, in addition to transforming *Grandview* into a “three dimensional storybook” (Umburger, 2007). Over two decades, Nick produced approximately 40 large concrete sculptures and tableaus that dotted the yard in addition to elaborately embellishing the house in concrete and found stones and fabricating smaller yard creations, like planters and decorative fencing. These sculptures and tableaus portray an eclectic juxtaposition of interests from animals to sculptural tributes to area immigrants and patriotic nods to his home in the United States. Other sculptures are more fantasy-like, such as representations of Paul Bunyan, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and a Family Tree featuring playful monkeys.

The efforts of JMKAC, the Kohler Foundation, and stewards of individual vernacular art environments make these sites accessible and an increasingly visible part of Wisconsin’s identity. In 2008, a consortium of the stewards of eight vernacular art environments sites in Wisconsin was created to build awareness and appreciation of the sites (Welcome to Grandview). *Wandering Wisconsin* is an initiative that features maps of vernacular art environments in Wisconsin and online information about the sites (John Michael Kohler Arts Center). These ongoing efforts to educate audiences about vernacular art environments in

Wisconsin are indicative of my reasons for choosing JMKAC and *Grandview* as sites for my research.

Site Three: Spring Green

The site for the third class in this multi-case study was initiated due to cancellation of one of the two classes that was meant to be offered at John Michael Kohler Arts Center. This site was chosen due to convenience; a relative of the researcher lived in the area and could provide access to a workshop location and assistance with announcing the class to potential local participants. The town of Spring Green has a population of 1,585 residents (Sauk County Wisconsin, 2009) and is located in a rural area of central Wisconsin approximately 45 miles west of Madison, Wisconsin. Spring Green is located near the home of renowned architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. In addition, American Players Theater, nearby House on the Rock, the Wisconsin River, and area state parks make this a tourist destination and vibrant artist community (Town of Spring Green). Several of the participants in the class discussed the importance of art in this tight-knit community and all of the participants had attended or visited local art venues. The specific site for the class was located in a meeting room above a popular local tavern and restaurant free of charge. Unlike other sites, this venue was unrelated to vernacular art environments, but provided a casual and comfortable location for the participants. The site was also located within driving distance of *Grandview*, which was used as a field trip location and workshop space during the second session of the class.

Research Participants

Selection of Participants

To create a study that is manageable and effectively addresses the research questions, a sample, or unit of analysis, must be delineated from a larger pool of potential participants in an investigation. In qualitative research designs, it is most typical to use purposeful selection methods (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009) because it “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, p. 77). According to Dyson and Genishi (2005), “cases are constructed, not found, as researchers make decisions about how to angle their vision on places overflowing with potential stories of human experience” (p. 2). In my own study, the conceptual phenomenon that defined my case was that I was interested in working with adults who identify as non-artists. While advertisements for the classes encouraged non-artist participation, the actual makeup of each case included participants who identified as artists, non-artists and art teachers. Each of these groups offered unique insight about the study, and patterns within each of these groupings shaped the final analysis of the data.

In addition to the defining characteristics of a case, criteria must be established that further outline a specific real-life case. These may include time frame or location. Yin (2009) stated, “The desired case should be some real-life phenomenon, not an abstraction such as a topic, an argument, or even a hypothesis” (p. 32). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) differentiate these two strands of criteria as conceptual versus logistical. Conceptual criteria are embedded in the research questions, whereas logistical criteria are the conditions needed to feasibly conduct the study.

The logistical criterion that framed my specific case study was that the participants must be adults who signed up for and participated in one of three classes that were offered by the researcher. The advertised description for the classes being offered as part of this study read as follows:

The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places

Ages 18-Adult

Although open to all artistic abilities, this class is tailored for non-artists. Participants will explore definitions of art, focusing on art in everyday life. They will also learn about how self-taught artists have transformed their homes and yards into fascinating, personal artistic environments. This class will include hands-on art making and journaling, discussion of various artistic traditions, and a visit to a local artist's environment.

Advertising for this class was distributed in Spring 2012, according to the advertising schedule for summer classes at JMKAC and *Grandview*. The Facebook invitation for the third class was distributed in August 2012. The following table describes the dates, times and locations for each of the class sessions (see Table 3.1).

Participant Descriptions

This section provides a brief overview of the participants in the study. A detailed description of each participant is provided in Chapter 4. In addition, I list the degree to which the participants self-identified as artists prior to taking the class on an artistic identity rating scale given to each participant in a pre-class survey. The rating scale asked participants to rate how strongly they identified as artists on a scale of one to ten—ten representing very artistic, five representing somewhat artistic, and one representing non-artistic. As data were analyzed, participants were classified into three groups that were useful for analyzing emerging patterns among these participants and for the discussion of findings. These group classifications include

non-artists, art teachers, and artists. Participants were classified in one of these groups based on responses to the pre-class artistic identity rating scale and discussion during the pre-class interview and class. All participants are identified using pseudonyms.

Table 3.1

Overview of *The Artist Within* Classes Offered as Part of this Study

	Date	Time	Location	Fee
Class 1	Saturday, June 16	10:00am-1:00pm	JMKAC	\$60
	Saturday, June 23	10:00am-1:00pm	VAE site: James Tellen's Woodland Sculpture Garden	
	Saturday, June 30	10:00am-1:00pm	JMKAC	
Class 2	Saturday, July 14	9:00am-12:00pm	Grandview	Free
	Saturday, July 21	9:00am-7:00pm	VAE exhibition at JMKAC	
	Saturday, July 28	9:00am-12:00pm	Grandview	
Class 3	Tuesday, September 18	6:00pm-8:30pm	Spring Green, WI	\$10
	Sunday, September 23	9:00am-1:00pm	Grandview	
	Tuesday, September 25	6:00pm-8:30pm	Spring Green, WI	

Summary Description of Participants in the Study

Overall, there was a total of 15 participants in the study (three in Class 1, five in Class 2, and seven in Class 3). Of these 15 participants, nine identified as non-artists, three identified as artists, and three were classified as art teachers. An overview of the participants and how they identified as artists and were classified for this study is provided in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Overview of Participant Self-Identification as Artists and Classifications for the Study

Participant Pseudonyms	Pre-class Artistic Identity Rating (10=highly artistic, 5=somewhat artistic, 1=non-artistic)	Self-Identification Classification
Class 1		
Judy	5	Non-artist
Megan	8	Art Teacher
John	10	Artist
Class 2		
Anne	3 (maybe 4)	Non-artist
Caryn	3	Non-artist
Sam	8	Art Teacher
Sarah	10	Art Teacher
Erica	10	Artist
Class 3		
Katie	2	Non-artist
Jessica	3	Non-artist
Ellen	5	Non-artist
Becca	5	Non-artist
Mike	5	Non-artist
Andrew	6	Non-artist
Gretchen	8	Artist

Vernacular Art Curriculum

The educational curriculum is an important component of this study. The vernacular art curriculum is meant to provide the conditions for adult transformation and, as such, was carefully considered. Three components in this curriculum were introduced as a means to transform adult identities as artists and address the research questions of this study: 1) art as a behavior of making special, 2) everyday aesthetics, and 3) vernacular art environments. The overall structure for the class remained similar for all classes. During the first session, participants discussed their preconceived definitions of art. A PowerPoint presentation was used to introduce the three content areas for the class, including researcher examples and shared examples by participants. This was followed by an introduction to art materials, an overview of expectations and time to work on personal visual journals. During the second session, each class went on a field trip to experience a vernacular art environment in person. Vernacular art environments are created in response to a specific place and are also best experienced as an immersive site. The field trip was an important way to make more explicit connections between this artwork and the ways this art is created as an integral part of the artist's everyday life. The first and third classes were also provided time to work on their visual journals at the field trip sites. During the third session, each class was provided time to work on their visual journals. This was followed by a discussion of the works as a group and summary discussion of the ideas presented during the class. Detailed descriptions of the enacted curriculum for each class and specific changes that were made to subsequent classes in response to participant feedback and teacher reflections are provided in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

In this phenomenological multi-case study a variety of data collection methods were used to address the posed research questions. These methods included all four of what Creswell (2009) described as major types of data collection in qualitative studies: observations, interviews, documents, and audio and visual materials. Yin (2009) stated that “a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (pp. 114-115). Multiple sources of data create “*converging lines of inquiry*, a process of triangulation” that supports research findings through multiple avenues (p. 115, emphasis in original). Specific data collection methods included pre-class interviews and surveys and a post-class survey. Additional data collection included researcher field notes, video and audio documentation of class sessions, and elicited participant visual journals. Table 3.3 illustrates how data collection methods aligned with and were used to address the research questions. The following sections provide detailed information about the use of each of these data collection methods for this study.

Table 3.3

Alignment of Data Collection Methods with Research Questions for the Study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS What do you need to find out?	DATA TYPE What methods will you use to collect the information?
1. What is the impact of a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge on adults' perceptions of art and identities as artists?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-class survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included questions related to participant transformations of perceptions of art, artistic identity, and influence of vernacular art curriculum. • Participant-made visual journals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included personal connections made to the vernacular art curriculum. • Video documentation of class sessions
a) In what ways do adults' prior formal and informal art education experiences shape their perspectives of art and identities as artists?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-class survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included questions related to participant demographics, formal and informal art experiences from childhood through adulthood, and artistic identity rating scale. • Semi-structured pre-class interview (45-90 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included questions related to participant demographics, formal and informal art experiences from childhood through adulthood, artistic identity, and definitions of art and artists. • Video documentation of class sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants shared personal experiences of art and definitions of art during in-class discussions.
b) How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as <i>making special</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-class survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included questions related to participant transformations of perceptions of art, artistic identity, and influence of vernacular art curriculum. • Participant-made visual journals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included personal connections made to the vernacular art curriculum. • Video documentation of class sessions
c) How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as <i>everyday aesthetics</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-class survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included questions related to participant transformations of perceptions of art, artistic identity, and influence of vernacular art curriculum. • Participant-made visual journals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included personal connections made to the vernacular art curriculum. • Video documentation of class sessions
d) How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as <i>vernacular art environments</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-class survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included questions related to participant transformations of perceptions of art, artistic identity, and influence of vernacular art curriculum. • Participant-made visual journals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included personal connections made to the vernacular art curriculum. • Video documentation of class sessions
e) What new knowledge about teaching practice emerges when an instructor self-reflects on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-class survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Included a comments section that participants used to provide feedback on the class content and teaching. • Video documentation of class sessions • Researcher field notes in response to class and video documentation of class sessions

Pre-Class Survey

A survey was given to participants prior to the first session of the class (Appendix A). The purpose of this survey was to gather background information, including age, residence, and exposure to art education experiences in elementary, middle school, high school and college settings. Participants were also asked to describe any art experiences they had informally as a child or as an adult and any additional art activities they currently did as an adult. The survey also included an artist identity rating scale that was used by participants to self-identify how their perception as artists. The rating scale asked participants to circle the number that best described how they identify as artists. The scale provided the option of one through ten—one representing non-artistic, five representing somewhat artistic and ten representing very artistic. The rating scale provided a tool that was used with the interview data to establish the perceived artistic identity of the participant and provide a context for potential transformation as a result of the class.

Pre-Class Interview

A key component of this study was to determine if adults experience any transformation in how they identify as producers and consumers of art. It was also the goal to determine what informal and formal educational experiences contributed to adults' identities as artists. To understand adult transformations through participation in a vernacular art curriculum, pre-class interviews were used, in addition to pre-class surveys, to gain a deeper understanding of participant art experiences, attitudes toward art, and identity as artist prior to taking the class.

Pre-class interviews were semi-structured with a set of open-ended questions that were modified, omitted, or added to depending on the responses of each participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Robson, 2002) (Appendix B). The interview questions were designed to elicit in-depth responses from participants in relation to the following themes: introduction, personal identity as an artist, informal and formal art education experiences and personal definitions of art. The researcher conducted these 45-90 minute interviews with individual participants prior to the start of the class at locations chosen by each participant.

Post-Class Surveys

Post-class surveys were administered following the class to determine if participant understandings of art and their identities as producers and consumers of art were in any way transformed (Appendix C). Post-class surveys were administered at the end of the final class session. Most participants chose to take the surveys home to complete and mailed the completed survey to the researcher. Post-class survey questions were used to provide insight in relation to the research questions. Table 3.4 demonstrates how post-class survey questions were aligned with the research questions for the survey.

Table 3.4

Alignment of Post-Class Survey Questions with Research Questions for the Study.

Research Question	Interview Question
<p>1. What is the impact of a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge on adults' perceptions of art and identities as artists?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did any of your prior perceptions about art change during the course of this class? Please describe. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did any of your prior perceptions about the definition of art change during the course of this class? Please describe. b. Did any of your prior perceptions about who gets to judge and interpret art change during the course of this class? Please describe. c. Did any of your prior perceptions about where art is found or located change during the course of this class? Please describe. d. Did any of your prior perceptions about who makes art change during the course of this class? Please describe. • Did any of your perceptions of yourself as an artist change during the course of this class? Please describe. • Circle the number on the following scale that best describes how you identify yourself as an artist: <p style="text-align: center;">Very Artistic.....Somewhat Artistic.....Non-artistic</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1</p>
<p>a) In what ways do adults' prior formal and informal art education experiences shape their perspectives of art and identities as artists?</p>	
<p>b) How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as making special?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did learning about the idea of <i>making special</i> influence your identity as an artist? Please describe.
<p>c) How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as everyday aesthetics?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did learning about the idea of everyday aesthetics influence your identity as an artist? Please describe.
<p>d) How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as vernacular art environments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did learning about vernacular art environments influence your identity as an artist? Please describe.
<p>e) What new knowledge about teaching practice emerges when an instructor self-reflects on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything else you would like to express about your experiences as part of this class?

Observations and Field Notes

While interviews and surveys were important components of this study, direct observations provided additional insights about experiences participants might be reluctant or unable to express during interviews (Merriam, 2009). Robson (2002) explained that the “actions and behavior of people are central aspects in virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to describe, analyze and interpret what we have observed” (p. 310).

Observation takes into account the behaviors of participants and their environment and provides a useful source of data to support or triangulate other forms of evidence (Robson, 2002; Yin, 2009). In-class interactions among the participants allowed additional understanding about the curriculum and personal connections to be revealed and discussed. In-class discussions allowed interesting personal connections to surface, which were often included in participant journals as examples of their understanding of the curriculum. In addition, participant discussion during class sessions often provoked group empathy or support and questions that helped deepen or complicate conversations.

Field notes provide a “written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 118-119). A disadvantage of being a participant-observer is that it becomes impractical to take detailed notes at the time of observation. To minimize this challenge, class sessions were videotaped and later reviewed for additional information and opportunities to reflect through the use of researcher field notes. These notes and reflections were particularly helpful for analyzing my own teaching and making necessary changes in response to participant

feedback and my own observations regarding nuances like tone and energy level, perceived engagement, and resistance.

Participant Visual Journals and Artmaking

The role of images, both gathered and produced by participants, was central to this study. Through *The Artist Within*, participants were asked to both collect and create images that would provide insights about the ways they experienced and responded to the vernacular art curriculum. Grady (2004) noted, “The image is a unique form of data that stores complexly layered meanings in a format that is immediately retrievable” (p. 18). In particular, participants were each asked to create a visual journal that reflected their personal responses to vernacular art environments viewed and discussed during the class, provide evidence of personal acts of making special, document art in everyday places, and reflect on their identity as artists. A detailed outline of the visual journal assignment and the questions used to prompt reflection and art production are provided in Appendix D.

The everyday plays an integral role in shaping our values, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs (Duncum, 2002), yet its mundane familiarity makes it hard to respond to in any critically reflective way. Spencer (2011) stated that

imagery is explicit and specific, capturing the instance in action... photography is not untainted in realism, but sometimes it might present us with ways of seeing the world which rupture the familiarity of the everyday, insisting on a closer look at those things beneath the mundane surfaces. (p. 34)

In an interpretive study of the everyday experiences of working-class mothers and daughters, Mannay (2010) asked participants to use visual means, including photography, collage, and mapping, as processes in which the familiarity of their own lives could be “made

strange” (p. 101). By utilizing photography to perceive art in everyday life, which may have otherwise been unnoticed, participants may be able to enter into reflections that question representations of life as-it-is rather than merely document it (Allmark, 2011).

During *The Artist Within*, participants were asked to produce personal visual journals utilizing a variety of materials including found or produced images. Since this research relates so closely to the understanding of art in the context of everyday places, photographs were a particularly useful form of data collection. Participants were encouraged to photo document art they identified in everyday locations, including their own homes or everyday places. These photo documents were placed in participants’ visual journals and accompanied by written reflections. Participants were supplied with all the materials necessary to complete these projects, including a digital camera, access to a printer, a personal journal and wide range of media that could be used for collage and image production. A detailed description of materials provided for artmaking is included in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis

In qualitative studies, analyzing data is an ongoing process that begins before data collection is even completed. Robson (2009) outlined three areas pertinent to data analysis: 1) data reduction, 2) data display, and 3) drawing conclusions and verification. Qualitative methodologies can create overwhelming amounts of data. Data reduction begins with the delimitations determined by the design of the research and is continued through processes such as summaries, memo writing and first level coding. Data display required the researcher to organize data in a way that allowed her to see the kinds of information that were emerging. Conclusions were drawn from the data and verified to respond to the research questions. Robson

(2009) noted, “These three flows of activity, together with the activity of collecting the data itself, form a continuous iterative process” (p. 476). In this section, I outlined specific techniques for analyzing data. The major categories discussed in this section include transcription procedures, general coding procedures, and more specifically, coding procedures for visual data.

Transcription Procedures

Creating transcripts was the first step in organizing and familiarizing myself with the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Transcriptions were created in a word processing format for all of the interviews and videotaped class sessions. Time stamps were recorded in the transcriptions so the original data could be easily revisited, if needed. All transcriptions were conducted by the researcher.

Coding Procedures

The transcriptions were coded to reduce and display the data in a way that defined emerging patterns and allowed for conclusions to be determined. Saldaña (2009) stated that in qualitative inquiry a code “is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). All transcriptions of interviews, videotaped observations, and researcher field notes, participant statements related to their visual journals, and pre- and post-survey data were analyzed using what Saldaña (2009) described as first and second cycle coding methods. During first cycle coding, transcripts of data were used to generate coding categories that reflected descriptions of the context or setting, participant perspectives, or ways of thinking about situations and the curriculum, observed participant behaviors, significant events as

observed during the class sessions or described by the participants, and strategies for completing tasks, social interactions, teaching reflections, or research methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The goal during the first cycle of coding was to generate as many codes as necessary to describe and categorize discrete components of the data. Second cycle coding was used to further regroup initial codes with similar characteristics into themes or patterns. To ensure that data were coded in a justifiable way, two outside readers (professionals in the field of art education who were familiar with qualitative research methods) were used to check the assignment of codes to the data. Given that proper precautions were made to ensure that all phases of data collection and analysis were valid and accurate, this systematic approach was then used to draw conclusions related to the research questions.

Coding categories were developed from the initial coding cycle to discuss and draw conclusions related to the research questions. These broader coding categories included demographic information, pre-class art experiences, pre- and post-class artistic identity, pre- and post-class attitudes toward art, responses to individual components of the curriculum (making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments), and responses to the class structure and teaching. All data were re-read and reorganized by participant within in these broader themes or categories. Some participants were mailed brief descriptions of findings related to that individual for member checking and provided the opportunity to offer alternative points of view or additional comments. Member checking was used as a strategy for ensuring internal validity (Merriam, 2009).

Data were presented for each individual participant, but were also analyzed between groupings of participants who had been identified as having similarities in their experiences that were useful in reporting findings. Yin (2009) noted,

multiple-case reports will contain multiple narratives, covering each of the cases singly, usually presented as separate chapters or sections. In addition to these individual case narratives, your report also will contain a chapter or section covering the cross-case analysis and results. (pp. 170-171)

A cross-case analysis was determined useful based on similarities in the experiences of the participants. The categories for this cross-case analysis included grouping participants by artists, non-artists, and art teachers. A cross-case analysis of data within each of these groupings was used to develop findings for the study. Data summary tables for each finding were used to determine frequencies for each finding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Coding Visual Data

Images used in the study were created or collected by the participants. The images, primarily photographs, were used to elicit conversations and written reflections related to the research topics. In the process of photo elicitation, images helped participants clarify or expand their own understandings (Grbich, 2007; Rose, 2007; Spencer, 2011). Rose explained that photos evoke “information, affect and reflection,” which encouraged participants to access ideas they may not have been able to articulate otherwise (p. 238).

The coding process for images, primarily created in conjunction with written or spoken reflections, was used to examine and interpret images created or collected by participants. Rose (2007) stated, “there is...much interest in the materiality of social life, and in how objects intervene in social life and in how the things that are done with them are not always consciously reflected upon and given meaning” (p. 248). Analysis of images taken by participants of art in their everyday life were used to examine the meaning of those objects in their social life, as interpreted by participants and the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential to every stage of a research study (Mertens, 2010). In this study ethical considerations were put in place to protect the confidentiality of the participants and provide them with information needed to give fully informed consent. University standards were met by applying for institutional review of research involving human subjects (IRB Review) following acceptance of the dissertation proposal and prior to collecting any data.

Upon registering for *The Artist Within*, participants were made aware that the class would be part of a research study. Prior to the first class session, participants were asked to sign consent forms that described their roles and rights as participants in the study (Appendix E) and that confidentiality will be maintained in all publications, field notes, and transcriptions by utilizing pseudonyms for the participants. All data, both digital and hard copy, collected during the course of this study is stored in a space accessible to the researcher only. Data will be destroyed within seven years from the date that it was collected.

Although JMKAC and *Grandview* are not being evaluated through this study, they are significant as sites for the research. Consent was gathered from JMKAC and *Grandview* regarding permission to publish outcomes related to this research (Appendix F). In addition, JMKAC and *Grandview* chose not to remain anonymous in all publishing of this research.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed description of the research methodology used to conduct the study. A phenomenological multi-case study was used to illustrate how a vernacular art curriculum might impact the identity of adults, in particular, adults who identify as

non-artists. Action research was also employed as a methodology for understanding my own teaching practice during the process of teaching a vernacular art curriculum to adults. Multiple data sources were utilized to adequately examine and triangulate contextual circumstances and conditions that allow for adult transformation of artistic identity through a curriculum that situates art and art making in everyday circumstances. Chapter 4 will present a detailed description of the enacted curriculum for each class, including descriptions of teaching reflections and subsequent changes. In addition, detailed description is provided for the pre-class art experiences, attitudes toward art, and artistic identity for each participant in the study. Chapter 5 will present the post-class data for the study and introduce findings for the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION: PRE-CLASS

Introduction and Organization of the Chapter

The goal of this study was to determine if reframing participants' understandings of art to include everyday art and aesthetic behaviors might transform their perceptions of art and their identity as artists and, specifically, to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge on adults' perceptions of art and identities as artists?
 - a. In what ways do adults' prior formal and informal art education experiences shape their perspectives of art and identities as artists?
 - b. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as making special?
 - c. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as everyday aesthetics?
 - d. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as vernacular art environments?
 - e. What new knowledge about teaching practice emerges when an instructor self-reflects on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum?

I sought to determine whether by democratizing art knowledge through including everyday understandings of art, adults might engage in more positive understandings of themselves as artists.

Data for this study were reported in two chapters: Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Chapter 4 provides a description of each of the three *Artist Within* classes offered as part of this study and follows with a pre-class description of each of the participants. In this chapter, I report an overview of the enacted curriculum for each of the three classes, including changes made to the curriculum for subsequent classes based on my own reflections. Following the class descriptions and reflections on the curriculum and teaching, I report demographic information, formal and informal art experiences and art knowledge, and perceptions of art identity for each participant. In Chapter 4, I organize the descriptions of participants in sections related to which class they participated in—class 1, class 2 or class 3—to recapture the interactions as they occurred during each of the classes.

In Chapter 5, I report data related to participant perspectives and art knowledge as a result of participating in the *Artist Within*. I provide a description of the impact of the vernacular art curriculum on the artistic identity, art knowledge, and attitudes about art for each participant. For this chapter, I chose to organize the descriptions of participant transformations by how they identified as artists prior to the *Artist Within* class. Categories for these sections include non-artists, art teachers, and artists. This provided an opportunity to consider patterns between adults with similar art identities and an opportunity to compare and contrast patterns across categories.

Class Overviews

In the following sections, I provide an overview of the enacted curriculum for each of the classes offered as part of this research. All classes followed a similar curriculum structure, with changes made to successive classes in response to participant and researcher reflections.

Class 1

Class 1: Participants

The first offering of *Artist Within* consisted of three participants. Two participants were related (an aunt and her nephew) and had participated in numerous classes and activities together. The third participant was currently working as an art teacher. The other two participants were identified as one non-artist and one artist based on their responses to the pre-class survey. The participants in Class 1 did not have a pre-class interview (due to late enrollment in the class). While data collected during the first class session are more limited than data collected during the successive classes, this first class was especially instructive in reflecting on and making changes to my teaching and the way activities were designed for participants.

Location and Setting

The first class was held primarily at John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC). The first and last sessions of this class were held at the arts center and the second class took place on site at James Tellen's *Woodland Sculpture Garden* (Tellen). At the arts center, we utilized a studio space located in the basement for discussion and artmaking. While at Tellen, we were able

to access the sculptures on display on the grounds and also utilize a small building that is used for visiting artists and workshops. In my field notes I reflected on the relevance of the location to our class,

Compared to the main floor gallery spaces of JMKAC, which are full of windows and skylights, the basement level is a bit dreary. The layout of the area feels somewhat maze-like. People often get confused when they come downstairs about which way to turn to go to their classroom. The room we were in was large enough to accommodate approximately 25 students comfortably. While it felt big for only four people, I made use of the space by setting up supplies on three sections of tables and setting up our discussion area at the fourth section of tables. The room is painted white with gray and neutral colored metal cabinets and tables. One wall is completely covered with a very large metal shelving unit that is full from floor to ceiling with large storage bins labeled with all kinds of interesting art materials. The lights in the room are those fluorescent tube lights, which make a slight buzzing noise. This was important because the participants (and myself) were visibly sleepy, particularly at the end of the third class (yawning, expressing sleepiness). The students left seemingly much more energized after the second session, which took place at Tellen where we worked in a room with large windows and had easy access to the outside.

I provided light snacks and drinks at all sessions of the class, which helped increase the energy level of the class and was a component of the class that participants expressed appreciation for.

Class 1, Session 1

Overview of the curriculum. The first session began with a PowerPoint presentation that allowed me to share ideas and examples related to the three main considerations of the vernacular art curriculum and to frame that within a discussion of participant experiences with art. I began by asking the participants how they defined art and what artists they were most familiar with. Following a brief discussion about the participants' perceptions of art and art preferences, I began to introduce the three curricular ideas that would be the focus of our vernacular art curriculum: making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments

(see Figure 4.1). At this point a simple diagram was used to represent the content of the curriculum for the class.

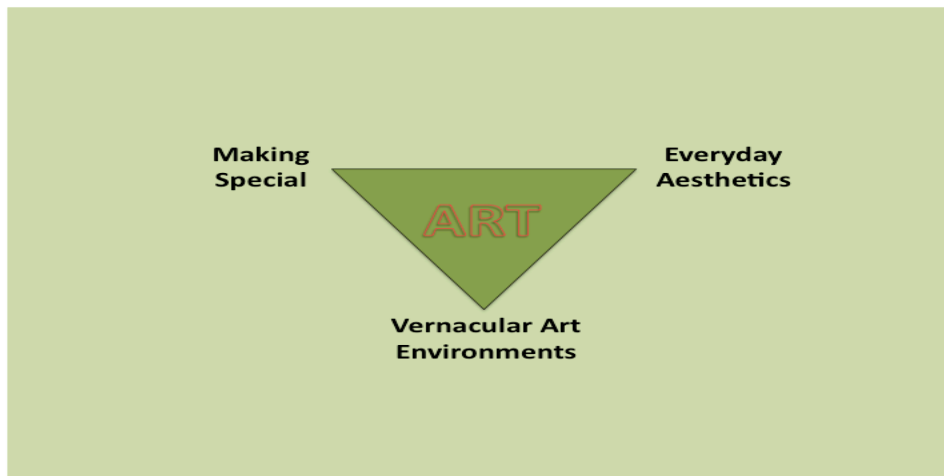


Figure 4.1. Diagram from class presentation introducing the overall curricular content for our class.

Introduction to everyday aesthetics. Following an overall introduction to the course content, I introduced the idea of everyday aesthetics. To introduce this idea, I contrasted everyday aesthetics with what might be a typical understanding of art as fine art that is decontextualized from time and everyday places and viewed within the context of a museum:

Often art has been synonymous with fine art and in order to experience or have an artistic experience you have to have an elevated experience in relation to viewing artworks. For many people, going to a museum can be awkward or frustrating because you feel like you don't have enough information to really understand what you are looking at. (See Figure 4.2)

I continued by describing how everyday aesthetics might be considered in relation to traditional definitions of art and ways in which it could also be understood as a relevant and perhaps taken-for-granted part of everyday life (see Figure 4.3). This was followed by images of everyday aesthetics that might be familiar to participants as ways that people alter everyday surroundings in meaningful ways. Examples included roadside memorials, bathtub Virgin Mary installations

often seen in garden or yard settings, cairns, graffiti, and altered mailboxes (see Figures 4.4 and 4.5).

Everyday Aesthetics

- Aesthetics predominantly seen as synonymous with fine art (Saito, 2007)
- “Kant conceived of a **disinterested aesthetic experience of elation denying simultaneous (personal, social, economic, etc.) interests** and elevating people to a higher plane of consciousness than that of everyday experience.” (Freedman, 2003)

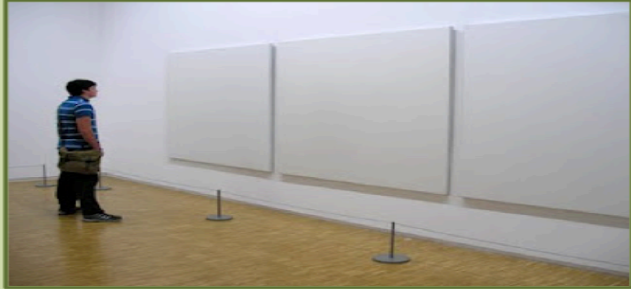


Figure 4.2. Slide from class presentation to introduce everyday aesthetics.

Everyday Aesthetics

“Everyday life includes routines and our taken-for-granted experiences, beliefs, and practices...since we are all participants, such knowledge is inherently democratic.” (Duncum, 2003)





Figure 4.3. Slide from class presentation used to introduce everyday aesthetics.



Figure 4.4. Slide from class presentation depicting a roadside memorial.



Figure 4.5. Slide from class presentation depicting an altered mailbox.

Introduction to making special. Following our discussion of everyday aesthetics, I shared a couple of personal experiences with the group that highlighted why I felt it was important to reframe art as something that occurs in everyday life. I explained that I had trained as an artist in my undergraduate college experience, but I had left feeling discomfort because I was most interested in creating art that was woven into everyday life versus preparing a body of artwork for a gallery or fine art setting. I explained that my identity as an artist made more sense to me when I encountered a text while working on a Master's in Art Education that suggested that art is also a way that humans transform everyday and ordinary experiences in meaningful ways (see Figure 4.6). This idea was reinforced by the work of Ellen Dissanayake who suggests humans use art as a form of making special (see Figure 4.7). In particular, I shared with the class the ways in which I had observed the behavior of making special with my family, who would identify as both artists and non-artists, as we prepared for celebrations and special events (see Figure 4.8). It was through these experiences that I had begun to understand how powerful and transformative it could be to recognize and encourage art in everyday life or art as a behavior of making special.



Figure 4.6. Slide from presentation introducing the idea of art as a way of making special.



Figure 4.7. Slide from presentation introducing the idea of art as a way of making special.




Figure 4.8. Image from class presentation illustrating examples of making special through celebration with my family.

Introduction to vernacular art environments. The final section of the curriculum was an introduction to vernacular art environments, including a selection of example artists and their works. I began by explaining that the term vernacular refers to an artifact or behavior that suggests a relationship to a particular time and place. In addition, I shared a quotation from Leslie Umberger, who worked as head curator at John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC) at that time, who suggested that vernacular environment artists “draw upon personal experiences and visions for their creations that are uniquely connected to a particular time and place” (see Figure 4.9). In addition, I shared another quotation from Umberger in which she described vernacular environment artists as people who often transform significant places, like the home, into elaborate and personal works of art (see Figure 4.10). I also made connections between what vernacular environment artists do and the ways in which people tend to alter their personal living

environments, particularly over time (see Figure 4.11). I explained that I felt vernacular art environments in this context were useful because they were exemplars of making special and making meaningful and unique everyday aesthetic choices.

Vernacular

- Suggests a relationship to a particular time & place
- Vernacular environment artists "draw on the vocabularies of their personal experiences, visions, histories, and beliefs" thus representing a particular time and place through their art. (Umberger)




Nick Engelbert

Figure 4.9. Image from class presentation introducing vernacular art environments.

Vernacular Art Environments

Artist environment builders transform a specific place, often the home, into a work of art. The motivations and manifestations of the works of the artists vary widely, however, what is similar is that, "each [environment builder] developed a symbiotic relationship with her or his home ground in response to a unique and heartfelt vision"
-Umberger, 2007



Paul & Matilda Wegner Grotto

Figure 4.10. Image from class presentation introducing vernacular art environments.



Figure 4.11. Image from class presentation making connections between vernacular art environments and ways in which people alter significant everyday environments.

Following a general description, I introduced a selection of vernacular art environments for discussion. Artists represented at JMKAC were chosen for this class because I knew that participants would be able to interact with actual artifacts. For this class, I discussed the works of Tom Every, Emery Blagdon and Carl Peterson. Although the majority of Tom Every's vernacular art environment is located in North Freedom, Wisconsin, a few of his artworks are on permanent display outside the arts center. Emery Blagdon's environment no longer exists in its original location. John Michael Kohler Arts Center purchased the entirety of his collection to preserve it as close as possible to its original state. A large exhibition of his work, including a partial replica of the barn it was originally created for, was on display in one of the galleries at JMKAC (see Figure 4.12). Carl Peterson's work also no longer exists in its original site, but a number of his pieces are on permanent display on the grounds of JMKAC (see Figure 4.13). For each of the artists, I provided biographical information and insights related to what inspired the

creation of their vernacular art environments. All of the participants indicated that these artists were unknown to them prior to this class.

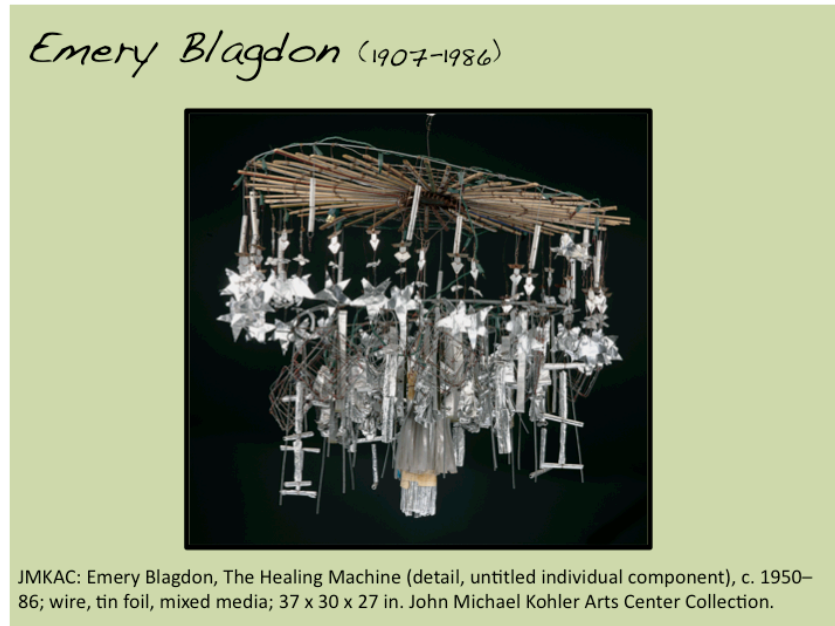


Figure 4.12. Image from class presentation depicting Emery Blagdon with his vernacular art environment.



Figure 4.13. Image from slide presentation depicting Carl Peterson's artist environment.

Relevance of a vernacular art curriculum. Following our discussion of vernacular art environments, I shared ideas about why a vernacular art curriculum might be important. We began by considering how we not only shape our everyday environments, but also how those environments shape our values in relation to everyday aesthetics. I presented contexts that set up contrasts between communities that were highly conforming (see Figure 4.14) and those in which there was an expectation that people within that community would alter their home environments in unique and individualized ways (see Figure 4.15). In particular, we looked at a vernacular environment artist, Mr. Louis Foo Lee, who had created a unique vernacular art environment within a subdivision that was very homogeneous. We discussed how this kind of contrast might have been either embraced or created tension within communities. For this particular site, the home had been purchased by a new owner, but the vernacular art environment had been maintained. In this case, I did not have any information about how Mr. Lee's vernacular art environment was perceived by those who lived in the nearby vicinity. However, participants in this class were aware of tensions that were prevalent in the neighborhood surrounding Mary Nohl's vernacular art environment, which was located just north of Milwaukee in an affluent neighborhood that wanted the site removed. Mary Nohl's home was located near Judy and John's home, and this issue was something they both felt strongly about and wanted to see Mary Nohl's home remain in its original location.



Figure 4.14. Image from class presentation illustrating a community with a very homogeneous aesthetic.



Figure 4.15. Image from class presentation depicting a community that valued divergent home aesthetics.

I finished the presentation by using one more vernacular environment artist to suggest that recognizing and utilizing art to alter our everyday environments or to make special could contribute to wellbeing and be an important avenue for creating meaningful experiences in everyday life. We discussed the artist Loy Bowlin, who began significantly altering his car, apparel, and home while suffering from depression during a transitional period late in his life (Umberger, 2007; see Figure 4.16). Bowlin noted that channeling his energies into creating provided him with the attention and interactions with others that he needed to be happy. In addition, I concluded by noting that I felt collaborative artmaking in the form of making special had a significant impact on my own family as well and contributed to the ways in which we celebrate and create meaningful experiences that enrich our lives.



Figure 4.16. Image from class presentation depicting vernacular environment artist, Loy Bowlin.

Introduction to supplies and artmaking. For this class, I prepared a tote bag with supplies and materials for each participant that I felt would support their continued reflection on the course content in their visual journals outside of class. Following the introduction, I described for

these materials, which included a canvas bag; a binder with printed articles about several of the vernacular environment artists we discussed; a high quality watercolor journal; a low quality digital camera; a pencil case with a variety of tools for sketching, coloring, and creating image transfers; and a written description of the expectations for working in their journals. Outside of class, participants were asked to further consider the content covered during class and use their journals as a space to make connections among these ideas and their own everyday environments and experiences. Participants were asked to collect relevant images and were given an assignment description sheet with questions to help guide their reflections (see Appendix D).

Following introduction to the materials, I demonstrated a novel artmaking process, image transfers, that I felt the participants might also be able to utilize in their journals. Participants were then asked to explore the galleries and grounds and were encouraged to take photographs of vernacular works on display that they might want to include in their journal reflections. As a group, we headed upstairs to the galleries and explored the works together. Once we returned to the studio space, participants spent an hour and a half working in journals and utilizing materials. Primarily, participants practiced image transfers using the images I had provided and printed images that they had taken while in the galleries. Prior to the end of class, I reminded participants to take some photographs from their own everyday environments that reflected the ideas of everyday aesthetics or making special and to come prepared to share their own stories.

Class 1, Session 2

For the second session of the first class, the participants and I met at James Tellen's *Woodland Sculpture Garden*. We began this session by reviewing the three components of the vernacular art curriculum discussed in the first session: making special, everyday aesthetics, and

vernacular art environments. During this discussion, I showed the participants images representing examples of these curricular ideas and they shared their own personal connections to these ideas.

The class then looked more closely at and discussed two vernacular art environments. First, we viewed the documentary video that John had created for a film class about a Milwaukee-area artist, Mary Nohl. The introduction of this video to our class was a negotiated part of the curriculum that emerged from recognizing a participant's expertise and relevant experience and encouragement from the group to review the work. John's video specifically focused on the history and myths that surrounded the work of Mary Nohl, the recent controversies about removing her work from its original site because of pressure within the neighboring community, and Nohl's legacy within the art community of Milwaukee. After viewing the 20-minute video, we went outside as a group to tour the grounds and discuss the concrete sculptures created by James Tellen.

Following the tour of the grounds, the participants returned at different times to the studio space, where I demonstrated a new selection of materials the participants could use to work in their journals. For this session, I introduced a variety of watercolor techniques and materials that could be used to incorporate more text into the journals, including stamps, magazines, and letter embossing. Judy and Megan brought their cameras and asked for specific images to be printed. While Judy worked in her journal, Megan forgot to bring hers and chose to work on separate paper. Judy and Megan experimented in unplanned ways with materials in their journals for approximately an hour and a half. John stayed outside exploring the sculpture garden until the end of the class and seemed uninterested in working in his journal.

Class 1, Session 3

For the final session, John did not attend, which left just two participants—Judy and Megan. This session was primarily meant to be a day to work with materials and finish journals in response to the curricular content. I introduced Megan and Judy to new materials they could utilize in their journals in addition to all the materials that had been previously introduced. New materials included a sewing machine so that they could alter their journals using a novel material. I also showed them how to use grommets to add elements to their book that might extend beyond the boundaries of the page or be used to attach images in a new way.

Even though Megan and Judy worked the entire time in their journals and experimented with the materials, I sensed their lack of commitment to reflect on the course content in this way. At the end of the final session, I asked Megan and Judy to talk about their journals. Judy had worked on eight pages of her journal. The majority of these were her experimentations with the image transfers. She also included a few images with text that showed that she was making connections to her home. Megan worked with materials during all three days, but stated that she felt she had not really made any real entries in her journal and requested that I not document it. John had worked on two pages in his journal on the first day, in which he experimented with images transfers. John was much more content and eager to explore and learn about the vernacular art environments. After the first day, he made no further entries in his journal.

While in-class discussions provided some insight about how the participants were reflecting on the class content, my hope was that the art activity would help participants make deeper personal connections to the class content and had seen the visual journal as a means to do this. On the last day of class, I shared with Megan and Judy my observation that the journal

seemed to inspire only limited engagement and asked for their thoughts. Both Megan and Judy expressed that the watercolor journal was overwhelming, and despite the prompts, materials, and in-class time to work on it, they felt the task was daunting, which helped me reflect on changes for future classes.

Class 1: Reflection on Teaching and Curriculum

The first class provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the way I structured the curriculum and my own teaching in order to make changes that would enhance future *Artist Within* classes. During the class, the adult participants had discussed ideas easily and appeared to have a good rapport with one another. With prompting, each participant was able to share ideas and personal experiences connected to the curriculum that enhanced our understanding of it. I was eager to continue to promote this kind of discursive environment by encouraging personal responses and discussions among participants. In addition, I noted that being responsive to the unique opportunities or interests of the group had been beneficial to the class. On reflection, I might have been more responsive to participants' interests by planning an excursion related to another vernacular art environment, since it was apparent that participants were more interested in this part of the class and less interested in working with art materials in their journals. On the post-class survey, Judy referred to this idea when she stated at the end of the survey, "I'm ready for a road trip to see other vernacular art environments!" Inviting John to share the video he had created about Mary Nohl appeared to be well received by all participants in the class.

The energy level of this class felt somewhat low, especially during times allocated for working with materials in journals. This could in part be due to the very small class size. During the class, I would often work alongside the participants to encourage engagement with the

materials, but with few participants it was difficult to create much energy or to elevate expectations in relation to making. Providing food and refreshments was well received and seemed to enhance the classroom environment, as did changing the location for the second session.

For this class, I spent a lot of time preparing bags for the participants that were meant to encourage working in the journals outside of class. None of the participants worked in their visual journals outside of class. However, all of the participants took photographs outside of class. This indicated to me that they were willing to record evidence of the ideas discussed in class in their everyday places, but they found the journals either uninspiring, intimidating, or unmanageable, especially within a three-week time span.

While the journals themselves had not been effective, introducing novel materials seemed to engage the participants in hands-on exploration. Participants were especially interested in photographing and printing images and working with image transfers. Judy persisted in experimenting with image transfers during all three sessions and noted, “This is so cool. You know, I think this stuff would look great in expressionist pieces. Looks pretty good doesn’t it?” Judy also noted that working with art materials made her forget about time. Additionally, utilizing the sewing machine, grommets, and working with a letter embosser also inspired some investigation. In my field notes, I noted that I felt it would be important to continue to introduce novel materials to the group while more carefully explaining expectations for reflecting on the content of the class.

Class 2

Class 2: Participants

Class 2 consisted of five people who participated in the study. All of the participants in this class had either taken a previous vernacular art environment class or other art-related class at this site. Based on the pre-class surveys and interviews, two of these participants identified as non-artists, two identified as art teachers, and one identified as an artist. The education director at this site, who typically teaches a vernacular art environment course, also attended all of the sessions of the *Artist Within* and provided valuable resources, including solicitation and management of participant enrollment in the class, a van for transportation, funding for supplies, suggestions for field trip options, and additional knowledge about vernacular art environments. In addition, the education director's daughter, a recent graduate with a degree in fine art, participated in two of the sessions and created a visual journal, but she did not participate in the research components of the class. In total, eight people were present for class discussions and in-class art making. The class took place on three consecutive Saturdays in July. In the following sections, I provide a brief overview of the location and setting of the second offering of the *Artist Within*, noting any significant changes to the curriculum or observations as the curriculum was enacted.

Location and Setting

The second class was offered at *Grandview*, a vernacular art environment located in Hollandale, Wisconsin. *Grandview* was chosen as a site for this research in part because PEC had regularly offered art classes for nearly 15 years and maintained a building that was used for

these offerings on site (Grandview Academy, 2015). Located in a small shed next to Nick Engelbert's home that now functions as a small museum, the site was supplied with tables and chairs, a restroom, access to water, and protection from outdoor elements and was in close proximity to Nick Engelbert's sculptural creations. In addition, a class had been offered at *Grandview* in previous summers that provided an opportunity for adults and area art teachers to take a course related to vernacular art environments that could be taken for college credit, professional development, or just continuing education. The *Artist Within* was offered as the option in place of this class during this year, meaning there was already a built-in audience for the class who came with the expectation of doing hands-on work and discussion in relation to vernacular art environments.

Class 2, Session 1

Overview of the curriculum. The second *Artist Within* class followed a similar curricular structure to the first class. During the first session of the second class, I used a PowerPoint to introduce and discuss definitions of art, the graphic illustrating the three curricular components, a description and examples of everyday aesthetics, the personal experiences that framed my interest in the idea of making special, a description and examples of making special, a description of vernacular art environments, and in-depth descriptions of artists Tom Every and Emery Blagdon. Like the first class, I followed this overview with a discussion about how different communal values and ideologies influence our everyday aesthetic choices and contribute to a contextual understanding of perceptions of vernacular art environments using the example of Dr. Louis Foo Lee. The presentation ended with a discussion about why the ideas brought up in this vernacular art curriculum were relevant, using my personal experiences and

vernacular environment artist Loy Bowlin as examples. The only change made to this introductory presentation was that vernacular environment artist Carl Peterson was not discussed with this group.

As I began my presentation for the class, I told the participants I hoped this would be a conversation and that they would contribute throughout. The participants in this class contributed easily to class discussions, interjecting frequently with their own perspectives or personal examples as ideas were presented. As an example, following my introduction about how everyday aesthetics is influenced by cultural or community values that are embedded in the conditions of place and, to different extents, we either conform to or resist these, participants eagerly exchanged their own examples and connections.

Erica: In Sun Valley, everyone has to have the same roof color for postcards. Which I thought was very curious. I mean in Madison buildings can't be taller than the Capitol. Think about how you have to conform. That makes you think about aesthetics.

Martha: Think about how you have to dress in a certain way for your work or that you can't change your oil in your front yard. I just don't get that.

Anne: Or that you can't have a clothesline.

Liz: Oh, that's a good example Anne.

Martha: Or a non-running car parked in your driveway. I mean we'd die. [lots of laughter]

Sam: Or take a leak off the porch.

Martha: Yes, how did you know about that? [laughter]

Liz: I like Mary's example of the clothesline, which to me is such a beautiful ritual in itself.

Sarah: I agree. It's such a good memory of my mom and it smells nice.

Martha: In China everyone has clotheslines out the window. Different cultural values.

Anne: The Amish. They have a clothesline they can roll up.

This conversation continued with participants building off of each other's input. At times, conversations veered off track and needed to be redirected after extended conversation. But overall, conversations were enthusiastic and filled with examples provided by the participants in response to the presented material.

Introduction to supplies and artmaking. The most significant changes to the class were related to how the visual journal and artmaking portion of the class were constructed. In the first class, this was identified as a problematic part of the class that would need revision to make it more accessible, engaging, and better suited for the limited time frame of the class. Similar to the first class, I began by discussing the assignment description handout (see Appendix D). Participants were asked to use their visual journals to explore personal connections and responses to the ideas of making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments. Listed on the assignment sheet were questions that might help guide participant investigations. Participants were also asked to use their visual journals to describe their personal identities as artists and any shifts in this perspective over the course of the class. The assignment sheet also briefly discussed the processes participants might use to explore these ideas in their visual journals, including how they might utilize image, text, and objects.

In the first class, I gave participants high quality watercolor journals that contained numerous pages along with a bag full of materials to use outside of class. Participants indicated that these journals were overwhelming and they were unsure how to work through them in a limited time frame. For the second class, I chose to order and provide blank board books (much like children's board books) in a variety of sizes. These books contained five, thick, sturdy, white pages that were blank and ready to be altered. The number of pages provided the participants

with a more reasonable perimeter for the amount of material they might be expected to cover as they addressed the content in the time frame of the class. In addition to limiting the number of pages, the sturdy pages of the board book provided an opportunity to really open up the variety of materials and objects that could be attached to the book and the ways in which the participants could manipulate the book.

Following discussion of the assignment and book format, I introduced the participants to the materials laid out on tables for their use. In the first class, I introduced new materials during each session. For this class, I decided to lay out all the materials at once, give the entire group an overview of what was available and then work with each participant individually as he/she had questions. Two rows of tables were used to hold a variety of materials including found imagery, images for image transfers, Polaroid cameras, specialty or patterned papers, and printers for printing personal images. A variety of materials were provided that could be used to attach objects or manipulate the books including glue, hot glue, scissors, pliers, brads, grommets, and wire. Materials were provided that might allow participants to create their own images or text, including permanent markers, watercolors, stickers, stamps, and stencils. Objects were also provided that might be used as three-dimensional embellishments like sequins, hardware, shells, beads, and Shrinky Dink paper.

The participants worked in their visual journals for the rest of the class. While some participants indicated they were unsure about how to move forward with the content of the book, there was an overall buzz of excitement and enthusiasm about the materials. At the end of this session, the participants were encouraged to take materials with them if they wanted to work at home. The majority of the participants filled bags with materials to take home with them and continue working. By the end of this session, we had discussed as a group where we would go

for our field trip during the second session and identified meeting times and places for transportation. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Class 2, Session 2

The second session of this class was scheduled as an all-day field trip on a Saturday. We had planned to leave at 9:00a.m. and return around 6:00p.m. This extended time frame was something that had traditionally been a part of previous versions of this class when it was offered by *Grandview* and was anticipated by the participants. After negotiation and discussion with the participants, it was decided that we would spend the day at John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC) in Sheboygan, Wisconsin—approximately a three-hour drive from *Grandview*.

There were a couple of special events and exhibitions happening at JMKAC that made it a good field trip site on this date: 1) Midsummer Festival of the Arts—an annual outdoor event featuring artist vendors, music, hands-on art projects and food; 2) two exhibitions dedicated to the vernacular of art environment builders, Emery Blagdon and Dr. Charles Smith. During the field trip, I led the group in a discussion of Emery Blagdon's work. Following this discussion, participants were allowed to roam freely through the exhibitions and the art festival. Participants were especially affected by the work of Emery Blagdon. A couple of the participants included his work in their visual journals. Unlike the other classes, participants in this class were not given a designated time and place to work on their visual journals during the second session.

On the drive home, it was apparent that participants were eager to see more vernacular art environments. After some discussion, it was decided that we would visit Ellis Nelson as a group at his home in the nearby town of Muscoda after the conclusion of the last class. Ellis Nelson is a vernacular artist who was still living, and one participant had a piece of his artwork and was

eager to get it signed. Another participant was especially taken by this artist and had already stopped at his home and visited with him. The aging artist has for many years displayed and sold his welded creations in his yard, creating an eye-catching display on a centrally located street in this small town.

Class 2, Session 3

The third and final session of the second class consisted of a short review and discussion of the vernacular art curriculum, introduction to a couple of new vernacular art environments, time for individual work on their visual journals, and time to share each completed visual journal with the group. This group also chose to have a potluck during this session, with each participant bringing some food to share. At the end of the class, we went as a group to visit the site of Ellis Nelson where we were able to visit with him personally and get a tour of his workshop.

As the session began, I asked the group if there was anything the participants wanted to discuss or share. Erica began by noting that she had done some research on the use of the word vernacular and how it compared to other words typically used to describe untrained artists. This idea inspired conversation among the participants, who described that they preferred the use of the word vernacular to describe this work. It is important to note that this idea was brought up spontaneously by someone in each class with the same result each time.

After reviewing the main components of the vernacular art curriculum, participants discussed what they felt was relevant about learning about art as it appears or is created in the context of everyday life. Sarah began by stating, “Well I think it gave people permission to be creative. People who didn’t consider themselves creative...and there are the people who just dabble and then there are the people who really rock it.” I asked the group if they felt this type of

curriculum was empowering. Caryn replied by stating, “It’s huge. It’s a huge deal. And I am so glad you are teaching about it because it makes you want to go more into it, when you have time.” Sarah continued,

It took me a really long time to just be open about the fact that I create art just because it feels good. It seems like to a lot of people that’s not enough...you know making special and everyday aesthetic fits my whole realm and my philosophy and what I love about teaching art.

These conversations were early indicators that there were components of the vernacular art curriculum that made an impression on the participants and their perceptions of art and identities as artists.

Following this discussion, I introduced two additional vernacular art environment builders, Sam Rodia and Nek Chand. I decided to present additional artists because participants in both the first and second class showed such interest in learning about these artists. Sam Rodia (1879 -1965) created *Watts Towers*, a series of towers constructed from metal, concrete and found objects and located on a small, 1/10 acre, triangular plot of land in Watts, California (Umberger, 2007). I also introduced Nek Chand (1924-2015), whose work was created in response to an urban planning initiative in his home of Chandigarh, India, which included the demolition of 26 villages that would be recreated as more “European” environments. Nek Chand’s *Rock Garden of Chandigarh* was created initially in secret using materials gathered from the demolition. Today Nek Chand’s *Rock Garden of Chandigarh* encompasses over 40 acres, includes 10,000 sculptures constructed from concrete and found objects, and is one of the most visited sites in India (Umberger, 2000).

Following the presentation, participants were given approximately an hour and a half to continue working on their journals. In this class, all of the participants worked on their journals

outside of class and came with significant portions of their journals already completed. The last part of class was reserved for participants to describe and discuss their journals. Once this was complete, the participants went on a second field trip, negotiated by the group, to visit the home and workshop of Ellis Nelson, a vernacular artist who lived in a nearby town.

Class 2: Reflection on Teaching and Curriculum

As I reflected on the second *Artist Within* class, several instructive themes emerged from my observations and participant feedback. In the following sections I share observations about the class in relation to overall the class climate, negotiated curricula and instruction, responses to the content and delivery of content for the class, and responses to materials and artmaking processes.

During the second class, the overall energy and climate felt noticeably more active and engaged. This could be due in part to some familiarity among participants, but it also seemed connected to class size. With eight people in the room (including myself), discussions during presentations and artmaking portions of the class were more robust and varied. At the beginning of the class, I had encouraged participants to consider the class as a dialogue. Like the first class, I also made conscious choices to pause and ask for feedback from the group to resist slipping into a one-sided lecture mode in which my voice was privileged above the group. Several participants noted in their post-class surveys that the class conversations were a positive experience. Caryn stated, “I love that when you shared your thoughts, you received intelligent feedback.” In her post-class survey, Sarah stated, “It was simply delightful to spend time having wonderful, exciting, philosophical conversations about my favorite topic with like minds. The instructor provided excellent questions for thought and great materials for an exciting project!”

Both participants responded positively to a class structure that deliberately engaged participants in thoughtful conversations, or what Sarah described as “philosophical conversations,” and being given space to respond to each other’s insights and ideas. For Sam, this type of interaction was something he felt was important. He stated, “As colleagues, we get along well and everyone works hard. I miss the camaraderie as soon as the class ends and enjoy every bit of it when we are in session together.”

In addition to being able to partake in thoughtful discussions, the participants responded to feeling the class was meant to be a joyful and validating experience. In her post-class survey Anne stated,

I am not an art critic. I only know what pleases me or what I think is interesting. The feeling that I interpreted from this class was that this is okay. This message not only came from Liz, but also from the other people in the class.

Anne continued,

I feel that one of our jobs as teachers is to encourage and make students feel good about themselves. Liz and the other artist/teachers did an excellent job of encouraging me in your class. I am pleased to have met you and hope to see you again perhaps at Grandview!

Anne was a participant who communicated at the start of the class that she did not self-identify as an artist. For her, having a positive and validating experience in the class appeared to be important to how she perceived of the overall quality of the class. Food was also provided for this class as a way to develop rapport and create a comfortable environment. Caryn responded to this by noting, “I loved the healthy snacks and surprise potluck.”

During the first class, I felt that I had not been as responsive to the interests of the participants as I could have been. It was clear that the group was most engaged by the vernacular art environments and that I might have capitalized on that by negotiating options for the final

session. In the second class, negotiation played a more central role. I had prior knowledge that this group had significant knowledge of vernacular art environments and might have opinions to share about where they would like to go for the field trip during the second session. Rather than deciding our field trip destination up front, this was decided in conversation as a group during the first session so that it might be a good experience for everyone. Building on the expressed interests of the group, we negotiated including a second field trip after the third session. This was both an indicator of the enthusiasm that had been generated during the class and the positive outcomes that can come from a flexible and negotiated learning environment with adults.

The overall content and delivery of the vernacular art curriculum appeared to be relevant, engaging and accessible to the participants. All of the participants made numerous personal connections to the curricular content through class conversation and their visual journals. In her evaluation of the class, Caryn stated that she “loved learning about making special and everyday aesthetics.” Caryn also noted that the graphic used to identify the three components of the vernacular art curriculum was helpful (see Figure 4.1) and Sam included a drawing of this graphic in his visual journal. However, I felt this graphic and the separate introductions of each component also created some confusion as participants realized the real life examples of these ideas did not necessarily fall into such easy categories and might actually overlap; this was a conversation that came up, especially when the participants discussed their personal examples of everyday aesthetics and making special. It might have been beneficial to the group to further tease out this idea as we looked at examples.

The class content was delivered and explored in a variety of ways: PowerPoint presentation, class discussions, field trips and a hands-on project. The format for delivering and working through the ideas in the vernacular art curriculum seemed to be a positive experience for

the participants in this class. Caryn stated that she “loved the multimedia presentations and fieldtrips.” She continued that “the field trip to JMKAC on the second Saturday was very helpful—to go into Emery Blagdon’s environment and immerse ourselves, then talk about it.” Overall, I feel the variety and experiential nature of the class was also important to the participants’ satisfaction with the class.

Unlike the first class, all of the participants in the second class worked enthusiastically on their books, both in and out of class, and completed them by the end of the class. While one participant chose to alter an existing hardbound novel for her visual journal, I sensed that for the participants in the class the board books were much more accessible in terms of volume and also provided a more novel form as a starting point for a visual journal. Providing all of the materials up front for participants and then addressing questions about the materials’ use individually also seemed to work well. Participants eagerly dug through the variety of materials available, often asking questions about using novel materials and conversing with each other during class sessions about material use.

Class 3

Given the overall positive response to the content and teaching of the second class, limited changes were made to the third class. The curriculum was delivered in a similar way as the first two classes, with the first session focusing on an introductory discussion about the components of the vernacular art curriculum, an introduction to the visual journal assignment and materials, and time for working on visual journals. During the second session we conducted our field trip, reviewed the information regarding the vernacular art curriculum presented in the first session, and also spent time working on the visual journals. During the third session, time

was set-aside for participants to complete their visual journals and the second half of the session was used to share and discuss each participant's work. The primary changes to the third class were made based on the logistics and site of the class. However, this class provided further insights about the form and content of the class, particularly since there were more participants who identified as non-artists in this group. In the following sections, I briefly describe the overall enacted curriculum for the third class and discuss data that may provide further possibilities for teaching adults, particularly, adults who identify as non-artists.

Class 3: Participants

The third class consisted of seven participants. Based on pre-class surveys and pre-class interviews, the participants were designated within the following categories: six participants were identified as non-artists and one participant was identified as an artist. Within this class, most of the participants either knew each other or knew of each other through other people or local circumstances. Like the second class, this class size seemed to contribute to an overall positive level of energy as discussions during work time and presentations were consistently full and featured varied opinions and ideas from everyone in the group. Video recordings of class work times captured numerous interactions among participants as they looked at each other's visual journals, shared their progress, and discussed different ways in which they were using materials.

Class 3: Location and Setting

This third class was held in a centrally located meeting room in the town of Spring Green, Wisconsin, which provided tables and chairs, access to water and restrooms, and ample room for working and setting out materials for the class. The site was chosen in part due to convenience; a relative of the researcher lived in the area and could provide access to a workshop location and assistance with announcing the class to potential local participants. This kind of gate keeping had been identified as important to the success of the second class and helped overcome the limitation of getting adults who identify as non-artists to sign up for a class about art. The town of Spring Green is a small town (fewer than 2000 residents) with an active arts community; it is the location of several important arts venues, including the home of renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright and a popular stage theatre company. While the site for our first and third sessions in Spring Green was unrelated to vernacular art environments, the site was located within driving distance of *Grandview*, which was used as a field trip location and workshop space during the second session of the class. Despite the close proximity of *Grandview*, the majority of the participants noted they had never been there or heard about this vernacular art environment.

Class 3, Session 1

The first session of the third class followed a similar format to the first and second classes. The class started with a PowerPoint to introduce and discuss the components of the vernacular art curriculum. We again discussed definitions of art, the graphic illustrating the three curricular components, a description and examples of everyday aesthetics, my personal

experiences that framed my interest in the idea of making special, a description and examples of making special, a description of vernacular art environments, and in-depth description of the artist Emery Blagdon. Because the vernacular art environment of Tom Every is close to Spring Green and many of the participants were familiar with this work, I instead chose to provide a description of the work of Mary Nohl. Mary Nohl (1914-2001) was a vernacular art environment builder whose work is located just north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Working in concrete and a variety of other materials, her sculptures cover the lawn of her beachside cottage and visually appear inspired by nearby Lake Michigan.

Given that the majority of the participants in this group identified as non-artists, I chose to include two additional slides to help frame what I felt was problematic and my reason for creating this vernacular art curriculum. I also provided a bit more art context that might have been unfamiliar to the participants. With the first slide, I described my own experiences as an undergraduate student in a fine arts program (see Figure 4.17). I described how that experience left me with the sense that to be an artist one must be very prolific and that an artist was someone whose ultimate goal would be to show their work in gallery or museum settings. This was problematic because I preferred to create art in the context of familial or everyday settings. I left college conflicted by a narrow understanding of art, art contexts, and who makes art. The second slide simply contained a quotation that stated, "I can't draw anything more than a stick figure" (see Figure 4.18). This quotation was in reference to my own experiences hearing adults claim that they were not artists and specifically noting that they could not draw realistically. I discussed with the participants how curious it was to me that so many people correlated being an artist with the ability to render an image through drawing. I felt that this was problematic because it was a narrow way of considering art that excluded a much broader range of thinking about art and

artistic behaviors. By including these two slides, the class had a more visible context for the problem that they might not have considered previously.

Liz's Story: Artistic Journey

Uneasiness in undergraduate experience as a fine arts major

- Being Prolific
- Art is made for gallery/museum



Figure 4.17. Image from class presentation representing my personal experiences with art in college.

“I can't
draw
anything
more than
a stick
figure.”

Figure 4.18. Image from class presentation related to narrow ways of thinking about art that I found problematic.

Introduction to supplies and artmaking. Like the second class, for the third class I provided the more accessible board books as the foundation for the participants to create their visual journals. Similar to the second class, a wide range of materials was provided for the participants to work with and were laid out on the table. Following the introduction and class discussion, I introduced the hands-on project, providing participants with the same handout given to previous classes as a resource (see Appendix D). I briefly gave the participants a tour of what materials were available and then worked with participants individually. The participants worked independently on their visual journals for the remainder of the first session.

Class 3, Session 2

The second session of the third class was held at Nick Engelbert's *Grandview* in Hollandale, Wisconsin. The goal for this session was for the participants to experience a vernacular art environment in person. As part of this field trip, one of the volunteers for *Grandview* provided a tour for our group that focused on some of the history of the site and Nick Engelbert's family as well as a description of the objects and paintings on display inside Nick Engelbert's home, which now functions as a small museum.

Following the tour of *Grandview*, the participants gathered in the building used for classes. I reviewed each of the main components of the vernacular art curriculum, pausing after each idea to ask participants if they had any ideas to share. After some initial hesitation, the participants shared examples; some focused on ideas they were thinking of including in their visual journals in response to the ideas of making special and everyday aesthetics, while others were inspired by listening to the responses of others in the class. For example, as participants

shared personal connections related to making special, they began to discuss ways in which they personally create traditional celebrations.

Becca: There are certain things we only make at Christmas time—red velvet cake.

Jessica: Yeah, that's one of the ways we are making special at the wedding is desserts from her family and two desserts from our family—German chocolate cake and pecan pie and crumb cake. So a way of making special rather than just a traditional decorated cake.

The participants continued to discuss how they partook in different types of celebrations and how the ways in which those celebrations had historical backgrounds but were also altered over time and in different contexts. In addition to the review, I had also included some PowerPoint slides that provided examples of making special and everyday aesthetics. The additional making special slides included images of traditional celebrations I thought might help participants make some personal connections to this idea. I also included a few slides depicting how the way we paint our homes or landscape our yards is often dictated by the values embedded in the regions we live in. From this we were able to discuss how it is often hard to see your own everyday aesthetic until you contrast it with something that is different from your own circumstances. This conversation came up in the second class, but for this class I intentionally included images to help support this point and help participants see that it would not be unexpected if they were struggling to come up with personal examples.

For this session and class, I also introduced three vernacular art environments. I discussed Sam Rodia and his *Watt's Towers* and Nek Chand's *Rock Gardens of Chandigarh*. In addition, I introduced Fred Smith's *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, located in the far north region of Wisconsin. Fred Smith (1886-1996) began creating his concrete sculptures at the age of 62, after retiring from over 50 years as a lumberjack. He created around 200 concrete sculptures reflecting regional legends, lore and figures on three acres of land (Umberger, 2007).

During the remainder of the class, participants were given time to work on their visual journals. I had brought all of our materials and tools, including a printer, to this site for participants to continue working with. I noted in my research reflection that participants were once again very active during this time and enthusiastically interacted with one another. During this class, I noted that participants often shared their visual journals with each other, including techniques they were using as they worked with materials. For example, Andrew explained to Gretchen how to use the Shrinky Dink material when she showed interest in his visual journal. For this class, participants also negotiated having a potluck and sharing the work of providing food for the group, which fostered a positive working environment.

Class 3, Session 3

For the final session of Class 3, we returned to the meeting room in Spring Green. At the beginning of class I announced that the first hour and 45 minutes would be set aside for working on their visual journals followed by some time for sharing and discussing. I sensed that there was some apprehension about this and explained to the group that this was just meant to be an informal sharing time, not a formal presentation. I reminded them that they were already quite familiar with each other's work and this would be a time to more fully explain and take in each other's work. Mike still expressed concern about what he was supposed to talk about. I informed the group that they should go through each page of their book and describe it and I would likely ask questions about how they addressed the ideas of making special, everyday aesthetics and vernacular art environments. Mike was the only participant who resisted addressing these ideas in his journal and continued to struggle with creating his visual journal, which might in part explain his continued apprehension about talking about his visual journal. Following this

introduction, the class once again energetically resumed working on their visual journals. There was much discussion between participants as they commented on each other's journal and shared material explorations and personal stories.

Class 3: Reflection on Teaching and Curriculum

The third and final class for this study offered additional insights regarding the curriculum and instruction provided during the *Artist Within*. In the sections that follow, I describe relevant insights based on the researcher's observations during the class sessions and feedback provided by participants on the post-class survey. In particular, observations and feedback were provided in relation to class climate, class discussions, curricular content, teaching strategies, negotiation, art materials and the hands-on art activity, and expectations.

Like the second class, the third offering of the *Artist Within* appeared to have a much better overall climate and energy level than the first class. With seven adult participants, the conversations were diverse and robust, which was also observed during times when participants worked with materials on their visual journals. There was also some familiarity among the participants in this group, which may have contributed to some of the positive climate and easy communication among participants. As before, participants were appreciative of the food that was provided and even opted to have a potluck with everyone bringing something to share during the second session.

Given that this class largely consisted of non-artists, it became important that the climate was fun and validating and that I consistently stated the outcomes would be varied among the participants and not used as some sort of ranking system. In my researcher reflections, I noted that this group was especially concerned about presenting the visual journals at the end of the

class, even though they had been informally sharing their work with each other for the duration of the class. I had to reassure the group that sharing their work at the end of class was not meant to be a critique or a time for judgment, it was an opportunity to see everyone's work and have a culminating conversation around their personal responses to the vernacular art curriculum. While the climate of the class was very positive and supportive, some participants were critical of their own progress. In an informal conversation during a hands-on work period, Katie and Mike discussed their visual journals with each other.

Katie: I like working on my visual journal at home because I feel intimidated by working amongst others in the group.

Mike: [laughing at this]. Mine is not very good.

Katie: Yours is so creative.

Mike: I am just now starting to add the pages.

Katie: Great. So what made you decide to do the branches?

Mike: I like organic forms. And so I was thinking about that. And then I saw your book and was like, oh, Katie's already doing it.

Katie: Well, on one page, but it's not even close to good.

Despite these kinds of conversations within the group, the participants seemed to respond well to the positive feedback and reassurances they received from both their peers and myself as the instructor. Katie, who identified strongly as a non-artist, noted on her post-class survey that her positive response to the class was due to the way it was led by the instructor, "Liz, you are a great teacher and have an excellent way of making people feel comfortable. I'm so glad I took the class!"

In the third class, the participants also responded positively to the opportunity to have discussions around an interesting topic and the feeling that multiple voices and points of view were encouraged and honored. In her post-class survey, Jessica stated,

In this class, I realized that art can take on so many different forms that everyone should be able to interpret something that they consider to be art. I liked that all of our ideas were taken into consideration and that there was no right or wrong answer to what art is meant to be.

Mike also responded positively to the class discussions, “I very much enjoyed being a part of your class. It’s always a plus for me to be able to discuss and debate with people similarly interested.” Like the second class, the participants in this group responded in a strong positive way to the opportunity to have semi-structured discussions around a topic that allowed for varied interpretations and points of view.

Building on the positive feedback regarding class discussions, Ellen also pointed out the constraints of the limited time frame for the class. On her post-class survey, Ellen wrote,

The class was terrific, I am so glad I took it. I wish it was much longer and we could spend more time with each artist and idea. The discussions were really interesting too, especially with people from many different backgrounds who have an appreciation for art, but don’t identify as artists. Thank you!

In both the second and third class, participants noted wanting more time to more fully discuss the topics presented in the class. The participants also mentioned time constraints related to trying to complete their hands-on art projects. Overall, the time commitment for all of the *Artist Within* classes was kept to a minimum because of a worry that adults with busy summer schedules would not be willing to sign up for a class that required too much time. However, the third class was especially limited since it was offered on a Tuesday, then a Sunday, and then the following Tuesday. Given that all of the participants worked on their visual journals outside of class, they would have likely preferred more space between classes. Overall, I think the participants felt

rushed to complete their projects, and three participants expressed worry about the fact that they were unable to finish their visual journals by the end of the class.

Like the previous two classes, the third class of the *Artist Within* used a variety of modes through which the participants explored the vernacular art curriculum, including teacher-created PowerPoint presentations, class discussions, a field trip, and a hands-on activity. The majority of the participants responded positively to the content of the vernacular art curriculum and the variety of teaching methods used to help participants explore that curriculum. For example, in her post-class survey, Jessica stated,

Thank you for presenting art in a way that was interesting and made sense. I enjoyed the discussions and the field trip. My project is still waiting for me and I promise to finish it at some point in time!

This statement indicates that the content of the class was presented in a way that was accessible. This is a particularly important point since Jessica also strongly identified as a non-artist. In addition, Katie noted, “The field trip was a great demonstration and was fun to experience.” Katie continued, “The slideshow at the onset of the course really helped to distinguish and demonstrate how our lives blend with art continually.”

While the presentation of the components of the vernacular art curriculum within distinct categories made the information accessible to participants, it also created an issue similar to what was experienced in the second class when participants started to consider those ideas within the context of their own personal experiences. At this point, the participants realized that real life examples do not fit into easy categories like the way they were presented in the PowerPoint. During our second session, Becca described this struggle as she was trying to work on her visual journal outside of class.

I was thinking about your checklist or your [assignment outline] sheet. I was trying to separate out [the curricular ideas]. You can't. They overlap to a certain extent. So it's like, okay, just forget that and try to put them all together and do whatever kind of works.

While presenting the ideas of the vernacular art curriculum within distinct categories had helped participants initially understand these concepts, I felt I had missed an opportunity to also present these ideas in a more complex and real-life way that would help participants make authentic connections to these ideas through their visual journals.

Negotiation was used in the second class to help provide a more relevant and enjoyable experience for the participants in that group. In the third class, negotiation was not used to necessarily conduct the class since so many participants found the information provided in the class new and seemed content with the plans for the class. However, negotiation was used on an individual basis, especially with Mike, who struggled particularly with the hands-on activity for the class. While his continued frustrations seemed to be an anomaly within the group, negotiations related to Mike's work were discussed openly in the class and would have been recognized as an option for anyone within the group. For example, during a class discussion, Mike shared some of his frustration,

Mike: I am noticing that it is way harder to create something when I am told to create something than when it just comes to me. I am just not having any luck at all.

Liz: I noticed that last week and so I reached out to Mike and explained not to feel confined by the format of the book. Most people need some clear perimeters, but you can certainly negotiate the form that you choose to create. I am hoping that you will work through the content of the class, but am less concerned about the form that takes.

Mike: When you sent me that message, I still wanted to stay with the book, but then having the same experience like, this sucks.

Mike eventually altered his book in a way that was highly innovative and was received by the other participants in the group with a lot of praise. However, he resisted addressing the ideas in the class through his book and admitted openly that he was just going to make up connections

between his book and the content of the class. While my attempts to negotiate a more relevant and engaging exploration with Mike were not necessarily successful, I still felt it was important that the participants in the class understood that negotiation and flexibility were important and I was happy to take a student-centered approach that could be tailored to each participant.

For the third class, all of the materials were once again laid out for participants to work with from the start of the class. As participants in this group entered for the first session, I sensed a bit of apprehension related to the volume of materials available. Additionally, Mike felt the materials and book format had a “scrapbook” feel that he had an aversion to. However, as I observed participants working, I noted a lot of enthusiasm, sharing of ideas and resources among participants, and the capacity for each participant to work with materials given individual mentorship as needed. The board book appeared to be accessible to most participants, although some struggled to completely finish given the time constraints of the class.

A couple of the participants acknowledged that the class was pleasantly different than they expected. Ellen stated on her post-class survey, “I wasn’t exactly sure of the class content when I signed up and was delighted that it focused so much on vernacular art (also love this term).” Like participants in the first and second classes, Ellen was aware of language issues related to how vernacular artists are referenced and was happy that the class was sensitive to this idea. On his post-class survey, Andrew stated simply, “This class rocked! Way better than I expected.” It is unclear from this statement what Andrew’s expectations for the class were, but might have implications about the description provided for the class or perceptions about typical adult classes more generally.

Summary Reflection on Teaching and Curriculum

Across all three classes, a number of overlapping observations emerged as important considerations when reflecting on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum. In each *Artist Within* class, the participants provided feedback or the researcher observed behaviors that provided insights related to the following areas: class climate, form and content of discussions, curricular content, modes of teaching, negotiation, art materials and hands-on activities, student expectations, and time. In Chapter 6, I will discuss findings related to reflecting on my teaching during this study and frame those findings within a broader understanding of adult transformative learning theory, situated learning theory, and democratic education.

Participant Descriptions

To determine transformations that may have occurred for adults participating in the study, a pre-class survey and a pre-class interview were used to establish the adults' demographics, formal and informal art education experiences, and artistic identities prior to experiencing the vernacular art curriculum during the *Artist Within*. In the following sections, I describe this information for each of the participants in the study. The sections that follow are organized according to which class they participated in—Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the participants' perceptions as a result of participating in the vernacular art curriculum.

Participants in Class 1

Judy

Judy: Demographics. Judy, 54, identified as a female who currently resided in a single-family home, where she had lived for the past two years. She identified her current residence as being in a city with a population over 100,000. She had completed a postgraduate degree and was employed in a non-art profession as a university professor.

Judy: Artistic experiences. Judy described having weekly art classes in both elementary and middle school. On the pre-class survey she left the space to list high school art experiences blank. Judy did not report having any art experiences outside of school as a child. She reported taking art courses in college that included a semester each of the following: art education, metals, woodworking, ceramics, and fibers. Judy noted taking a six-session metalsmithing class as an adult, but did not report any art activities that she did on her own.

Judy: Prior artistic identity. On the pre-class survey, Judy gave herself a five out of ten on the artistic identity rating scale. During our in-class discussion, Judy stated, “I had five art classes in college. That’s pretty many. And I sucked at all of them. I liked them; but I was terrible.” Based on class discussions and pre-class survey results, Judy seemed to most closely identify as a non-artist.

Judy: Attitudes about art. During our first class session, Judy described how she might define what art is by stating, “I think of creativity and that being the process and the product. And that’s mainly it. It’s self-expression.”

Judy noted that when it came to artists or works of art, she liked the Impressionists. During an in-class discussion, she stated,

I like the Impressionists. That's what I would always kind of lean toward. And I think, too, of art as writing. I remember in high school we did found poetry. And that just was so amazing to me that you could take something that was just there and really look at it in a totally different way by just looking at phrases.

Judy also came to the class with a limited familiarity with vernacular art environments. She joined the *Artist Within* class with her nephew, John. Her home was located near the home and art environment of Mary Nohl, a celebrated vernacular artist in the Milwaukee area, whose work has also been contested by residents who live near the site. Judy was familiar with this artist and particularly the work her nephew had done creating a documentary film about Mary Nohl. Aside from knowing about the work of Mary Nohl, Judy indicated that learning about other vernacular art environments would be new to her.

Megan

Megan: Demographics. Megan, 50, described herself as a female living in a single-family home in a city of 100,000 or more. She had lived at her current location for 17 years. Megan had obtained a postgraduate degree and was currently working as an art instructor in a K-12 setting.

Megan: Artistic experiences. Megan noted having art classes "once weekly" in elementary school, but was not sure how frequent her art classes were in middle and high school. Megan described having a college degree in painting and drawing and obtaining an art education teaching certificate. As an adult, Megan noted taking many art courses to renew her licensure for teaching art. However, Megan stated that she was "too busy with 'mom' stuff" to pursue art activities on her own as an adult.

Megan: Prior artistic identity. On the pre-class survey, Megan gave herself an eight out of ten on the artistic identity rating scale. While she rated herself quite high on the scale, she discussed some insecurity she had as an artist and art teacher during class sessions. At the end of the first session, Megan stayed after to initiate a conversation with me related to her artistic identity.

Megan: This year I am not going to the Lakefront Festival of the Arts.

Liz: Is there any particular reason?

Megan: It's funny because I like to go there to see the different types of artwork, but then I also get depressed because maybe I don't take the opportunity to create as much as I would like to. Like those people, it is obviously a priority in their life. I tend to make my family a priority. So I thought, you know what, I am just not going to go this year. I don't want to walk away and feel that. You know, feel that I haven't been taking care of my creative needs.

While Megan identified strongly as an artist, she expressed frustration several times during the class about finding a balance between her work as an art teacher, her everyday life and family, and what she felt were traditional expectations of an artist, like prioritizing the creation of art work that could be publically displayed or sold.

John

John: Demographics. John, 24, identified as a male living in a single-family home in a suburb of a city for the past two years. John had completed a four-year college degree and was working as a filmmaker and artist.

John: Artistic experiences. John described taking "general art classes" in both elementary and middle school and additional woodworking classes in middle school. John did not report any art experiences outside of school as a child. In high school, he noted taking

photography for four years and one year of graphic design. He also took a semester each of AP music theory and MIDI production (audio recording and editing). In college, John participated in three semesters of guitar and two and half years of film courses. As an adult, John had participated in jewelry making. In addition, he described pursuing music writing, drawing, painting, film, and creating found object sculptures on his own.

John: Prior artistic identity. On the pre-class survey, John gave himself a ten out of ten on the artistic identity rating scale, indicating that he felt he was very artistic.

John: Attitudes about art. During the first session of class, John described his interpretation of art stating, “I think of art as a process. I think of the process being more important than the product. Maybe.” John’s interest in artistic processes was also connected to a statement he later made regarding his art preferences, “I don’t think I gravitate toward any one person or any kind of particular objects. I don’t know. I like the Surrealist movement a lot. I like the ideas behind Surrealist processes and that kind of thing.” In a later session he continued this idea: “I started thinking about Surrealism not as much like an art movement, but as a process. And that really opened my eyes to what art can be.”

While John did not feel he had specific artist preferences, he did have a special interest in vernacular art environments. He had created a short documentary for a college film course about Mary Nohl, a vernacular environment builder whose cottage home was located in the town where John currently lived. Through this project he had interviewed a number of people who had important knowledge about her work or were extended family members. Creating the documentary had inspired John to more deeply consider different issues related to this type of work. As he described his project to the class, he stated,

Really this is just a fraction of what I learned. I was given a 20-minute limit...But, god, I've learned so much. And it's been a really interesting experience. I didn't know about any of these problems with the community over the last ten years until I started researching. And then that kind of became the focus. You know, originally, I just wanted to do kind of this generic biography on her life and then it turned out like this was the real story and how important the connection to the environment is with her work and making sure it stays there.

John had become quite passionate about Mary Nohl's work, had found some of her pieces at a local antique shop, and was working with JMKAC to return the work to the museum. Nohl's work seemed to inspire his growing interest in vernacular art environments more generally. Overall, John came to the class with a high perception of himself as an artist and a seemingly specific interest related to learning more about vernacular art environments.

Participants in Class 2

Anne

Anne: Demographics. Anne, 69, identified as a female participant who was currently retired from a profession in teaching. While she retired from a non-art profession, teaching primarily high school Spanish, she noted trying to incorporate art into her classroom. Anne stated, "Actually one thing that we didn't have was the most attractive room. There were not any real windows in it. It wasn't really good. So we painted a mural on the wall. So, I did actually [incorporate art], if I could." This attention to the aesthetics of her everyday environment emerged as an important component of Anne's understanding of herself as an artist. While this will be described later in more detail, it is important to note that Anne was a longtime resident of her current home in which she had lived for 33 years. Anne resided on a farm at the edge of the

village of Hollandale, Wisconsin. The village is the location of *Grandview*, the vernacular art environment we used as the site for our class.

Anne: Artistic experiences. Anne indicated that her options for art classes in formal settings were limited by what was offered and what scheduling requirements would allow. Anne described her formal art experiences in the following way:

Well I don't have any formal art education. When I went to grade school the teachers had us do art projects, fun things sometimes, which I always thoroughly enjoyed. But we didn't have an art teacher, an art class per se. When I went to high school there was one art class that was an elective and could only be taken once.

Additionally, Anne described taking limited art classes in college:

When I went to Northern, there wasn't too much wiggle room for extra classes. But I did squeeze in a couple of one or two drawing classes. I don't remember real clearly. I know there was at least one. And that's basically it for any formal art education that I've ever had.

Anne described numerous positive art experiences as an adult. She lived in close proximity to *Grandview*, where the director of education, Marilyn, maintained a steady schedule of art classes described by multiple participants in my study as highly accessible workshop-like classes catering to a variety of skill levels, in addition to being inexpensive, often costing just two dollars. Anne stated, "I enjoy my classes at *Grandview*. I get out there as much as I possibly can, with a busy schedule, learning how to do all kinds of different art projects. It's very varied."

Anne was able to describe numerous projects and classes she participated in at *Grandview*. These included creating handmade paper, decorating gourds, creating lanterns for a local parade, constructing a tree sculpture using wire and marbles, and completing a couple of ceramic projects. I asked Anne if she was selective about which classes she took at *Grandview* and which classes were her favorite:

Well, I don't sign up for anything. I look at the classes that are offered and pick and choose to some degree because I can't be out there generally for everything. I pick and choose...But the ones that I've liked the most were things like Fairy Furniture.

She went on to describe the process of making Fairy Furniture:

I guess I'm kind of always attracted to bird nests and eggs and gourds and things of that nature...Well first of all we made fairy furniture. I think the first class was a little bed and some chairs and things like that. And they are simply made out of cloth and twigs and just stuff. And then after that we made some houses with...it seems to me we used little individual milk cartons and built a house and stuck all these things all over it. So that sticks out in my mind.

The finished pieces, which she pointed out to me on display in her home, were charming assemblages of a variety of materials, primarily natural objects, that represented miniature functional objects like chairs, beds, and houses. Anne indicated that taking the Fairy Furniture class more than once and had constructed a few displays of this work throughout her house. As we looked at the examples of the fairy furniture on display Anne asked me, "See how fun that is? To just use all that stuff." Anne noted enjoying the range of materials provided at *Grandview* in a couple of instances. She pointed out that, particularly with the fairy furniture, she had a desire to just keep making more and that when unable to finish projects in class she would "keep messing" when she got home.

Another class that Anne participated in at *Grandview* involved both a previously forgotten skill and an artmaking craft she would need to revisit to teach it for an upcoming event. Anne described this process in the following excerpt:

And the same lady that taught that [braided rug-making] also showed us how to make these little dolls, out of, well you actually rolled up a little Kleenex, if I remember, for the head. And then you put some string around that. And then you made arms and legs and dressed these dolls the way you wanted to. I guess it's that kind of stuff that I tend to like the very best. In fact there's a class coming up on cornhusk dolls. Years ago a friend of mine and I got into that a little bit and I've kind of forgotten how it's done. But we have a 125th celebration coming up in Hollandale and I'm supposed to show to children down at the library how to use or how to make cornhusk dolls. So I'm looking forward to that

class [laughing], if it's the same lady I think, to remind me how we did those cornhusk dolls.

Anne: Family influences. In addition to the numerous art experiences she took part in at *Grandview*, Anne noted the influence of family on her artistic experiences, particularly through interactions with her mother and grandchildren. Anne noted that art experiences she had on her own were primarily “projects with my grandchildren.” In addition, she added that most classes held at *Grandview* are casual in that they are meant to be attended by all ages and are usually taught to an intergenerational audience so she would participate in these classes alongside her grandchildren.

Anne noted her mother's ability at creating handcrafted objects several times. In the following statement Anne described what she learned from her mother in her adult years:

I was kind of spoiled and my mother could sew, and my mother could knit and my mother could do beautiful kinds of handiwork. She made beautiful handmade quilts. It was a little bit before my time. But she made the most perfect little stitches...Perfect little, tiny, regular stitches. So I was a little spoiled in that she would knit me things or make me things and I didn't come from a big family. But when my mother was dying from cancer I had to spend a lot of time sitting with her and she showed me how to knit. And I just went from there. And so I'm not a fancy, fancy knitter. I can show you an afghan I finished. But I've had a lot of fun over the years making mittens for my boys and then my grandchildren. [Recently] one of my middle sons said, “well mother can't you make them some mittens?” So I enjoy those kind of smaller projects. I have made sweaters and things like that. Experiment around hats.

During our interview, Anne also made connections between her parents' influence and the ways in which she and her husband have maintained their home:

Well I live in kind of an eclectic house. It's just the stuff I like but I guess basically we've always rather liked antiques and old things like that. That interest I guess I inherited from my mother and dad and so it's just a mixture of things. It's not anything very professional or anything. It's just what we like. But it's a blend of just different things.

It was clear that Anne pursued numerous art classes in adulthood and found in *Grandview* a site that provided an accessible artmaking environment for her. In addition to classes held in

Hollandale, Anne participated in extended trips hosted by *Grandview* to other vernacular art environments and classes in Wisconsin. Anne was able to articulate that for her making art was tied to a sense of enjoyment. While she identified numerous art experiences in adulthood that she pursued because they brought her joy, it is important to note that at this point many of these descriptions indicated that she felt what she did was not art, but craft, or some form of making that was less than art. This idea will be addressed in more depth in the sections that follow.

Anne: Attitudes about art. Participants were also asked questions that would provide insights into their familiarity with art and artists during the pre-class interview. During our interview, Anne indicated that living close to *Grandview* had been influential to how she perceived art and primarily discussed works by local artists:

Anne: I didn't know very much about the slightly more primitive art except for I guess most everyone had heard of Grandma Moses. But we have several; well we have *Grandview*, that site with Nick Engelbert. We have this fellow [who] has passed in this area who had painted farm scenery...So that's kind of locally collectable around here. But it's been lots of fun to be by *Grandview*. I'm not going to say that's the kind of art that I really admire. But I have discovered that there's more to it than originally meets the eye. I've come to kind of appreciate it a little more than I might have just on the surface.

Liz: So what kind of things then would you say that you normally would admire?

Anne: Wellbeing that kind of dot the I, cross the T kind of person, I have always admired very fine detail. Drawing and things like that. My husband has a cousin who lives not too far from here who started out in commercial art at the University of Wisconsin and worked in Chicago, I think. And then came back around Madison, which was home. And she is just a tremendous detail artist. So there again...[seemingly alluding to comparisons between her own skills and the skills of this person]. Of course, she will say, she's practiced and practiced and practiced and practiced and is never finished learning and practicing. So I guess traditionally I've always been kind of attracted to that sort of thing. But I don't know. It's hard to define. You just know when you see something, whether you like it or not. I like pottery [pointing to display cabinet]...and, we're lucky to have Mineral Point because it is full of some very skilled artists and artisans.

In the post-class survey, Anne indicated that her understanding of art had shifted based on prior direct experiences with several vernacular art environments:

I have always admired what I perceive as fine art, but I have found (through our trips to Outsider Art locations and to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center) these people and their expressions of art to be very interesting.

This indicated that prior to taking the *Artist Within* class, Anne had already experienced a broadening perception of art based on interactions with vernacular art environments in the area.

Anne: Prior artistic identity. Prior to participating in the *Artist Within*, Anne described herself as a non-artist. On the pre-survey rating scale, which asked participants to circle the number that best described how they identified as an artist (one indicating non-artistic and ten indicating very artistic), Anne circled three. She also drew an arrow pointing from the three to the four, suggesting this might be slightly higher. She was recognized by other members in the class as perhaps being too modest in her views of herself as a non-artist. While describing the art she made for the class, Marilyn, the education director at *Grandview*, teased Anne:

Martha: Keep in mind, this is the woman who has no artistic talent.

Liz: Oh yeah, we know.

Erica: [to Anne] You know what? You have to say you do.

Liz: Eventually she does, I think.

Anne: You'll just have to listen and wait Marilyn. The day I say that...[laughing]

Anne also described moments when her identity as an artist had been influenced by comparisons she made between herself and others and encouragement she had received from teachers:

There was a girl in my grade school and high school class who was terribly talented. And I used to watch her just do so well and think, I can't do that. She's so much better. And she was. Now I don't know what's become of her. I don't think she's become a famous artist. But she was so very good that it did frustrate me...She seemed to be able to just draw very well...I don't think she was looking at things necessarily. She loved to draw horses and had that down very well. And I can remember she made a beautiful horse out of clay and it blew up in the kiln. You know how that goes [laughing]. So that's neither

here nor there. But I guess I was comparing myself to her and perceiving that she was very talented and I could not measure up to that.

In college Anne remembered being encouraged to consider pursuing more studies in art:

I did have one of the drawing teachers encourage me to take more, do more. He seemed satisfied with what I did. But I guess I wasn't sure where I would go with that. Again, I didn't perceive myself as really an artist. And so I simply pursued Spanish as a minor, or I'm sorry, Spanish as a major, we called them in those days, and English as a minor...I liked some things about the English classes, you know, depending on what it was, and other things I thought were rather dull. But that's what I did.

During our interview Anne took me on a tour of her home and pointed out objects she had created or objects she and her husband had collected. They had done numerous renovations in the house, one of which included hiring an artist to create specially carved pieces for their home. My observation at this point was that Anne's home was a significant site for her own meaning making and perhaps an unrealized outlet for creative expression. Despite that Anne described herself as a non-artist, I took note of Anne's displays of numerous objects she had made in her home as an indication of some sense of pride in her abilities as an artist. Anne invited me to tour the objects in her home stating, "I can show you some of this stuff. It's no work of art, but I don't know, when you make something, you're kind of proud of it. It doesn't matter who likes it if you like it, I guess." In my own researcher memos I noted the following:

This idea of being proud of something you make, regardless of what others think, is important. Later, Anne takes me on a tour of her house and all the objects she has made. First, I was amazed by Anne's attention to the way she decorated her home. She likes to collect antiques and these are displayed throughout her home. She has taken care to either choose only really high quality antiques or has had them restored, because these antiques were exquisite and appeared well cared for. While her home still maintained an old farmhouse charm, it was obvious that Anne took pride in updating and maintaining the home. For example, she had beautiful marble countertops in the kitchen. In addition, Anne displayed the objects that she made. The fairy furniture was on neat display on side tables and shelves. The cornhusk dolls were on display in a glass case in an unused bedroom upstairs with other antique dolls that she collected. I took from this a sense that Anne took some pride in this work if she was willing to display these objects in her carefully decorated home.

Participants in this study were asked to describe how they defined art and what it means to be an artist prior to taking to the class. As part of this study, it was my thinking that prior experiences in art that had created narrow definitions of art and artists might also influence how adults constructed their own identities as artists. As I interviewed Anne, she made several connections between how she defined art and artists and her own identity as an artist. Anne stated that “artists and art people have very imaginative minds. They really take off with things right now and I don’t. So it is interesting. There are different kinds of brains and mindsets you know.” In addition, Anne often referred to her own ways of making in a way that suggested she felt these were less significant than other forms of art. She described a club in which she participated in as an adult:

Have you ever heard of the home extension economists? It’s through the University of Wisconsin. Started years ago to educate farmers and farm wives. We have clubs. And so, it’s no big deal. We were learning how to put two colors of paint on the brush and you know...

While describing an object she made in a class at *Grandview* Anne noted, “Well, that’s not a work of art, but it’s a lantern.” She was also careful to make distinctions with the words she used to describe her own artmaking. When asked to describe additional artmaking she did on her own as an adult, Anne noted that she liked to do “handicrafts,” making a distinction between art and craft and how she saw herself fitting within those distinctions.

Caryn

Caryn: Demographics. In her pre-class survey, Caryn, 53, indicated that she had lived in a single-family home in an urban area for fifteen years. Caryn stated that she works as a substitute art teacher in an urban school district and as an art teacher for high school students at a night

school. Despite having a profession connected to visual art and significant educational experiences in art, Caryn communicated real discomfort identifying as an artist and felt profoundly impacted by her experiences in the *Artist Within*.

Caryn: Artistic experiences. Caryn noted that she had limited experiences in art in her formal schooling as a child. She was unable to recall classes in elementary school but was able to remember two art lessons: a foreshortening lesson where students created a drawing of a tree and an apple head puppet. She indicated having no art classes in middle school and quit art in high school following an assignment that required students to create a symmetrical or asymmetrical cut paper design using geometric shapes. Outside of school, Caryn recalled having limited interactions with a great aunt who was a self-taught potter and “mostly kept to herself.”

Despite limited experiences in art as a child, Caryn pursued a Bachelor’s in Fine Arts (BFA) and in college noted experiencing “lots of challenging painting, metals, and clay projects.” Caryn’s college experiences appeared deeply influential to her perception of her identity as an artist in adulthood. This connection will be described more fully in later sections.

Caryn was a participant in the second session of the *Artist Within*, which took place at *Grandview*. Like all the participants in that class, she also had participated as an adult in other classes offered at *Grandview*, particularly ones connected to learning about Outsider Artists. Caryn also indicated taking additional adult art classes at other venues, including a “turning” class and a bead making class at a local stained glass studio. In her pre-class survey, Caryn indicated having limited adult experiences in artmaking that she did on her own and a desire to do more. For this part of the survey she listed, “Jewelry making rarely. I want to sew and do embroidery. I’d like to have more pottery time.”

Caryn: Attitudes about art. In addition to being familiar with *Grandview*, in her visual journal, Caryn indicated being familiar with a number of area vernacular art environments prior to taking the *Artist Within* class. Caryn also made statements indicating familiarity with fine art or that she had visited art sites or museums. While discussing her visual journal Caryn stated, “One of my favorites, just since I was a kid, was the *Café Terrace at Night* by van Gogh.” She also noted that she was familiar with the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and had visited the arts center numerous times. Caryn also described an art experience she had and how she applied it in her teaching:

Caryn: In the Isthmus [newspaper] it said, the monks are making a mandala at the Frank Lloyd Wright church. So we went there and these guys were toiling for two weeks on this sand mandala that was as big as this table is round, a little bigger. It was so cool, and so meticulous and so detailed and earth and fire and ying and yang [excited voice] and everything and then when they were done. You know what they did with it?

Participants: Smear it up [participants indicating they know what happens next].

Caryn: So we begin again. We don’t hang on to stuff. We begin again. And the kids went, Huh! Why did they get rid of it? And I wasn’t completely sure so... [laughing]. I’ll have to research that. That’s my standard answer.

Caryn: Prior artistic identity. On the pre-class survey, Caryn indicated she would identify herself as a three on a scale of ten on the artistic identity rating scale. Caryn made several comments during the class and in her post-class survey that showed her college art experiences had left her conflicted about her identity as an artist, particularly in relation to creating a prolific and coherent body of artwork. For example, Caryn wrote in her post-class survey, “I realize from college I have a trained eye, but still felt like an art slacker.” While discussing her visual journal, Caryn described the artwork of a friend who attended college with her. “He’s doing great in Baltimore. He’s manic-y and it just pours out of him. He made everybody look bad because he would just make, make, make, make, make.” The previous excerpts illustrate ways in which

Caryn's negative perceptions of her artistic identity were connected to definitions of an artist coming from her college art program, particularly dedicated to creating thematic and prolific bodies of work.

Sam

Sam: Demographics. On the pre-class survey, Sam described himself as a 50 year-old male. He currently owned three homes, two of which were located in rural areas and one in a city with a population of 100,000 or more. Sam had completed a four-year college degree and was currently working in an art related field as a middle school art teacher. Sam had worked as an art teacher for 27 years in public schools in both Milwaukee and Madison (large metropolitan areas in Wisconsin).

Sam: Artistic experiences. Sam provided limited descriptions of his art experiences in formal school settings. He noted participating in clay experiences in elementary school and having drawing and painting in middle school. In high school, Sam took classes that provided opportunities for drawing and painting with acrylic, oil, ink and watercolor mediums.

As a child, Sam recalled a significant art experience that occurred outside of a school setting. He described visiting a vernacular art environment that is located in northern Wisconsin with his family.

When I was a kid I was young and I remember going up through Phillips and seeing Freddy Smith's place. I was young. But I was just blown out of my mind. I was about four years old. And I was already freaked about that. Age four. My parents stopped and here's these deer with real antlers stuck in the cement with all these pieces of glass and bottle caps. And I'm asking a million questions, you know, about how it was made. I think I probably even sat on the deer. You know, I've probably got a picture of me when I was a kid sitting on one of Freddy Smith's deer.

Sam continued to express feeling deeply affected by the work of vernacular environment artists throughout the *Artist Within* class, and this early experience indicates the impact of this type of work on him. The only other childhood art experience Sam mentioned was limited participation in Cub Scouts outside of school.

On the pre-class survey, Sam noted participating in a number of art-related college classes including “drawing, painting, printing, sculpture, photography, calligraphy, mixed media, and art education.” Knowing that Sam was particularly interested in the work of vernacular artists, I asked him if this work had been a part of his art education during that time. Sam felt that these artists had been absent from discussion during that time and stated:

No. Vernacular art was not a subject that any of my professors spent any amount of time on. They really didn't. They, I think, considered them to be more naïve. And that's sort of, unfortunately, a negative connotation for people. Like, these are unschooled people creating art objects or works that if they had really gone to college and got a real great education in art they would really maybe become something. But they are toying with it, more or less. Or they're not real bona fide artists, which I never bought into that idea. I think they are as bona fide as anybody else that does art. But my definition of art is probably more expansive than maybe others.

Beyond his college art courses, Sam indicated having “too many to mention in the space provided” when asked to describe art education experiences he had as an adult outside of school. In response to a survey question asking for description of art making activities that he does on his own as an adult Sam stated, “Currently restoring old A.C. tractors.” This indicated to me that Sam did have a broad way of considering what might be an art experience.

Sam: Attitudes about art. During the interview with Sam, I asked him to expand on how he defines art and what he means when he described his personal definition of art as “expansive.” He stated,

I'm just more accepting of people saying, ‘well this is art. I think this is art for this reason.’ I want to hear their reasons. I'll decide myself whether I buy into it or not or

consider it to be an art form. That's based on my own perceptions of what I consider to be art. I think it's so personal for each person. What one person considers being art, another person might consider to be a joke, you know?

He continued by explaining his own struggles with what he considered art and how his understanding of art had changed over time:

And I had my own hurdles when looking at abstract expressionism and trying to buy into the notion [of] this guy named Picasso, who's considered to be the father of modern art. His artwork at times looked childish to some people, including myself for a while, until I really got perspective about what he was trying to achieve and what he was trying to break away from, which is the conformity of realism, you know? He was trying to do something that would stretch the boundaries of doing the same kind of artwork that was considered to be artwork through the centuries—acceptable artwork. It's changing colors and getting into cubism and different color theories—blue and green and pink. He was stretching and making art more accessible to other people who wouldn't be considered, quote unquote, artists. And so he was broadening the definition of what is acceptable art to public people so he's kind of a hero, really.

I asked Sam to expand on what his personal parameters for art might be.

They're out there. I mean they're just wide. They're wide. They're wide as the sky. And they change. They change. They alter. And I like to know ideas. Like why people create. That's just as important to me as anything else because that's the motor. That creative motor that's in us. There's an artist inside all of us. That's what I believe. It's just a matter of awakening him or her and getting you know...things blooming. And it takes a spark, [like] an interest that someone has, and then it catches fire and then you get obsessed with something you know and that can be really good.

From this statement, it is apparent that in addition to having a broad definition of art, Sam also felt that anyone could be an artist in some way. Sam also articulated some clear ideas about what he felt was important about art and how he felt it might impact people.

And then it [art] can be therapeutic, and it very much is therapeutic for a lot of people. It's like [when] we were talking about a lot of [the vernacular environment] artists. If you dig into their back history, a lot of them are a little warped. They had some traumatic experiences in their life and this is a way for them to work through it. It's therapy. And it's great. It helps them make sense of something that doesn't make a lot of sense. Something tragic, something really bad that happened in their life experience, but the art becomes their savior, sort of. It helps them deal with these things.

As an experienced art teacher in K-12 settings, Sam expressed a sense of urgency about the role of art in children's education, particularly in response to policies that were influencing art teachers and requiring art programs to be cut from schools.

Like I said, art is going to bail us out. We've got ourselves in a bit of a mess right now and we're going to need art to get us through this tough time because we're going to need to have some innovative, creative ideas to solve a lot of these problems we have with energy and the planet getting crowded. We're going to need to address it, and it's going to be our creativity that gets us out if we can get ourselves out of it. That's what it's going to take.

During our interview, Sam articulated connections among his feelings about the relevance of art, particularly for producing creative problem solvers who could address 21st century issues, the role of art in schools, and the themes he saw emerging from considering the work of vernacular artists. He began by discussing shifts in his experiences with art and what he felt was considered art.

My experience with the arts from childhood changed and evolved a lot. I see art and what becomes hot and what isn't at times, it fluctuates and changes. And it's influenced a lot by the readiness of society to grasp or tangle with something that's different. I mean, this genre, folk art or outsider art, vernacular art, these are terms that kind of have come down the pike. They've been around certainly for a while, but they're really, I think, taking on some force right now. They're starting to become popular. It's almost sad, I don't want to see them get too popular.

Sam continued by describing how vernacular art might be important to making art more accessible and relevant to people,

But then again I do because the artists are so cool that we don't want to hide them, you know? These are people we need to be sharing with our kids. They're so human and it's so close to the core of our daily living, and that can actually get kids excited because it's more inclusive. When you can do that, when you can make it inclusive to people from all cultures and that, then it can be embraced better. That's where I see the real importance of the vernacular artists—their accessibility and the fact that it's kind of a worldwide application. You see these people that you can say are vernacular artists or naïve, folk artists—they're really among us. They're all of us. They're our next-door neighbor, they're our cousin, they're our aunt, you know, or uncle. Grandparents. They're all around us.

Sam continued by describing why making art accessible is important given the current political climate and its effects on education,

And I think we should embrace it because I want to see the arts stay a central core to humanity because you've really seen unprecedented assault on the arts in the last 12 years in our district...So we need to somehow get through the next decade of money crunches. And it's pervasive, you know, in all different areas. And we've got to survive.

Sam continued by describing why he felt art was important within our education system,

We've got to still be standing on our feet because I believe in the arts. I believe in them as much as anybody can believe in anything as far as helping people in many different ways that go beyond just art. You know, there's the idea of expression. You know, being able to express yourself is really important. We've got a lot of hurdles in the coming decade in terms of meeting scientific research that's going to allow us to produce good energy. It's going to take creativity. And so our kids are going to need that...Freeing creativity in the 21st century to solve world problems. Energy shortages, water shortages, whatever comes. Pollution. And it's going to take creativity to rescue us from ourselves.

Sam: Prior artistic identity. On the pre-class survey, Sam rated himself as an eight out of ten on the artistic identity scale. This indicated that Sam identified strongly as an artist. He also explained that he felt it was necessary to remain humble about his artistic identity given his beliefs about sources of artistic talents.

I try to be personally very humble about the idea or notion of being an artist because I see art being something that's more divine. It's something that comes. It's already within you and you do these things, but they're propelled by, partly, the divine power, but partly your will too. So there's kind of several prongs, so to speak, about artistry. I try as an artist to remain humble about whatever abilities I do and don't have. What I can say is that I love imparting whatever skills God gave me to other people. I get a lot of joy out of watching others get those ah ha moments or a self-discovery where they find something that they really enjoy and excites them. I like being a part of that. That means seeing young people learn and get those moments where it's like, wow, this is really cool. You get that buzz where there's just a lot of nervous excitement going on and working. Or you get a still quiet or it can even be chaos, you know, a little bit of chaos. But I like that kind of interaction with my students.

I asked Sam if he would consider his teaching a form of art. He connected this idea to his use of storytelling to engage his students in learning.

Oh, yeah. There's an art to teaching. And that is to allow my kids to get good information, great information actually. And interjecting stories. The kids want to hear stories. They, like all of us, are somewhat suckers for a really good story, and the neat thing about my stories is that they're true. I find quirky stories about artists because I'm interested in it and the kids can feel my interest. So once they see our passion for what we teach then it's contagious. And then the end result is good. You know? And so that's kind of how I approach it. I do a lot of storytelling. I give enough information and background and the kids can take it in different directions. I emphasize and talk a lot about product, but process is important too. They are equally important and they both need to be there. I don't care if the balance is fifty/fifty. It might be 70% process on one project and you know 30% percent product in the other, but there's got to be those two elements in there. And function and form. I want kids to be thinking about those things too as they're creating stuff, you know—what drives them. And I like them to see the stories of other artists and what drove them.

In addition to creative experiences that might be an inherent part of his teaching, I asked Sam how much time he devoted to creating his own art.

The daily life takes over a lot of our purpose. As far as me creating art, I'm limited by a certain degree of time that I have. If I didn't do the profession I do, I know that I'd be doing it all the time. But since I do it for my living and I teach it and give that to others, I think that unfortunately my own artwork I don't do as often as I'd like to. And because I find myself kind of mentally exhausted a lot of times at the end of the day you need to really not be feeling exhausted to be creative. I need to have some time to be with my thoughts to come up with some thought provoking things that would really inspire me to stay focused.

Despite the limitations of time, Sam was able to describe his artmaking preferences when he is able to create art.

But yes, I mean I do produce artwork. And I think the things I produce are inspired by natural forces of man or natural forces of nature. And then the shaping of the earth by natural forces of weather. And the natural things that live here. Our animals, our plants. That kind of thing inspires me. And I see that as coming from a divine thing. So a lot of my inspiration is already in the divine. That which God created, I can relate to or respond to. And I can see the beauty in it.

I asked Sam to expand on the limitations of time that influenced his own artmaking and whether he felt fulfilled artistically or was missing something because of this limitation. In

response to this question, Sam described ideas he had for artmaking that he was excited about and hoping to pursue in the near future.

No, no. I have unfinished business. You have other aspects of your life, you know, being a father, being a husband, being a friend to others. There's not as much time right now in my life to create as I'd like to have. But that's still a good problem to have because I have something to look forward to if I'm fortunate enough to retire from this profession. I have a retirement or have some time on my hands in the future. I see myself as producing, actually getting really much more serious than I've ever been since back when I was in college, to actually start producing stuff again. I was very prolific when I was in college at producing artwork, of all different mediums.

I asked Sam to elaborate on the kinds of artmaking he was hoping to pursue in the future. He described hoping to pursue art endeavors similar to the vernacular art environments that he found so inspiring.

I might pursue something like that [vernacular art environments]. I'm definitely intrigued by it, I'm definitely thinking about it. I just like that quirky stuff. I like it. For example, I play fast pitch in Madison on Tuesday nights and if the parking lot fills you have to park on the street. And there are these people that have this home that's probably about a thousand square feet max, maybe 900 square feet, but in their front yard is a monster chicken. It's a plastic chicken. I don't know if this thing was on top of a factory. It's just monstrous. It's literally like 10 feet tall and probably about three feet wide or four feet wide and it's just a monster rooster chicken in their front yard. It's so weird and so out of place. It's right in their front yard. And no one's vandalized it. It's been there for now, probably about, I don't know, four or five years.

He continued,

Well I'm gonna do something probably crazy like that. A little bit crazy...I don't know if I want to go too farfetched because I have a lot of guys out there in the area. I don't want to offend the locals because they're going to vandalize it or shoot it up and have a good laugh over that. People out there—they know who's from out of town and who's not, you know. So I have to be cognizant of that. Even though I've been out there for 20 years, it takes a long time to overcome the city slicker thing...those stigmas are hard to overcome. It takes a long time to get accepted.

Sam was able to make comparisons between his own concerns and the stories he had heard about the intersections of the community with a local art environment that he was familiar with.

Society sometimes has a way of not accepting some things. And I mean obviously you look at Nick [Engelbert] and his wife here and they were kind of outcasts. They were doing this stuff a little bit before it was more accepted or recognized as art forms. So people around here probably wrote them off as eccentric, strange, or whatever. And now we talk about them with great affection. But there was probably a time when people might have resented some of this stuff. So each community is what it is. And I don't see any kind of art like this out by where I am right now, so I'm not sure how well it'd be perceived, but I don't really care. Being an artist is kind of 'do what I want to do anyways' and if somebody doesn't like it it's too bad I guess. So I'm not looking to offend anybody. It's just the way that I express myself. And if someone doesn't like it they'll let me know. Tip it over or blow it up. Shoot holes in it. So, I'll know pretty fast where I stand with it. It's just the way it is you know. It's the truth.

Sarah

Sarah: Demographics. Sarah described herself as a 43-year-old, female. She had lived for 20 years in a single-family home in a small town with a population of less than 5,000. Sarah had completed a four-year college degree and worked in an art-related profession as an elementary art teacher for K-5 students.

Although Sarah noted that she "fell into teaching on accident," she described her job as an art teacher as one that she really treasured.

I teach K-5. And it is just the best job in the world. I feel so fortunate to get up every morning and do something that I love to do and look forward to it and laugh every day and have fun. And do something positive and get paid for it...I think some days [positive gesture] and other days it's like hhhhhh, they can't pay me enough to put up with that kid anymore. But truly, it's fun. Fun way to live life I guess.

Sarah described being discouraged by advisors in the college where she got her teaching license that art teaching jobs would be "few and far between." Sarah stated,

I had five job opportunities. Four interviews and three offers. And I have this fantastic job I love, and I discovered at that age that I'm really good with people. I'm really good with kids. And I have a passion for art and just sharing it with other people is what I was meant to do.

At the time of our interview, Sarah had been teaching art for 19 years.

Sarah: Artistic experiences. Sarah recalled having art classes once a week in elementary school in class sessions that were approximately 45 minutes long. In first and second grade Sarah reported that these art classes took place in the general classroom, while in third through fifth grade, classes were held in a designated art room. In seventh and eighth grade, Sarah reported having nine weeks of art instruction each year with daily one-hour sessions. During our pre-class interview, Sarah described telling her own art students about her experiences as a child in art class and how this compared to her current teaching philosophy. I asked her if there was anything particular she remembered about her elementary art experiences.

Just that I couldn't wait to do it every week. Even in high school I really couldn't wait to do it because it just felt good to do it. And I did have a teacher in elementary school who wanted everybody to cut the Santa Claus the same way. And I love to tell my students of the times I got yelled at for not doing the art right. And I love to tell the kids, because it's really funny now. But I had an art teacher that didn't like it when I went ahead and did things before she told me to. I didn't like that either when I first started teaching. But that's because I had this plan and I'm trying to follow this plan. Now, you know, it's ok, I've relaxed. You know I remember the times when I didn't do it right. But I still remember things I did [in elementary school]. I still recall some of the projects I did and how satisfying they were. It was so satisfying. And I wonder if everyday people do stuff that feels that satisfying. I don't know. They're lucky if they do.

Sarah also described taking art classes daily throughout her four years of high school. She noted that while this was a positive experience, the program was focused nearly exclusively on developing realistic rendering skills, which she felt did not fully prepare her for a wider range of meaning making through art. Sarah also obtained a Bachelor's of Fine Arts in college. When I asked her to describe what she learned in college in detail, she began by returning to what she learned in high school.

I can't say I learned a lot, which I really hate to admit to most people. But, you know I came from a high school where the teacher focused on realism. You know you take this photo and you draw it exactly as it is. Black and white. And then the next semester we're going to take this and do it in color. No creativity. Never learned about artists. Never learned about art movements. Didn't know anything.

Sarah felt her art learning in high school had prepared her very well to render realistic images.

She stated,

By gosh, I learned how to draw and paint realistically, I'll tell you that. And I am darn good at it. I am really, really, really, good at it. But it's kind of a chore to do it. My [husband] says, why don't you paint wild life paintings? Why don't you paint deer and sell them? And I could. But you know [indicating disinterest]. It was fun, it just always felt good. And I shined at it. I was good at it, you know.

Sarah described how this narrow focus on rendering skills in high school contributed to struggles as she continued through her art studies in college.

And then I got to college and I learned...art history was very helpful because I learned for the first time who all these artists were. I didn't know who Picasso was when I was a senior in high school. Isn't that crazy? Or Monet. And I remember going to the Chicago Art Institute on a senior class trip and seeing the haystacks, Monet's haystacks, and going, these are stupid. Didn't know what his point was. Didn't know how to appreciate art and of course all those art history courses taught me how to appreciate art. And gave me the ability to pick and choose what I liked, what motivated me, and turned me on and moved me, and what didn't. But how to still appreciate what you don't like. That's neat.

She continued by describing how college introduced her to basic principles of design.

[In college] I learned the basics. I learned what the elements and principles of design were. So I started to understand some of the concepts you need to think about when you're creating a piece of art. I was just creating art in high school and not really knowing what I was creating. Not knowing how to talk about it.

Sarah then went on to describe how a narrow focus on basic art skills in high school had not prepared her well for creating art in college that included personal ideas or concepts.

There were never any conceptual ideas introduced in high school. So then when the very basics were over in college, we were just told to paint and draw. And I was in with a bunch of really artsy...kids who just had ideas. And they would just paint! And I'm still learning about color theory and what to do with things. And I've picked up more at Grandview, talking and learning with other artists, than I can say I learned in four years of college. One of [the professors] said, start painting. He walked in the first day and said, this is painting whatever, paint. See you in a couple of weeks. I'd show up at the class time and nobody would be there, but I'd show up anyway and paint. And I remember going into his office and saying to him, what do I paint? This is painting one...And he was kind of disgusted. He said, well you know you should have some ideas. So I started

with ideas and concepts that were important to me at the time and they were very trite. They were what I should have been doing in high school. Be that as it may, it was a weird experience.

She continued by describing connecting with other people who had similar college experiences with art.

But then I was talking to the Dodgeville art teacher and the Monroe art teacher, two people that I met. And we had taken a *Wandering Wisconsin* class a couple of summers ago and they had both had very similar experiences. And then I took a class with another lady who taught us some acrylic painting. Took it with one of the art teachers and she said the same thing. It was very common in the 80s, you know, for people to get art degrees and just paint. But I wanted more, and I pursued more, and I asked questions and took a lot more classes. I learned more, and that just made me feel really good. You know—relieved.

Outside of school, Sarah noted that her art experiences as a child were self-directed versus taking place in class settings. On the pre-class survey she stated, “As a young child, only self-directed. Whatever I could get my hands on. [Participated in] 4-H, but self-directed as well. Nothing ever offered that I knew of.”

As an adult, Sarah noted that time and family commitments only allowed her to create art on a “small scale” on her own. She noted that as an adult some of the art she created on her own as an adult included, “draw[ings], cut paper designs, origami, altered/folded book collages, yarn and felt dolls.” She also noted that she would “play with gourds and other found objects.”

Sarah described participating in a number of art classes as an adult. These experiences primarily took place at *Grandview*, a vernacular art environment with a foundation that cares for the site and also coordinates art classes for children and adults. On the pre-class survey she stated, “*Grandview* is where I began when my father was asked to teach a class and needed help. I have networked through *Grandview* and take local classes in Southwest Wisconsin with friends

when I can.” Sarah described *Grandview* as a place that she felt was accessible, comfortable, and offered classes for which the cost was very minimal and not inhibiting.

Sarah: The art classes that I have taken throughout the years for fun have been with friends that I’ve met through *Grandview*. And we’ve branched out and done a little bit here and there. But, I don’t have time right now with kids so that’s what I love about *Grandview*. It’s five minutes away and cheap and close to home.

Liz: Yeah, I think the one class I took was two dollars.

Sarah: Yep, they’re all two bucks. We tell people and they don’t believe me. They’re really two bucks...And then, like I said, the other things I’ve done when I can find the time have been with friends that I’ve met there. The other art teachers around the area. It’s just been a great way to network.

Sarah continued by describing how the art classes at *Grandview* created an environment that was accessible to people with a broad range of art experiences.

Sarah: I love how this has just opened up art for anybody. It’s just really neat. And it’s so not intimidating. For two bucks. You don’t have to call ahead. I think it’s brought people...it’s within their comfort zone. For two bucks, must not be that serious, I can go do it. Because it’s funny how intimidated people get about making art, you know?

Liz: Do some people who do not consider themselves artists often show up for the classes? Have you noticed?

Sarah: I think most of the people that come don’t consider themselves artists. It’s moms and women who like to craft, who just like to make. To make and need a direction. And that is one thing about me and I assume you, we don’t necessarily need a direction, but we’re not tortured like I said with all these ideas...But, yeah, I think it’s a mix. Yeah, I think there are a lot of just women. There are a lot of moms who know their kids love this stuff. And older ladies who already are crafters. Who sew and do all kinds of wonderful things, but just want to branch out. It’s fun to watch people discover that they’re creative or more creative than they thought. I think that we get all kinds. So it’s a different atmosphere than something like in Mineral Point where the classes are more expensive. I think sometimes people are just intimidated to get involved in stuff like that.

Sarah was able to describe numerous art classes she had taken at *Grandview* over the years. Themes that ran through her descriptions included that these classes were “fun” and involved ideas that she was excited about trying in her own teaching. Sarah had recently attended

a gourd decorating class, and she and her son had also participated in a handmade paper class.

Additional classes she mentioned included

Bracelet making... We did pinhole cameras one day. That was a hoot. Eve, the Dodgeville art teacher, and I taught the cake boxes. We co-taught that together the last couple weeks. Took a day to make them and a day to paint them, which was a blast. And the day we painted them we all brought cake. We made cakes. So you have to have cake when you're painting cake. That was fun.

Additional classes Sarah mentioned incorporated found object assemblages based on the work of outsider artists, a lesson she planned on using with her own students. She also participated in a basket making class, which she described as being taught by "a local Blanchardville lady, who's not an artist, but make baskets." Sarah went on to describe other art classes she participated in at *Grandview*: Ukrainian egg dying, woodworking projects offered by her dad, and fairy furniture.

She described the fairy furniture class and instructor,

Her name is Tatiana. She has a website. She's just this gorgeous, strange woman. And she does the most beautiful, intricate, fairy houses. And we did that a few years. That was a riot. I have an entire box of fairy furniture downstairs that every now and then I take out and display for part of the summer to see if something happens. Just fun, fun stuff.

Sarah also described recently attending an art class at a site other than *Grandview* where she and a co-worker participated in a workshop on drawing exercises called Zentangles. She enthusiastically described for me the details of the class and Zentangle process. Eventually, the point she noted that she wanted to make about this experience was her ability to empathize with the instructor of the class, who was not a teacher, but had been trained to teach the Zentangle process. She stated,

So my whole point when I brought this up was that my friend and I were just laughing at the end of it because we're teachers and we were all excited. 'Oh, isn't this fun. Oh, yours looks better than mine. Oh I need my glasses.' There were like ten other people, and they were all old and they were so serious.

She continued,

Like they didn't talk and they didn't joke. Nobody said anything. And I could tell the instructor was getting a little nervous. Because, I can't remember what she does for a living, but she said, I've really come a long way in being able to call myself an artist...So then I could tell, but she's been trained. She went to the Zentangle School out in California, which sounds really fun. So I was making jokes with her because her hand was starting to shake. And nobody else was joking or picking up on it with my friend and I.

Sarah brought this idea back around to her experiences at *Grandview* and why she felt they were so positive,

That's what I like about *Grandview*, everybody's just huhhhh...relaxed. 'Oh yours is great, oh yours too.' Which is how my classroom is. So you know I'm not the stuffy [type]. I don't like that atmosphere.

Sarah: Teaching art. Sarah noted discrepancies between her current philosophy and practices teaching art and her previous experiences as an art student.

Well it's so different than it was when I was in school. We did a lot of really cookie cutter things back in the 70s that centered around holidays and things like that. And less on artists. I was never exposed to artists in elementary school at all. Not in high school either, but at least in high school we were using fine arts tools. Now, I'm a self-taught teacher, is what I tell myself. I was never given a curriculum...And that has taken years of figuring out, but I talk about artists and concepts and tools and ideas all rolled up into each project. And the kids come away with a real sense of art and excitement. My classroom is full of emotion and passion because I love it.

She described a particular component of her curriculum associated with art and holidays.

And I do incorporate holidays more than I used to...I was kind of trained to go on what I did as a child. I didn't have a very extensive art methods class...And kids were saying, 'Oh, we did this in the classroom, we want to make art.' And now, as the curriculum has become so demanding, teachers are coming to me and saying, do you have time to do some jack-o-lanterns and do some symmetry? So I'm starting to reincorporate that. And the kids love it and you can make it artistic. You don't have to make it cookie cutter. I mean we don't make Santa Clauses. And the kids love to make things for people. You know at Christmas time or Easter, to take something beautiful home. Or Mother's Day. And that's why I like to do art too, I'm so motivated to do art for other people and kids like to do it for other people. And it is just a win, win.

Sarah was able to articulate challenges within the education system that had brought her back to including art lessons that incorporated holidays. In contrast to her own experiences in school,

Sarah noted the difference is that she makes conscious efforts to do this in a way that is not “cookie cutter” and still allows students room for diverse outcomes.

Sarah: Attitudes about art. During our pre-class interview, I asked Sarah to explicitly state how she defined art.

If I had to say what is art, if I had to answer that question...Like, what is art to me? Art is world peace, no [stated jokingly]. Well I guess art, first and foremost to me, is something that makes the world more beautiful. And I know that sounds really cheesy. But I guess that’s my favorite kind. I can think of a lot of 20th century, modern artists, art males, who would be pull on me. It’s definitely a way to express other than in words. It makes important statements about anything. Your emotions, your feelings, politics, your heritage, the future, it’s just a way to tell a story. It’s a way to express. And for me it just makes the world a better place. It’s everywhere.

While Sarah’s initial statement about art suggested that it was something “beautiful,” she added additional ideas connected to communication of meaning and broad ideas of where art can be found.

As someone trained to teach and create art, Sarah demonstrated a deep knowledge of artists, art processes, and formal design strategies. When asked to describe specific art lessons she does with her students, she stated,

I can’t even narrow one down. There’s so many I have fun with. I talk about Wayne Thiebaud. Do you know who he is? He is a current, present-day [artist]...He’s American and he paints cakes and bakeries lined up in deli cases. He’s really interested in the geometry and the composition of things and the way the light falls on the different cylindrical and triangle shapes.

Sarah described using this artist’s work to engage K-5 students in ceramic and drawing lessons. She described teaching students art making skills, including, overlapping, color mixing, and creating the illusion of space, and illustrating her understanding of how to introduce a range of artmaking techniques appropriate for the developmental level of her students. Throughout our

interview, Sarah used vocabulary and artist examples that illustrated she had a developed knowledge of art and art processes.

Sarah also demonstrated familiarity with the vernacular art environments that we considered as part of this class.

And *Grandview* just has, you know, the whole place just has a special little place in my heart because I just grew up driving past it all those years and hearing my dad talk about it. He worked for Nick Engelbert when he was a boy. And so it's just kind of a neat place. It's good memories from my childhood of being a part of home.

In addition to *Grandview*, Sarah noted having visited other vernacular art environments located in Wisconsin, including Tom Every's, *Forevertron* and *The Painted Forest*.

Sarah: Prior artistic identity. Sarah rated herself a ten out of ten on the artistic identity rating scale on the pre-class survey, indicating that she felt that she was very artistic. During the pre-class interview, I asked Sarah to further describe how she identified as an artist.

Well I do consider myself an artist. That's something that's always been a passion. It was funny, I was thinking about this before you came and I always go back to a day on the bus in Kindergarten waiting for it to take us home. I remember just thinking, and who knows where I got the idea, but I remember thinking I'm going to be an artist when I grow up. That's what I want to do. And you know, when you were my age back then you were either a teacher or a nurse. I remember later on somebody asking us what we wanted to be when we grew up and every girl said teacher or nurse, and me, being very shy, I just said teacher because I thought the teacher would like it. ...But I always knew I had talent in it [art] and wanted to pursue it.

Sarah was able to identify an early interest in art and knowledge of her talent and potential identity as an artist. However, she also articulated insecurities that arose as she began to navigate her identity as an artist as an adult.

I really didn't know what to do with it [college degree in art]. And since then I've talked to a lot of people my age, much to my relief, who had the same experience as I did. Where you were just thrown into these painting and drawing classes in college and you were told to create. And I really struggled with that because I don't have a bunch of ideas inside that need to come out that I can take to shows and sell. I don't work that way.

Sarah seemed to struggle with her identity as an artist, feeling that an artist should prolifically express personal as the purpose of selling his/her work.

So then I really struggled for many years with—well, am I really an artist? Because I just really like to dabble in it and I'm good at showing kids concepts. But then you know working at *Grandview*, and I started working there about 10 years ago, that really was what kind of brought me out and made me comfortable saying, yeah, I'm an artist. And I've met a lot of teachers and artsy people that have said the same kind of thing. So it's kind of nice to know that I'm not alone. So now I can comfortably say that. And I really kind of owe it all to *Grandview* because it's this local place where I can go and just enjoy and do art the way I want to do it. Because I love it. It just makes me happy.

I asked Sarah to clarify what it was about *Grandview* that had been so influential.

The atmosphere. The people. Martha. I tell her sometimes, you've been my mentor. You know you've just brought me around full circle and made me realize that I can truly call myself an artist. And not feel silly or like I'm not really one because I'm not an elite fine artist, you know? When I go to *Grandview* we're all artists and all having fun and laughing. And you meet people who take their own art very seriously and they're very introverted and they're private and they're kind of elitist. It's just like any area of life. There are all kinds of us, but, that's just kind of made me feel comfortable in my skin about it I guess. And, so that's where I'm at now.

She continued,

And that's why I was looking forward to Saturday [our class] too. Talking about, what is art? What do you consider art? Because I've been through that too. I've had teachers say, well what do you do? Well, I'm just, everything. Well you have to do something. One teacher said to me years ago, well every art teacher does something on the side. Well I don't have time to do anything on the side for one thing. I don't have that drive. But yet, I've been making art my whole life. In the form of birthday cards and poems. And it's all original. And it all came from my heart. And that, like I said, that's a good way to live. It's a healthy way to live. And it's the way that kids feel about their art. That's the way they create.

Erica

Erica: Demographics. On the pre-class survey, Erica, 60, described herself as a female.

She had lived in her current single-family home for the past 13 years, and on this current rural property location for the past 19 years. She had worked as an instructor teaching graphic design

classes at the college level and had also worked as a graphic designer. She had recently returned to school to get certified to teach art in K-12 settings and was currently looking for a position to teach art.

Erica: Artistic experiences. During our pre-class interview, Erica described numerous art experiences as a child and adult. Erica compared and contrasted formal and informal experiences with art as a child. When asked to describe her art education experiences as a child, Erica began by describing an influential television program that included instruction in art.

Erica: [I remember] sitting and watching John Gnagy. As a little kid, that was when we got a television, which was a big deal for us...And I sat and watched John Gnagy and I was so amazed. He had this wonderful goatee. And he would make this scene so it wasn't just regular lines, and then he would shade it and give it depth. And to me that was the most amazing thing and mom realized what a big deal this was for me so she bought me a John Gnagy [art] set. And I still have the little stump and a few pieces of the chalk. Unfortunately our house burnt, so the book burnt. But mom found one at an auction or a garage sale or someplace and so she gave me another copy of the book. Do you know John Gnagy?

Liz: No. I know Bob Ross, but not John Gnagy.

Erica: Oh, Bob Ross is way after him, and his little trees and what not...So John Gnagy would have been my time. But he was wonderful because it was on television of all things. What an amazing thing of how they used television.

Liz: So, would you actually sit and kind of do it with him?

Erica: Absolutely. I just was amazed.

I acknowledged that this was not what I had expected Erica to describe when I asked her about her early art education experiences. She continued,

It was because I went to a parochial school. The thing was that they had us color coloring pages and I wanted my own paper to draw my own lines. We had fights, the nuns and I, and this was not a good thing. They gave me a C because I was not a compliant child. But at the same time they also gave us modeling clay. And I loved that because you'd bring it out, you'd make something and then you'd pound it all back together and put it back in your desk. So it wasn't precious. And you could make something new. And that was wonderful.

Erica also described her father's interest in performing arts as an influential informal art experience.

Erica: Well, interestingly enough, my dad is into plays. He took my mom to things like Shakespeare plays. To find out that, here he was, he only made it to the 6th grade, because he was required to work on [his] father's farm. And so they didn't have the opportunity, but he loved reading and he loved you know...

Liz: So does art kind of trickle down in your family? Or are you an outsider?

Erica: I would say that all my siblings have a real strong artistic bent.

On the pre-class survey, Erica indicated having art "45 minutes every day" in high school. In our pre-class interview, Erica noted that she participated in a lot of art in high school. She followed this by describing poignant informal experiences during that time of her life stating, "And I made jewelry. My aunts and uncles and I just made presents of all sorts. I sold a carving, painted, did all kinds of stuff." Erica noted that this experience was especially important to her because she struggled with dyslexia in school during a time when she felt the disorder was not well understood. While Erica was able to recall art experiences in formal education settings, she returned repeatedly to informal experiences that allowed her to pursue art in self-motivated and individualized ways.

In college, Erica continued to pursue experiences and education in art. During her pre-class interview she described her rationale for choices made during this time related to her continuing education and career.

In 1970, I went to school in Madison at the university there in art. I started off in art education and I thought, I don't know if I really want to do this because I hated school. So I didn't. I went and took art. Well, then after pursuing art activities for quite a while and then thinking, okay, I want to have a family and this is really hard. So I got into graphic design, plus, I got into computers and books. I love books. So it was kind of a fun thing. I worked with a multicultural publisher, which was great fun. I didn't make lots of money, but it was great fun. Then, because I saw that the things he [my boss] was doing

were killing the business I kind of worked my way into catalogue work as a graphic designer. And that was fine. It got too intense. The [understanding was], oh, we have computers now, you can do more work, get more accomplished. I realized I didn't care that much about convincing people to buy things. So I had an opportunity and I worked for about a year and a half at [Herzig] College.

She continued,

They were then going from college to university and I did not have an MFA or even a master's and it was like, uh, oh well. Then I decided to go to Platteville and get my certification in art ed. I thought, okay, here we are. We're gonna make the circle and go back to the original idea. By then, I had figured out all the things to do with my dyslexia, which is normal for many art people. I decided we'll do this because about a third of the students I had for college students did not have adequate training in art. So I thought if I can do this maybe I can help. So now, it's really hard to find a job and I have to stay within driving distance. So I don't know if I'll find anything.

In addition to teaching college level design classes, Erica described teaching art workshops or volunteering to teach art lessons at her kid's school and other venues as a side job.

Erica also described participating in numerous informal art experiences as an adult. She described recently getting glass beads and creating jewelry with her daughter. She also stated,

I'm working on a graphic design project for someone so I'm working on a book for someone. So, you know, lots of projects going on...I've probably taken zillions of classes. You know, all over. Something that interested me. I took paper making and glass blowing out west because you couldn't do that as an undergrad at Madison. I went and took classes at Edgewood and got to put on a show there.

Erica's descriptions indicated that art experiences continued to be an integral part of her life and something that she pursued in her career and as a source of enjoyment.

Erica: Attitudes about art. In addition to her familiarity with artmaking practices, Erica seemed to have a well-established knowledge of artists and art historical contexts. During our pre-class interview, I asked her to describe any favorite artists she had.

Oh, there are so many artists. It depends on what...I mean there's so many. I love strong women artists. And so I think early on Kathe Kollwitz was one of my very favorites. I loved her strength and her just I was amazed by her.

Erica came to the class knowing about vernacular art environments and had visited a number of the Wisconsin sites. She suggested that the information provided in the class about vernacular art environments would likely not be new to her. During our pre-class interview, Erica recalled a childhood memory related to a visit to *Grandview*.

And actually, my dad was going to an auction and I was with him, and I was very young. I saw this place [Grandview] and we stopped. We parked our car close to where the [statues of] monkeys are. And it was beautiful. The flowers. And I actually saw him [Nick Engelbert] walking from the house to the barn. This was not here [the art shed] and it was different. It was gravel here. And it was different. There were lots and lots of the fence with the cement on it. [It was] kind of all over. But it was an amazing thing to see and my dad believed in gawking.

When asked to describe her definition of art, Erica noted, “the definitions out there have gotten very broad,” indicating that she sensed a shift in academic ways of defining art. She continued by stating that her personal definition of art “probably was always broad.” Erica seemed to have a fairly established personal definition of art that she repeated a few times during the class. During the pre-class interview she stated,

Art for me was really about communication...extremely so. And for me it's not so much about selling it and getting all of that. It was really for me. It was to find out how I felt. What did I think about something. I didn't really discover how I felt about things deeply until I actually did art. And then I could look at it and go, ohh, that's why.

Erica: Prior artistic identity. On the pre-class survey, Erica identified herself as a ten on the artistic identity rating scale, indicating that she felt she was very artistic. When asked if she would identify as an artist, Erica stated, “Well, I am definitely an artist.” During our pre-class interview, Erica described how she learned to justify identifying as an artist.

Well, the thing is I probably had mixed feelings about, are you an artist if you can't make a living at it? And I realized, no, that doesn't mean anything. Because there were a lot of artists who never made a living from it who are considered artists. So I guess that didn't matter.

Erica pursued degrees in art related fields and worked as a graphic designer and an art instructor. Here she claimed that she was still able to define herself as an artist despite not making a living at it. Despite having a broad definition of art, the assumption could be that Erica is still framing an artist as someone who makes a living from selling his or her personal work, and she was able to resist that idea and still identify as an artist.

Participants in Class 3

Becca

Becca: Demographics. Becca, 54, identified as a female who had lived in her current, single family home in a small town (participant identified as population 5000-10,000) for the past twenty years. Becca works in a non-art related job as a program specialist for the United States Department of Agriculture. During our pre-class interview, Becca described how her job had initially allowed her time to utilize her interest in photography in the field but had transitioned over the years into a “desk” job:

Well, most of my time is spent in the office. I’m at the desk. I used to be able to get out in the field and do neat things and take photographs and do things like that. I like photography. I’ve always done a fair amount of that. Mostly plants and you know that kind of thing.

Becca noted that she has a Bachelor’s in Geography. She continued to describe her entry into her current job in the following way:

I was thinking about land use more like planning, you know, urban planning or something. And there were just no jobs. And I got a job with the Wisconsin DNR doing mapping. And then went from mapping to working with a state agency to a federal agency and I’ve been with a couple of different USDA agencies for more than 27, 28 years. So I did a lot of outdoor [work]. Started with outside fieldwork. You know, you can go up the line and you end up at a desk. So that’s where I am now.

Becca: Artistic experiences. Becca had limited memory of her art experiences as a child.

When asked to describe any formal art educational experiences, she stated,

Just the basic elementary school art classes, you know, everybody has. The only thing different I did, in about sixth or seventh grade I took a pottery class from a professor out at the campus in Richland Center...Well it was art. It was drawing and pottery, and we did all kinds of art.

Becca was unable to remember if dedicated art teachers taught her art classes in school or if the classroom teacher taught art lessons. She also could not identify any memorable art lessons from school. Becca did note “that’s a long time ago so.” While she did recall having weekly art classes in elementary and middle school, she did not take any art in high school. Outside of formal school settings, Becca recalled being encouraged to do art as a child by her parents and stated, “I was always making things. Just out of cardboard boxes and oatmeal boxes or whatever. I was always putting things together. So, yeah. [My parents] encouraged that.” Although she pursued a non-art major in college, Becca indicated taking an art history class.

As an adult, Becca described participating in a number of art experiences, either in a class format or in a self-directed way. She was particularly interested in photography and described multiple ways she had pursued this medium:

It was mostly just experimentation. Just, you know. I guess I did take a photography class through continuing education too, but it really wasn’t...it didn’t turn out to be what I expected or what I wanted or whatever. So it’s just been basically hit or miss. I just take a lot of pictures.

Becca described her creation of photographs as recreational, and during our pre-class interview she stated, “I probably photograph plants more than anything because of the...some of it because of work. Just because the pictures I have are kind of a record of what I was looking at. Outdoor things.” Becca also included some of her personal photographs in her visual journal and described taking “a lot of pictures.”

In addition, Becca noted in her pre-class survey that as an adult she had taken classes in drawing, watercolor, oil painting, metalwork, and rosemaling. During the pre-class interview Becca briefly described the metalwork class and stated, “Working with metals, like cutting and using the acetylene torch. That was kind of fun. The high school shop teacher taught that. That was the last thing I did so that was fun.” Becca was especially fond of a class on the traditional art of rosemaling she took at a Norwegian folk center about 40 miles from her home:

[Rosemaling is] basically a decorative art that Norwegians did on all their woodenware. Plates and everyday utilitarian things and mostly now it’s just decorative plates you might hang on the wall or something. It’s very scrolled, and it’s hard to describe.

She continued, “It’s just decorative. And there’s different kinds, like I said, with the different parts of Norway [there are] different ways of doing it. Some are way more elaborate than others and it’s just beautiful work.” Becca also described the hands-on learning she did as part of the rosemaling class:

We were just learning the techniques of the brushwork and filling the brush with the paint. It’s kind of multicolored. And how to form all the different leaves and flowers and patterns that are typical of that kind of rosemaling. We didn’t actually do a piece like a plate or anything. We were just learning the techniques. So now I would like to do the next [step] you know. Take some more and actually start to paint something.

Becca described wanting to be able to take the rosemaling class again, but stated that the art center had not offered it in a couple of years. Becca also followed up on this conversation, in which I had indicated not being familiar with the art form, and brought a book on rosemaling to one of our class sessions to share with the class and me.

Becca: Attitudes about art. When asked directly how she defined art, Becca struggled to articulate a response:

Oh, gosh. [long pause] I don’t know. I’m not sure I can put it into words you know. It’s just...It is hard. I’m not even sure I can...where to start I guess. It’s as much of how

something makes you feel as much as anything, you know. Just, get a good feeling about, you know, a painting or a sculpture or something.

She also stated, “I guess, just off the top of my head, probably the first thing that comes [to mind] is painting. But, you know, art is everywhere. So it’s hard to pick one thing.” I asked Becca to expand on her statement that art is everywhere, and she continued, “Oh, yeah. Whether it’s hanging on the wall or a building or whatever...furniture, you know. Everything’s designed somehow. Some things look better than others and work better than others.”

In this way, Becca came to the *Artist Within* class already making some connections between art and everyday life. In her post-class survey, Becca would indicate that this was an area of her understanding that did not change during the class. Becca stated, “I don’t feel that my perception has changed. I always felt that art was a little word with an endless definition. It is something personal and individual.” She continued, “I realize art is everywhere, whether it’s hanging on a wall or a well-designed building or a beautifully laid table at Christmas—it’s all around.”

Becca seemed to have a clearer idea about who makes art or the definition of an artist. In the pre-class interview Becca stated, “I think anybody can make art. I think it’s not so much talent as this ability and wanting to do it. The desire to do it I guess. I think anybody can be an artist, deep down.” This sentiment was also repeated in her post-class survey. In my research notes I indicated, “In contrast to the hesitation or struggle to answer some of the previous questions, Becca did not hesitate to answer this question regarding who can be an artist.”

Becca: Prior artistic identity. On the pre-survey artistic identity rating scale Becca placed herself directly in the middle as a five. During the pre-class interview, Becca expressed some comfort and interest in art, but resisted identifying as an artist. Becca stated, “I don’t know if I

identify...well, I can't say I strongly identify myself as an artist. I just enjoy art and I enjoy doing art once in a while and you know learning more about it." Like Anne, Becca also displayed some of the artwork she had created in her home. During the pre-class interview, Becca stated, "Well I have a watercolor painting on my wall. My husband got it framed and put it up in the living room, that I did, which is, you know, that's fine." In my researcher notes I mentioned the following about this exchange: "Here Becca laughed modestly—inferring perhaps she thinks it is silly or being shy about her work being framed and displayed in this way." In addition, Becca mentioned displaying a couple of her metal artwork creations on her porch. I took the use of display as an indication of some pride or confidence about the artwork that had been created.

For Becca, much of her struggle seemed to be less about interest in art or confidence in her abilities but lack of time to devote to pursuing her developing interests in creating art:

I always enjoyed, I don't know what the right word is, maybe dabbling. I'm never very serious about anything, you know, except maybe photography as much as anything. I just did more picture-taking probably more than anything else. Since being an adult, I've taken several art classes over the years. So I've gotten more into that. I never did a lot outside of the class. Once I got through with the class it was, you know, hard to do it yourself.

During the pre-class interview Becca continued to address the idea of follow through in relation to her artmaking and nearing retirement:

I thought I had time to do it but I really didn't. But now, maybe I'll have time to do it. I think as I move toward getting closer, anyway, in the near future, that I would retire from working that at that time...I'll need something to keep me busy. As trivial as that might sound, but that's really true. I'll have time to do more things.

Becca noted that with more time she would still like to pursue more art classes, as opposed to working independently. She was particularly interested in taking ceramic classes, in addition to the rosemaking classes previously mentioned:

Like I said, I did like pottery and that's something that you know you wish you had the equipment to do. There were pottery classes at the campus that the continuing education gave, but I could never fit it into my schedule. So, that is one thing I wish I could do more with I guess. Maybe more than the other things.

Jessica

Jessica: Demographics. Jessica described herself as a 62 year-old female. On her pre-class survey she noted that she had lived in the same single family home for the past 23 years in a small town (population less than 5,000). Jessica had attained a bachelor's degree and completed some graduate degree work. She worked in a non-art profession as a Kindergarten and first grade multi-age classroom teacher.

As a classroom teacher, Jessica saw few connections between her profession and her art experiences as an adult. In the pre-class survey, Jessica stated that the only art experiences she had as an adult "would be doing 'art' projects with young children." The quotations here indicated that she questioned whether these projects would qualify as art. Jessica noted that she had taken required classes in teaching art in elementary settings, but that this experience had been "not great." She continued,

But you know, every school has an art teacher. Well most schools have art teachers. So it really isn't that big of an issue. And now that I'm teaching younger kids, you know, what I can do and show them to do is what they need.

While Jessica did not feel her limited abilities in art inhibited her teaching, she did recognize the importance of having art experiences in her classroom. She continued,

I've had some kids over the years and I'd like to know what they are doing now because they were so good at art. And I have a little boy right now. I had him last year when he was in kindergarten and now he's a first grader. He'll sit and he'll draw. He's not a very good reader and he struggles with academic things. But you watch him draw and he could just sit and draw and draw and draw. And you know it was just something he has that he

could do. And then there are the other ones that are the really good readers and they can color really well and everything is perfect. But they're not particularly artistic. You know, they can do what's given to them but not create anything that's particularly interesting. So it's just what happens with them. What they are good at.

She continued by explaining how this influenced her own teaching,

And I find my role is just to promote whatever...help them with what they need help in, but also help promote what they are good at. So if they're good at art then give them opportunities to draw so they at least are...so the kid that's not a very good reader, you know, but he can really draw. Let's promote some of the things you're really good at. Hopefully the reading, I mean obviously you need to read, but hopefully the reading will come. At least he's got something that he can excel at and feel good about himself.

I asked Jessica if she integrated art into her classroom and she stated,

Well, I try to. You know I do as well...I'm not very artistic particularly. So, you know. I do as much as I can. They have art once a week with the elementary art teacher and then we do a lot of projects in the room. I'm not helpful for the best example of what to do in art. You know, we just do what we can do.

Jessica's statements indicated that she values art experiences for her students and feels that her own limitations in art do not necessarily interfere with her ability to integrate art at a kindergarten or first grade level.

Jessica: Artistic experiences. Jessica described having very limited experiences in art as a child. In her pre-class survey she noted having art in elementary school "maybe once a week." During an interview Jessica stated, "I don't remember at all...I don't know if it was just that I wasn't interested. I don't really remember any particular experience in art as a child." When asked about secondary art classes Jessica stated, "I didn't take art. No, I took music. I was in the choir, band, and all that, but not art." During our interview, Jessica began to make correlations between her experiences in art and her confidence or identity as an artist,

Everybody has to have their niche, their talent. And that's [art] not my talent. Not that I'm not interested in it. Not that I don't like it. I just can't do it. Or maybe I could if I maybe had a different kind of upbringing. Or, not upbringing, but different experience in school. If I had a different experience in school maybe I would have. I don't know. I went the music route. Not that I'm really musical. You know, did the band and the choir and

all that kind of route. I can't even remember if I took an art class. I don't think I did. I don't think I ever thought I could. So you know some of it's maybe confidence too. What you can and can't do. But some people are just naturally good at it. They're just good at it. And I'm not.

Additionally, Jessica did not recall any art experiences outside of school as a child. In our pre-class interview, I asked Jessica if her family influenced any of her early experiences in art:

Liz: What about your family? Were they [artists]?

Jessica: No.

Liz: So what kind of hobbies or things did they prefer?

Jessica: My mom sewed. So that was her kind of thing. But as far as art, no. My dad worked all the time. His thing was gardening.

Liz: Did you inherit either of those skills, the gardening or...

Jessica: The sewing. No I really don't sew very much [laughing]. I'm the black sheep in the family.

Liz: Oh really. Everybody in your family sewed?

Jessica: Yep. I can, but I don't really like it. Probably if anything I inherited the ability to do gardening kinds of things. I did not get the sewing gene. My mom sewed and baked and canned things you know from the garden and did all that kind of stuff. You know the kind of a typical mom of that [generation].

It is important to note that Jessica is the sister of Becca, another participant in the class, who reported being encouraged to do art at home and felt she was always creating something. Jessica described feeling that Becca was the more artistic sibling in her family.

Jessica: Well I know Becca has taken art...she's probably the better artist of the three of us in the family. She's taken some art classes and has a painting that she did that she has in her house. I don't know if she told you about it or not.

Liz: She told me about it. Maybe she was too modest about what she did.

Jessica: No, it's nice.

Liz: Yeah. She did mention the watercolor.

Jessica: Yeah. She took a watercolor [class]. There was a watercolor class at Richland Center. I think that's where it was. I've thought about doing things like that you know because they offer watercolor classes and different art classes here. Maybe when I retire. I don't know [laughing]. Am I ready for that kind of stress? And maybe that's part of it, I just feel like I'm incompetent.

Jessica: Prior artistic identity and attitudes about art. Jessica gave herself a three out of ten on the artistic identity rating scale. When asked if she would identify as an artist Jessica stated, "No. I don't think I would call myself an artist at all." She altered this assertion a little bit by noting, "I mean I can do some things, especially, if I'm given a [pattern]. But I'm not particularly...I mean I'm creative in some ways, but not artistically creative." Jessica's perspective about herself as an artist prior to experiencing the vernacular art curriculum often correlated with her perceptions about art and artists more generally. It was difficult to unweave many of Jessica's statements about art more generally and her identity as an artist. For this reason I have combined her statements about her identity as an artist and her attitudes about art.

When asked to define what art or an artist is, Jessica was most capable of describing them as something that did not include her. When asked to define art Jessica stated, "That I'm not. Oh my god. Something other people do. Wishing I could when I see people paint. Or do something you do or Bella does, I wish I could. But I can't. I mean, well, can't...I tell my kids [referring to her students] never say can't, say I'll try." She continued,

You know I tell them, I said, you're better artists than I. I guess that's the thing. I never considered myself...I can't do art. I mean I can't draw, I can't. So you just think that you're not artistic. But, I guess there are other things besides just the drawing kind of art. But you know, I don't do pottery. You know, there's so many people that are...I wish I had that much [indicating a small amount with her fingers] of somebody's artistic ability. But I think you have to inherit that from somewhere.

When asked to describe an artist or who makes art, Jessica predictably stated, “Somebody that’s not me.” Jessica seemed to feel that artistic ability or talent was something that was innate or inherited and she had not been gifted with natural artistic tendencies.

Jessica repeatedly made distinctions between art and craft and felt that what she did was more closely connected to craft. In the pre-survey, Jessica stated about art activities she did on her own. “I do more ‘craft’ projects rather than what I would consider ‘art.’ However, maybe I do more art than I think.” This idea was also addressed in the pre-class interview.

Liz: In adulthood do you have any informal experiences or classes?

Jessica: Not really.

Liz: What about this craft group you were talking about?

Jessica: Craft group? Ooooh. Well I stitched. I did cross-stitching and that stuff years ago. It’s turned into more just drinking. There’s not much crafting involved anymore. Actually, I would say, if I do anything I would be more interested in doing craft stuff than art. Something I can see and do rather than something I have to try and [come up with].

Liz: So is that how you would distinguish between the two?

Jessica: I think so. Yeah.

Liz: So you’re comfortable going into a Michaels?

Jessica: Yeah. And if I see it, like in pictures, you know I can go online and see all that stuff that they do. And I think, ‘Oh, yeah. I can do that.’

Liz: So did you guys ever do any art activities? Or did you just hit the wine right away?

Jessica: Yeah, no. Years ago a lot of people cross-stitched. That was kind of the thing to do. And then once in a while someone would see something in a magazine and get all the stuff together for...you know. But it’s all gathered, it’s not really art. It’s more a craft. And so on Halloween—decorate, or fall—decorate. Something that had to do with fall to put in your house. So it’s you know it’s more that than art I think. I certainly didn’t create it on my own. None of us did. And now it’s more just every now and then get together and chat. Nobody really cares anymore.

Liz: Do you still do that then?

Jessica: Yeah. We get together once a month. It's been going on for years. Years and years.

In addition to art or craft activities that Jessica participated in, she noted some experiences in which she viewed or purchased art. Jessica indicated that she and her husband did like to attend local art events, particularly theatre or music events. She also had visited art museums in her travels and described some of these experiences.

Jessica: Yeah. Like when we go to New York to visit Sarah. Madeleine and I went in July. We went to the....let's see, Jeff and I went to a museum of contemporary art.

Liz: The MoMA?

Jessica: Yeah. In February we went to the...

Liz: The Met?

Jessica: Yeah. Yes.

Liz: The Metropolitan Museum?

Jessica: Yeah. But not the Guggenheim. Yeah, the Metropolitan Museum. And I really liked [that]. At some point you get to like, this is enough. And there's some art I really like looking at and other things, wooh.

Liz: So what would those be?

Jessica: Well I don't really like the really modern like...the really abstract kind of art. And I also don't like...I like looking at it for a while, but like the Renaissance, you know and the women holding the babies and the angels and stuff, you know. That's ok for a while but that's enough of that.

Liz: So what falls in between?

Jessica: Yeah, in between those two. I have a hard time remembering names of artists.

Liz: Like Impressionists?

Jessica: Yeah, some of that. But I don't know, there's some art that's created that like, I just don't get it. It just doesn't do it for me. But there's some that's beautiful. I like Picasso, you know, some of Picasso's things. There's just some really neat art out there.

Also some that I really like that aren't in museums, so. Which I'm sure you do too. Yeah, everybody has their style, I guess, so to speak. So yeah, we've gone to quite a few museums as we've travelled around.

In response to questions about her artistic preferences, Jessica continued to make distinctions between objects that she liked and things she perceived as real "art." I knew that Jessica and her family had recently visited Costa Rica and asked if she viewed art when she traveled there. Jean noted,

Well, where we were last we went into the town and there really wasn't...there was one gift shop we finally found that we all bought some [things] there. But nothing that really stood out. I have a cutting board, well a board with ceramic tiles on it, it's painted all the, you know different things. You know, birds, the toucan. Which is art, but not a painting so to speak.

Jessica seemed to be indicating that in asking her to describe art she saw while travelling I would be referring to traditional art objects, like painting. This theme also emerged when I asked Jessica to describe the objects she liked and displayed in her home:

Well it's funny because some of the things, like one of the things I really like is an American Players Theatre thing I got at a For Pete's Sake auction. [It is] the renderings that they have of the costumes. So the costume designers make their rendering and then they donated them to For Pete's Sake. So I've got them. The first one, the one I really like, I got four or five years ago, and had it framed and that's one of my favorite things. It's one of the characters from one of the plays here. But I had it framed and I just like it and I bought two more this year...I guess I just like things that I like.

Following this statement, I asked if she had a favorite piece of art, and she struggled to articulate how she would categorize the object she previously mentioned:

Jessica: Well, I mean, that's not really art. Well I'm sure they consider themselves artists since they're drawing. Well they are artists, but...I don't know that I could pick out one. There's certain things...the trouble is I see them and I think, Oh, I love it. And then later on I think, what one was that? I kind of like *Starry Night*.

Liz: The van Gogh piece?

Jessica: The van Gogh. I like stuff like that. I think it's just cool.

Liz: Where did you learn about that one? Did you learn about it from the museum or from reproductions?

Jessica: I don't know. I think I've just known about it and I've seen it. And with kids [I] learn a little bit more of that. The art teacher last year did something with that with the kids. I actually have a cutting board that has that picture on it. I don't know, I just kind of like it.

Liz: I do too.

Jessica: Yeah, it's just kind of...it's a neat representation. Then there's his, van Gogh did the sunflower, right?

Liz: Yep.

Jessica: I used to have sunflowers in a different part of my decoration. And so I like some of his sunflower pieces.

Here, Jessica resisted citing the renderings of costume design as art and instead described a very renowned painting as a favorite art object. The ways in which Jessica defined art and artists appeared important in shaping her identity as an artist and are revisited by her in her reflection on the *Artist Within* class.

Ellen

Ellen: Demographics. Ellen described herself as a 36 year-old female. She had lived in her current home, which was a renovated one-room rural schoolhouse, for the past six years. She had attained a four-year college degree in theatre and was currently working as a box office manager and education coordinator for a local theatre company and as a studio manager for a commercial photographer. While Ellen's work did not require creating art, she seemed to take jobs that kept her close to the arts. She stated,

I ushered at APT [local theatre company] before and thought, oh, this place is really cool. I'd like to come back here. And so I came back maybe two years after I finished college and then I worked at APT off and on. I've worked in retail and then I also worked

managing a photography studio, a commercial photography studio that did catwalk photography.

I asked Ellen if she actually did the photography.

So I was the studio manager. So I put together crews of people. And then we would have these fabulous lunches sort of. So I would get those all set up with people who were coming in to cook. And then also did kind of material sourcing and production because we were doing photography for The Guild, which is an art catalogue...So we were doing sort of environmental shots to put pieces in a location and give people an idea of what to do with them...So some of it was location and some of it was building sets there. So when we were building sets at the studio then I helped with that. Putting together things that the designers had drawn.

Ellen described how working as a manager in a retail environment had been an inspiration to her and had influenced her artistic identity.

There have been people throughout my life who I have been very inspired by, either things that they're making or sort of their style of doing things. Like, I worked managing a tabletop store. And the woman who owned that business had a very distinct style of presentation of the items there that was very artfully presented. And a very definite color palette...so I think that her eye and ideas of things probably influenced me from having spent time with her. And it sort of influenced my taste. And there have been a couple of people like that in my life.

Ellen seemed to draw inspiration for her own artistic identity from working jobs that were art-related where she was able to identify creative persons or actions.

Ellen: Artistic experiences. In elementary school, Ellen went to a Waldorf school where she felt art was very much a part of the overall educational experience.

Ellen: It's similar to Montessori. It's very hands on and art is sort of incorporated into everything you do. You don't have books for any of your subjects. The teacher is illustrating on the chalkboard and then you're illustrating your own book while they're teaching it. And yeah, pretty much all the projects that you do for class you're illustrating things or you're actively involved in the project itself. And there's always music every day and lots of hands-on learning. And painting. Vocal music. Instrumental music.

Liz: And was that a choice, obviously a choice your parents made? Was there a reason for that?

Ellen: They were sort of doing the back to the land thing. And there were a group of people in that area that wanted to start alternative schools for their kids. So they got involved in that. They were a part of the original group that started that school and my mom was familiar with that style of education from having lived in England.

Liz: Do you think that's influenced how you learn and navigate?

Ellen: Yeah, I think so. I think it kind of influenced my idea that art is all over the place. That it's just sort of part of everyday life. And of course you appreciate that and of course anybody can make something.

I continued by asking Ellen if her high school experience had been similar to the experiences she had in elementary school.

Ellen: I went to public high school. So I had art classes there. And music there. But they were a little more like, Ok, we're gonna make a picture. And here's how you make a picture. You take a photograph from a magazine and you lay a grid over it, and then you can copy from the grid onto a larger scale grid and make that picture [mocking tone]. So it was that kind of thing.

Liz: And so it sounds like that wasn't necessarily pleasant for you?

Ellen: Well it's not as inspiring. Where [students are] just, "ok, I guess" [timid voice].

Ellen did note that she continued to take art classes throughout high school despite how it differed from her experiences at a Waldorf elementary school.

In addition to formal high school art experiences, Ellen made note of an art-related job that she had at that time.

Ellen: And then the other thing that I did in high school was, my job was working for a potter who made Ocarina whistles...They are a tube instrument that plays an octave and they're made out of clay. Some of them are turned on a wheel and some of them are pressed. But I spent a lot of time in their clay studio helping clean them up or press them into the shapes or get them ready for various markets. They did like Renaissance fairs and art fairs and stuff like that.

Liz: Oh, that's fascinating. So did you like that kind of process?

Ellen: Yeah. It was fun. It was not necessarily creative but it was part of making things and yeah, I don't know. They had birds that were specific songbirds.

In college, Ellen noted taking a number of theatre classes, but also took fiber art, an introductory art class, and a feminist art class. She described her college art experiences in the following way:

Ellen: I had some art classes in college. Just like beginning design and then I had some fiber arts classes. And my school had a weaving shop that I worked in for a year. It was all production weaving.

Liz: So what's the difference between production weaving and art fibers?

Ellen: Well the production weaving, the school had a store and so it was all set as far as what you were going to make. Like they had a catalogue of traditional Appalachian craft. And so it was established; the patterns that you were going to make, baby blankets. Or you were going to be weaving place mats or whatever it was that you were working on at the time.

Liz: And then you were able to take a class that was more like you could choose?

Ellen: Right. You could choose what you were going to make. And it was a textile class so there was some dyeing. It was kind of a broad sampler of textiles. So there were some embellishment and some dyeing techniques. And sort of batik and a little bit of screen printing. And then there was some weaving. So it was kind of across the spectrum.

Ellen noted that she had taken pottery classes outside of school as a child and an adult. As an adult, Ellen included quilting, knitting, and cooking as art making activities that she did on her own. Here, Ellen seems to reinforce what she previously stated about how her elementary experiences influenced her ideas about art; she did seem to accept that art was part of her everyday experiences, which might include activities like cooking or knitting. In addition to these activities, Ellen described also initiating and organizing the display of artwork near where she lived.

Ellen: Well we had a group in Spring Green, maybe five or six years ago, Swiss Miss. And we curated an art show in the convent. APT has a convent in Plain and they house people there in the summertime. But in the fall we were able to use that space as a gallery. And we wanted to have something that corresponded with the fall art tour that goes through the area. What we were seeing was that we knew a lot of people who were artists, but didn't necessarily have a studio that they could open to the public. Or didn't

have a large enough body of work that they would be able to present. And so we were able to feature those people at the convent show. We did that for two years and that was really fun. We were able to sort of branch out and do things that maybe wouldn't be included in the fall art tour, like installation art and video art.

Liz: Oh, that sounds great. And did you have any work in that show then?

Ellen: No. No. Support of [other artists].

During our interview and throughout the pre-class survey, Ellen's descriptions indicated that she had both diverse and rich experiences in art and that she continued to pursue art endeavors as an adult.

Ellen: Attitudes about art. It was evident that prior to taking the *Artist Within* class, Ellen defined art in a broad way and was very familiar with art in general, including a deep familiarity with the vernacular art environments. During the pre-class interview, I asked Ellen how she defined art:

How do you define it? I don't know. I guess the thing is everybody likes different kinds of art. Techniques that are really structured appeal to some people. And there are so many different types of art. I guess it's people interpreting things in new ways. Materials. And sort of making a representation of an idea or a feeling or...but there are also people who just photograph straight on literal things. And some people love that too.

Ellen continued,

The other thing is there's a fine line too I think between crafts and art. And some people I think are really anti-craft. And I think that some crafts can be very well done and there are also some art where there's lots of craftsmanship to it. Where it's like, ok, clearly that person has mad skills and can paint something that looks exactly like a photograph. It doesn't appeal to me, but I can appreciate skills that go into it. I don't think that I want to say that it's not art. I just say, well, ok, it's not for me but I guess other people really get excited by that kind of thing, so...I guess I'm pretty broad and like, sure! It's all in here. There's something for everybody. Some people like, it some people don't.

I asked Ellen to describe where she fell on the craft and art continuum and if she felt she was accepting of craft as art.

I dooooo. It's hard to draw a line because there are some things that are pretty crafty. Are they art? I don't know. I mean there are some craft things that are like, is a scarf art? I

don't think that, maybe not. But then there are some scarves out there that are very sculptural and not your traditional...maybe you're making craft and you are taking it in sort of a new form and using it more as sculpture. Or there are craft things like embroidery where people will do things where it's almost painted. And so it kind of blurs that line a lot. I guess I kind of like it when people do blur that line. It's interesting to blend the two. And I certainly appreciate the skill level that goes into creating that. Ellen acknowledged in our interview that while she might have limits to what she would

describe as art, she was open to others' perspectives. This idea was revisited when Ellen

described how judgments are made about art:

Ellen: Again I think that there are probably different avenues or groups of people...it depends. If you're in an academic setting I think that it gets defined differently than if you're a judge at the arts and crafts fair. And maybe some of it is just popular vote. People, lots of people, are getting excited about something. It kind of depends on what it is that you're looking at.

Liz: So context is important?

Ellen: Yeah. I mean. There are people that make [wacky] Packer stuff and they're a Packer fan. And they're like, wow this is art. Whereas I would sort of tend to be like, mmmm, I don't know. But those people love it and it's great for them.

Ellen described a variety of experiences viewing art in museum settings. During our pre-class interview she stated,

I've been to things in Madison and Chicago. And then I was in France for a couple of weeks and got an opportunity to see a number of museums. I remember going to the Pompidou Center and seeing modern art for the first time and just being like, this six by eight blue canvas is supposed to be art? I'm so confused. It was so weird. I was also sixteen at the time. But I think that's good because after that it was like, hmmm. And I guess maybe sort of what I'm talking about with academic or more art institutions. That they might present something like that and you hadn't necessarily thought about art that way.

She continued,

I also was in France later when I was in college and got to go to Arles where van Gogh painted a lot of things. And there was a museum there that had tribute pieces of other artists that had either been influenced by his style of painting or his color palette or the area. And so I thought that was really cool, as far as museum experiences.

In addition to museum experiences, Ellen described being very familiar with vernacular art environments and had visited a number of these art sites. She noted that as she traveled she liked to seek out museums, art installations and visit outsider artists.

We just went up to Bayfield and I finally got a chance to see the concrete park in Phillips, which I've been wanting to see for a long time so I was pretty excited...It was great. I had no idea that there were so many figures there. And it was cool because we had a chance to go in the afternoon and we had a chance to go in the morning and all the glass pieces and stuff were completely different and it just had a different feel to it.

I asked Ellen if there were any other favorite art sites she had visited.

Well a lot of them are sort of sculptural like that. So we went to the Garden of Eden in Lucas, Kansas. We were on a road trip and we were like, well we can swing [to] western Kansas. And last year, Mark and I went to the Heidelberg project in Detroit...It was interesting. And the man who created it was there and he was really interested in engaging people and was out on the street and just like, 'Hey, I'm so glad you came. Get out and wander around.' And it's kind of weird because it's in Detroit and it's in a whole area of abandoned buildings and things are falling in. He's watched it fall apart throughout his life. Then he decided he was going to make something out of it. So that was cool.

The region in which this study took place has a number of vernacular art environments that can be researched and visited. Most of the participants in the class were unfamiliar with this group of artists, including sites that were nearby. However, I was intrigued by Ellen's familiarity with vernacular art environments and asked her where this interest came from.

My mom. She likes it. So she always had us stop at the Dickeyville Grotto when we were kids on our way south to Missouri to visit grandparents. She would be like, 'Alright, stopping off here.'

I asked Ellen if she could describe a personal favorite work of art. For this she indicated a nearby vernacular art environment and a more traditional fine art form.

Ellen: A favorite piece of art. I like the sculptures a lot at Dr. Evermor's. I think those are really inspired. I think that it's really clever how he's taken things and completely transformed them. I'm liking abstract art more, like as I get older. I just like that it leaves a little room for your imagination or catches you in different ways. When you look at it you see different things in the piece.

Liz: Where do you see abstract art? Like in a museum or just locally?

Ellen: Well, I've noticed that the pieces of art that I've bought have been more abstract art lately. And I'm thinking, hmm, ok, I never would have thought that I would like that. But now, maybe something about the colors of it too. Or the composition. But for some reason it's just really pleasing to me. Because it can change maybe? Things you are noticing in it.

Liz: I was going to go back to Dr. Evermor. You mentioned his cleverness. Do you know his story or are you attracted to what you see?

Ellen: I don't really know his story. So yeah, it's mostly what I've seen and I just like the idea that you can take discarded scissor shears that are all rusty and make them into this beautiful bird. Transform them so they are no longer these rusty, cast off pieces.

From our conversations, it appeared that Ellen had a familiarity with a wide range of art forms, both within museum settings and as vernacular art sites. This wide range of art preferences seemed to coincide with her belief that art is a part of everyday life. To this point, Ellen stated,

Ellen: I appreciate going to museums and things like that. But I also like it mixed in with everyday life. I don't think it should just be this separate thing where you're like, oh, ok, we'll go to museums to see art. It's not part of decorating your house or how you think about laying out your garden. Mix it all in there.

Liz: Do you feel that allows you to appreciate the artists' environments?

Ellen: I think so. Just interesting things that people have decided to do. And a lot of it is just materials on hand or to represent what they see around them. Like the person in Phillips, I think his are a lot of local history of logging and the north woods. It was stories that he was hearing around him. And he was illiterate, but he could sculpt things. And he wanted to represent these stories and share them with other people. And he had a bar so he had a lot of glass on hand so mix it all in there. Pre-recycling just, we'll recycle it into people. It will be great. So I think that's inspiring.

Ellen: Prior artistic identity. Prior to taking the *Artist Within* class, Ellen gave herself a five on the artistic identity rating scale. When asked whether she identified as an artist Ellen stated, "Um, no. I don't. I don't. But I like to make things. I like to knit. I like to have a beautiful home. I like to create projects and stuff like that, but I don't necessarily identify as an artist."

Ellen noted that her mom had been an influence on her artistic interests, but she also stated that her mom would not identify as an artist.

She's like me. She doesn't identify as an artist. She just makes stuff. She's a really accomplished quilter and knitter and she's taught a lot of kids handiwork. And she has friends who are artists. And she has collaborated with them on projects. But, yeah, she's good at finding materials and going to them and being like, I found this. You should make something out of it. I thought you'd like it.

Despite a range of art experiences, a broad way of thinking about art, and an interest in viewing art, Ellen resisted identifying as an artist. I asked Ellen to tell me how she defined an artist.

I think maybe passion about something and dedication to pursuing that. And maybe continuing education. Not necessarily formal, but...I have a friend who is an artist and she's always sort of pursuing new techniques and new ideas and maybe new color palettes and just...sort of a hunger to keep growing in whatever it is they are passionate about creating.

Ellen's definition of an artist did not provide sufficient cues for why she maintained a non-artist identity.

Katie

Katie: Demographics. Katie described herself as a 37-year-old female who had lived in the same rural, single-family home for the past 11 years. She had earned an associate's degree and currently worked in a non-art profession as Director of Operations at the home of a renowned architect that was located in the area. Although some people might consider this an historic art site, Katie's connection to the site seemed to be less art related. In response to an interview question regarding whether she related to the artistic aspect of the site where she worked, Katie stated,

I really don't. Sometimes I wish I did. I feel like it's too much of my day-to-day stuff that I forget where I'm working. I forget what our mission is. I forget, you know, it just becomes that grueling, mundane, work. And the personalities of some people get too

close and too much in your way. But when I go on the estate, the times that I get over there, that's when I realize, oh wow, god this is beautiful. And we're so fortunate to live and work here. But yeah, that doesn't happen on a day-to-day basis by any means.

She continued, "I guess I really like the gardens up there. I like the natural landscaping...I love the history. I love old historic things. So for that...but you know if I could work at Old World Wisconsin." Katie discussed this site a number of times throughout the class, and at this point it illustrated that her work was not deeply inspired by the architecture of the site as a form of art. During our pre-class interview she noted that she came to this current line of work because she had grown tired of a job that required her to commute "and so I got a job at the visitor's center [where she currently works]. And then after that I took over the bookstore and then like four years ago I took over operations. And that's where I guess I'm at." While Katie worked in an art environment, it was not a purposeful choice or a priority for her to be in a job connected to the arts.

Katie: Artistic experiences. Katie was able to recall some early art experiences in school. In her pre-class survey, Katie noted having art classes from first through sixth grade. She recalled making "plaster masks, pottery, paper mache, and wood block prints." I was impressed that Katie was able to recall specific details about her art teacher, including her name, and stated the following:

She was very nice. She was, I'm sure she was young...And she was just very nice. She always dressed in like a smock. And I remember we got to watch Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video when that came out. 'Cause it was art [laughing]. She pulled in a TV and we all got to watch it and see how they [made it]...Yeah. I remember the day we walked in there and there was a TV and we're like, what's going on? And she's like, well, we're gonna watch a video today...And she said it's gonna be Michael Jackson's new video, "Thriller." And she used it because of the art and the zombies and everything. And so yeah, growing up in the country we didn't get to have MTV. So it was like a huge treat. It was awesome.

Katie did not recall doing an art project related to the video, but looking at this popular culture artifact in the context of the art room left an impression on her. I continued by asking Katie if there were any projects she remembers from her art classes.

Yeah. I remember doing...you know it's funny when Bella works on her projects and stuff [at work] and I'd go with her to get the supplies. And all of a sudden we'd be walking down the arts and crafts aisle and I'm like, I remember this stuff. So I remember there was a kiln in the class. And so we got to make pottery, little vases. Animals. I remember doing paper mache.

Katie continued by describing the process of what was a paper mache project.

Following elementary school, Katie's art experiences seemed to diminish. She did not recall having art in secondary school or college. She stated,

I don't remember doing anything in middle school. Well it was kind of optional. It was one of those deals where you either played an instrument or you took art classes or you took a language or you took music classes or something like that. And so I took a language and I took music and sucked at both. Yeah. So I don't remember doing any other art but in elementary school.

Katie recalled that outside of school she participated in 4-H programs as a child where she tried a leather making and crochet class. She also described really enjoying coloring in coloring books; a pastime that she still enjoys as an adult. She stated, "But I do know that I always enjoyed coloring. In coloring books. And like even to this day I'll pull out a coloring book with my nephews or something, and I love it. It's fun." As an adult, Katie did not recall any other art classes that she had taken, but she did mention gardening as an activity that she enjoyed.

The only other thing that I can think of how I bring my own little art into day to day is just by gardening. I enjoy gardening. So that's how I get to kind of play with the colors and yet it's a challenge. But I don't think of it as artistic. It's not art. It's just my way of having a hobby I guess.

Katie: Attitudes about art. Layered within Katie's definition of art were indications that viewing art was something that brought her some discomfort.

When I think of art I think immediately I'm like over my head. Because I don't feel like I, I don't know art history. I don't know, I mean my only art experience I think honestly was in elementary school. I just, I don't feel like I have any experience in it. So I immediately when I hear the arts I'm like, nothing I know about.

Katie reiterated this idea when she described experiences she had at work.

We do field trips for work. Like we went to Milwaukee's museum of art. And then I've got the chance to go to the Biltmore with Bella and you know I'm just looking at the pictures and stuff. And she's like, you don't realize what you're looking at. There are Renoirs in there; there's all sorts of stuff.

She continued,

Yeah. I mean it would be interesting but I feel like I wouldn't know anything. Or like when we went to the museum of Milwaukee and seeing some of that stuff and I'm just like...it's just, some of it I just don't get. I don't understand it. So then sometimes I just get frustrated. I'm like all right, what else can we do.

I noted Katie's frustrations about viewing art were also reflected in her response to interview questions about who she felt made judgments about art:

Katie: Ohhhh. I don't know. I mean, I sometimes thought seeing some of the art that's out there and these people are selling it for big time money. And I'm like, are you kidding me? There's one at the town hall. And this, I mean it's cool because it was an old, old truck. But he [the artist] had just all sorts of shit and garbage thrown on top of it and it was welded and he sells them for like 60,000 dollars. And I'm like, no. No. That's stupid. I mean, to me that was stupid. But to other people that's...I mean obviously he sells them. I don't know to who, but he sells them.

Liz: So you have some lines that you draw in the sand?

Katie: I do. Yeah. I do. And maybe it's me being uncomfortable with some things that I look at. Me just being naïve about some things. But, yeah, I can easily start to like make fun of stuff.

This conversation was interspersed with Katie's good-humored nature and lots of laughter.

Katie's is very kind, enthusiastic, and bubbly, but in this conversation it was clear that she felt strongly about certain kinds of art experiences. At this point in our conversation Katie admitted

that she had taken a sneak peek at the artwork we would be going to see as part of this class and bashfully admitted that she was not sure she liked it. Katie had never seen this artist before and stated, “So, I’m hoping that when I go, after I take the class, I’ll be like, this is very intellectually stimulating. And I won’t laugh at it.”

During the pre-class interview, Katie also described artists and artworks that she did enjoy.

I love color. I really love color. Like, you know how you see different artists and different genres and periods and everything? And I’m drawn to Rothko, Mark Rothko. I love his colors. I love how he uses the color blocks. And just something like that is just so invigorating, yet soothing. Yeah, otherwise, I don’t know what it is about color. I think just that you can you know...it’s bright, you can choose your colors. The lines are already there, you just have to make it pretty.

In addition to Rothko, Katie was also able to quickly articulate a favorite piece of art, a painting by Vincent van Gogh. She stated,

I don’t know where I would have seen it. I know that I bought the print. And it’s, well it’s in a closet right now. But, yeah, I think it’s just one of his more popular [paintings] and I don’t know where I would have gotten exposed to it necessarily. But I do like his stuff.

When asked to describe how she defined art and who makes art, Katie identified creativity as an important factor.

I would just say the use of creativity. You know, it’s somebody being creative. Whether it’s an interpretation of something that they see, they feel, they hear. And in their own way of putting it together into something. Whatever kind of medium it might be.

She continued by noting that artists “have that creativity to interpret things that affect them on a day-to-day basis and use it in an artistic spin.”

Katie: Prior artistic identity. Katie was quite adamant about her identity as a non-artist.

When asked if she would describe herself as an artist Katie stated, “Noooooo. No. And Bella could vouch for that. No, I am not an artist by any means.” On the pre-class survey, Katie gave

herself a two on the artistic identity rating scale. Much of Katie's perception of herself as a non-artist has been illustrated previously. Katie seemed amazed that she was participating in the *Artist Within* class and stated,

I think I'm going in kind of blind...I mean I'm looking forward to the experience, regardless whether I come out with something profound or not. It's something totally different than what I would normally do. In fact, I told my mom I'm taking an art class and she's like, what? And I'm like, I know.

Andrew

Andrew: Demographics. Andrew indicated that he was a 33 year-old male. He described his residence as a rural, single family home where he had lived for one year. Andrew had earned a postgraduate degree in college and worked in a non-art profession as a civil engineer. Andrew described his work as a civil engineer,

Andrew: I design bridges and other heavy civil applications or retaining walls. Foundations for industrial structures and I do some constructioneering stuff that has to happen so structures that are already designed can be built...I do some site visits as well. It's a little of both. Some design work and then some just straight up problem solving I guess.

Liz: So working with the people who are building the structures.

Andrew: Exactly. Yep.

I asked Andrew if his work involved much creative expression, and he stated, "I don't know. In terms of some design and problem solving. But not all the time...sometimes it is just by the book." Andrew noted that he drew a lot for work and considered this a component of his art experiences as an adult,

Andrew: I draw a lot for work, but it's more technical. You know.

Liz: So, could you describe it for me? What kinds of things would you have to draw?

Andrew: Like design sketches. You know, something drawn to scale to show an idea. Show dimensions. Show how things fit together.

Liz: Do you use computers or do you have to do that in pencil?

Andrew: I do a lot in pencil.

Liz: Is that by choice?

Andrew: I think it's faster when you're trying to fit some pieces together, unless it's very difficult or the geometry's difficult. But I don't use CAD or computers to draw something.

Andrew: Artistic experiences. Andrew was able to recall art experiences as a child that were connected to formal educational settings or motivated by his own initiative. Andrew cited gluing yarn on paperboard as a specific memory from elementary school. In middle school, Andrew was able to remember his art teacher's name and recalled being singled out by her to create a banner for a school event. During our pre-class interview Andrew responded that he thought the middle school art teacher would have identified him as an artist. Andrew also noted that during middle school years he did "self-motivated drawing daily."

Andrew: I was always drawing when I was a kid. Doodling or sketching.

Liz: Did you have favorite types of imagery?

Andrew: Yeah, like war. Planes shooting each other. It was always Russians versus USA. As a child, Andrew also remembered participating in 4-H projects, working on models, and woodworking.

During high school, Andrew described taking several art classes. He stated, "I took a class for 2-dimensional and drawing, stuff like that. I took another semester for 3-dimensional, just kind of an intro in sculpture and ceramics and stuff. And then I took a semester of sculpture after that." Andrew contended that he was definitely interested in "more spatial stuff" in his art experiences and preferences. Andrew also noted taking classes in industrial arts in high school,

including drafting and woodworking. Andrew described taking art classes in college that were focused on art history and did not require any personal art making. He stated, “[I took an] art history course. And history of architecture too. Two semesters of art I took in college. And poetry.” As an adult, Andrew noted that he did not take any visual art classes, but he participated in the community choir, community theatre, and took guitar lessons.

Andrew: Attitudes about art. During our pre-class interview, Andrew stated that when he thinks of art, the first thing that comes to mind is “probably, a museum and paintings.” However, when I asked Andrew how he might define art, his response was more complex. He stated, “Define art. I think any sort of creative endeavor. Any expression of something original is art. Or taking an idea and adopting it to your own ideas.” After a short pause, Andrew continued,

Andrew: I don’t know. I think that design is a part of art that’s overlooked. Just design in itself is a great way of expressing or being creative.

Liz: And what makes you say it’s overlooked?

Andrew: Maybe not overlooked, but underappreciated. There could be something really beautiful or interesting about something you buy at Target or at the store or a car that wouldn’t necessarily be considered a work of art but has taken a lot of thought or foresight or ideas to develop.

Andrew’s definition of an artist aligned with his definition of art as a form of creative expression,

Style I guess or seeing something or doing something and then making it their own. Making it something unique. You know, I guess, isn’t art one of the greatest expressions of individuality? Just expressing yourself as a person I think in one way or another. That’s construed as an artistic endeavor.

Building from Andrew’s interest in design and his definition of an artist, I asked him if he had an identifiable taste in art.

Andrew: I like Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Craftsman-style architecture, furniture from that period.

Liz: Are you responding to Frank Lloyd Wright or the leaves and patterns? [Frank Lloyd Wright's home is in the nearby area and I thought he might be making references to that].

Andrew: Yeah, I like Frank Lloyd Wright. I like a lot of the photos of the homes he built and things that I've seen of his and places that I've been. I don't know that I would call that Art Nouveau. I like the detail of Art Nouveau or the intricacies. That sort of thing.

Continuing with design-related questions, I asked Andrew if there were any products that he especially appreciated. He stated,

Andrew: I had a hood ornament off of an old Chrysler that's like a stylized airplane that sat on the hood of the car. It was really unnecessary in terms of the car itself, but was you know a nice touch.

Liz: How'd you come across it?

Andrew: I bought it at a flea market.

Liz: Interesting. Do you collect things or is that a rarity?

Andrew: I don't collect a lot of stuff. I tend to hold on to things. So at the same time I recognize that I hold on to things, I hesitate to buy stuff sometimes unless it's really cool.

When I asked Andrew to describe a favorite piece of art, he described the work of a painter he had seen in a museum setting.

Andrew: Uhhh, I'd say Edward Hopper. There's a couple Hoppers that I admire that are pretty cool.

Liz: What do you like about them, Allen?

Andrew: The light. The characters. It brings a lot to your imagination—wondering what they are doing or why they're there or what this place is about or what it's like to live there.

In addition to works of art, Andrew described several art museums that he was familiar with and had visited.

Well, a little bit here and there...I've been to the contemporary museum in Milwaukee. And I've been to the Indianapolis Museum of Art. You know I check out galleries around town every now and then if there's something going on. I've been to the Chicago Art Institute.

Andrew: Prior artistic identity. In the pre-class survey, Andrew chose a rating of six on the artistic identity scale. I asked if he identified as an artist, and Andrew succinctly stated, “No.” When I asked him if he could elaborate on that he noted, “Um, I don’t make a living as an artist. I don’t spend a lot of time doing artistic things on my own. I do stuff...I guess I do artistic things as part of a larger community.” He noted the artistic things meant “music.” Andrew was particularly interested in singing and participated in college and community choirs.

Andrew preferred to describe himself as a creative problem solver versus an artist. He stated,

I don’t know. I think I’m a creative problem solver but I’m not necessarily someone who’s driven to create or to design. Like if I have a need or a specific problem that I want solved, such as steps that go up to my house, I might put some time and energy into thinking about what that should look like or how it should be done.

I asked Andrew to elaborate on the steps that he made to enter his home.

Liz: So what’s unique about these steps? What was the problem?

Andrew: I didn’t have any. That was the problem. And so people had to walk through the front yard to get to my front door basically.

Liz: And so what did you end up with?

Andrew: Uh. Well, I made a stairway out of stone and timber and concrete.

Liz: So not the typical go to Menards, get some prefab things and...

Andrew: No.

During our pre-class interview, I also asked Andrew to further describe his preference for woodworking. In this conversation it was apparent that Andrew was very skilled in this medium. He also seemed to indicate that he created things when he felt there was a need.

Liz: What kinds of things do you make?

Andrew: Whatever I need to make. I've made, well most recently just the steps. The risers and the steps that take you up to the deck and into the front door of my house. That's the most recent thing. But, I've made two guitars and I made a couple cabinets and pieces of furniture.

Liz: Wow, I think you were underselling yourself, Allen. I was thinking maybe you made a little toolbox or something.

Andrew: I was the grand champion woodworker at the St. Joe County Fair in 1997!

Liz: What did you make?

Andrew: It was a bottom half of a hutch or a cabinet.

Liz: And you actually carve into it or do you like to use a lathe?

Andrew: No, it was all machine tools. No carving.

Liz: What about the guitars? How did you make those?

Andrew: Uh, you have to do some carving for that.

Liz: And so were there any design choices you made in terms of the guitars?

Andrew: On the acoustic guitar I built, I kind of invented my own connection to make the neck that enters the body. It's a bolted joint. So there's a slot that it fits in and there are a couple bolts that hold it into place.

Liz: And you had to design that piece you mean? Or did you make it more elaborate than was necessary?

Andrew: It's probably a little more elaborate than what was necessary. I took an existing idea and just adapted it to something I thought would work.

Andrew noted that he did not actually play the guitars and wished that he had the skill to do so.

Given Andrew's commitment to making objects out of necessity, I asked him what inspired him to make the guitars. For this project he noted being inspired by "a guy that lives in town. A friend of mine. He is a semi-professional guitar maker." Andrew said that his friend mentored him on the first guitar, and then he completed the second one on his own.

Toward the end of our interview, I asked Andrew if there was anything that I neglected to ask him or anything else he might want me to know. Andrew began describing a project that he was working on as part of a wedding celebration. Andrew was part of a group of friends who were designing a structure that would allow a piano to be rowed down the river on top of canoes while being played.

Andrew: I'm really excited about this piano thing.

Liz: For the wedding?

Andrew: Not so much for the wedding. I just think it's gonna be a neat thing to have a piano on canoes and to have someone playing it as it floats. I think the moving part is what excites me the most. Just to be there to see Bill and to hear Bill as he's playing and moving.

Liz: So you brought that up in the context of this interview. Do you think of this as kind of an artistic performance piece?

Andrew: I think it is.

Liz: Do you see yourself as part of it?

Andrew: A little bit. I think the actual...I think putting the piano on the boat is the easy part.

Liz: Really? Most people are thinking that's the hard part.

Andrew: No. The great part is when it's played. [And] actually floating. That's what makes it all worthwhile. It's kind of part of my job to put heavy stuff on barges. And Tom's too [also a civil engineer].

Liz: So this is a unique experience for the two of you?

Andrew: Yeah. It's gonna be cool.

Mike

Mike: Demographics. Mike described himself as a 44-year-old male. He had lived in the same rural, single-family home for over nine years. He earned an associate's degree and was currently working in a non-art profession as a grain miller. In addition to his job, Mike was working on establishing his own business as an exhibit fabricator. I asked Mike to elaborate on his job as an exhibit fabricator, which seemed to require some design skills in addition to technical or building skills.

It is what I did for a company that I worked for in Baraboo called [Resonance] Research, which is now closed. Most of that was high voltage, physics-based exhibits—equipment that museums use either on stage or as exhibits to demonstrate principles of electricity and physics. A lot of it was more spectacle, I think, than educational. The museums used it to draw people in. It's the type of thing that excites people, but I'm not sure how much they actually learn from it or took away from it.

He continued by explaining his interest in this kind of work,

So I've always been interested in electricity and electronics. When I was a kid I spent a lot of time playing and experimenting with electronics. So starting my own business is sort of duplicating a lot of what I was doing for Resonance Research. But I also want to expand it to include other areas of science—like chemistry and some more physics-based things.

During our interview I made the assumption that Mike might be self-taught, so I asked him to describe how his background had prepared him for this type of work.

I went to tech school for electronics. But yeah, largely self-taught when it comes to the building aspects. The skills I have in terms of woodworking, metalworking—bringing all of that together.

Mike liked the idea of working in what he described as a “niche” market. While he struggled to get the business fully “afloat,” he was able to describe a number of museums he had created science-based exhibits for. I particularly wanted to know if Mike felt this job required him to utilize any creativity or creative processes.

I like bringing creativity into the design of the equipment. I thought so much of that was lacking in the equipment that we built for Resonance Research. I just enjoy making something look different or trying to reorganize it to make it more visually appealing. And so many museums have artists that are on their staff. You know, you're making it a beautiful environment for people to be in as well as something that's educational. So I really enjoy that. Just the process of making a piece of equipment beautiful to look at as well as functional.

I asked Mike if he had an example he could share, so he described a project he was asked to work on for a museum exhibition.

You've probably seen one in a physics class or something. They have a belt that runs inside a tube. And then they have a metal sphere on the top. You put your hand on the sphere and it makes your hair stand up. So they had a unit like that as part of an exhibit at the museum and they were looking for a solid placement for that. So I worked on that for a while and it never actually came to fruition because it was a very difficult thing to get to the point where I felt that it was ready for primetime I guess. But I put some time into creating just a base for it that was more complex than it needed to be just for the purpose of making it look like it had some design in it rather than just the functional aspect.

Mike: Artistic experiences. During our pre-class interview, Mike at first described having no art classes in school. This conflicted with the information he had provided on the pre-class survey where he described having art "at least once per week for one class period" in both elementary and middle school. I asked Mike the question again and he clarified, "Well, I mean we had art classes. [But] in terms of educating us about the world of art, there was none of that. There was, you know, it was all sort of based on teaching us to do the artwork ourselves." I asked Mike if he could describe anything specific about his early art experiences in school, but he struggled to remember any.

Yeah, I'm trying to think what classes I had. I had classes in middle school that were probably required at that point. I don't know if in elementary school whether we had a specific art class. Like you said school days are pretty faded.

As a child, Mike's most memorable art experiences seemed to occur in informal settings outside of school. He noted participating in pottery making experiences individually and through

4-H club. When I asked Mike if he could describe a specific art lesson or teacher from his childhood, he described this informal pottery experience.

I grew up next door to a pottery studio. And when I was very young, me and some of my neighborhood friends decided that we should go to the pottery studio and ask for some clay and then we could have her fire the things that we made. So we did that. We walked down there and she gave us some clay and then we took them back and she fired them and I still have some of those pieces today. I was maybe eight or ten. But I think of that fondly. There was another time several years later that she had an opportunity for kids to come and make things. So I remember making a dog or something.

Mike noted that he did not have any art classes in high school or college. However, when asked if he could describe a memorable art teacher, he described his experiences outside of class with the high school art teacher.

Mike: I think the high school art teacher made more of an impression on me even though I didn't take classes with him. A good friend of mine was interested in art and so he took all of his art classes with him. He seemed more, you know, I think he was an artist outside of school. And so I guess I have more memories of him. Some of my earlier art teachers were probably not all that interested in art themselves but were just doing it in the capacity of teaching.

Liz: And so would you go to the room with your friend or something?

Mike: Yeah. Just sociable, just social interactions with him. Just around the school or at lunchtime. He had a study period and I think he was in charge of our study period.

Liz: So is there anything about him that stands out?

Mike: I think just the fact that he was interested in my friend's artwork and was willing to discuss it. It just made an impression on me that there was something more there than just playing with tempura paint, you know. Beginning to see the level that my friend took it to in high school. I don't know why that made me [interested]. I just got to know that teacher as more of a person than any of my other art teachers. I'm not sure if it had anything to do with his being an artist necessarily...and knowing that he was doing photography and painting outside of school.

Liz: The teacher was?

Mike: Yeah. That interested me. I guess that was the point at which I started to open up to or be more interested in art, just because my friend was.

Mike noted that part of the reason he had a slow start with appreciating art was that he had limited family support. He stated, “My family never encouraged or appreciated art. So it was very slow in coming to me.”

As an adult Mike noted that he did not participate in any art education experiences. However, on his own, he stated that he designed and built furniture from found or recycled materials. It was his preference to work in a more sculptural or 3-dimensional way.

Mike: Attitudes about art. During our pre-class interview, I asked Mike to describe the first thing that came to mind when he thought of art. Mike stated, “Expression; I guess. Expression of things that we can’t necessarily express verbally.” During the course of our interview I noticed that Mike seemed to make distinctions between what he would define as art versus craft. I asked Mike to elaborate on this idea.

Craft to me is more, like I said, technical excellence. So while there are furniture makers out there who are considered artists, a lot of cabinet making necessarily isn’t thought of as art. But there are people who do it to a level of excellence that just impresses me. And it inspires me to be able to do similar things. Or even do that same sort of work at even a tenth the level of ability. So I guess I see craft as not necessarily carrying more cerebral ideas with it, you know, that might be conveyed in painting or music. But yet, I appreciate art where that technical ability is part of it. So that would be the dividing line for me, just that craft is more the technical ability without necessarily an intellectual component to it.

In addition to how he defined art, Mike was able to describe what he felt defined an artist. He stated, “I guess I define an artist as someone who’s doing it either professionally or spends a large proportion of their time focusing on creating art.”

Mike described actively seeking opportunities to be an audience member in a range of arts events, particularly ones that were local.

I try to participate here locally in any sort of gallery showings or things like that. Any events that are put on locally...There’s quite a few artists locally. There seems to be. Local businesses are using it as an opportunity to both promote those artists and draw

people in to the store. Convivio has their first Fridays, I think it's called, where they'll feature a different artist. The yoga studio just finished up this weekend with an exhibition for [Jean Marc Michel]. So just different things like that. I try to make it to American Players Theatre as much as possible as well as community theatre. There's a good amount of community theatre in this town. That's exciting to see.

Mike continued stating, "I have friends that are interested in the arts as well and so, you know, being able to attend things that they suggest. Or just as a social event. I enjoy that."

The importance of local art and supporting local arts venues was something that resurfaced again later in my interview with Mike. He described his experiences going between two towns, one that he felt had strong support for the arts and another that he felt neglected the arts as a relevant part of the community.

I was just working in Lone Rock, now. I never really had any interaction with Lone Rock, and Spring Green and Lone Rock are worlds apart. Lone Rock is a really impoverished town. At one time it was the largest town in the area, but now is just— everything has left. There's not much in terms of jobs and I work for a flourmill. We're dealing local, organic flour made from locally grown grains. So the owner and myself are a little bit more...it seems like people who are into the organic foods movement are a little more interested in the arts. It all kind of comes together. You know, eating well, appreciating life.

He continued to describe his observations of this community,

But interacting with that community I'm very aware of how little appreciation they have for things like art. Just some disparaging remarks when they found out that I attend American Players Theatre here. You know it's all in good humor, but there's very definitely a lack of appreciation for those things. So it seems like it would be a very good thing, whether a part of the school system or just community related events, could bring [art] to young people. An appreciation like that. Because I think that an important part of community building is having a beautiful community to live in in the first place. And some of that is based on art.

I asked Mike if he could describe any artists that he particularly liked. He noted that this was difficult since he did not really focus on remembering detailed information about specific artists. He stated,

That's something I've noticed about myself is that I don't seem to focus very much on individuals. I appreciate things when I see them. So many of my friends have musical heroes or artists or architects that they appreciate. I just don't seem to...I take in what comes to me and so as far as artists I can't say that there's any one in particular that's really struck me.

However, Mike was able to describe an artist network that he found inspiring. In response to an interview question I asked regarding whether Mike had a favorite art medium, he responded,

Mike: No. Not necessarily. I appreciate the whole range. I do enjoy things like, are you familiar with Survival Research Laboratories?

Liz: No.

Mike: Mark Pauline is the artist who started that. It was all machine-based art. And he's been doing it since the 70s I think. Just creating machines as performance art and then holding these performances. I think he was just out doing things on the street and now they do it in, you know, they'll have a lot of people attend to see these things.

Liz: Have you seen one in person before?

Mike: I haven't. They're based in San Francisco. So that type of thing appeals to me just because of my appreciation for machines and mechanics. But, no, as far as music, painting, and drawing, I don't think that I necessarily focus on any one thing over another.

Mike also had some familiarity with what he described as "outsider artists." Mike was familiar with the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and noted that this institution was what made him aware of outsider artists in the nearby area and throughout Wisconsin. During our pre-class interview, Mike referred to this part of the conversation when I asked him to tell me where he thought art is found.

Well I guess, in the sort of same line of thinking as why I appreciate outsider art, I think it's found in a much wider range of places than perhaps the formal arts would like to think. Because I said that I consider myself more of a craftsman, I feel like some of my design work leans a little bit more into art. I feel that there's a fine line that divides craft and art. I mean I can find art in local architecture, not necessarily architecture that was built by somebody who has achieved a following or a high level of skill. I think it's really in how you perceive it. If you allow yourself to see things like that. Or allow yourself to

define art as not necessarily something that's only available to people who are highly educated. I think you can see it in a lot of places.

Mike: Prior artistic identity. As Mike mentioned, he did not identify as an artist, but instead he felt his identity was more closely aligned with being a craftsman. He communicated personal distinctions between art and craft, which also informed how he identified as an artist. On the pre-class survey, Mike designated himself a five out of ten on the artistic identity scale. In the pre-class interview, Mike made connections between his appreciation for outsider artwork and his own artistic identity:

I guess I appreciate outsider artwork because I sort of see myself that way as well. I enjoy, like I said earlier, I enjoy working with my hands. I enjoy craftwork, woodworking, metalworking, and I enjoy being creative with that. So bringing an artistic point of view to some of that work. I'm not a professional artist by any means and I don't even, I don't necessarily consider myself an artist at all—just someone who appreciates being creative. And so I really appreciate people who don't have formal training and yet built their life around creating artwork. It's interesting to me that they're out there and that people are actually taking notice of them.

Gretchen

Gretchen: Demographics. Gretchen described herself as a 35 year-old female. She had lived in her single family home, which was located in a town with a population less than 5,000, for the past one and a half years. Gretchen's current profession was working in an art-related occupation as a women's outerwear and swimwear designer for Lands' End. During our interview, she elaborated on her numerous educational and occupational experiences in art and fashion design, which will be described more fully in the next section.

Gretchen: Artistic experiences. Gretchen described participating in numerous art experiences throughout her child and adult life. She described her experiences in elementary and middle school as "standard." She was able to recall the name of her elementary art teacher and

noted, “He’d bring all the big posters and he’d hang them in the front of the room. So you’re talking about Impressionism or you’re talking about whatever. And then we’d, you know, make an impressionistic art.” Gretchen said this in a tone that suggested she was mocking or questioning this kind of art assignment.

In middle school, Gretchen also recalled her teacher and was able to describe why she felt positively about that teacher,

[In] junior high, I had an amazing art teacher that everybody thought was a raging bitch. And I thought she was great. All of my friends thought she sucked. And I was like, Mrs. Williams is awesome. We did batik where we had little frying pans full of wax. You know and you’d do all your pen batik art and then dye it. I did a butterfly. And we did linoleum prints, I remember, that were cool. We did a lot of clay. We made masks of clay.

I asked Gretchen to expand on why she felt this teacher was exceptional,

I think that she treated us like adults. And up to that point a lot your teachers treated you like a child. And she was no nonsense and she had high expectations I think was the thing. And she was very encouraging. Like she could sense that you were trying even if it wasn’t perhaps the best piece in the room. Like if you weren’t making a genuine effort she could tell that I think. And she was just a really interesting lady. She was cool looking. Had cool stuff in her art room. She was just a really genuinely interesting person...And she always had these really interesting photos. There was something about the way she made art accessible I think. Even though she was sort of tough. And I think she could just sort of smell BS on kids. And they were the kids who were like, we don’t care about art class we just want to screw around. And so she could sense that and so she was just sort of on their cases...I felt like she wanted to believe in you and encouraged you to be there.

In high school, Gretchen noted that she took all the art classes that were available where she “did different sculptural stuff and throwing pots. Making jewelry. Again, kind of like dabbling.” She also participated in after school art clubs and high potential summer classes in art. When asked to describe any exceptional art experience I might have missed, Gretchen noted winning a Mr. Yuck poster design contest as a child.

In addition to formal art experiences, Gretchen's father, an artist, was an influential part of her art experiences as a child.

I was exposed to a lot of art as a child. My dad is an artist and a painter. So frequently he would have people out to photograph because he had a studio at the house. And by studio I mean the room upstairs had a backdrop and he had a couple lights, but it was his studio...We didn't really have TV. We had a TV, but it was like go outside and then if I wanted to come in I always had art supplies.

Gretchen also noted that "as a family our trips were to art museums. They weren't like Disney. It was definitely art museums and looking at stuff and being asked, 'what do you think about that?'"

In addition, Gretchen described getting direct art instruction or advice from her dad,

I remember when I started figuring out drawing stuff I was focusing so much on the object. My dad kept saying, 'Gretchen you don't have to draw the object. Focus maybe where the object isn't—the negative space. And if you have leaves or something, you can try and start there.' You kind of are doing it and all of a sudden you're like, Oooh, it kind of looks like leaves. You don't know to not look at the thing. Separately, he was doing screen printing. It was just that you were around a lot of stuff. But we were always encouraged to kind of play with it. He had airbrushes.

A pattern that emerged during our interview is that while Gretchen had exposure to a lot of materials and experiences, she felt she was always just "dabbling" or not developing a deeper understanding of certain art processes. She stated, "But I mean, this is going back to that same thing. To this day if I was to pick up an airbrush now I'd still be like, I don't know what to do. I had exposure, but didn't follow through with the whole thing."

Despite feeling that some of her art experiences at home only provided a surface understanding of materials or processes, Gretchen described feeling very influenced by the access to unique art experiences with her dad.

We were exposed to a lot of photography. This is a really great experience—I could go into the dark room with my dad. So he had this particular metal box that was shiny. It was kind of like a breadbox, but it was metal, that he kept all his materials in. And it had this

very distinct like, plll plll [noise]. He had a certain gold filtered light in that room and he would always do it in the little laundry room. So he would put his enlarger and all his bins in there. I was a very little kid. And my dad would be in there developing negatives and then he would say, 'Ok, you can come in. We're going to make prints.' So I would hear that plllll and the door would go shut. And then he would open the door and I could see yellow in there. It's really yellow. And he'd get something and I'd stand on it.

She continued to vividly describe the experience of helping her dad develop photographs,

So then he'd set the paper down, turn the light on, and he'd be like, Ok, count, 1, 2, whatever, you know. Click the light off. And then it was so fun when he'd put it in the first thing, the fixer. It wasn't the fixer, it was the developer. The picture would start to come to life. And then he'd say, 'Now put it in the next one.' So there were the different baths. And that was such a special thing. My brother was too little to be in there. So it was like, Oh, I get to hang out with dad and develop in the room, which is cool, you know—the dark room. So yeah, I guess I was influenced.

Gretchen also seemed to understand that having art be such a regular part of her everyday home life was a unique situation.

[My dad] did larger than life size paintings of my mother. And so, he did these huge paintings of my mother depicting Mick Jagger and Bruce Springsteen and I don't know who else off the top...and they still hang in my parents' house. These huge paintings. And you don't even notice them. My friends would always come over and be like, what is the deal? And I'm like, what? Oh, I guess there are huge paintings of my mom everywhere. Like you just don't even see them.

Gretchen described taking numerous art classes after high school and eventually pursuing fashion design in college and as a profession.

I wanted to be an art teacher, but was kind of into science and into art and ended up taking time off after high school. I took about six years off and just had my wild time. I ended up realizing, thinking that I was going into possibly art or biology or hotel restaurant management kind of hosting parties. And what's so funny, I ended up doing hotel restaurant management and got into it and realized there is too much food involved in this.

She continued,

I still was taking art classes because I always had liked art classes. I felt very sort of comfy in that realm. But never felt like my skills were...like I didn't spend enough time in each area, you know. You take a painting class and then you take a class where you are using pencils and charcoal. You take a class where you are doing photography and then

you do printmaking...So it was sort of like dabbling. And always that desire to get really good at one of them.

During college, Gretchen was also able to identify an instructor who was influential to her art studies.

I was taking just basic electives. And then I also took a lot of art history classes. I was close to a minor in art history because I had one art history class with an amazing teacher who would get so excited he would jump up and down. It would be art in the dark and he would be up in the front like freaking out about Egyptian art and you were like, crap this is amazing. Like I want to learn everything about art.

She continued by describing how art history had been an entry point for her for broader understanding,

There are a lot of things that I feel like I'm too simple to understand. Talk to me about the history of world war whatever and I am like I don't know what you are talking about. But you can learn things visually through time. You can learn things by the history of costume. What was happening. You can see how the people were dressing. Or you can look at art and you can say what was happening at that time period. Oh, oranges symbolize wealth and I started to get it through art. Not that I was practicing it as much. But it helped me to understand things.

Gretchen continued to describe the decisions made in college that would lead to her current career in fashion design,

So I just took a handful of basic classes. Drawing and painting and color theory. And then art history. Like twice as much in art history. And then moved into fashion design, which is arty in its own way, I guess. It's research; it's history. The challenge [in fashion design] is putting this two dimensional thing onto this three dimensional thing. And the thing between you and that is a sewing machine.

I asked Gretchen if she sewed,

Uh, not if I can help it. I did. I had to. I found it easier to use a knitting machine and create softer silhouettes...And I enjoyed more the illustration. I remember my teacher saying, 'it's really cool that you can draw a pretty picture, but how do you get into it?' And you'd be like, uhhhhh, there's a side zip. And she'd be like, 'You can't say that every time.' And I'm like, but what if there is. So she was good to push you out of this like, oh, I can make a pretty picture...But there were times that I really enjoyed the sewing aspect and there were other times when it was difficult. You're working a lot with different textures depending on the stuff your making. Silk versus wool versus leather. It

all has different properties. And you're creatively applying that stuff. That's my experience.

During our interview, Gretchen spoke of her art experiences as if she seemed surprised by her journey or that it had unraveled by chance or circumstance.

So I somehow was distracted and said, Oh, I can study fashion. Related, but not. So anyway, ended up going into the fashion program. Going through it at UW-Stout. Studying in Paris. I did a winterim [sic] in Paris doing all these couture techniques with fabric manipulation, millinery, all these tissue [sic] flowers...It was a short amount of time, but it was really intense.

Prior to graduating, Gretchen completed a five and a half month internship in New York City at Marc Jacobs that exposed her to fashion design, sewing and fabrics that she felt were "amazing" and introduced her to the fashion industry on a level she had never seen before. After graduation, Gretchen continued pursuing occupations in fashion design, which took her back to New York City, then to California, and finally back to Wisconsin where she currently works as a designer for Lands' End. During our interview, Gretchen described her journey as a fashion designer as "totally whirlwind."

Gretchen: Attitudes about art. During our pre-class interview, I asked Gretchen how she might define art,

This is really funny because I just saw *Colt* from Andy Warhol this week and it said, 'art is whatever gets you off.' And I was like, hah, Andy Warhol, you're right. Because at this point it's so hard to put in a box. Art is as little as your doodles, it's as big as your...what makes it art? I don't know. I like his answer. Like, if it feels good when you're doing it that's great, that can be your art. I think it can be so many things and you start to realize I never thought video could be [art]. If it didn't hang on a wall, it couldn't be art or anything. It couldn't walk around and be tangible. You start to realize people can speak art and people can make sound that's art and people can talk about things that can be art. So, that's my answer, Yes, it can be anything.

Prior to this question, I also asked Gretchen what came to mind first when she thought of art. In contrast, her answer to this question referred more closely to fine art and established art institutions.

The first thing that comes to mind is the Walker or MoMA. Something about that kind of vast expanse and then this quiet where you turn and then you see it, this piece hanging on the wall that someone has put all this time and effort in for you to have a reaction, right? Or just for you to observe it. Or whatever. You're walking and then you get to the one that you're like, whoa. And then you want to stop. I think my favorite are the ones that make me laugh. Like, what?

As mentioned, museum spaces are places that were very familiar to Gretchen and something she had grown up visiting. Here she was able to speak comfortably about the reverential quality of museum spaces, which for some people feel much less accessible. Still, Gretchen felt that everyone should be able to make judgments about art and was particularly fond of listening to children respond to works of art.

Gretchen was able to describe a variety of artists and artworks that she enjoyed.

I'm quite keen on black and white photography in a lot of different ways. And then a few painters that I just always, since I was a kid, I always liked. Wayne Thiebaud, his cakes and pastries. It's so typical. It's like everything in my life revolves around sprinkles. Roy Lichtenstein, I always really took to his stuff. I really like photography as an art form. I like painting. Oh, there's a current women who does paper art, Kara Walker. I think it's paper. She does the silhouettes. Amazing.

She continued by noting some more traditional work that she was less fond of,

And then like traditional. I guess that I'm less into, and not that it's not important, but like Monet's waterlilies, are beautiful, don't get me wrong, and like Degas's ballerinas. All of that stuff. But I think I feel like so much of life is so serious, I kind of like silly or like goofy, a little bit.

She continued by describing a contemporary photographer she enjoyed who used very dark humor in his work that required viewers to pay attention to get the joke. She enjoyed this process of being in on the joke while viewing art.

Gretchen also responded to the scale of work, something she was able to consider because she visited museums and “real art” so frequently.

Scale has always been so cool when you actually see real art. And you go, oh my god, Frank Stella’s protractor [series] are enormous. And then you see the Mona Lisa and you’re like [indicating its small size]. That sort of whole thing, that play of scale and how it interacts, how you interact with it. Is it eye level or is it vast or...that kind of feeling that art gives you of like, wow.

I also asked Gretchen how she would define an artist. For this she made connections between being an artist and livelihood, but also some kind of visual proof that the person really lived for his or her experience as an artist.

They have a smock and paint brush [joking]. No. Initially of course what came to mind is someone whose livelihood is art; then they’re an artist. But that’s not necessarily so because I know a lot of artists who aren’t making a great living being artists, but are definitely dedicated to their art. I think it’s the people that somehow live it. You know when you meet those people.

She continued,

It’s hard to put a definition on it. They are the people that aren’t spending time doing all these other things. They spend a lot of time honing their craft. I guess they always, in my head—again probably since I was a child, they got paint on their pants sort of. Or they’re a stained glass artist, they’ve got a Band-Aid. They’re a fashion designer so they wear glasses because they stare at a computer all day. You know, they prove it or something. They don’t just sit around and say, I’m an artist. They actually do it. I think that defines it.

In many ways, the “proof” that Gretchen describes here, reflects stereotypical visual cues that one might associate with an artist who dedicates his/her life to a specified craft or art form. She also referred to time and dedication, something many participants, including Gretchen, identified as a prohibiting factor in their ability to create art.

Gretchen: Prior artistic identity. In the pre-class survey, Gretchen designated herself as an eight on the artistic identity rating scale. When asked if she would describe herself as an artist,

Gretchen connected this to her profession as a fashion designer and ways in which that work did not necessarily meet her expectations of what it would be like to be an artist.

I think the idea of being a fashion designer, before you really know what it is, you think that's an artist. I always had an idea like I'd have pins in my mouth and a sketch pen and fabric draped over my shoulder. And I'd be smoking cigarettes and sketching things rapidly and that's totally not how it is. A lot of time is at a computer, a lot of time is doing research, and a lot of time is doing other things that are not artistic.

Gretchen described pursuing classes and other endeavors she thought might provide a more creative outlet or career.

I was feeling like part of my job wasn't super creative. Like a portion of your job is creative, but a lot of it's kind of functional and getting the job done. So then I went back to school for sculptural cake art. And took all these baking classes and did cake art. So my big idea was I was going to move to Spring Green and open a bakery. Well there's already one bakery here. And then my mom and I were at this shop and it was so typical. It was a six-inch cake, like a ganache—this gorgeous cake. And it was 12 dollars. And my mom was like, Who's gonna pay 12 dollars for that cake? And I was like, uhhh, that's the market I moved into? That's an amazing cake. That poor person isn't even making any money on that cake. The ingredients alone are 12 dollars. And then my old boss had said, 'Hey, I'm out here at Land's End if you want to come over'...in the end I've been there, in January it will be 2 years. So I must be having fun because time is flying.

Given the mundane components of her job as a fashion designer, Gretchen seemed to hesitate to consider this part of her artistic identity. However, she did feel that art was still a part of her life that she pursued, and she included the cake art as a part of her artistic identity. She noted, "I think at times in my life I have spent time doing artistic endeavors, in different ways. Like the cake stuff really became artistic. It was so fun."

When describing her personal artmaking, Gretchen noted how this was sometimes dictated by access to free resources, "Apparently I have some sort of thing where I don't like to see things go into the trash that are perfectly fine things." She described creating a quilt from material that was discarded at her work. She described additional discarded objects that she

rescued from the garbage, some of which she used to create art objects and others that remain stored in a box.

In addition to feeling like much of what she did was “dabbling,” Gretchen also described a few other struggles she felt when thinking about herself as an artist. One of her struggles was connected to a tension between art and craft,

Some of the stuff that I do I think falls into the craft category. And I really grew up in a house where there was a very defined line. Art was one thing, craft was another. And so I have a hesitation when I’m doing these sort of sewing projects that maybe that doesn’t really fall into [art]...but I think it could be blurring. It could be grey. I’ve done a few sewing projects. I always refer to everything creative I’ve done as a project.

Additional questions arose for Gretchen related to validating her art by showing her work,

So I guess there’s a part of me that wishes I was more of an artist and showed things. Not that I need to show it. But that would seem like it’s proof that I do something rather than, oh, I take photos and I love to take photos. But I don’t really do it. I put them on Facebook. That hardly seems like it counts or something.

The final struggle that Gretchen mentioned was related to motivation,

I kind of feel like I wish I had more of something that was an assignment. For so long I was in school and I feel like I need an assignment. I can fulfill the assignment. You know? Which gives it validation. That sounds idiotic, but true.

While Gretchen strongly identified as an artist, she struggled with traditional and familial understandings of what is meant to be an artist. Here she described struggles related to dedication to acceptable forms of fine art, showing work in a sanctioned art setting, and feeling the need for outside motivators and validation to create artwork.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the enacted curriculum for each of the three classes offered as part of this study. In addition, I provided a description of personal reflections

on my own teaching and the class curriculum for each of the three classes as well as described how these influenced changes made to successive classes. These reflections and subsequent changes were made based on my own observations and participant responses to the *Artist Within* class. A brief summary of my teaching reflections across the classes was also provided and will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Following the class descriptions and teaching reflections, I provided a detailed description of each participant's formal and informal art and art education experiences and perception of his/her identity as an artist prior to completing the *Artist Within*. These pre-class descriptions were drawn from pre-class surveys, pre-class interviews and in-class discussions. The pre-class descriptions of each of the participants provide a foundation for considering the impact of the vernacular art curriculum on these adult participants. In Chapter 5, I provide a detailed description of each participant's post-class responses to the vernacular art curriculum, including changing attitudes toward art and impact on artistic identity. Participants' post-class descriptions are organized according to artistic identity categories that emerged during the study: non-artists, art teachers, and artists. Findings related to each of these categories and, finally, across categories are then provided.

CHAPTER 5

DATA COLLECTION: POST-CLASS

Introduction and Organization of the Chapter

In this chapter, I begin by providing a description of each participant's post-class attitudes toward art, perception of his/her artistic identity, and responses to the vernacular art curriculum. Data for this chapter were collected through post-class surveys, audio taped and videotaped class sessions and discussions, and visual journals that were created by participants during the class in response to the vernacular art curriculum.

While the original goal of this study was to determine the impact of a vernacular art curriculum on the art perceptions and identities of adults who identify as non-artists, participants in the three classes represented a spectrum of art experiences and identities as artists, providing more diverse insights into the impact of the curriculum. In this chapter, I present descriptions for each individual participant's post-class perceptions, clustered into three categories: 1) non-artists, 2) art teachers, and 3) artists. Non-artists (Katie, Anne, Caryn, Becca, Jessica, Judy, Andrew, Ellen, and Mike) represent participants who either designated themselves as five or lower on the pre-class artistic identity rating scale or specifically described themselves as non-artists. Art teachers (Sarah, Sam, and Megan) represent participants who indicated they were currently working as art teachers. Artists (Erica, John, and Gretchen) represent participants who either designated themselves a six or higher on the rating scale or described themselves as artists or highly artistic. Following the post-class descriptions of participant perceptions within each

category (non-artist, art teacher, and artist), comparisons between pre- and post-class participant perceptions are used to discuss findings related to the impact of the vernacular art curriculum. Finally, a discussion of findings across participant categories is provided at the end of the chapter.

Post-Class Data: Non-Artists

Katie

Katie: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

Katie seemed to have a strong positive response to the content and structure of the *Artist Within*. During the pre-class interview she adamantly described herself as a non-artist. In addition, she denoted herself as a two on the artistic identity rating scale prior to taking the class. On the post-class survey, Katie changed her rating to a six, indicating a shift from “non-artistic” to “somewhat artistic.” During the class, Katie’s understanding of art seemed to broaden significantly, which allowed her to approach her own artmaking in a less inhibited way. As she began to describe her visual journal to the class, Katie playfully announced, “So my cover. Katie the artist” (see Figure 5.1). This was a significant change from her tone in the original interview where she insisted she did not have any artistic talent.



Figure 5.1. Cover design of Katie’s visual journal.

Katie: Changing attitudes about art. Katie indicated that her understanding of art had broadened in response to the vernacular art curriculum. She stated, “Yes. This class helped to expand my outlook of what art is and how it applies to (and appears in) everyday life.” Katie restated this idea again in another section of the post-class survey; “the class really helped to show how art literally is all around us—whether by making special or everyday surroundings.”

In the post-class survey, Katie described how she had originally defined art and the role of an artist, “I think I always assumed that art was something based on a large scale. An artist was someone who created art based on that principle.” Katie did not expand on what she meant here by “large scale.” I inferred that she might be referring to a level of commitment beyond the scope of casual artmaking in everyday life. However, in response to a later question, Katie described how her perceptions of who makes art had changed in response to the content of the class. She stated, “Liz helped to broaden my senses of ‘art.’ She made me realize that you don’t have to be famous or educationally trained to create art.” In this way, art and making art had

become more accessible to Katie through her understanding and application of the class content.

During our final class, Katie made a connection related to this idea in response to a conversation about a technical drawing that another participant had included in his journal.

I think it's kind of along the lines of construction workers. You know, they would be the last people that would call themselves artists, but what they do is literally art. I mean from the way that they can build something. You know, you've got stone on your house and the way that they lay them and all the pieces have to [fit]...I mean it's amazing. So, yeah. It's an everyday simple thing that some people do for a living that's art.

Katie: Impact on artistic identity. I observed throughout the class that Katie seemed to exhibit a newfound confidence in her artistic identity that especially allowed her to explore and experiment with materials in a playful way. When asked if any prior perceptions about her artistic identity had changed during the class, Katie stated, "Yes. This was a very fun class and brought me back to my childhood when playing with crayons, watercolors, and modge podge was so fun and liberating." In her post-class survey, Katie underlined and put a smiley face next to the word "modge podge," acknowledging what might be considered an overzealous use of a new material that she enjoyed incorporating into the construction of every page of her visual journal.

During the final class discussion, Katie described her visual journal and also shared a mistake that had turned into another playful exploration with materials.

Andrew: Is that a four-leaf clover?

Katie: Oh this [laughing]? Well, I don't know if you guys know this story or not, but on Sunday I glued a ladybug there. And I didn't like the ladybug. So I tore it off and then it put a hole [laughter]...So then I had to find a patch. And I had some stamps at home. I went into all this stuff. It just brought out the inner, whatever, geek in me. But I found like all these stamps that I had gotten years ago. And I thought well I might just stamp a flower. And so that's that. And the rest are rhinestones [laughter]. (See Figure 5.2)



Figure 5.2. Detail of Katie's visual journal illustrating playful experimentation with materials.

During the class, Katie described deciding to impulsively purchase a set of watercolor paints that she spotted in the craft aisle during a shopping errand. These were used to create a watercolor painting of a favorite place to put in her visual journal.

And then this page is my ode to Old World Wisconsin, which we've been going to since we were kids. And one of the things that we always had to do there was pick our favorite place and then you got to have your picture in front of it. [This is the one that] has always been my favorite—it's the Koepsell farm. And they're of German ancestry. So I did the German map. I do have German ancestry in me so it kind of all relates to me. And then I put a couple zinnias on the page. (See Figure 5.3)



Figure 5.3. Katie's self-initiated exploration with watercolor paints used to paint an image of a favorite place.

The class responded positively to Katie's painting and encouraged her to continue exploring art.

Gretchen: Yeah, I think you should keep painting.

Katie: Well thank you. Well I'm going to try different...not medium? [questioning if that is the correct word]

Participant: Yeah, medium.

Katie: But I want to try colored pencils.

Bella: You might like pastels.

Katie: I don't know those, you'll have to tell me about it tomorrow. I haven't met them yet. I just know modge podge and modge podge [laughter].

In response to the post-class survey question about whether the idea of making special had influenced her artistic identity, Katie stated, "Yes. I realize how much of my day, week,

month and year revolves around that very idea. Whether traditions or routines—we all have a way of making our own special.” Katie described examples she included in her journal of ways in which she feels she utilizes the artistic behavior of making special in her everyday life.

And then back to Old World Wisconsin...And then this is, again, the Koepsell farm. This is another view of it. And I like that. My favorite. All right, so here’s a Christmas tree because we make Christmas special. This is my making special. And I love to cook on campfires so this is my campfire. (See Figure 5.4)



Figure 5.4. Katie’s personal examples of making special.

Katie also felt that the idea of everyday aesthetics was an influential way to consider art. In the post-class survey, she stated, “It helped me to realize how my organizing, decorating, gardening, etc. is all a way of me making my surroundings beautiful (or trying anyways).” Katie used her visual journal to describe everyday aesthetic qualities that were an important part of her surroundings.

So my vernacular art section is harvesting color [laughing]. I’ve got my flowers from my garden because that’s important to me. And I cut this out because it’s enjoy, play, and hope. You enjoy the garden. You play in the dirt and watch things grow. And you hope that they live. (See Figure 5.5)

She continued,

Here's the next page. So I love everything old. I do...And then this is my making special page because I do like to incorporate old things, try to anyways, in the outdoors. So this is a picture of my yard. Kind of steps up to the patio. And we've got a lot of wood. And then I like to can tomatoes and stuff like that. And I like just the orderly picture. The way that the cans all sit on your counters. And so I like that. And I put celebrate because it's my way of celebrating. (See Figure 5.6)

Katie completed her visual journal with additional images of her garden. She described this page by stating, "and then there's just more of my garden in my everyday aesthetics because I walk around and I look at it all day" (see Figure 5.7).



Figure 5.5. Images from Katie's visual journal depicting her everyday aesthetic preferences.



Figure 5.6. Images from Katie’s visual journal depicting her everyday aesthetic preferences.



Figure 5.7. Images from Katie’s visual journal depicting her garden.

While the curricular content related to making special and everyday aesthetics seemed to have a positive impact on Katie, she did not feel that she could make a personal connection to the vernacular art environments.

This—I had a bit more trouble identifying with. While I understand what vernacular art is—it's harder for me to relate it to art and my surroundings. The field trip was a great demonstration and was fun to experience.

While Katie was able to enjoy and appreciate discussing examples of vernacular art environments, she appeared most affected by the ideas of making special and everyday aesthetics. Through these latter ideas she most readily responded in personal ways that indicated changes in how she perceived of herself as an artist, particularly through her everyday places and behaviors.

Anne

Anne: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

Anne: Changing attitudes about art. During the pre-class interview, Anne indicated that she had already begun to broaden what she considered to be art through her experiences in classes at *Grandview*, a vernacular art environment located near her home. Following the *Artist Within*, Anne indicated that this class was also influential in continuing to broaden her perspective of art. She stated:

The idea that roadside memorials could be considered art surprised me. I have always thought that only the most talented artists create real art. Through my association with *Grandview* for quite a few years now, I have begun to appreciate the more non-trained person who has a need to express himself or herself and this class was a further development of my education.

In her post-class survey, Anne was able to make connections between how shifts in her definition of art and who makes art impacted her perception of herself as an artist. When asked to describe

whether her perceptions of who makes art had changed during the course of the class, Anne stated, “Definitely! I had never thought of what I do in my home or with my family or in my environment as having very much to do with art. Without knowing it, I have tried to make things special!” Anne indicated that due to participation in the class she was able to make clearer connections between her everyday life and art. She stated, “I learned that in some ways I shape my environment and that this can be an artistic endeavor.” In the visual journal that each participant created as part of the class, Anne included images of ways she recreates her everyday environments, particularly related to gardening (see Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.8. Images from Anne’s visual journal depicting her everyday environments.

Learning about everyday aesthetics in particular also influenced how Anne perceived her everyday surroundings. She stated, “I think it [everyday aesthetics] has made me notice and appreciate even more the things around me. In other words, my environment and how it does

influence me and I influence it.” In the visual journal the participants created as part of the class, Anne included a number of personal images that indicated a broadening of how she thought about art and its relationship to her everyday life. She stated, “Well my book is just kind of my environment. My life. So this is Hollandales’ rock. My driveway, you know is just past this rock” (see Figure 5.9).

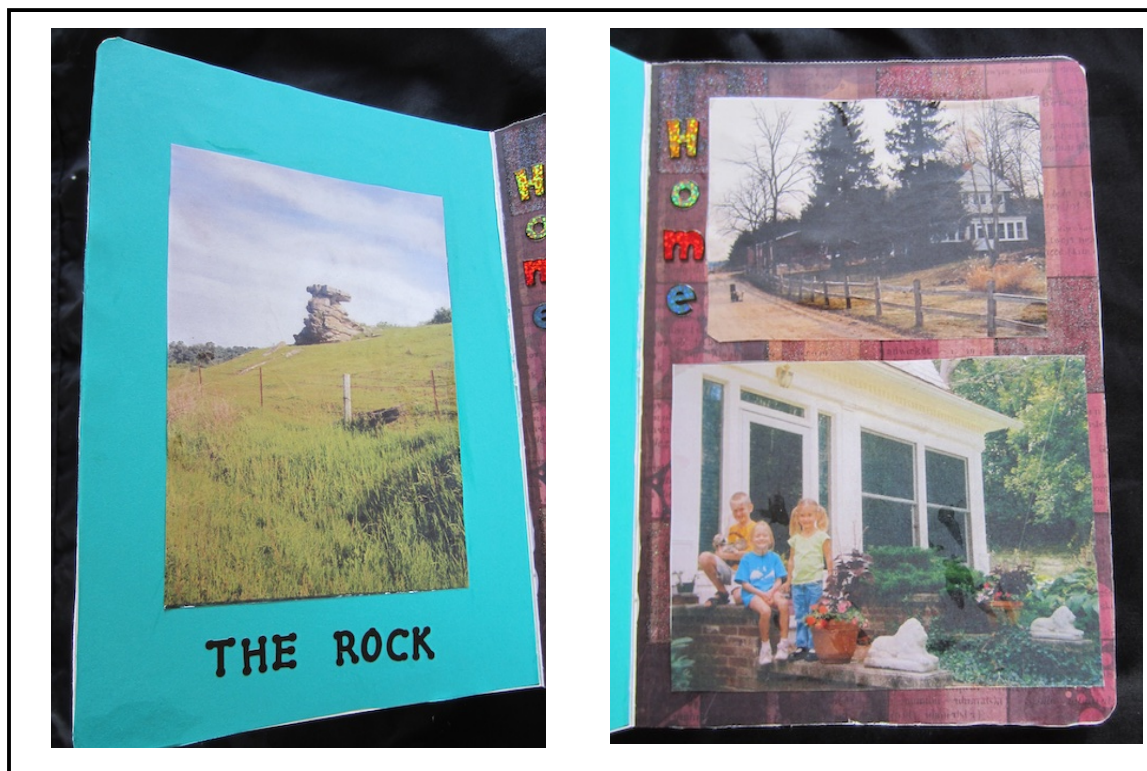


Figure 5.9. Images from Anne’s visual journal depicting areas around her home.

Anne: Impact on artistic identity. In her post-class survey, Anne indicated on the rating scale that her perception of her identity as an artist had improved from a three or four to a six. It is important to note that my goal in this class was not to teach participants to fit prescribed notions of what they felt it means to be an artist, but to broaden traditional definitions of art so that they could recognize ways in which they had already been incorporating artistic behaviors into their everyday lives. Anne addressed this point by stating the following, “It [making special]

made it clearer to me how important it is to make everyday living in our own environments special as well as the celebrations in our lives and that I have already been doing these things.”

This was also reinforced in Anne’s visual journal where she included a number of images indicating ways in which her family utilized making special, one of the three components of the vernacular art curriculum. These included the tradition of her husband dressing as Santa Claus for their grandchildren and an annual hike that her extended family enacted in the last week of April, a tradition that had been occurring for 46 years (see Figure 5.10). Anne also included images of her doll and antique collection, something I had also identified as an influential part of how she organized and connected to her home (see Figure 5.11)

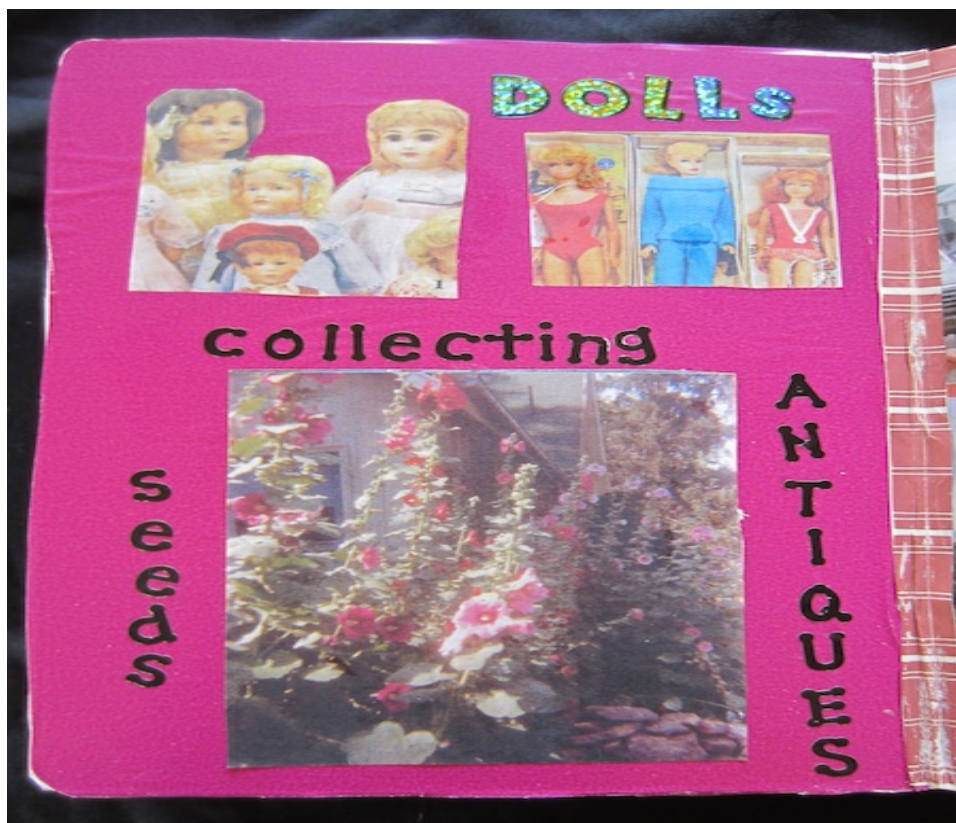


Figure 5.10. Images from Anne’s visual journal depicting ways she identified making special.



Figure 5.11. Images from Anne’s visual journal depicting significant personal collections.

In relation to the impact of her experiences in the *Artist Within* class and how these might influence her in the future, Anne noted:

I plan to continue taking the classes at *Grandview*. I look forward to this every summer. I love to visit the outsider art locations in our state and love to go to Kohler. I can even further accept that what I do in these classes or in my environment is OK if I like it. These things are expressions of me and who I am.

Caryn

Caryn: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

In the post-class survey, Caryn used the rating scale to indicate a more complex understanding of her identity as an artist (see Figure 5.12). Following the class she felt the need to make distinctions between her artistic identity in “reality” versus a more personal sense of her artistic identity, indicated by the notation “in my head.” In both cases, Caryn has noted significant improvement in how she perceives of herself as an artist following the class in contrast to prior to the class.

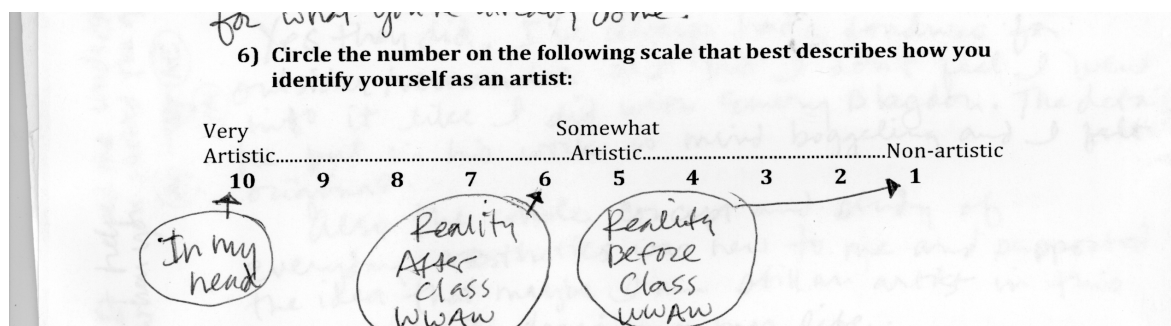


Figure 5.12. Caryn's post-class artistic identity rating scale.

Caryn: Changing attitudes about art. In her post-class survey, Caryn indicated some transitions in how she thought about art, particularly in response to discussions about vernacular art environments. In response to whether her definition of art had shifted, Caryn stated the following:

Yes. Before I felt that Vernacular Art was a hyper crazed output of a loner isolated creative being. Now I feel self-taught means something more. Possibly an interest in putting your bodily energy into making something bigger than you. Maybe something that could/would have power if you tried hard enough.

She added, "Education should open people up to the possibilities, but without knowing the 'rules' a person could have a clearer creative path." She continued this idea in her post-class survey related to shifts in her perception of who makes art:

Again with the vernacular artists (coined afterward of course) who in some cases didn't think they were making art. Who just thought they were making something. There's a freedom there. I wonder, if they thought it was art if these artists would have kept going like they did?

Here Caryn seems to be making connections between the stifled feeling she initially expressed, even as someone educated in art and thus aware of its "rules," and the freedom she perceived an untrained artist might experience. She continued:

Epiphany! I see myself here. When I turn around at the end of my life and see a very creative life, I would have missed knowing it in the middle (where I am now) that I always was an Artist—something that I've not verbalized; always saying 'no, I'm a lazy artist.'

Caryn also noted feeling not wholly connected to this type of art overall. Previously, Caryn admitted feeling “alienated” by the intense dedication she perceived was required to create the vernacular art environments—something she felt was lacking in her own pursuits as an artist. She also indicated during the class “this outsider art is a lot for me. You know? It’s really busy and I needed something that was calming.”

However, Caryn had a particularly strong response to Emery Blagdon’s work, a vernacular environment artist whose work was on display at John Michael Kohler Arts Center where we went on a class excursion. She stated, “I’ve always had a fondness for outsider/vernacular art but I don’t feel I ‘went’ into it like I did with Emery Blagdon. The detail he put in his work is mind-boggling, and I felt—original.” The display of Emery Blagdon’s work at John Michael Kohler Arts Center was meant to replicate the immersive environment that he originally created. Caryn found this experience and our class discussion of his work helpful in deepening her understanding of these works and included images of his work in her visual journal (see Figure 5.13).



Figure 5.13. Images from Caryn’s visual journal depicting vernacular environment artist, Emery Blagdon.

Caryn seemed deeply affected by our class discussions of everyday aesthetics, which in turn reshaped and broadened how she defined art. Caryn stated the following in her post-class survey:

Even though we teach art is for everybody, I've felt it helps to have an understanding of art, like history, to fairly judge. But now showing of the shrines and everyday aesthetics and making special opens up the viewing, bringing shrines and such to everybody. I used to think shrines were tacky and cheap; now I see them as a special effort, something happened here or someone died and I cared about them.

As part of her visual journal, Caryn also placed significant meaning on her choice to display artwork done by friends and family in her home (see Figure 5.14). Caryn stated, "I feel including artwork of your friends and family at home creates a more meaningful life. I don't want to sound too out there, but it's their energy that they used to give you something." She described examples of artwork from friends and family that she included in her visual journal.

This is my friend, Adam. You can see him online. His stuff is pretty sexual sometimes because of his past. But he's coming out to his mom here and she's rejecting him. He's not done it yet. He's in his forties. (See Figure 5.15)

Caryn provided an additional example stating,

And then this is my friend Beth from Lake Geneva. And she did these big pastels on big sized paper, you know, regular big sized paper. And she would do all these layers and put them in her tub and wash them off and do more. I thought, wow, that's license to copy. I want to try that. They are really cool abstracts. And just, she's so cool. (See Figure 5.16)

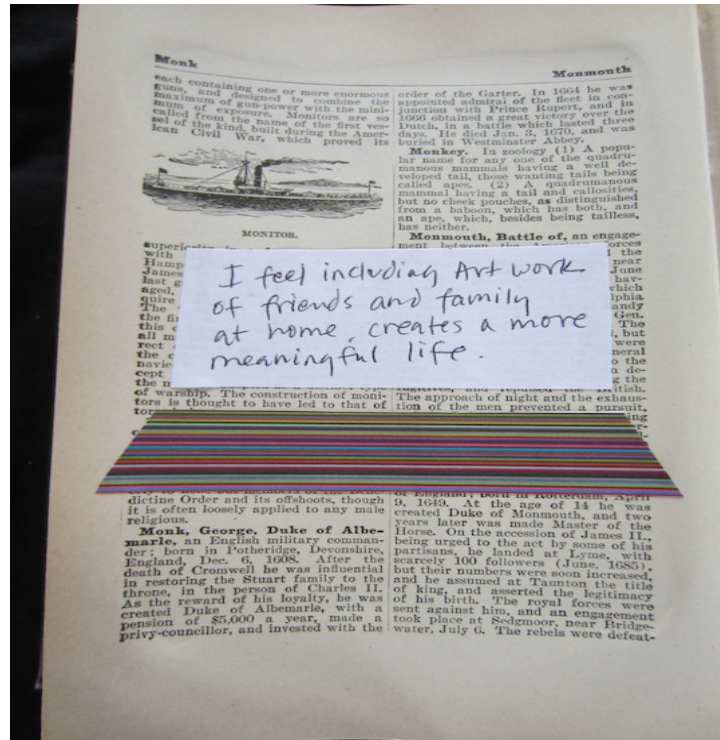


Figure 5.14. Image from Caryn’s visual journal addressing her collection of artwork from friends and family.

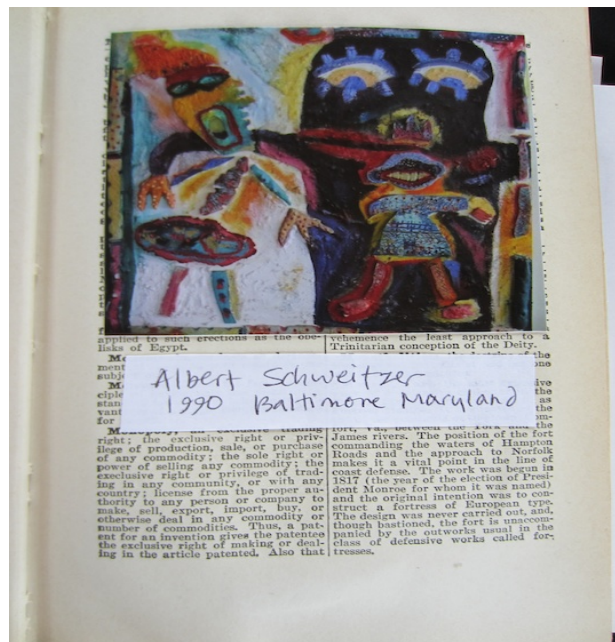


Figure 5.15. Image from Caryn’s visual journal of a friend’s artwork displayed in her home.

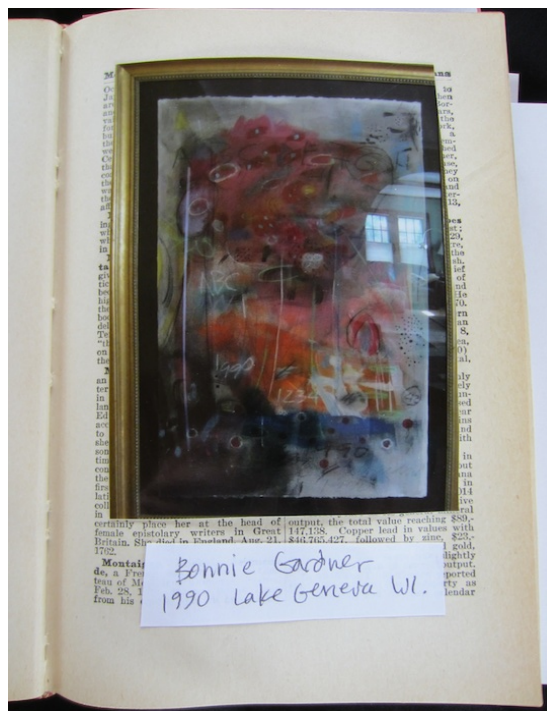


Figure 5.16. Image from Caryn's visual journal of a friend's artwork displayed in her home.

Caryn: Impact on artistic identity. As Caryn began to shift or broaden how she defined art and who makes art, she also began to reexamine her own identity as an artist. Here she addressed her response to everyday aesthetics and the roadside shrines we looked to as examples:

In the discussion of everyday aesthetics you made me appreciate the car accident shrines we see. Also the way we make anything special. I appreciate that more now. I see my Thanksgiving cards as a deeper symbol of family, at least my desire to have this gathering meaningful before and after the celebration of Thanksgiving.

The Thanksgiving cards that Caryn refers to here represented a personal example that emerged several times during the class and as part of Caryn's visual journal. As Caryn shared her visual journal, she discussed her intentions for creating the cards:

And then we make cards for Thanksgiving. I'm the only one in my family that invites people with an invitation, a homemade invitation. It's an invitation to a ceremony of gratitude. And I'm trying to plant the seed and the tone before they come because they all don't even smile. I've tried the gourmet and the organic stuff and I try so hard and they're just like [making a face]. My mom is the sweetest. And I did this like Renoir. No one

would know it was a Renoir [describing a specific card design]. I cut him up and...We are so blessed. My dog Chuck who's gone now. Beautiful flowers, beautiful trees from the bottom up. (See Figure 5.17)



Figure 5.17. Image from Caryn's visual journal depicting her handmade Thanksgiving cards.

When asked to describe in the post-class survey if the idea of making special had any influence on her identity as an artist, Caryn stated the following:

Truly! My (art cards I'll call them now) Thanksgiving cards were meant to 'warm' up my sedate and unappreciative family (1/2 of them, apathetic to education). This feels like therapy. But I can see what I was trying to do from a different angle now. I will work harder with my art to touch them. I'd like to be more artistic with food and decorations. I've decided to now photo document the centerpieces for my Thanksgiving Book where I put my cards, what we did and didn't do, make, buy, etc. (See Figure 5.18)

this is not a good picture, but it was really cool paper. It was a wedding present, this woman swimming in an ocean and all these fish and a beautiful bow. So I wrapped it up and kept it on a shelf. But the present is out. (See Figure 5.21)

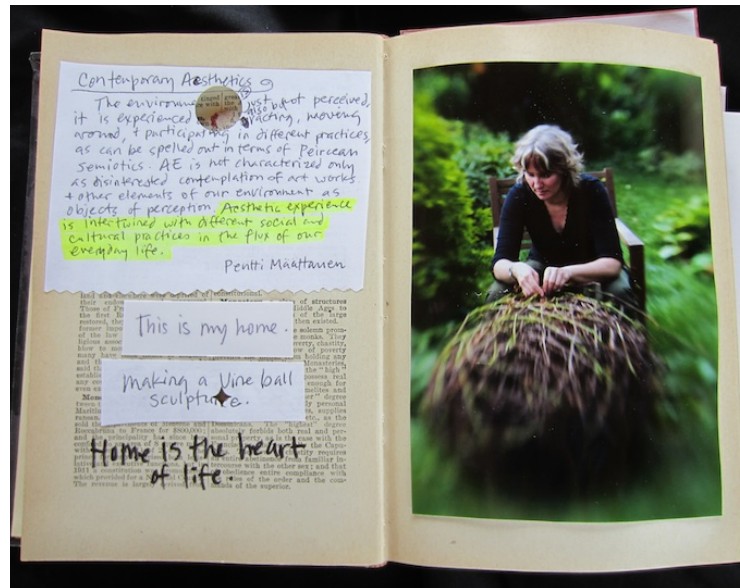


Figure 5.19. Image from Caryn’s visual journal of her creating a vine ball.

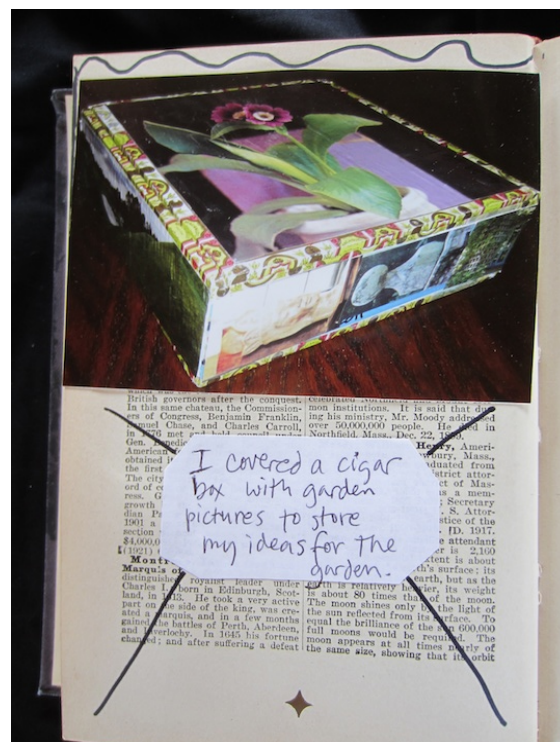


Figure 5.20. Image from Caryn’s visual journal depicting decorated cigar box.

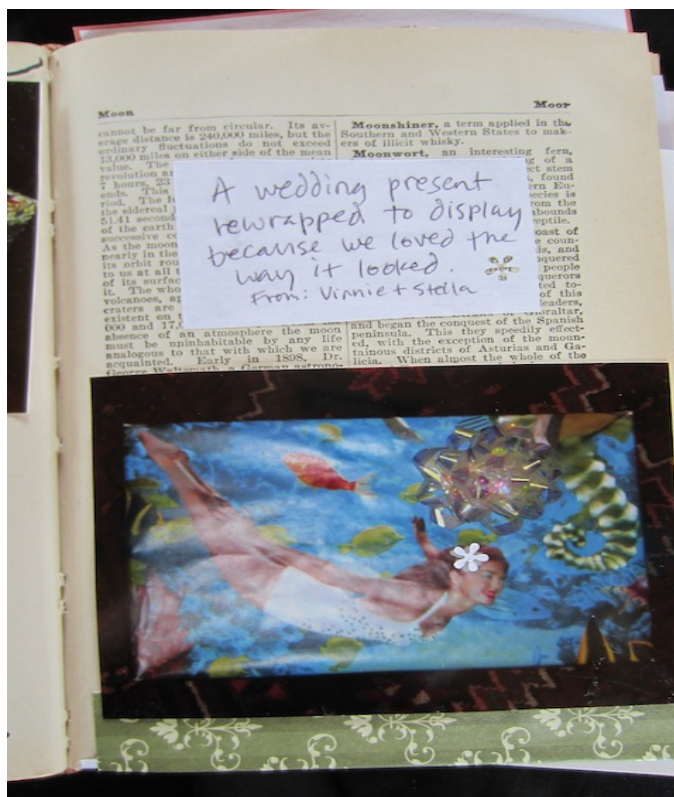


Figure 5.21. Image from Caryn's visual journal depicting rewrapped gift box.

Caryn described her visual journal and stated, "This is a painting I did in my bathroom because my bathroom's so ugly. I did a huge seven foot thing of flowers so you don't look at my faux marble sink and stuff" (see Figure 5.22). Caryn also described how the ways in which she altered her everyday environment were used to communicate her personal identity and values, "And I'm getting a new neighbor, so I have all kinds of democratic posters out front because I want the right neighbor [lots of laughter] (see Figure 5.23).



Figure 5.22. Caryn’s visual journal entry depicting a personal mural in her home.

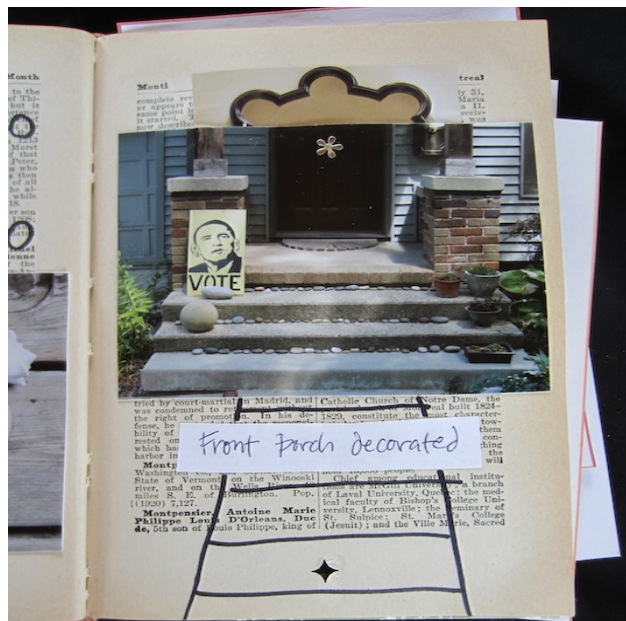


Figure 5.23. Image from Caryn’s visual journal depicting her front porch.

During the *Artist Within*, Caryn was especially affected by discussions about the idea of everyday aesthetics. In her post-class survey Caryn stated, “The whole concept and study of everyday aesthetics was new to me and supported the idea that maybe I am still an artist in this way, visually designing my life.” In particular, Caryn seemed to feel that the idea of everyday aesthetics provided a framework for her to think about her own artistic behaviors and ways of making meaning. When asked in the post-class survey if any of her perceptions of herself as an artist had changed during the course of the class, Caryn stated the following:

Yes, everyday aesthetics legitimized me. I just did things but didn’t think they were necessarily artistic or art...I see myself as more creative and moving in a positive direction now. So much healthier than continuously kicking yourself and thinking maybe you picked the wrong path in life because I’m not as prolific or artful as others I know.

When asked on the post-class survey to specifically describe if learning about everyday aesthetics had influenced her perception of her artistic identity, Caryn stated,

Hugely, yes. Everyday aesthetics was a way to have nature around me. Round rocks are easily accessible from anywhere...I was concerned that this dragging rocks home thing was odd—not anymore. I’m legitimized again. I didn’t think the things I did were of an artist’s world, but it makes me happy to hear of everyday aesthetics and learn more about it.

The rock collection Caryn described here also emerged in her discussion of her visual journal, “This is just a little collection of my rocks. Just one. And then I lined them on my stairs in the front of my house” (see Figure 5.24).

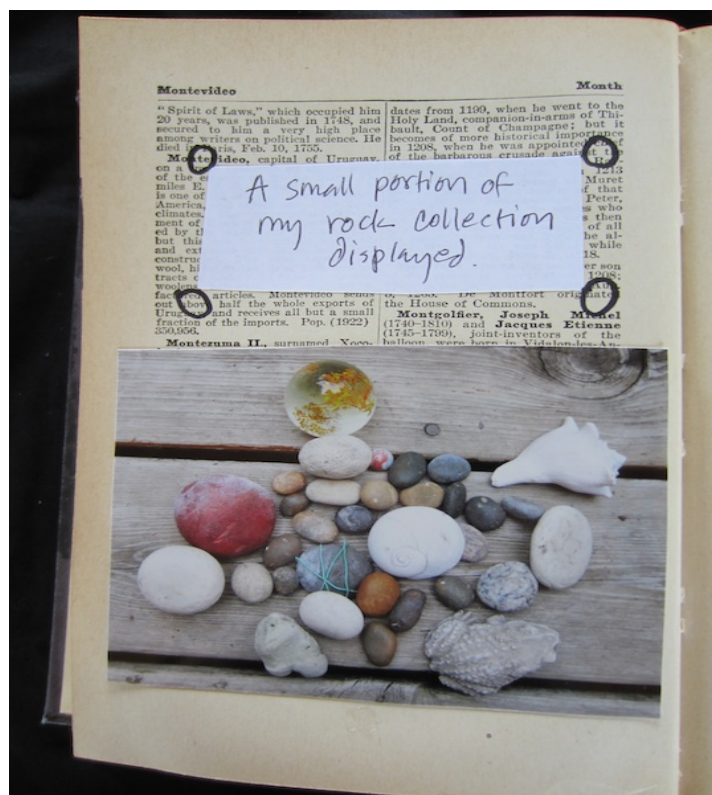


Figure 5.24. Image from Caryn’s visual journal depicting her rock collection.

Caryn concluded her discussion of her visual journal with the other participants in the class by stating, “And then I just said, everyday aesthetics. I didn’t realize that there was meaning and connection to what I was doing. It makes me want to do more. So thank you. Thank you” (see Figure 5.25).



Figure 5.25. Image from Caryn’s visual journal.

Becca

Becca: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

In the post-class survey, Becca noted a subtle, but positive, change in her perception of herself as an artist, moving herself from a five on the artistic identity rating scale prior to the class to a seven. This subtle shift may be in part due to previous descriptions that indicate that Becca came to the class with broad notions of what art is and who can be an artist. However, there were some components of the class that Becca described as influential to her attitudes about art and how she identified as an artist.

Becca: Changing attitudes about art. Despite Becca's broad perceptions about art prior to taking the *Artist Within* class, she still noted that learning about everyday aesthetics and making special did have some effect on her attitudes about art. She stated, "Art is very broad and including those everyday things we do to make our environment more pleasant or more enjoyable or 'special' has broadened my personal definition of art." Becca also noted, "I hadn't really thought about that concept [making special] as art, but I do see that as a way to express myself artistically in a way I am comfortable with." In relation to the idea of everyday aesthetics Becca stated, "I try to make my home attractive and I can see how that really is artistic expression." These prior statements about making special and everyday aesthetics indicated that following the class Becca did have a somewhat new understanding of art and artists, which also provided a way to reconsider her own artmaking practices.

During Becca's statements to the class about her visual journal, she identified and discussed a number of nontraditional art objects that she or someone in her family had created or collected. Becca began describing her visual journal to the class in the following way:

I've always picked up things, little things, pieces of shell. This is a piece of birch bark. I've got a little dish that I keep and I just find something interesting, a rock or something, and throw it in there. So I was rummaging for a thing for this [project] and pulled up these things for the cover. On the back I've got a partially worked piece of projection point. Could have been an arrowhead, but it was partially worked. I found that, I think, on the job at one point. (see Figure 5.26)

Like Caryn, Becca took note of her tendency to collect and save found objects as a potentially meaningful action.



Figure 5.26. Objects collected by Becca that she included as visual components of her journal.

Becca included a number of personal photographs in her visual journal, which was a medium she had previously indicated particularly enjoying. She organized these images primarily around the ideas presented in the class: making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments. Becca stated,

I take a lot of pictures. So that's basically what I've got in here. Photographs. This I suppose you could call this part of making special. This is a trip up north. My husband and I are kayaking and I took this picture early one morning in the water. It was just like glass...That's just a reflection in the water. And just other photos I've taken around. We've got a farm outside of Richland Center where that was taken. And this was outside at the house. The cat sitting in the apple tree on the deck. (see Figure 5.27)



Figure 5.27. Photographs taken by Becca and inserted in her visual journal.

Becca also devoted a portion of her visual journal to ways her family and she attended to making special (see Figure 5.28). She stated,

[For] making special, this [page] is kind of a work in progress I guess. I started writing down things that you know seem special. Food mostly [laughter]. Bundt cake, bunny cake, fondue. We always do fondue at New Year's Eve. Cinnamon rolls at Christmas. Different things in our house. We just had our bathroom redone and I picked up tile. And I like to refinish furniture. So that's something I like to do for special. I also like rusty metal. So I've got a yard ornament, yard art. And I've done a little bit of metalwork. So that's this piece. And a little collage of things on my porch. Different pieces that are rustic.



Figure 5.28. Becca's self-selected art objects related to the idea of making special.

In addition to images she felt were related to making special, Becca also included photographs of unique manmade environments she had seen (see Figure 5.29).

This is I guess, I don't know if you'd say everyday or more of a manmade environment kind of photo. This is a picture in front of the German warehouse in Richland Center. And I didn't take this; I stole this off of Facebook [laughter]. Everything else in here I took. These two I took in Germany. I thought they were really interesting. This old, old house. This little village, cobblestone street and the modern painting on the door. And this was another, an old church that was being remodeled with these really modern looking organ pipes in it and the colors are really pretty. This is a night scene at Larry Fest up by La Farge and they light up the trees at night. It's a bluegrass festival.

She continued, "And this other photo is kind of hard to see. But up in Door County, we were just driving along the lakeside from Cape Point Park and found this place. I don't know who it was. There were all these metal sculptures. Yeah and this is kind of a big gate. So I just thought it was very interesting." Becca displayed an awareness of her everyday environment and seemed to use her photography to capture images of places that she found interesting or visually compelling.



Figure 5.29. Photographs included in Becca's visual journal of unique manmade environments.

While explaining her visual journal, Becca stated the following about ways her husband had also made his mark visually on their home (see Figure 5.30):

Becca: And some different kind of art that my husband enjoys. The taxidermy. He's got a fish that he caught [laughter]. Yes. I left for the weekend, I came back, and a deer head was on the wall. It's too high up I can't [reach it].

Participant: That happened to me too.

Jessica: He threatens to bring one down to our house.

Becca: Yes. And sneak in one day and put a deer head on her wall. A skull mount.

Jessica: And he's got just skulls. The white skulls too.

Becca: And these are some wood inlay fish that we've got hanging on the wall that are really very pretty.

Liz: So Barb with your husband's choices, why do you choose to put it in your [visual journal] book?

Andrew: On the first page!

Becca: Well it does, well...I don't know. It's just that this is right at the door when you come in. This is at the top of the steps. This is my everyday life. Yeah, I look at them every day. And he's very proud of these deer, the big fish.

While other participants share homes with partners or other family members, Becca was the only participant to clearly acknowledge how she negotiated the aesthetics of her everyday environment in addition to making her own visual contribution to this shared space.



Figure 5.30. Entry from Becca's visual journal depicting her husband's influence on the decoration of their home.

In her post-class survey, Becca noted that she already had some familiarity with the vernacular art environments that were presented during the class. She stated,

I had been aware of vernacular art—maybe not by that name, but they always held an interest with me. I have created vernacular art around me and my home as an adult. My father was a great one for creating vernacular art I realize now!

As Becca shared her visual journal with the class she noted, “This is from the other day [during field trip to *Grandview*] and some of the vernacular art. This carved head is something our dad did years ago. I had it in the garage for a while” (see Figure 5.31). She continued,

That’s from the other day. It was in the front at *Grandview*. And here’s a pile of stone. We saw this in Door County also...And this thing is like over seven feet tall. This little pile of rocks. So we were trying to balance some more on top there. And I’ve got a couple of stumps that I’ve put in my garden. Just let the ivy grow over.”

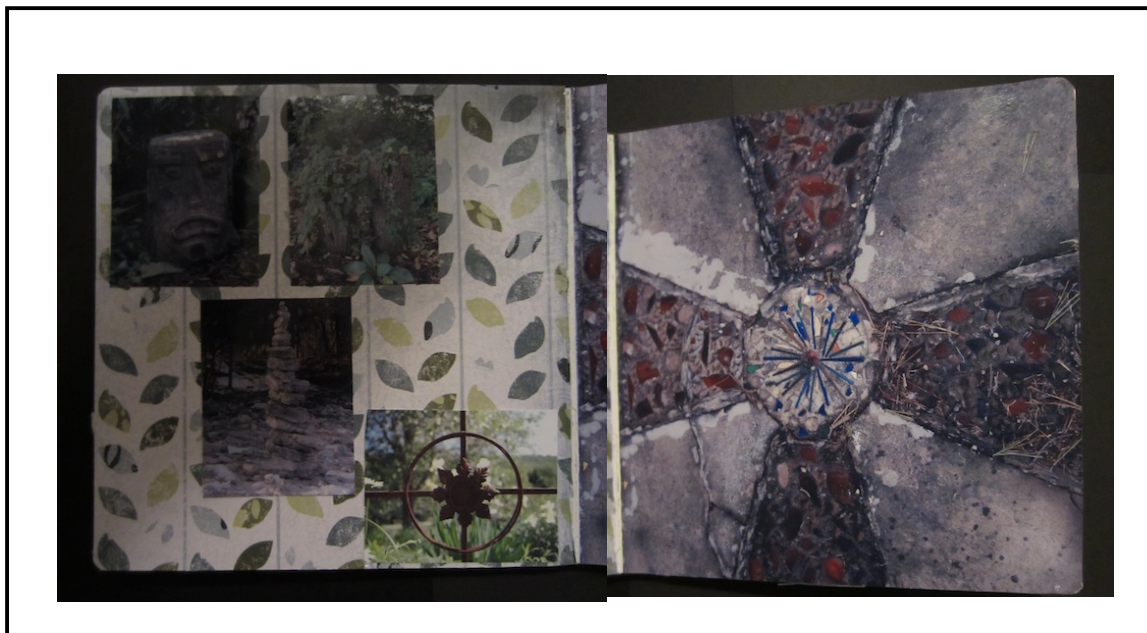


Figure 5.31. Images from Becca’s visual journal depicting vernacular artifacts.

Becca: Impact on artistic identity. Through her visual journal, class discussions, and post-class survey, Becca displayed a broad understanding of art by including numerous examples from everyday settings. She also displayed some comfort with producing art and had actively sought out art experiences in her adult life, even while noting the constraints of limited time to do so. While Becca indicated a modest improvement in how she identified as an artist she also verbalized personal growth through the class on the post-class survey, “Yes. I see there is more of an artist inside than I realized. It’s just a matter of finding a way to express it or realizing that

things I do every day (or as something special) are art.” Here, Becca seems to indicate that the ideas learned in class related to making special and everyday aesthetics, strengthened her ability to recognize her own artistic forms of expression.

Jessica

Jessica: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

On the artistic identity rating scale, Jessica originally designated herself as a three. On the same scale on the post-class survey, Jessica designated herself as a four. While Jessica resisted shifting how she rated herself on the scale and felt strongly that she was not an artist, there were some significant changes in attitudes about art and her own artistic identity that were articulated in the written components of the survey.

Jessica: Changing attitudes about art. In the post-class survey, Jessica began by noting that she had experienced limited change in her attitude toward art and how she identified as an artist. However, as she worked through the questionnaire, more nuanced thoughts about how the class had impacted her emerged. In the post-class survey, Jessica stated,

I don't think any of my perceptions about art changed during this class, as I've always felt that art is an important part of many people's lives. I also have felt that art is something someone else does, rather than myself. I can enjoy art, buy art, go to museums and view art, but have never considered myself an artist. Art exists in all walks of life and I think this course showed us that is certainly true.

In this statement, Jessica seems to articulate that this class confirmed some ideas she already had about art's place in a broad range of life experiences. However, in response to whether her perception about the definition of art had changed, Jessica acknowledged that the way art was presented in the *Artist Within* was a welcome change,

I liked the definition of art as presented in this class. Most people think of art as something that hangs on your wall or in a museum. Everyday Aesthetics and Making Special in particular are ways in which art can be related to our everyday lives and makes our lives richer. Defining art in this way brings it to a level that can be appreciated by people in all walks of life and helps them realize that they can all be artists in one way or another.

Jessica's personal definition of art also seemed to influence how she perceived herself as an artist. As Jessica continued to describe some of the ideas she learned through the class, she also began to discuss how those ideas might have impacted her own artistic identity and the ways in which she appreciates art.

I hadn't considered some of the places that art is found that were presented in this class. When one considers Everyday Aesthetics and Making Special, there is art everywhere. We don't need to go to a museum to view art, but rather find it in our everyday lives. I rather like this idea, especially since I don't consider myself an artist, as I can be artistic in many different ways within my own life. The things that we create within our home/work/community define who we are and maybe should be as important as the art that hangs in a museum. Vernacular Art that is special to certain areas is a wonderful way to enjoy art and to realize that it can take on many forms. I think as I travel to different places, I will be more appreciative of the vernacular art that I may see.

She continued to elaborate these ideas as she discussed how her perceptions of who makes art had changed during the class,

Most people feel that an "artist" is the only one that makes art. If one considers art as occurring in their everyday life, then all of us should consider ourselves artists. I do still feel that some people are more "artistic" than others and can create works of art that are truly magnificent. We all can enjoy these works of art and marvel at what they can create. However, I do like the idea that people in everyday walks of life can also create something that is artistic and that they and others around them can enjoy.

Jessica: Impact on artistic identity. On several occasions during this study, Jessica made reference to her belief that there were delineations that could be made between art and craft and that she was not an artist because she would identify what she created as craft. While Jessica held firmly to the idea that she was not an artist, she described ideas that were presented during the

Artist Within that had caused her to rethink her definition of art and in turn her identity as an artist. For example, in the post-class survey Jessica stated,

I still don't particularly think of myself as an artist; however, I do have a better appreciation of what art is and that I can create "art" in many different ways. I've always considered things that I have done more in the realm of craft, than of art, but really I guess it is all in how you perceive what you are doing.

Jessica seemed to be especially affected by the idea of making special as a kind of artistic behavior,

I like the idea of *making special* and anyone that thinks of how they *make special* in their everyday life should consider themselves an artist. The traditions we have, the food we make, the celebrations we plan, the way we arrange our homes are all artistic ways in which we live our lives. I really never gave much thought to the fact that all of what we create within our homes could be considered artistic, but I rather like that it makes us artists.

While Jessica actively participated during all three class sessions, she struggled to complete her visual journal for the class. Related to the previous quotation, most of the images she compiled in her book were photographs she took within her home to illustrate the idea of how she makes that everyday place special. While describing her book to the class she stated, "So I went around my house and took some pictures of things that have some special meaning. Right now the martini is the... [lots of laughter]. It's a plaque somebody gave me years ago that's very appropriate for the time" (see Figure 5.31). Jessica also photographed and included in her journal part of her personal collection that she displayed in her home.

Jessica: And I used to cross stitch and I cross stitched sheep and I have a whole collection [of sheep objects]. Will and Bob counted them one time just to see how many sheep I had. So I put that in.

Will: I think it was like in the 50s, in one room [laughter]. (see Figure 5.32)

Additional items documented for her journal included images of wall plaques with memorable quotes from songs she sang to her children, objects bought or gifted to her through her family's

travels, a small statue handed down from an aunt who had passed away, and a carefully constructed display of framed family photographs (see Figure 5.33).



Figure 5.32: Images of meaningful objects from Jessica's home.



Figure 5.33. Images of meaningful objects from Jessica's home.

While describing whether she had been influenced by the idea of everyday aesthetics, Jessica again hesitated, but then seemed to realize this might have been more influential on her artistic identity than she had originally thought.

I'm not sure learning about everyday aesthetics exactly influenced my identity as an artist, but it was interesting to talk about how our surroundings affect how we feel about the area we live in. Most of us take our surroundings for granted and don't think about how they influence us. As we look around our neighborhoods or towns, we may find things that really influence how we feel about our place. As an artist, there may be ways we can change/improve those everyday aesthetics to make our surroundings more enjoyable. If it is only working in your own backyard, you are using artistic talent to create a special place. So in that way, I guess it did influence me.

While Jessica consistently noted that she was not an artist and felt she had limited artistic talent, her responses in her post-class survey suggest that new perceptions about art and artists that were learned during the class allowed her to consider greater access to art for “people in everyday walks of life,” which might include herself.

The curricular component presented during class that seemed to be least influential on Jessica's personal artistic identity was the vernacular art environments. Jessica stated,

I enjoyed learning about vernacular art environments and was interested in the people that create these environments. However, it didn't really change my identity as an artist. I like looking at all the different types of art people have created, but I can't quite imagine myself creating anything quite like that.

Like Caryn, Jessica is able to appreciate the vernacular art environments, but recognized disconnect between the creative processes of these artists and her own capacity for creating art.

Judy

Judy: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

Of the three participants in the first *Artist Within* class, Judy was the only person to complete and return the post-class survey and her answers were limited to one-word or one-sentence responses.

Judy: Changing attitudes about art. Although on the post-class survey, Judy noted that her prior perceptions about how art is defined, who judges or interprets art, and who makes art had not changed during the course of this class, she also stated, “I’m more aware of how art and the physical/psychosocial environments are intertwined.” In addition, Judy responded that her perceptions about where art is found had also been influenced by the class by stating, “I typically only thought of art as something contained within 4 walls.”

Judy: Impact on artistic identity. On the post-class survey, Judy indicated a subtle, positive change in how she identified as an artist by changing from a five to a six on the artistic identity rating scale. When asked on the post-class survey if she had experienced any changes in how she perceived of herself as an artist, Judy stated simply, “No.” However, when asked if her identity as an artist had changed based on specific components of the vernacular art curriculum, Judy somewhat expanded her answer. When asked if everyday aesthetics had influenced her artistic identity Judy stated, “Yes. I’m more aware of my being artistic.” In response to the same question about making special Judy stated, “Yes. I realized my home is my art.” While Judy’s visual journal primarily reflected exploration with class materials, the images she included that might provide insight about how she was considering the ideas presented in the class were

images of her own home and an image of a vernacular art environment that included the word home (see Figures 5.34 and 5.35).

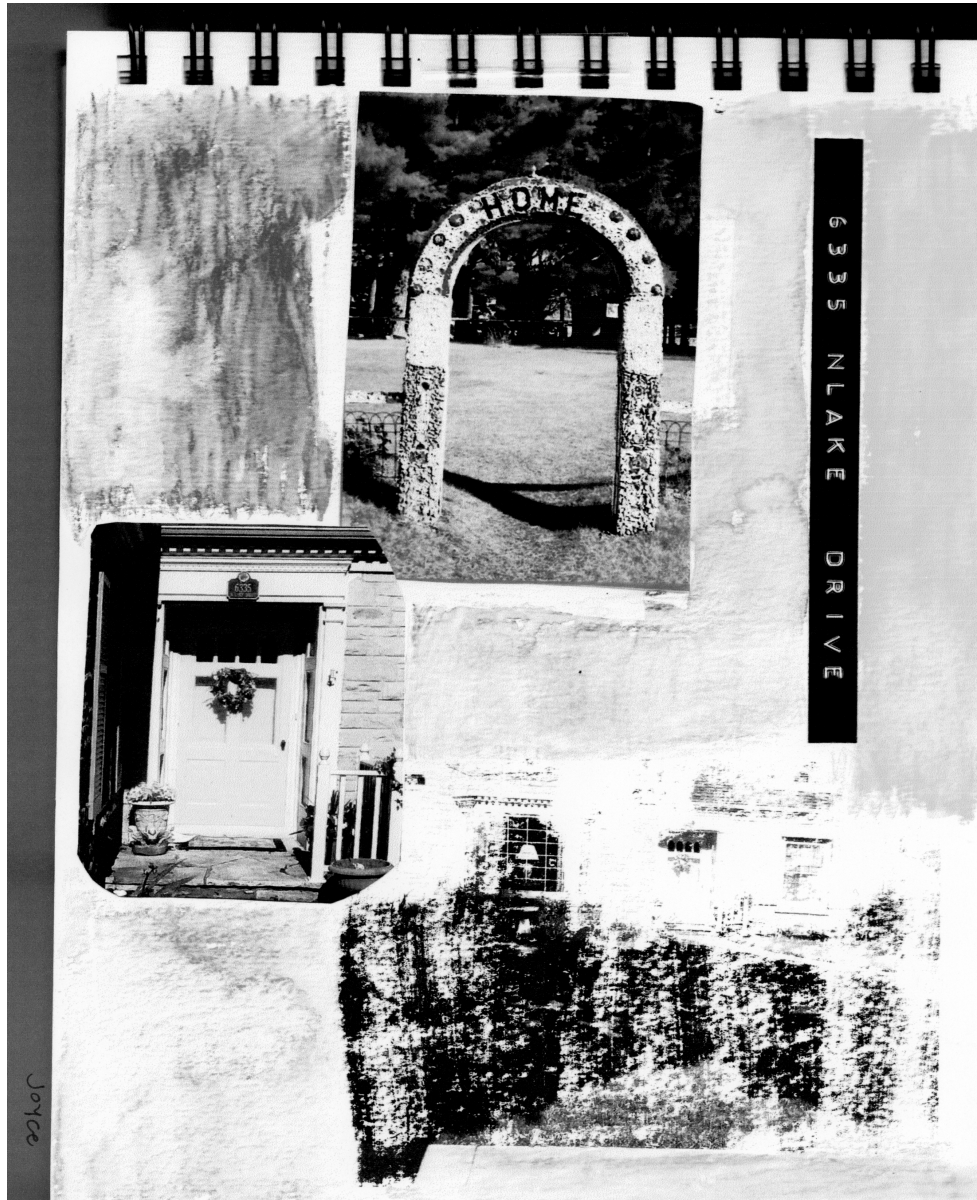


Figure 5.34. Images from Judy's visual journal depicting ideas about home.

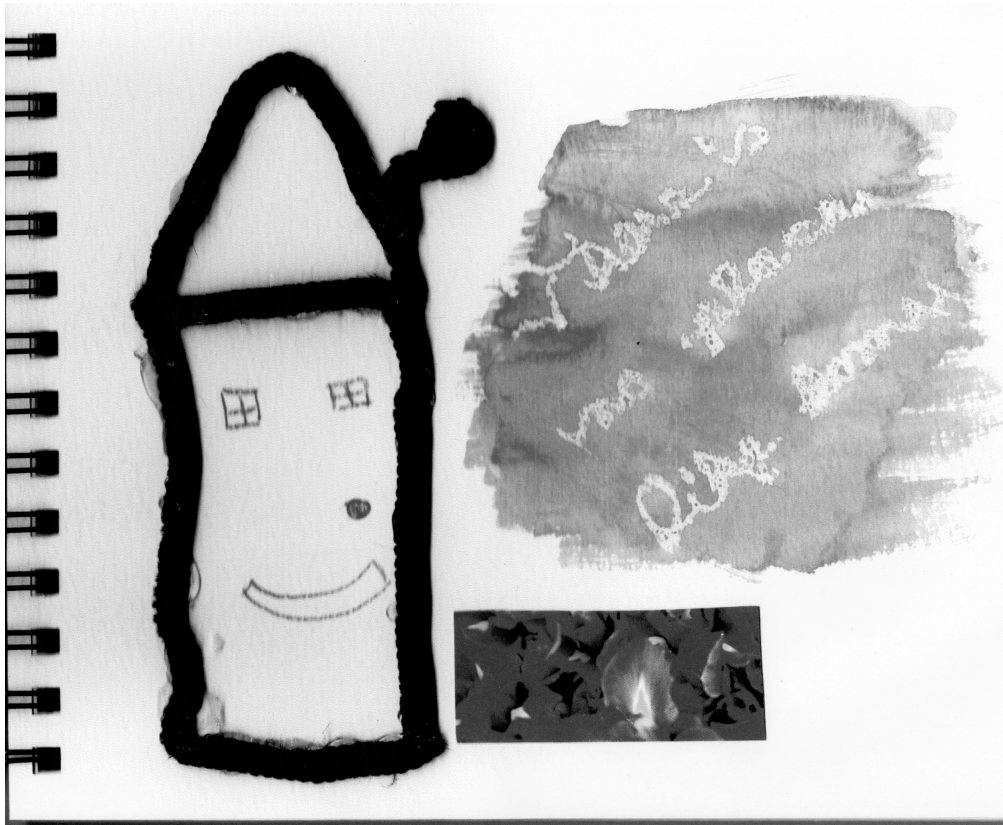


Figure 5.35. Image from Judy's visual journal.

During a class session, Judy discussed a tradition that was meaningful to her and that she might potentially reconsider as an artistic behavior.

Judy: Well I suppose that, every month I have four girlfriends and I get together for breakfast...And I know that when it's my turn [to host] I get out the good china and do something different for a centerpiece and make very special food. Like a big hit was Martha Stewart's French toast. So it will take me a couple of days to get ready for it because I am mainly slow with doing stuff. But, I put a lot of thought into what napkins are going to be used. And little stuff like, when Mary Poppins came to town...and so we had a Mary Poppin's high tea for it. So I had gotten gerbera daisies for each of the place settings and we had high tea foods and beverages and it was really fun.

Liz: So did you ever consider that your artmaking process?

Judy: No.

Liz: Or, does it not really matter?

Judy: I had never thought of it that way. I had just thought of it as something fun to do. But I guess it is an extension of an expression of art.

Later during this class session, Judy identified another personal experience that she had not previously thought of as an artistic endeavor.

I didn't think about gardening as an expression of art but it really is. I moved back here from Seattle. And so everything grows in Seattle. I had huge flower gardens. And, I guess I just enjoyed it. I didn't really think about it. Every year I would grow bulbs. And wherever they would land I would plant them. I had no idea what color was going to come up. That was kind of fun.

Judy also indicated on her post-class survey that learning about vernacular art environments during the class had not influenced her artistic identity. Judy also shared that Emery Blagdon, whose work was viewed during our class seemed eccentric. She stated,

I was thinking about that (Emery Blagdon). With the electricity right? Wasn't that where he felt he got the healing from? That sounded kind of goofy. So I am kind of picturing him with a colander on his head and being some kind of nutcase, but he probably was fascinating to talk to.

For Judy, Blagdon's personal story seemed overshadow any justification for his work being considered art. However, she did indicate that learning more about the vernacular art environments was something she would like to do.

Andrew

Andrew: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

On the artistic identity rating scale, Andrew indicated a slight positive shift in how he perceived his own artistic identity by moving his rating from a six, prior to the class, to a seven, following the class. Despite a slight shift on the rating scale, Andrew's written feedback on the

post-class survey and his enthusiastic commitment to creating his visual journal indicated that he was affected in a positive way by the class.

Andrew: Changing attitudes about art. When asked if his definition of art had changed through the *Artist Within* class Andrew stated, “Somewhat. I’ve always seen art as a creative and expressive endeavor, and that hasn’t changed, but now the qualifications are more broad—everyday.” The idea of art occurring in everyday life seemed to be an important and new way of thinking about art for Andrew. He continued this idea by noting, “I look for and find art more often now.” When asked if his ideas about who makes art had changed, Andrew stated, “Yes and no. I still believe anyone can create art, but now I give everyday art more credit.”

Andrew: Impact on artistic identity. On the post-class survey, Andrew indicated limited change in how he perceived himself as an artist, “Not really, but I think about art and try to be more creative in whatever I do.” However, through this class, Andrew seemed to have been able to make greater connections to art in everyday life and to see this as a valuable idea. In turn, he was able to articulate ways in which this affected his own identity as an artist.

When asked if any of his prior perceptions about art had changed, Andrew responded, “Yes. I see art more personally now. It has become more accessible, something anyone can participate in without special talent or training.” This personal access to art was also expressed in relation to who he felt can make judgments about art, “Just as anyone can like or dislike something, even if it’s a gut reaction, anyone can judge and interpret. After this class, though, communicating thoughts about art are easier.”

On the post-class survey, Andrew described how learning about everyday aesthetics had influenced his thinking about art, “It helped me recognize how a little art in your environment/home/office or in the way you do things can boost happiness and enjoyment of

otherwise everyday life.” Here Andrew reflected on the value of art as it occurs or is utilized in everyday life.

Andrew used a portion of his visual journal to explore the theme of everyday aesthetics.

He described several pages of his journal to the class in the following way:

So on Tuesday last when Liz was showing us around all the materials there was this board that had some words on it. And I saw this here, density. And it just caught my attention and I was thinking about it and what it meant and how I could apply it to our art project. So I came up with this theme. So it's, density—stuff of life. (See Figure 5.36)

He continued by discussing how he had explored his personal everyday aesthetics within his journal,

Andrew: So the stuff of life got me thinking about my house and how I live and how it's kind of cluttered. And I wondered if I could tie that into everyday aesthetics. My house isn't very aesthetic on the inside. It's just clutter. So I took some photos of some of the clutter. So here's my kitchen sink and the counter and all my dirty dishes. And here's the top of my coffee table in my living room. And there are books and harmonicas and business cards and things like that.

Will: What's that there on the left?

Andrew: What this one? That's filler [laughter]. Those are some of Liz's photos that were sitting over there. I thought it looked cool. It would kind of blend in.

Mike: I think you need to come visit me and then you'll understand what clutter is [laughter].

Andrew: So yeah just stuff around my house and stuff that I thought looked cool...And so the theme, continuing with the words that were on the board, on this page is adrift. So I guess that's my everyday aesthetic. (See Figure 5.37)

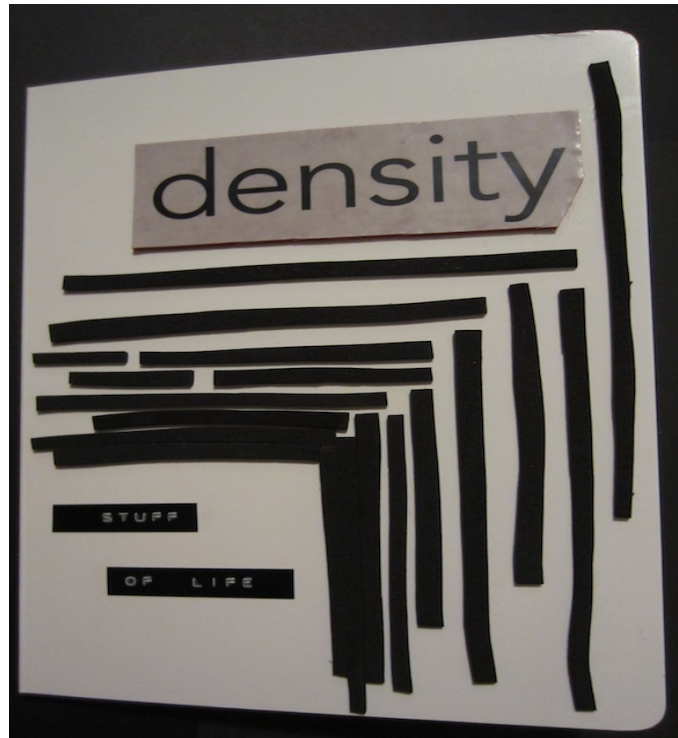


Figure 5.36. Cover design for Andrew's visual journal.

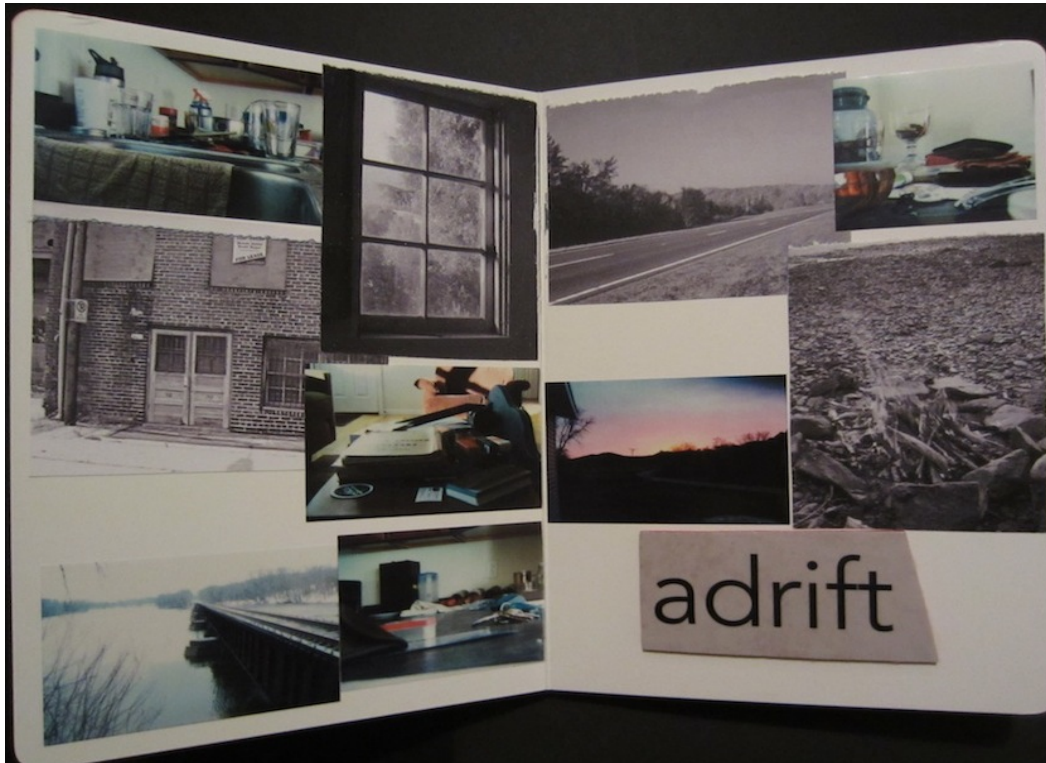


Figure 5.37. Images from Andrew's visual journal depicting his everyday aesthetic preferences.

Andrew's consideration of his personal aesthetics within his home became the inspiration for further artistic exploration in his visual journal.

And then the last sheet isn't anything very special. I was looking around my house to take photos of clutter and messes and things. I have all sorts of crap lying around...some of it was ski maps and ski tags and things like that and I thought an interesting insert into the book...And then on the back of the ski map there was this thing about safety. It says, be safe out there. And on the last page of the book there was some text by the manufacturer that I didn't really care for so I thought it would be a good place to stick that. I kind of liked the alignment, be safe out there on the last page because it's kind of a closing remark. (Figure 5.38)



Figure 5.38. Image from Andrew's visual journal utilizing found images from his home.

When asked to specifically describe if learning about the idea of making special had influenced his identity as an artist, Andrew stated, "Yes. It broadened my identity by opening or recognizing more creative outlets." In his visual journal, Andrew chose to consider the idea of

making special by exploring materials in response to our visit to the vernacular art environment, Grandview,

And then the topic of making special, I have my inspiration from Grandview where I made a whole sheet of shrinky dink and I put green and blue and I made some hatch marks on there with the magic marker. So I wanted to take glass and stick it in stuff. I didn't really have something to stick the glass into so I took the candle and the shrinky dink pieces and then I welded the pieces to the board with hot wax. And then I was afraid that this would come apart if I closed the book too hard. So out of design and more of a utility thing, I put these foam strips on here to make a negative space around here. And I thought it was kind of boring so I took the felt and I tried to make some sort of a negative image. So there's the green and blue here. (See Figure 5.39)

Andrew seems to be responding to the ways in which artists who created vernacular art environments often explored everyday materials in novel ways. In particular, Nick Engelbert (who created *Grandview*) combined shards of glass, ceramic and stone to create mosaic sculptures in concrete. Here, Andrew looked for a way to replicate a mosaic-like aesthetic using materials on hand that could be included in his visual journal.



Figure 5.39. Image from Andrew's visual journal in response to vernacular art environment.

In response to the vernacular art environments, Andrew shared images within his visual journal of a personal project he was working on at his home.

This is getting into what you call the vernacular art environments. So I put a sketch of what I might do for my mailbox sometime in there. So it's going to be a rock that it sits on. And then there will be a pylon that comes out of the rock. So there's a box at the bottom and a box at the top. And then boards or steel angles that connect them in between. There will be something that juts out to the side that the mailbox will be suspended on. And then I was thinking I would put some sort of a solar collector on there and some LED lights that light up at night. And I could have some really cool indirect lighting on the bottom box at the top of the rock and the top box it would shoot out into the sky. Not very brightly but just something that lets you know it's there. (See Figure 5.40)

Here Andrew described a personal way that he plans to alter his own home environment. In addition to his own personal artwork, Andrew noted that the vernacular art environments had influenced how he thought about his own artistic identity, “by learning how identity can be shaped by art.”

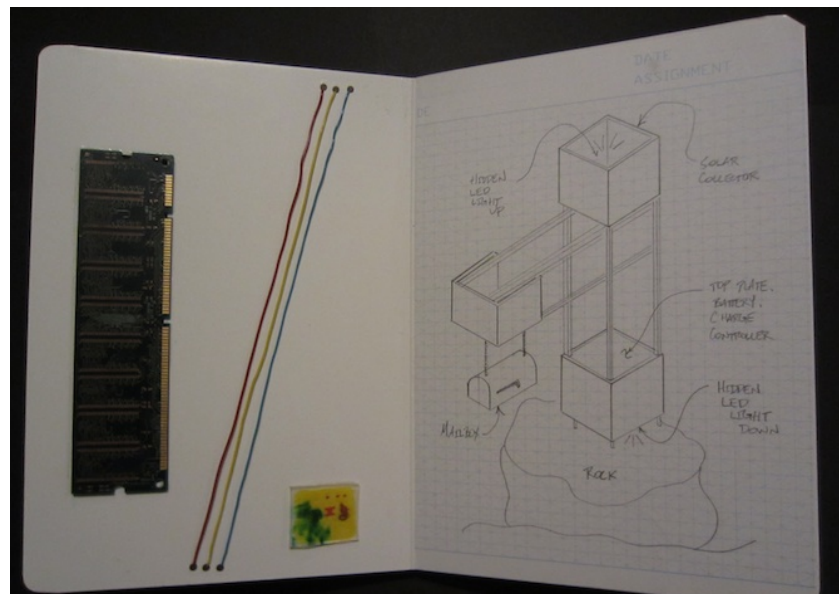


Figure 5.40. Image from Andrew’s visual journal depicting a sketch for a personal outdoor project for his home.

EllenEllen: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

Like Jessica, Ellen maintained that she would still not identify as an artist following the class. On both the pre-class and post-class survey she chose a five on the artistic identity rating scale. On the post-class survey she also noted, “It depends on the group I am with and the project I am working on. These things influence my feelings about artistic ability or creativity.” This indicates Ellen felt that context had a role to play in how she perceived of her own artistic identity. Despite indicating no change on the artistic identity rating scale, Ellen was able to describe ways in which the class had influenced her thinking or provoked her to consider questions about how she perceived and herself as an artist.

Ellen: Changing attitudes about art. In the post-class survey, Ellen expressed ways in which the class challenged her to think more broadly about art.

The discussions of what people view as art were great. These new, different perspectives on individuals’ perceptions made me think even more broadly about art. I think these discussions could have gone further, given more time. The definitions all seemed very focused on fine art/visual art.

She continued by stating,

The course really presented the idea of art integrated into everyday life. Art could be found anywhere. Museums/galleries seem to be where older pieces are preserved.

Ellen had significant familiarity with the vernacular art environments when she came to the class. In her visual journal, Ellen included images of Dr. Evermor, an artist who created a vernacular art environment in the area that she especially enjoyed (see Figure 5.41). In relation to the vernacular art environments, Ellen was especially conscientious of the language used during the class to identify them. She stated,

I love love love the term vernacular art as opposed to outsider art. It makes the origins of their work seem so much more authentic and organic as if it grew out of a reaction to their environment. This definition also opens up a world of possibility that this could happen anywhere. Outsider art just sounds like they weren't accepted, didn't have training or talent, but just kept plunking away.

This statement indicates that Ellen came to the class with a criticality about how language and classifications could influence how artists and artworks are perceived.

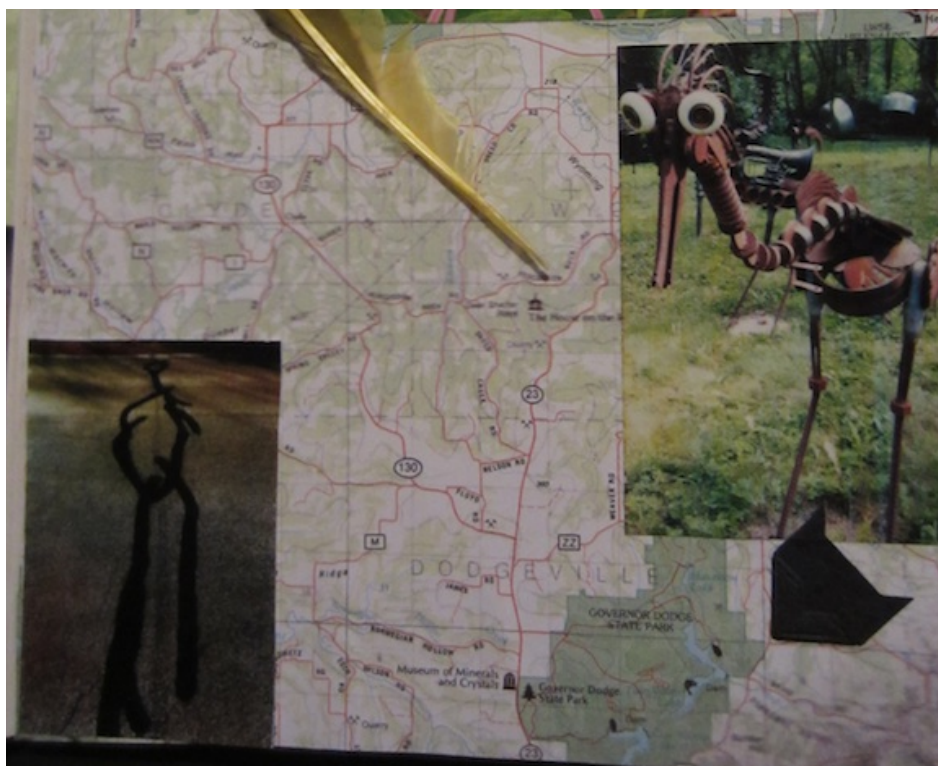


Figure 5.41. Detail from Ellen's journal including images of vernacular artworks.

Unlike several participants in the class who found the vernacular art environments hard to identify with personally, due to the volume of the work, Ellen was able to put this same idea into perspective for herself. She stated,

As I create small things for myself I wonder what that thing or confluence of events is for me, or others around me, that starts such an ambitious project. Perhaps the point is that people don't set out to create a whole art environment—they grow organically with people and reflect ideas that resonate with them as they go.

Ellen indicated several times during the class that she wished there was more time to discuss or consider the ideas brought forth in the class. With more time, Ellen might have been able to resolve some of the questions. Given the direction of some of her ideas, this, in turn, might have led to her ability to make closer connections between the class content and her own identity as an artist.

In her visual journal, Ellen also included an image of a contemporary artist whose work was shown locally and who she felt also addressed the idea of looking to everyday environments for inspiration.

I have this little reminder of Jean Marc's show that he did next door here. Where he found someone who was seal coating but decided that they were sort of art or messages and paintings. And I thought that was a really interesting idea. Just to look around and sort of maybe look for messages or elevate ideas of everyday. (See Figure 5.42)

Within her visual journal, Ellen included images of objects that represented influences from her everyday life and were an important part of her personal vernacular.

So I started out with the sort of lacy pattern of the paper and I liked the idea of having a little doorway into the book. And summer is my favorite time. So to have a screen door seemed nice. And then I wanted to sew on it. So I put the rivets inside so that I could sew the screen door onto it (see Figure 5.43). And then I started thinking about vernacular. I have a map of the area and just things in the area that I like. My favorite beer. Jesse has a lot of rusty metal things around the house. So they are part of my everyday things that I see.

Here, Ellen is able to make connections between her understanding of everyday aesthetics and her own everyday aesthetic preferences.



Figure 5.42. Cover image from Ellen's visual journal.

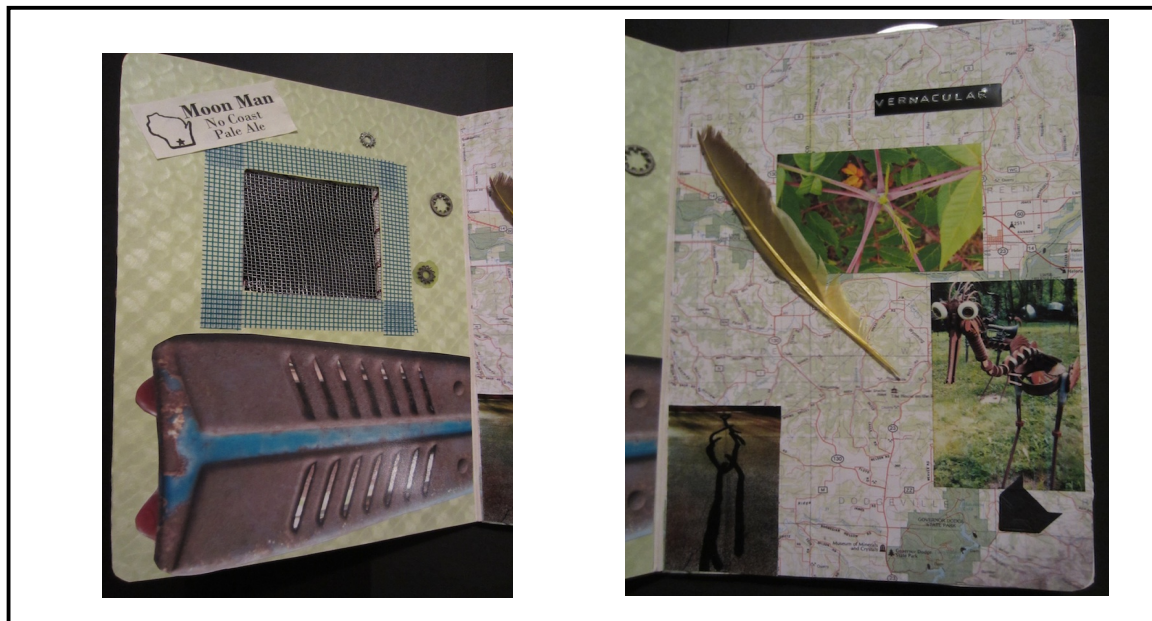


Figure 5.43. Images in Ellen's visual journal depicting vernacular objects.

Ellen: Impact on artistic identity. Ellen seemed to embrace the ideas introduced in class about art as a part of everyday places and experiences. However, in this class I thought participants might develop a broader definition of art, which in turn might influence how they perceived of themselves as artists. While Ellen embraced a broad notion of art, she maintained specific beliefs about who is an artist, which also played a distinct role in how she identified as an artist. In the post-class survey she stated,

I still don't identify myself as an artist, however, I think art should be a part of everyday life and expression. My home environment reflects who I am and what I find beautiful or interesting or inspiring.

When asked on the post-class survey if the idea of making special had influenced how she identified as an artist, Ellen continued,

Sort of. I love the idea of making special as an artistic behavior. I think part of why I hesitate to identify as an artist is for me it has a connotation that it is your vocation. Hmm...I wish I had identified this in class because it would be an interesting discussion.

Ellen noted the impression the class discussions had left on her and seemed to want to work through ideas brought up in class in further conversation with others.

While Ellen felt that identifying as an artist implied a connection to a vocation, she also noted that art is “about point of view and a person expresses that point of view and shares it with others in a creative way.” She continue, “Making art is for everyone, not just those who have studied and trained in an art form.” Here, Ellen’s straightforward definition of an artist as someone whose vocation is in art is complicated by her belief that art should be accessible to people with a range of art experiences or backgrounds.

In her response to everyday aesthetics on the post-class survey, Ellen identified a number of images that represented her own aesthetic preferences. In addition, she also continued to

reflect on the distinctions she had drawn between the idea of everyday aesthetics as it was presented in the class and what she feels it means to be an artist.

My aesthetics of everyday are very strong. There are things that I am drawn to and others I don't have as much interest in. I am drawn to rich and complex colors, natural materials, interesting and organic textures, contrast of ideas, mixed materials, one of a kind, uniqueness.

In her journal, Ellen included and described a number of personal aesthetic preferences.

I like textures and patterns on insects and moss and lichen and I have a little bit of a green problem. Given the opportunity to look at anything else I'm always like ooooooh green. So I guess I'm really inspired by natural objects and things in nature around me. And I like to garden. And then I like fabric and I was thinking about insects and iridescence and fabrics with silks and things like that. That have that same sort of iridescent quality. (See Figure 5.44)

She continued,

I also like to quilt and put together fabrics. And so I had these pieces that were left from a quilt that I made. And I was kind of putting them together. And I had photographs that I was looking at and thinking, oh, they're kind of similar themes and shapes to them. And then I started sewing on these things and I'm like, I think I'm gonna sew on my photographs some more [laughter]. I like that. And then I included this photograph because we went on this big, long hike last winter with snowshoes. And we went across this big hillside and then looked back and it looked like someone had sewed, sort of, the land together. So I think that's inspiring for the quiltings too—the different blocks of land and colors. (See Figure 5.45)



Figure 5.44. Ellen's images of everyday aesthetic preferences.



Figure 5.45. Images from Ellen's journal depicting her aesthetic preferences.

Ellen included images in her visual journal of the personal traditions she felt illustrated the idea of making special.

Then this I guess was part of my making special. I also like to can. And I was thinking of it as the idea of preserving. Preserving sort of tradition and/or a feeling. I like to think of it as, ok I'm putting little messages about summer in these jars for myself for later [laughter]. I love currants. I think they are just like little jewels. They're such a pretty thing to look at and they're sort of rare so I like the idea of preserving that. And sort of a gardening tradition.

She continued describing the images in her visual journal,

Again more photographs. Beekeeping. I have some nice textured paper. Jesse's parents keep bees. And so we participate in that. So that's also sort of preserving. And they're sort of like little alchemists or something turning ordinary pollen into special things. (See Figure 5.46)



Figure 5.46. Image from Ellen's visual journal depicting personal ways of making special.

Ellen's ability to describe numerous visual examples from her everyday life aligns with her suggestion that she had a strong awareness of her personal aesthetic preferences. Still, she questioned how her everyday aesthetic activities connected with what it means to be artistic.

Again, I'm not sure if these things are artistic or if they are just who I am and my preferences. Calling out everyday aesthetics as artistic does draw attention to these actions and choices as part of creating an environment.

Mike

Mike: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

On both the pre- and post-artistic identity rating scale Mike identified himself as a five—saying he saw himself as “somewhat artistic.” Mike noted not feeling particularly changed by the class overall and indicated some discomfort with the format of the class. In particular, he seemed to have a negative response to the art project itself, which was meant to help participants further explore and make personal connections to the ideas of making special, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments. In addition, Mike seemed to feel frustrated by the time constraints of the class and my request that students produce artifacts in a limited time frame. I also noted that Mike seemed resistant to any traditional school-like associations; at one point I complimented a drawing he seemed very engaged with and he indicated an aversion to this seemingly teacher-like interaction. Mike also resisted the format of the post-class survey and chose to write me a letter instead. He wrote, “As I'm working on answering your questions, I'm finding that I have the same negative reply to all of them. I thought perhaps explaining why in this [letter] format was a better option for me.” In contrast, Mike enjoyed the opportunity to participate in discussions and what he described as “debate” with the members of the class. In

the following sections, I further describe Mike's responses and artworks that were generated during and after the class.

Mike: Changing attitudes about art. As mentioned above, Mike noted not feeling particularly changed by the class. He felt the class likely "changed my perception about art in some ways. We had some good discussions during class that have added to my understanding in some way, but I don't have any eureka moments to share." In part, Mike felt that the content of the class mirrored previously held beliefs he had about art. He stated, "I did not feel greatly changed by your class. That isn't a criticism of the class, but rather the result of my having thought about the ideas presented in the class previously." He continued,

As you know, I have previous exposure to vernacular art environments. Also, I've always been critical of any organization that asserts that it holds the key to understand a particular subject. I guess I have a 'punk' aesthetic—I feel like art is often made to seem arcane or esoteric by groups who seek to distinguish themselves from the general population.

Here, Mike is referring to the way the class discussions suggested that there were ideas about art, particularly outside of fine art traditions, that had been underrepresented in educational or museum settings. He noted that he was already skeptical of this kind of tradition prior to the class.

When asked if his definition of art had changed, Mike stated,

I don't think my definition of art has changed as a result of the class. Perhaps I should say that a definition is as elusive to me as it was before the class. I was definitely challenged to think about my definition of art and I do see the creative process at work in different ways now, but I'm not sure that my definition of art is any more clear to me.

Mike did note that the idea of making special was the more influential content presented during the class. He stated,

Of the two concepts discussed in class, "making special" is the one that made me think the most. The idea that art may be an abstraction of the desire to make special is very

interesting to me. I don't think it has changed my ideas about what art is, but it gave me further insight into why art is.

As Mike described his visual journal during our last class session, participants discussed additional ideas about the definition of art.

Bella: So do you create sculpture work?

Mike: Not sculpture work but I've done furniture from found items and like recycled...

Participant: You've made lamps that are sculptural.

Mike: I suppose. Yeah.

Gretchen: But functional doesn't have to be nonartistic. Anything can still be very artistic. A mailbox...

Mike: Yeah, well it's been one of the good things about this class that it's really made me think about what art is and how creativity lends itself to art or craft. And we had this discussion with, probably all of you did...was everybody here interviewed by Liz?

Participants: Yeah

Mike: And so I'm sure you asked everyone what they thought art was and what they thought craft was.

Liz: Yes.

Mike: I think I said something like craft doesn't necessarily include an intellectual component. Things like architecture and woodworking and I've kind of rethought that. I don't know that the ideas that are being conveyed are...what do I want to say? They are maybe not the same. I think there are different kinds of ideas that are being conveyed. Rather than by fine art. But I'm not sure I can find that dividing line that divides craft from art.

Liz: As easily?

Mike: Yeah. It seemed to make sense during our interview. But now that I've thought about it more, it doesn't really. So now I'm not sure what the hell art is [laughter].

The discussion continued,

Mike: I think beauty has a lot to do with it. So there's a lot of craft out there that's not beautiful. I mean popsicle stick figures. Things like that. But, I don't know. Beauty lends

itself to all of the forms I think. Whether you're painting or whether you're designing bridges. Whether you're creating something out of wood. That's the common thing that all the people are trying to do is to create something beautiful. It's something beautiful to look at not just functional necessarily.

Gretchen: So if I dare to be the devil's advocate, simply because I challenge that because there are other people who are high artists, i.e. Francis Bacon...He would go to these parties and then go home and paint these wild pictures of these horrible looking women. They don't look like women. They're these like scrawled things. And you'd be like, they're not beautiful. But there was this energy exchange of sorts. Right? So he went and had this experience, and it was 'I want to depict how I'm feeling' or something. It's interesting that you're thinking like, 'Oh, if it's real it's because it's beautiful. The thing is you made something and it's totally cool. The discussion is interesting.

Mike: Well that's a good point though. I mean that's still expression I guess. Whether or not it's beautiful.

While Mike did not feel that the class had really changed his attitude about art, this conversation illustrates that he had been influenced to consider and reconsider more complex nuances about art and craft through conversations with the group.

Mike: Impact on artistic identity. During our final class, Mike described the process he went through in creating his visual journal.

Mike: The front of my book has this black disc on it that represents my mind and all the colored light brights in there represent my state of mind at the beginning of this project—just a jumble of emotions and not knowing what to do. So I started out on our first day and I didn't seem to be getting anywhere. Sketched some stuff, which I then covered up with address labels because I hated my sketches. (See Figure 5.47)

Liz: Is that your address?

Mike: No [laughter]. And then Saturday I think it was, I went to Goodwill. And I found all of these cool children's toys and eureka! I found my idea. So I went home and I started putting all this stuff together. And it was very time consuming and I really wasn't getting anywhere with it. I ended up breaking some of the components and not being able to accomplish what I was hoping to. And so that led to white space and failure.

Participant: And yet we're still so impressed! [laughter]



Figure 5.47. Mike's visual journal cover, which incorporated working light bright components.

Mike continued to describe his visual journal and the frustration he felt with the process.

Mike: So, when we got together on Sunday this was just so time consuming that I realized I needed to just start gluing paper on my pages like everybody else and filling up these pages because I need to get done, you know. And so, this is what I did on Sunday. And that was really time consuming too [laughter]. I was still working on this today. And so that didn't work out at all.

Participants: It's really cool (positive chatter from the group).

Mike: Thank you. So I finished this today.

Participant: Is it sticks?

Mike: It's just branches that I broke into pieces and hot glued on paper that I cut out. (See Figure 5.48)

Andrew: I kind of see a skeleton form.

Mike: Really?

Bella: I'd admit that.

Mike: I admit that. I totally designed that into it [laughter]. And then to finish I was just 'screw it.' I've had it with this whole thing and I'm frustrated and I'm just gonna wrap up with your little bit of ... [huge laughter interrupting what was said]. (See Figure 5.49)



Figure 5.48. Interior pages of Mike's visual journal.



Figure 5.49. Interior image from Mike's visual journal.

Mike concluded by noting the following about the process of creating his visual journal for the class.

I found myself really frustrated with this project because I consider myself fairly creative, but when I was forced into a medium that I'm not used to working in I was at a loss. I'm used to working with tools and I like doing more craft work than artistic things. When I do bring creativity to that type of work it usually...it just kind of comes to me. I don't try to force it. And so this felt forced.

Mike continued,

The first day that we worked on things, I didn't get anything done because I didn't know where to go with it. And it had sort of a scrapbook feel to me, which really put me off of doing it. I also found a difficulty, well maybe not so much, but I think a different way of understanding your [Liz's] ideas. The making special...I felt whatever I did it was going to be celebrating the experience of this class. So I wasn't trying to relate it to any other event in my life necessarily. And everyday aesthetic, I don't know. It's kind of like whatever I'm creating that's the things that I've created that I have in my house. You know it all comes from the same process.

Mike seemed to find the form of the art activity prohibiting. I sensed his frustration early in the class and suggested that he pursue materials that he enjoyed working with and that the provided materials were meant to cover as broad a range of interesting material as possible and were not meant to be a limitation. Mike did incorporate materials into his visual journal that were novel and seemed to reflect his personal interests and ways of working. However, he made very limited connections between his visual journal entries and the content of the class and seemed to resist a formal assignment as part of the structure of the class.

Although Mike described himself as “somewhat artistic” on the rating scale and expressed a lot of frustration with the in-class visual journal assignment, his peers in the class were very impressed with the innovations he incorporated into his journal. During the final class, Katie described her own personal response to Mike’s work.

On Sunday I went home, because I’ve been working on this because I get freaked out like I’m not going to finish or whatever. So I’ve been working on it and my husband, he’s like, ‘what are you trying to do, be the best one in the class?’ And I’m like, ‘maybe, it doesn’t matter. I wanna get it done.’ And the pages are falling apart, but whatever. On Sunday I get home and I just sat there and I’m like, ‘Ben, somebody’s lights up. Damn!’ No, it’s cool. It’s so funny and so weird and so amazing to see how everybody takes something in a different way. I mean it’s crazy. I mean, you’re given a project, but yet everybody’s mind goes in different directions and not one is the same. It’s very cool.

Other participants in the group repeated this positive response to Mike’s innovative use of a light component in his book.

Students also responded to Mike’s expressed frustration with the project.

Andrew: Mike, you talked about being frustrated because you didn’t have a specific idea or task to complete, is that right?

Mike: Yeah.

Andrew: I would say spend a little more time being frustrated and working through that. I think you’d be surprised. I think you are a very creative person. I know you are.

Mike: Well, thank you. And I didn't mean to come off like I didn't want to do it. It was just, well I think all of you just dove into this on last Tuesday. Liz turned us loose and everybody was like, I know what I'm doing [laughter]. I just thought, what do I do with this thing [the blank book].

Participant: It's so flat.

Mike: And I mean all of this stuff that's sort of craft material, and I just felt this aversion to that.

Liz: I did send Mike an email to not feel constrained; you can go wherever you want to go. This just gives most people something to start from. But if you want to get out your welder and throw the book in the trash...

Mike continued,

I don't mean to come off like I'm no longer interested in different mediums, but I think when I started out sketching my cover, it's been a long time since I've drawn anything. And I used to be a better drawer. But when I started doing that it didn't seem to flow. It looked horrible to me, which I used to be able to draw things and I was happier with them. So, like I say this just felt...if I spent more time with this I think I would produce a result.

Like other participants, Mike seems to indicate that time limitations were a factor in his frustration with trying to produce an art product during the class that he felt he could be happy with.

Findings: Non-Artists

In the following section, I introduce findings from this study for the nine adult participants who identified as non-artists followed by the number of participants associated with each finding. A broader discussion and analysis of these findings will be presented in Chapter 6.

- Finding 1: For non-artist adult participants, prior perceptions of art and artists impacted how they perceived of themselves as artists. (8 out of 9)

- Finding 2: For a majority of participants who identified as non-artists, learning about everyday aesthetics and/or making special as a framework for understanding art, was new knowledge. This new knowledge broadened, and in some cases challenged, previously held understandings of art and artists. (9 out of 9)
- Finding 3: For adult participants who identified as non-artists, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special as components of the vernacular art curriculum provided inroads for identifying and realizing personal artistic behaviors in everyday life. (8 out of 9)
- Finding 4: For adult participants who identified as non-artists, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special had a positive impact on how strongly they identified as artists. (7 out of 9)
- Finding 5: Learning about everyday aesthetics and making special democratized viewing and judging art for adult participants who identified as non-artists. (3 out of 9)
- Finding 6: For adult participants who identified as non-artists, learning about vernacular art environments as a component of the vernacular art curriculum had a limited impact on how strongly they identified as artists. (6 out of 9)
- Finding 7: For adult participants who identified as non-artists, a vernacular art curriculum contributed to an understanding that art has the potential to enrich and positively impact quality of everyday life. (6 out of 9)

Post-class Data: Art Teachers

SarahSarah: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

In both the pre- and post-class surveys, Sarah indicated that she was a ten on the artistic identity rating scale. This meant that Sarah identified herself as highly artistic. Despite having a positive attitude about herself as an artist, Sarah also shared her insecurities, particularly related to her inability to devote significant time to creating her own art outside of the time spent teaching art in the classroom. In our pre-class interview, Sarah indicated that it took a long time for her to gain the confidence to say that she was an artist. On the post-class survey, Sarah seemed to allude to the need to be with others who also questioned their ability to identify as artists, “It was very validating to spend time with other ‘creative’ people; everyday people who are artists like me, and to find that they are modest too in their perceptions of their own artistic selves.” Sarah seemed most affected by the opportunity to have a conversation about art with others she felt she could identify with. She stated, “It was simply delightful to spend time having wonderful, exciting, philosophical conversations about my favorite topic with like minds. The instructor provided excellent questions for thought and great materials for an exciting project!” While her experiences in this class did not create significant change or transformation in how Sarah identified as an artist, working in this group setting seemed to help Sarah validate her convictions about herself as an artist and provided a new language to talk about her own artistic identity and philosophies about art.

Sarah: Changing attitudes about art. For the most part, Sarah seemed to indicate that the class did not really change her attitudes or perceptions of art, but instead it reinforced a previously held belief that art could be found in a broad range of places. She stated, “If anything, this class reinforced for me that art is truly everywhere.” In addition she stated, “I am happy to see that other people see art everywhere like me.” The class content that seemed to influence Sarah the most was making special. In response to the post-survey question asking whether any prior perceptions about art had changed during the course of the class, Sarah responded, “Slightly—I loved the idea of making special (something I do almost daily in my life) as artistic.”

Sarah: Impact on artistic identity. On the post-class survey, Sarah seemed most affected by the concrete connections that were made between art and everyday life during the class. In response to whether the idea of everyday aesthetics had influenced her artistic identity Sarah stated, “It really gave me permission to say that yes, I incorporate art into my life daily—and to enjoy the effect it has on family and friends.” Despite strongly identifying as an artist, Sarah indicated a need for both validation and permission to identify as an artist, both of which she felt were assets of the class and the curriculum.

Sarah came to the class with significant familiarity with vernacular art environments. Still she described on the post-class survey how her awareness of these artists had influenced her identity as an artist,

Yes, becoming aware, after college and obtaining an art degree, that these people never let fear or uncertainty about their abilities and desires stand in the way of the creative process empowered me! It allowed me to truly unleash the creativity inside me.

Based on prior conversations with Sarah about her college experiences with art, Sarah seemed to be contrasting the influence of her formal college education in art with what she was able to

personally take away from learning about vernacular art environments outside of formal school contexts.

Sarah had the strongest reaction to the idea of making special. In the post-class survey, she described how making special had influenced her identity as an artist and her ability to provide a rationale for her teaching practices,

Absolutely 100%. It opened a whole new realm of thinking for me—I now have an identity or LABEL for my personal and professional philosophy. I will never again worry about finding an excuse for my school administration for why I make special as part of my curriculum.

Sarah seemed to indicate that the idea of making special provided her with the language she needed to describe and support her personal convictions about art and art making.

Sarah devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to creating her visual journal and spent a significant amount of time working on her visual journal outside of class. Sarah organized her book using colors and significant words or quotations that she personally connected to art (see Figure 5.50). As Sarah began introducing her book to the class she stated,

It is the color wheel because when I counted the pages there were six. So each page has a word that is what art means to me. And then quotes that just go along with the word. And I wanted it to be inviting to touch and look at and pull out...and so I have 'happiness' (see Figure 5.51). It's found things. Every single thing in here is either symbolic or just something that I thought was beautiful and...But this is 'happiness' and then the orange is 'energy' (see Figure 5.52). This is all what art is. 'Making special.' And I really love that term and I'm going to use that a lot.



Figure 5.50. Sarah's visual journal, combining color, quotations and symbolic imagery.



Figure 5.51. Sarah's red visual journal pages associating art with happiness.



Figure 5.52. Sarah's orange visual journal pages associating art with energy.

At this point, I encouraged Sarah to expand on and share some of the ideas she had worked into the pages of her book. She described in more detail the objects, images and words she had incorporated into the pages she had organized around the color of yellow and the theme of making special (see Figure 5.53).

This is a lot of things that my family made for me. This is a sun that my son made out of clay. And this is a little bit of a picture of a vase my daughter made that is on the dining room table. And this is one of my favorite photos of my kids in a photo I made of rocks taken from the lake we were at. A little elephant my daughter picked out for me for my birthday and a candleholder my son made. The cheese plate Wyatt made on our clay day. The cheese is a special snack in our family. It's a traditional...my dad makes his, grandpa's famous cheese plate, whenever we go to the farm.

Sarah continued in this way, describing a number of objects and images she had chosen to include in her journal that were meaningful to her. Each page of her journal was filled with numerous examples that Sarah used to connect to the vernacular art curriculum.



Figure 5.53. Sarah's yellow visual journal pages associating art with making special.

Sarah continued by describing to the class additional pages she had created for her visual journal. Sarah stated, "Green is extraordinary and nature because I think art and nature and extraordinariness, they just all go together [See Figure 5.54]. Love. Love goes into art" (see Figure 5.55). This page of Sarah's book also incorporated a window that opened to an image of *Grandview* (see Figure 5.56).

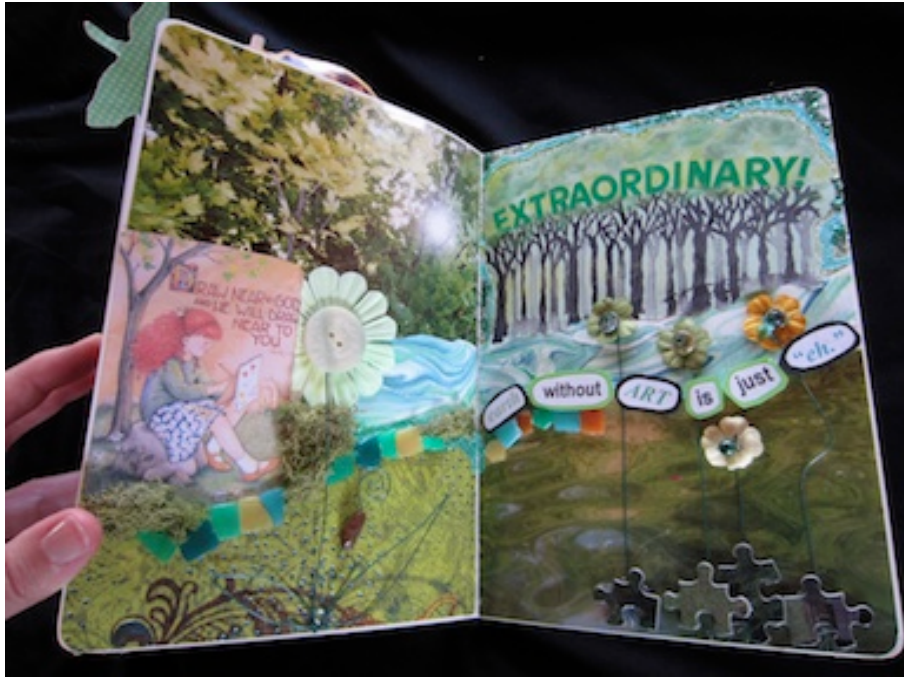


Figure 5.54. Meaningful images from Sarah's visual journal.



Figure 5.55. Meaningful images from Sarah's visual journal.



Figure 5.56. Detail from Sarah's visual journal depicting a window looking onto Grandview.

Sarah finished describing her book to the class as she discussed the last page,

I really believe that God is a part of art. And my favorite quote from a pastor that I just thought was a dear man. And the quote says, 'Art is collaboration between God and the artist and the less the artist does the better.' And I really believe that because when I get going the ideas just come. And I don't think that they all come from me. (See Figure 5.57)



Figure 5.57. Image from Sarah’s visual journal depicting personal connections she made between art making and God.

Sarah continued by describing how she felt about the process of creating her visual journal and her overall intentions for the book,

I just had an absolute blast doing this. This was just a whole—what it all means to me and why I like it. I just gave myself permission to do something that was totally for me and I never do that. Crazy fun. I just want to eat color. I just want to eat it. It nourishes me. You know what I mean? I am like that every day in my room and I never get tired of seeing what kids do. And I was wondering if other art educators feel this way? And I don’t mean to take up so much time but sometimes it’s just magic when they are all creating and their work is almost more exciting at that moment than it is later when it’s hanging on the wall.

Here, Sarah ends her discussion by reconnecting her enthusiasm for art with her enthusiasm for teaching art and the ways in which these seem to provide her with significant sources of joy.

SamSam: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

Sam indicated in the pre- and post-class surveys that he felt he was an eight out of ten on the artistic identity rating scale. Despite indicating no change on the rating scale, Sam used his visual journal to take notes on the ideas discussed in the class and to describe ways that the class content had impacted him. Although Sam worked as an art teacher and rated himself as highly artistic, he also indicated feeling inhibited by limitations of time to create his own artwork. While Sam came to the class with significant familiarity with vernacular art environments, our discussion of these artists in relation to the idea of making special and everyday aesthetics seemed to have some impact on how he saw himself moving forward with personal artistic endeavors. The following sections provide detailed descriptions of Sam's impressions from the class.

Sam: Changing attitudes about art. Sam participated in the second group of classes. During these sessions, we visited an installation of Emery Blagdon's vernacular art environment on exhibit at John Michael Kohler Arts Center. Sam was particularly affected by the work and life story of this artist. In response to whether his ideas about art had changed during the class, Sam stated,

My ideas about art were pretty open to begin with. The changes that get to me are the inspirational, amazing ideas that came to me through the artists we studied. The marriage between art and science with Emery Blagdon, for example, got to me.

Sam indicated that he felt viewing art was important to his understanding of art and stated, "As you view and see more art your definition of art becomes more expansive and inclusive I think. That is how it works for me."

Sam: Impact on artistic identity. In response to the post-class survey questions, Sam indicated that he felt the class had changed how he thought about his own identity as an artist. In particular, Sam made connections among the idea of making special, everyday aesthetics, the vernacular art environments and his own attachment to his family's homes. Sam stated that "I became more aware of art in my home and my wife's home. I made connections between what is special and how that works with 'place.'"

Sam was influenced by the idea of everyday aesthetics and described having limited awareness of this idea prior to the class. In his visual journal Sam wrote, "I had not been conscious about creating everyday aesthetics in our home, but am a lot more aware after taking this class and taking time to actually think about it now." He continued by describing what he perceived as significant artifacts reflecting the everyday aesthetic he shared with his family.

I have many paintings, prints, photos, sculptures and different types of furniture in our home. Taxidermy works are incorporated into the décor—fish, birds, and whitetail deer. Other trophies are sports paraphernalia and lots of books. Hunting themes—guns and fishing poles are part of the house décor in the family room area. We have a blended environment in each different room. The everyday aesthetic I do for me. Probably to remind myself who I am or what is important to me. I take for granted how many images of ducks there are in this house!

In addition Sam wrote,

Everyday aesthetics are important to some folks and not as much to others. I believe that everyday aesthetics is something I could spend more time actually doing something about. In that sense, it is more important than I thought in our homes.

When asked if the idea of everyday aesthetics had influenced his identity as an artist Sam stated, "Yes. It makes me want to do my own vernacular style art in our homes and at our property." In this way, the idea of everyday aesthetics and the examples of the vernacular art environments seemed to provide Steve with viable options for creating his own art.

Sam was especially affected by the opportunity to view and discuss vernacular art environments during the class and stated that “going to the Kohler and getting back there to see the space that they’ve got there that had all of Emery’s things was really powerful.” In his visual journal he wrote,

I love V.A.E.! They are so personal, strange, intriguing, beautiful, inspirational, mysterious, and informing. Some of the concepts that are employed to create VAEs are surprising when revealed by the artists. The VAEs I have seen in field studies are beyond everyday aesthetics. They are exaggerated, larger, louder, and more detailed, visually speaking, than everyday aesthetic arrangements.

Sam continued by describing how this work inspired him or informed his own artistic identity.

I try to allow everything I see and experience in our world to inform me as an artist. I retain what is important in meaning to me and let the other ideas, which are less inspirational, slide by. If they influence me and become part of my artistic identity it is because my interest in vernacular artists’ works allows me to be influenced to create something new. Vernacular artists, I believe, influence us to examine more carefully what is really important in our own life. Vernacular artists that I have seen and met are really focused. Ellis Nelson (1929-present—83 years old), who I met a week ago, is a highly focused, intense vernacular artist by definition.

Unlike several participants in the class, Sam was able to take in the magnitude of the vernacular art environments without it overwhelming his understanding of how this work might affect his own identity as an artist. As he described, he was able to take from this work what he needed for personal inspiration and overlook the rest.

In his visual journal, Sam primarily responded to the class content with written reflections. However, he gave special attention to the vernacular art environments by incorporating a poem and some images of Emery Blagdon in his journal (see Figures 5.58, 5.59, and 5.60). As he began to describe his visual journal to the class, he shared the poem he had created.

I just tried to...I did a little poetry. I don’t know if any of you remember Herman’s Hermits. They’re way back. I did a spin off. It says, I am Emery Blagdon, a healing man I

am, Emery Blagdon, I am I am. I never got married to the farmer's woman next door because her daddy led me to the door. We wish everyone was an Emery. Emery! We would not have a Willie or a Sam. No Sam! He is a healing machine artist. He is Emery. Emery Blagdon I am, I am. Emery Blagdon I am. Second verse same as the first.

He continued, "I just tried to tie poetry into this. And I just really found myself gravitating toward him. I enjoyed it thoroughly. It was a lot of fun."



Figure 5.58. Cover of Sam's visual journal depicting work from artist, Emery Blagdon.

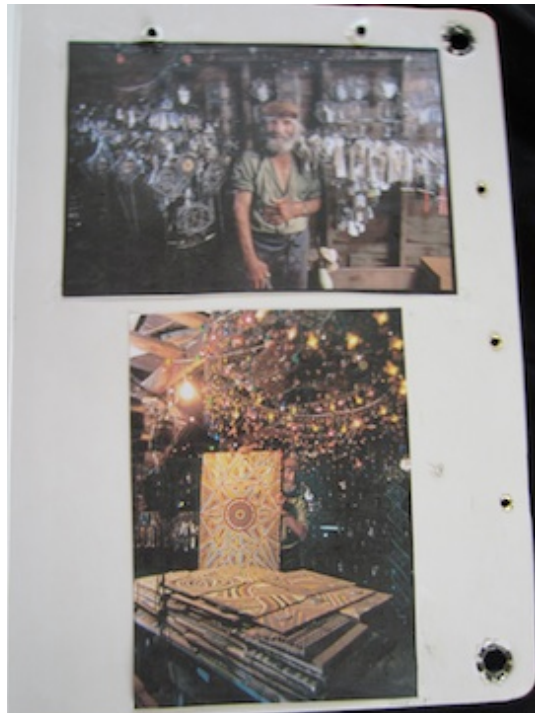


Figure 5.59. Image from Sam's visual journal depicting artist, Emery Blagdon.



Figure 5.60. Image from Sam's visual journal depicting artist, Emery Blagdon.

In addition to Emery Blagdon, Sam responded strongly to Ellis Nelson, a living vernacular artist we visited during our third class session. Nelson sold his items outside his home along an intersection in a small nearby town. This was someone Sam stopped and talked to during the course of our class. We eventually decided as a class to add a visit to Nelson's home to our agenda and went there following the last class session. Sam was really excited to see Nelson's workshop, which was a well-worn space filled to the brim with metal, tools, and examples of Nelson's mechanical ingenuity. In response to this visit to Nelson's home, Sam stated the following,

I think when we go to these sites, be it Kohler or like today at Ellis Nelson's place, it's neat to see the artist in their environment and their setting. You start to absorb what might drive them. I just thought it was a real privilege to be in that space, that intimate space. [To be in] Ellis Nelson's building and see all those vises and anvils and his working space is just...That contraption he made for keeping the heating of that building was just incredible. To think of the circuitry and the electrical knowledge to make that happen is just...I'm still thinking about it.

In his visual journal Sam also wrote a reflection in response to the idea of making special.

Making special is indeed an artistic behavior and process for those of us who choose to create art or arrange our living spaces. To make anything special you must have time and the will to make it happen. Many of us, including me, get too caught up in daily living activities to produce special things. Special traditions in our families are expressed in holidays, birthdays, educational achievements, watching Badger sports, Packers, Brewers, etc.

Like other participants, Sam acknowledged that lack of time was a limiting factor to creating art.

Here, he seems to indicate that while he lacked time to create art objects, holidays and family traditions provided alternative outlets for expression and making special.

As an art teacher, Sam was very vocal about the policies and societal perspectives that put the work he did in jeopardy. As he reflected on the idea of making special, he seemed to

begin to make connections between this idea and the place of art in people's lives and educations.

Making special widens the definition of what is or becomes considered as art to become more inclusive. I am open to what people define as "Art." They may or may not agree as to what I consider Art as it is pretty open to one's own personal interpretation and reasons for their inspirations. Making special is very important to me and I would hope that it is to everyone else as well. There is so much to learn from each other. I firmly believe if there was much more emphasis by society on the importance of the arts, the world would be much better off for mankind.

He continued by stating,

Being an art teacher has been a good choice for me for the last 27 years. I hope all of us in the arts are able to side step, as we have been, the obstacles coming at us in the next decade. With all the cuts from money shortages and funding issues, the future of everything seems to be in question. All the ideas presented in this class are fine. They influence and inspire us to be better teachers and artists. This class has forced me to look more inward at myself as an artist, which I know is a good process.

Here, Sam acknowledges that the idea of making special is important to him and that a more inclusive definition of art is one that he already subscribed to.

Megan

Megan: Changing Attitudes about Art and Impact on Artistic Identity

Although Megan participated in all three sessions of the first class and filled out a pre-class survey, she did not complete a pre-class interview or a post-class survey. However, Megan shared revelations that she experienced during our in-class discussions that provide some indication about how the ideas presented in the class impacted her. At one point during the class, she discussed her struggle to find examples related to the vernacular art curriculum to place in her visual journal.

Megan: I told my husband what I had to do and he said, well look at your suitcases. You have them all stacked up there, because I collect vintage suitcases. I just have them stacked. He said, well that's that. And look at your pottery, how you have it all on shelves. He was the one who pointed it out. And I was like, oh yeah, that is what I would be looking for.

Liz: It's interesting that you couldn't see that. It's almost invisible to us- the ways we behave artistically becomes natural to us.

Megan: And for a long time I really felt guilty. You know, being an educator for 20 years. By the time the summer rolled around the only thing I wanted to do was work in the garden. I wanted to get as far away from art materials as I could be. And people would be like, Oh, what's the medium you like to work in. And I would be like, my garden. And I would never think that that was anything artistic. So, as time went on, it was a serious [issue]. Honestly, like through therapy, I had to come to [terms] that I am doing something. If it is therapeutic to you and it rejuvenates you, it's what's good for you. It's what you need. Whether it's making something or not. And I struggled with that for so many years. Maybe it was around me all the time and I never realized it. In everything that you do.

She continued by sharing an additional example based on a conversation about the class,

I had an eye doctor appointment this week. And he asked me what I am doing this summer. And I said, I am taking this class at the Kohler. It's about everyday artists and how you are always around it in your own home. And he said, like I cook. Like I present things on a plate. And I was like, yeah.

Megan articulated some discomfort related to her artistic identity several times during the class, particularly as it related to her profession as an art teacher and being unable to devote significant time to creating art objects on her own. During a class discussion about broadening definitions of art to include how it is integral to everyday life, Megan stated the following,

I was filling out the survey and it asked on here, describe any artmaking activities that you do on your own. And I am thinking, well I garden, but she [Liz] might not think that's...you know I paint different rooms in the house. I hang pictures in different places. You know...and then I wrote down, "nothing."

This statement indicated that Megan had preconceived notions about what might be defined as art and was more readily able to identify personal artistic expressions when those preconceptions were broadened. In response to the ideas presented in the class, Megan was able to identify

several examples of ways she enlists artistic behaviors in her everyday life and this seemed to provide her with some reassurance about her artistic identity.

Findings: Art Teachers

In the following section, I introduce findings from this study for the three adult participants who identified as art teachers, followed by the number of participants associated with each finding. A broader discussion and analysis of these findings will be presented in Chapter 6.

- Finding 1: For art teacher participants, prior art education experiences were identified as contributing to less inclusive understandings of art and artists. (2 out of 3)
- Finding 2: While art teacher participants strongly identified as artists, some prior perceptions of art and artists negatively impacted how they perceived of themselves as artists. In particular, art teachers struggled to balance their art teacher identities with perceptions of what it means to be an artist. (3 out of 3)
- Finding 3: Art teacher participants believed that art had the potential to positively impact students and the world. (2 out of 3)
- Finding 4: For art teacher participants, learning about the vernacular art curriculum as a framework for understanding art reinforced previously held beliefs that art can be broadly defined and anyone can be an artist. (2 out of 3)
- Finding 5: For art teacher participants, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special as components of the vernacular art curriculum provided inroads for identifying and acknowledging personal artistic behaviors in everyday life. (3 out of 3)

- Finding 6: For art teacher participants, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special as components of the vernacular art curriculum had a positive impact on their identity as artists. (2 out of 3)
- Finding 7: For art teacher participants, learning about vernacular art environments provided insights for personal artmaking. (2 out of 3)

Post-class Data: Artists

Erica

Erica: Impact of Vernacular Art Curriculum

On the pre- and post-class surveys, Erica identified herself as a ten on the artistic identity rating scale, indicating she felt she was highly artistic. On the post-class survey, Erica primarily provided limited one-word answers. Overall, she felt she had not been deeply affected by the class because she had previously explored or thought about the ideas that were presented in the class. In her visual journal, Erica made clear connections among the ideas presented in class, objects and traditions from her everyday life, and her personal artwork.

Erica: Changing attitudes about art. On the post-class survey Erica stated, “No” to all questions asking if any of her perceptions of art had changed during the course of the class. Erica came to the class with extensive knowledge of art and of vernacular art environments. While presenting her visual journal to the class, Erica referenced work that she had done with vernacular art environments to help the administration at *Grandview* and a class trip she had taken through *Grandview* educational programming (see Figure 5.61).

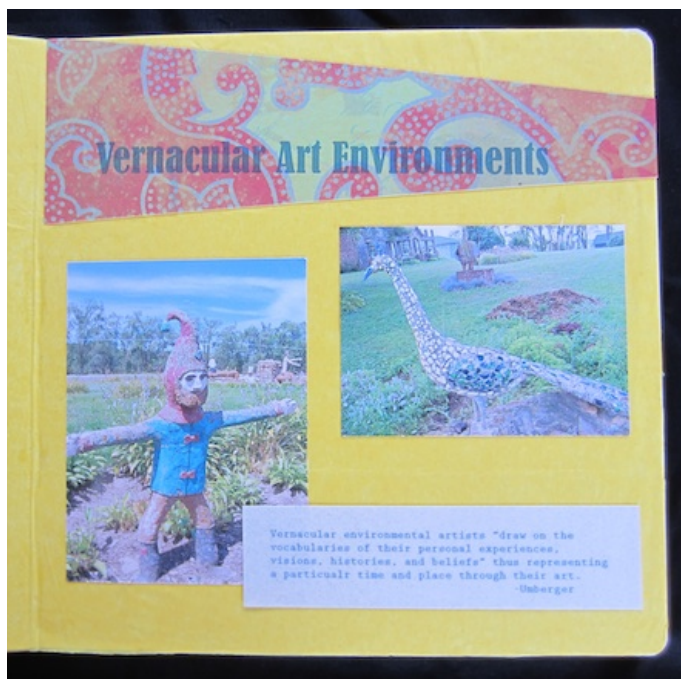


Figure 5.61 Image from Erica’s visual journal depicting familiar vernacular art environments.

Erica: Impact on artistic identity. Erica noted on the pre-class survey that her perceptions of herself as an artist had been “made stronger” during the course of the class. This indicates that her previously held beliefs about her artistic identity were not changed during the course of the class, but were reinforced through the course content.

Through her visual journal, Erica made personal connections to the class content. As she shared her visual journal, Erica described her personal exploration of the idea of everyday aesthetics,

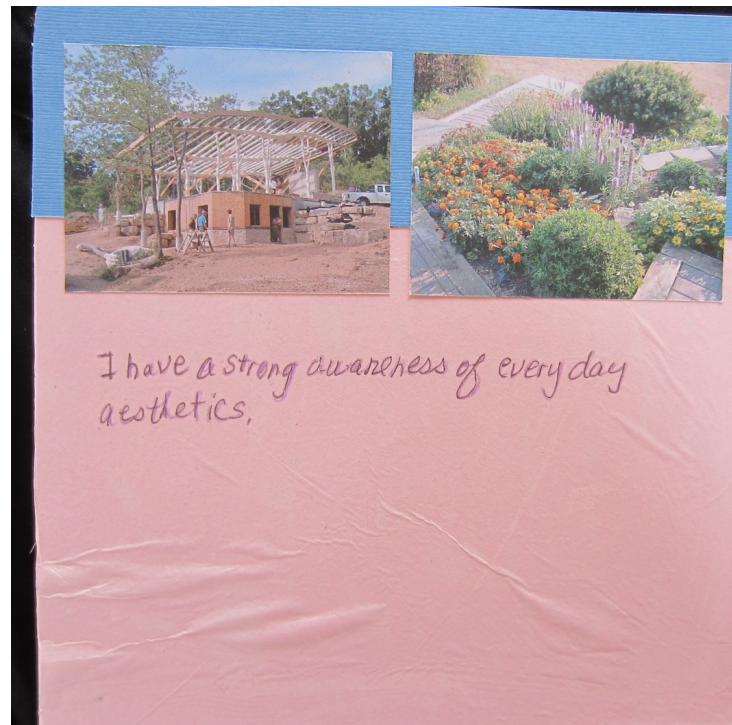
So I thought about this and I really explored the issues. So, this is a corner in my bedroom. Places in my bathroom. Those are personal spaces. [In] this image, all the pieces have come from either people and they have a lot of meaning or they’re things that I picked up...Miniatures. I loved miniatures as a child. I had my own little grocery store in a closet. And mom would give me all the little sample bottles and all the little things and I realized that I liked miniatures. As a child it was fun to have things your size or even smaller. And teapots. So, my friends and husband and kids have given me tiny teapots because I like the whole idea of having a tea party. (See Figure 5.62)...And then,

there's more to add, but everyday aesthetics. Just how someone, you know, puts their flowers together or builds their building. That's part of it. (See Figure 5.62)

On the page of her visual journal Erica describes here, she included a quotation stating, "I have a strong awareness of everyday aesthetics" (see Figure 5.63).



Figure 5.62. Image from Erica's visual journal exploring everyday aesthetics.



. Figure 5.63. Image from Erica’s visual journal exploring everyday aesthetics.

During the in-class discussion, Erica continued by sharing her visual journal entry about making special with the group.

This was making special. Looking at how people have their houses. And in one of them there was an art piece that said, “There are things you do because they feel right and they make no sense, they make no money, and it may be the real reason we are here. To love each other, and to eat each other’s’ cooking and say it was good.” [laughter] It’s wonderful. But it said a lot to me about making special. And as I said before, pizza night is an important family ritual, but a lot of foods that we have are very important to my family. (See Figures 5.64 and 5.65)

Overall, Erica felt that the information presented in class was not new to her and that she had explored these ideas previously. She also came to the class strongly identifying as an artist and felt the class had not contributed to her artistic identity, but had reinforced ways she already thought about art. Erica was able to identify and discuss personal examples related to the vernacular art curriculum and worked through those examples in her visual journal.



Figure 5.64. Image from Erica's visual journal exploring making special.

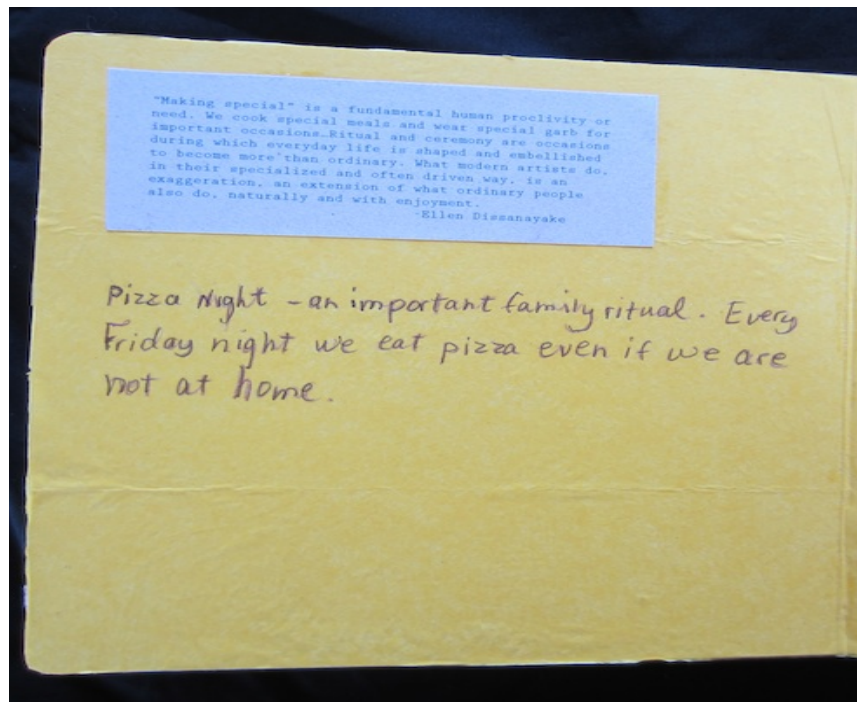


Figure 5.65. Image from Erica's visual journal exploring making special.

John

For this study, John completed the pre-class survey, but did not complete a pre-class interview, post-class survey, or attend the last session of the class. On the pre-class survey, John identified as a ten artistic identity rating scale, indicating that he came to the class with a strong artistic identity. While there is limited data regarding the impact of the vernacular art curriculum on John, I include relevant observations and quotations from in-class discussions below.

John: Changing Attitudes about Art and Impact on Artistic Identity

John came to the class with significant knowledge about vernacular art environments and a strong opinion about how these artists are treated. During a class discussion I asked the group if they had any reactions to the vernacular art environment pieces on display in the galleries at JMKAC. John stated,

Oh, I can say a lot about what I didn't enjoy last week. I hate it when the stuff is taken out of its [original location]...I hate it because it doesn't hit me as much when it's taken out of its space. So you know, we are looking at these sculptures, but we are at the Kohler museum. And they are all organized in this way to work with that building. That's not what it was intended to do. So it is hard for me to get over that.

In addition to feeling strongly about how vernacular art environments are displayed, John was interested in discussing the use of the term vernacular and approved of this label versus others that he felt had a more derogatory tone. While this was not new knowledge, it was apparent that John had been deeply affected by the work of vernacular environment artists and was passionate about perceptions of the work.

While the work of vernacular art environments was not new knowledge, making special and everyday aesthetics as ways of thinking about art provided John with new ways of

considering his artistic identity. John initially struggled to think about personal examples of everyday aesthetics. However, his aunt, Judy, who also lived with John, was quick to point out that she felt that he had a distinct way of organizing his surroundings that she joked appeared to her as “hoarding.” John stated,

I will hang drawings and stuff. If I am at a restaurant and there are crayons and stuff I will draw on the paper and rip them off and tape them on my wall and stuff. Or I have a stack of bones that I found on the beach that they are still outside, but kind of lined up in an interesting way. I think the idea of organization as creativity is a really interesting idea because that’s one I wouldn’t have thought of that I do as well.

While John already had a strong identity as an artist, the idea of everyday aesthetics as an artistic behavior was new.

John also noted that the idea of making special as an artistic behavior was new to him. During a class session I asked the participants if they agreed or disagreed that making special is connected to making art. John stated, “I don’t know if most people agree. I like to agree because it makes me feel better about myself as an artist. More justified, I guess.” Here, John indicated that the idea of making special was something that helped him justify his own artistic identity.

Gretchen

Gretchen participated in all three sessions of the third class, filled out a pre-class survey, and participated in a pre-class interview. However, she did not complete a post-class survey, which would have provided a clearer indication of how the class impacted her artistic identity and attitudes about art. On the pre-class survey, Gretchen designated herself an eight out of ten on the artistic identity rating scale because of her art-related job as a fashion designer. Despite having an art career, she discussed in our pre-class interview struggles with her artistic identity related to feeling like she did a lot of “dabbling” with materials, especially in educational

settings, and did not develop enough knowledge to work independently with some materials. She also noted growing up with an artist father and being influenced that there were clear designations between art and craft and feeling that what she did was primarily craft. She also felt that if she “showed” her work this might provide her with proof that she was an artist, despite not feeling particularly interested in doing so. Like other participants, time was a prohibiting factor and she noted that by definition an artist is someone who dedicates significant time to their work.

While there are limited data to indicate how the vernacular art curriculum impacted Gretchen, I include a couple of relevant topics that emerged while she discussed her visual journal with the class. Gretchen noted that her visual journal was incomplete and that she would have needed significantly more time to complete her ideas. In addition, she seemed to respond positively to the idea of making special; she stated, “And this was really fun because I loved the idea of, Oh a card from mom is totally legit, and that’s awesome.” Although she did not expand on this thought, it provides some indication that Gretchen felt broadening ways of thinking about art by legitimizing everyday objects like cards was a positive idea.

As Gretchen began to discuss her visual journal she stated, “So I was thinking to me an artist is playing with material” and much of her journal was devoted to exploring a variety of materials in unique ways in connection to ideas from the class. She described for the class several ways she had worked with familiar materials, like foam sheets and fabric she had saved, on different pages to create visuals compositions she found “pleasing” (see Figures 5.66 and 5.67).



Figure 5.66. Image from Gretchen's visual journal depicting material exploration.



Figure 5.67. Image from Gretchen's visual journal depicting material exploration.

In addition to exploration with materials, Gretchen used her visual journal to express an idea related to everyday aesthetics. As she shared her visual journal with the class, she discussed how she was trying to create a new relationship with the bugs that inhabit her garden. She stated,

“And so my daily life and the yard and all these things...I think you guys heard me talk about these bugs. They’re in here. I put them in resin.” She continued,

Okay, I don’t want to have only negative feelings towards you because that’s not really fair—that I’m a human and you’re a bug. You’re still alive. Even though I want to kill you all the time. So I’m trying to kind of create a new relationship in my vernacular environment to this thing that is constantly eating my plants. I started modge podging, these are some dahlia petals of my beautiful dahlias that they just kept putting holes in. And my grape leaves full of holes. And my apricot tree full of holes. So the intent is to somehow do a collage of that which they have destroyed, but in its own way has a beauty. This is like fictitious in my idealized version, they’re beautiful. (See Figure 5.68)

While Gretchen participated eagerly in class discussions and artmaking, data related to Gretchen’s responses to the class provide only brief glimpses of how the vernacular art curriculum influenced her. Here she does provide some indication that she was able to connect the idea of everyday aesthetics to personal experiences.



Figure 5.68. Image from Gretchen’s visual journal depicting her response to the idea of everyday aesthetics.

Findings: Artists

In the following section, I introduce findings from this study for the three adult participants who identified as artists followed by the number of participants associated with each finding. A broader discussion and analysis of these findings will be presented in Chapter 6.

- Finding 1: While artist participants identified strongly as artists, prior perceptions of how art and artists are defined negatively impacted or created a struggle with how they perceived of themselves as artists. (2 out of 3)
- Finding 2: For artist participants, learning about the vernacular art curriculum as a framework for understanding art reinforced or aligned with previously held beliefs that art can be broadly defined and anyone can be an artist. (2 out of 3)
- Finding 3: For artist participants, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special as components of the vernacular art curriculum provided inroads for identifying and acknowledging personal artistic behaviors in everyday life. (3 out of 3)

Findings Summary

In this chapter, I described participant responses to the vernacular art curriculum, focusing on how it impacted their attitudes about art and artistic identity. As is typical of qualitative research, extensive participant quotes and visual artifacts were utilized to establish confidence in the accuracy of participant portrayals and provide supportive data for findings. Data for each participant were presented within one of three categories: non-artists, art teachers and artists. Following each participant category, findings were introduced that emerged from

patterns across participants within that category. In this section, I briefly discuss the findings across participant categories. Further analysis of findings introduced here will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Across all categories of participants, it is notable that a large majority of participants (13 out of 15) made explicit connections between how they perceived art or artists and how strongly they identified as artists. Overall, the participants held conceptions of art or artists that interfered with their ability to identify as artists themselves. Even for the participants who identified strongly as artists, narrow conceptions of an artist as someone who is prolific, shows or sells work, or spends a significant amount of time producing traditional art objects had been an obstacle to identifying as an artist. A majority of the art teachers (2 out of 3) and artists (2 out of 3) identified prior art education experiences that had taught a less inclusive understanding of art that contributed to struggles when negotiating their artistic identities.

For all non-artist participants (9 out of 9) and one artist, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special, as a framework for understanding art, was new knowledge. For a majority of participants who identified as art teachers (2 out of 3) and artists (2 out of 3), learning about making special and everyday aesthetics was not necessarily new knowledge, but did reinforce previously held beliefs that art and the notion of who can identify as an artist can be broadly defined. This suggests that a broad conception of art and artists is relevant to how strongly adults are able to consider themselves artists or capable of artistic behaviors.

Results from this study suggest that learning about everyday aesthetics and making special, as a framework for democratizing art knowledge, had a positive effect on how strongly the participants were able to identify as artists. While these effects were slight in most cases (especially on the artistic identity rating scale), this might be expected given the limited time

frame of the class. A large majority of adult participants who identified as non-artists (7 out of 9) indicated that learning about everyday aesthetics and making special had positively impacted how they identified as artists. While art teachers did not indicate a shift in how they perceived of themselves as artists, a majority (2 out of 3) indicated that learning about everyday aesthetics provided them with new language to discuss or validate what they already did or to consider new ways of thinking about artistic behaviors that are not separate from their everyday life. In addition, several non-artists (3 out of 9) noted that learning about everyday aesthetics and making special had democratized the viewing process in relation to art and made viewing or judging art more accessible. Data for artists in relation to impact on artistic identity were missing or inconclusive.

As a part of the vernacular art curriculum, the participants were asked to create visual journals that would help them bridge the content learned in class with examples from their everyday lives. Nearly all participants (14 out of 15) across categories were able to identify and share examples of artistic behaviors in their everyday lives. This indicated that a vernacular art curriculum provided nearly all participants with inroads for identifying and acknowledging their own everyday artistic practices.

In addition to everyday aesthetics and making special, a third component of the vernacular art curriculum was vernacular art environments. This section of the curriculum created more mixed responses from participants. For most non-artists (6 out of 9), learning about vernacular art environments was identified as a part of the curriculum that had not impacted their artistic identities. Overall, non-artists participants enjoyed viewing the vernacular art environments, but felt overwhelmed by the immensity of these projects and the dedication of the artists themselves. While the vernacular artists were primarily untrained artists, something I

thought might resonate with this group of participants, most non-artist participants were most affected by traditional markers of being an artist (particularly being prolific and dedicated to singular project) they had observed in the work but were unable to identify with. In contrast, a majority of art teachers (2 out of 3) indicated that learning about vernacular art environments provided them with insight or inspiration for personal artmaking in their everyday environments. Responses by artist participants to the vernacular art environments were inconclusive due to limited data.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 4, I provided a description of the enacted curriculum for three classes of the *Artist Within*, a vernacular art curriculum created and taught by the researcher. In addition, I provided a description of each participant's pre-class formal and informal art experiences, attitudes about art and artistic identity. In this chapter, I provided descriptions of each participant's post-class attitudes about art and perceptions of his/her artistic identity. The goal of discussing pre-class and post-class data from this study was to determine if a vernacular art curriculum might positively impact the artistic identity of the participants by broadening traditional definitions of art and artists to include ways in which it is integral to everyday life. In Chapter 5, I also introduced findings based on data within the three participant categories that emerged during the study: non-artists, art teachers, and artists. In Chapter 6, I will provide further analysis of these findings as well as conclusions and recommendations for further research. In addition, I will discuss and analyze data described in Chapter 4 related to new knowledge gained about teaching practices through teaching and reflecting on a vernacular art curriculum enacted with adults.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Art education continues to be shaped and re-shaped in ways that reflect broader shifts in philosophies about art and goals for learning through art. For this study, the problem identified by the researcher was that the influence of modern ideologies on philosophies of art and theories of art education have created barriers between art and everyday life that negatively impact perceived access to art by adults who consider themselves non-artists. This study sought to determine ways that curricula and teaching could be used to democratize art and create a greater potential for lifelong engagement with art. As described in Chapter 3, the design for this qualitative study utilized a phenomenological, multi-case approach to examine transformations in artistic identities and attitudes toward art for adult participants in a class in which a vernacular art curriculum was created and conducted by the researcher. In addition, an action research approach was implemented to address the final research question related to what new knowledge about teaching practice could be learned from enacting a vernacular art curriculum with adults.

Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the findings based on the data presented in Chapters 4 and 5. This chapter provides a discussion of the analytic categories related to the findings, research questions, and relevant literature, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and future study.

The overarching research question and sub-questions that helped guide this study are the following:

1. What is the impact of a vernacular art curriculum that democratizes art knowledge on adults' perceptions of art and identities as artists?
 - a. In what ways do adults' prior formal and informal art education experiences shape their perspectives of art and identities as artists?
 - b. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as making special?
 - c. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as everyday aesthetics?
 - d. How are adults' perspectives and identities influenced by a vernacular art curriculum that emphasizes art as vernacular art environments?
 - e. What new knowledge about teaching practice emerges when an instructor self-reflects on teaching adults a vernacular art curriculum?

Discussion of Findings

The research questions 1a-d for this study were largely satisfied by the findings presented in Chapter 5. Broadly, the findings revealed that prior art experiences, both formal and informal, influenced adults' attitudes toward art and their identities as artists. The findings also indicated that the introduction of a vernacular art curriculum has the potential to positively affect adults' attitudes toward art and their identities as artists and to provide inroads for acknowledging personal artistic behaviors in everyday life.

This chapter provides analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of findings in relation to relevant literature. Discussion of the findings is organized into the following analytic categories, aligned with the research questions for the study:

1. Prior art experiences and attitudes toward art and artistic identity. (Research Question 1 a)
2. Vernacular art curriculum and transformation of attitudes toward art and artistic identity. (Research Questions 1 b, c, d)
3. Reflections and modifications to teaching practice. (Research Question 1 e)

Analytic Category 1: Prior Art Experiences and Attitudes Toward Art and Artistic Identity

For this study, participants were asked to describe their experiences with art prior to participating in the vernacular art curriculum. While direct causal assertions cannot be made, patterns did emerge among the participants that indicate how their attitudes about art and artistic identities were shaped. Understanding the influence of prior art and art education experiences on adults provides context and insight about how teaching and curriculum might influence lifelong engagement with art. As described in Chapter 2, these art experiences are situated within broader modern and postmodern ideologies as they relate to art and art education (Barrett, 2008; Freedman, 2003; Neperud, 1995). The following sections elaborate on findings that emerged related to the potential influence of the participants' art experiences prior to the study.

Prior Experiences in Art

Participants in this study identified a variety of formal and informal art experiences, self-initiated art experiences, and family influences as children and adults prior to taking the class. While these experiences varied in both quality and quantity, one of the strongest findings from this study related to the influence of prior art experiences on adult participants' attitudes toward art and how they perceived themselves as artists. Also, across all categories of participants (non-

artists, art teachers, and artists), a large majority identified perceptions of art they have that influenced how they perceived themselves as consumers and/or producers of art.

Influential Perceptions of “Real” Art and Artists

Overall, participants had developed conceptions of art or artists that in a variety of ways seemed to disrupt their ability to personally identify as artists or capable consumers of art. For the participants in this study, prevailing myths that define real art and real artists were influential and are discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Art versus craft. Adult participants’ discussions about their art knowledge and identities prior to the vernacular art curriculum seemed to align with traditional notions about hierarchies of art, many of which echoed modern ideologies in which real art was an isolated entity, considered most authentic when created and perceived as decontextualized from everyday life (Fenner, 2008; Gablik, 2002; McEvilley, 2006). In particular, participants shared and often struggled with personal distinctions between art and craft that parallel modernist art world distinctions mentioned previously. Participants perceived craft as something that was both different and less valid than real art. For example, Jessica wrote, “I do more ‘craft’ projects rather than what I would consider ‘art.’” Distinctions about art and craft seemed to influence how participants identified as artists. This was true even for participants who strongly identified as artists. As the daughter of a professional artist, Gretchen noted, “I really grew up in a house where there was a very defined line. Art was one thing; craft was another.”

For participants in this study, there were hierarchies of art, and identifying their personal art with craft provided them a way to situate what they did outside the realm of real art. Postmodern theories of art have blurred the tight boundaries and hierarchies of the past and place

renewed emphasis on a wider range of artmaking practices, including those that intersect more closely with everyday life (Barrett, 2008). In a postmodern art world, the margins have moved to the center as makers of art draw from a wide range of practices and distinctions among art, craft, and other ways of making have become less relevant. Artists appropriate and juxtapose a variety of nontraditional mediums and practices to construct new meanings (Buszek, 2011; Gude, 2004). In addition, renewed interest in craft and do-it-yourself (DIY) cultures has validated a much wider range of artmaking practices (Levine, 2008). The adult participants in this study seemed to be aware of distinctions and discussions about art and craft and used those platforms as they considered their own ways of making. For the most part, the participants' understandings of these distinctions were rooted in modernist notions of fine art that created barriers when considering their own art practices and behaviors.

Art and museum settings. Participants noted that they understood art as something that is mainly found in museums, outside the context of everyday life. Andrew stated, "When I think of art what's the first thing that comes to mind? Probably a museum and paintings." Art in museums was perplexing to some participants, particularly those who identified as non-artists, as they tried to reconcile their own judgments with perceptions of the museum as a place that sanctioned real art. Katie addressed this discomfort stating, "Like when we went to the museum of Milwaukee and saw some of that stuff...I just don't get it. I don't understand it. So then sometimes I just get frustrated." Katie saw herself as incapable of, or not qualified for, making judgments about art, particularly within the museum context. Instead of understanding her own judgment as a valid point of view, she described feelings of confusion or discomfort when viewing particular works of art that had been sanctioned by a fine art institution.

The responses of the adult participants in this study echoed prior studies in which visitors felt intimidation or dissonance in art museum settings (Soren, 2000; Wletzl-Fairchild, Dufresne-Tassé, & Dubé, 1997). Today, many museums, including art museums, have made significant shifts in light of postmodern concerns about how knowledge is constructed and shared in these settings, often utilizing greater audience participation and museum transparency (Conlan, 2010; Ebitz, 2007; Karp & Levine, 1991). However for many adult participants, the notion that art museums represent legitimate knowledge about art that remains elusive to them persists (Congdon, 2004).

Creativity and self-expression. Powerful ideas and myths about how art is defined and who makes art were prevalent in participant discussions. One such idea described by participants was art's connection to creativity and self-expression. Andrew echoed this idea, "Define art? I think any sort of creative endeavor. Any expression of something original is art. Or taking an idea and adopting it to your own ideas." While Andrew identified as a non-artist, creativity was a useful connection for him between his own work and something he identified as art-like. Andrew stated, "I think I'm a creative problem solver, but I'm not necessarily someone who's driven to create or to design."

While the idea of creativity was constructive for Andrew, several participants identified creativity as a barrier. As Jessica described her definition of art she stated, "Some people think that people that are very crafty are art[ists]. But you know that's not really art because you're looking at something else and doing it." For Jessica, creating something new or forming your own ideas was a key part of defining real art. This idea about originality informed her conviction that she was not an artist. Similarly, Anne dismissed her own capacity as an artist because she felt she did not have a talent for novel ideas. She stated, "Well, artists and art people have very

imaginative minds. They really take off with things right now and I don't. It is interesting. There are different kinds of brains and mindsets you know.”

Research (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) indicates that people do have a predisposition to creativity based on deep interest in a specific domain or topic. However, the connections made by participants between art and creativity also reflect modernist notions in which creativity or novel ideas seem to emerge solely from within the individual. Postmodern ideas about creativity recognize the influence of cultural context and question the notion of originality as something that occurs within a vacuum, solely within the individual, or even as something that necessarily constitutes art (Gablik, 2002). Freedman (2010) describes creativity as a learning process and notes “creativity depends on previous knowledge, and therefore, depends to some extent on reproduction” (p. 13). The participants seemed to feel that creativity was a prerequisite for being an artist versus the idea that creativity is cultivated from knowledge (Craft, 2005) and interest in a subject within and in response to a wide range of cultural or situational contexts. This is important because participants perceived that they had limited knowledge of art in the traditional fine art framework. However, by potentially broadening how art is defined by making more explicit connections to everyday life, participants recognized a more varied knowledge base from which they can and do act in creative ways.

Art and innate talent. Participants expressed beliefs that art required specific talents you were or were not innately born with. Jessica stated, “Everybody has to have their niche, their talent. And [art's] not my talent.” While Jessica considered the idea that different experiences in school might have helped, she was adamant that talent was inborn, a necessary condition of art, and she did not have it.

The connection between art and talent is related to another recurring theme that participants used to express barriers related to their artistic identity—the ability to draw or to render realistic images. Jessica stated, “I can’t do art. I mean I can’t draw...I guess there are other things besides just the drawing kind of art...But I think you have to inherit that from somewhere.” For participants, a notion that there was a correlation between talent in art and the ability to draw realistically persisted.

The relationships among innate talent, drawing, and art have been given attention within art education and broader studies of cognition and intelligence. Researchers note a relationship between heightened proclivities, or innate talent, in specific domains or types of intelligences, including art or art-related capacities, and the development of expertise or high achievement in those fields (Gardner, 1983, 2006; Winner & Drake, 2013). Still, Gardner (2006) noted that “the biological proclivity to participate in a particular form of problem solving must also be coupled with the cultural nurturing of that domain” (p. 7). For adult participants who identified as non-artists, the notion that art was an innate talent often prevailed over notions that learning in art could be nurtured.

The study of children’s drawing and graphic development has been influential to the field of art education. Lowenfeld’s (1949) work in this area has been especially influential to art educators. Lowenfeld identified developmental stages of children’s expression through graphic representations that move progressively toward realistic rendering, often culminating in the adolescent years with students critical of their own drawing abilities and at a point when they may feel discouraged to continue in art without guidance or an enlarged understanding of art.

Efland (2002) suggests that more recent studies of graphic development have placed emphasis on socio-cultural influences that shape children’s representation through drawing and

that children develop a range of visual repertoires for different purposes (Kindler, 1999; Kindler & Darras, 1998; Wilson & Wilson, 1982; Wolf & Perry, 1988). Kindler (1999) describes a range of visual repertoires used by children to communicate ideas and states that “education in visual arts should not remain limited to exploration of a narrowly selected range of pictorial systems that we happen to particularly value” (p.344). Kindler notes that children understand the values placed on different forms of visual representation in school and may narrow their own varied repertoires to meet those expectations. She suggests that art education curricula should broaden possibilities and values attached to a range of visual strategies. The participants in this study seemed to have developed ideas about visual representation that are not inclusive to a range of expressive strategies. Without the validation of a range of meaning making processes beyond the goal of representational drawing, adult participants readily saw themselves as non-artists.

Just dabbling. Artists were identified as those who were dedicated to creating art in ways the participants felt were personally unattainable. Adult participants felt that what they did was more closely aligned with dabbling and an indication they were not real artists. Becca stated, “I always enjoyed, I don’t know what the right word is, maybe dabbling. I’m never very serious about anything, you know, except maybe photography as much as anything.” Caryn expressed numerous times during the study that perceptions about art and artists that were influential had been perpetuated during college while she was working toward a degree in art. She stated, “I’m not that dedicated to the theme from my BFA or anything,” indicating that Caryn felt pressure to create a sustained body of work around a personal topic or theme. In addition, Caryn noted, “I realize from college I have a trained eye, but still felt like an art slacker.” Caryn repeatedly expressed that pervasive or stereotypical ideas she learned about art and artists, like being

prolific and creating cohesive bodies of artwork, were a real challenge to her ability to perceive herself as an artist and a significant frustration for her.

Exhibiting and selling art. Participants also identified artists as people who exhibited or sold their art or those for whom art was their profession. For non-artist participants this was a clear indicator of someone's status as an artist. However, this idea caused a struggle, particularly for participants who identified as art teachers or artists. Gretchen, who identified as an artist and even worked as a fashion designer, described this struggle, "There's a part of me that wishes I was more like an artist and showed things. Not that I need to show it. But that would seem like it's proof that I do something." Megan, an art teacher, hovered at the end of class and initiated a conversation stating, "This year I am not going to the Lakefront Festival of the Arts...I like to go there to see the different types of artwork. But then I also get depressed because maybe I don't take the opportunity to create as much as I would like to."

Dual identities: Artists/art teachers. Participants who identified as art teachers articulated similar struggles described by Caryn and Megan in relation to their ability to dedicate sustained time and energy to artmaking. Sarah, an art teacher, stated, "One teacher said to me...well every art teacher does something on the side. Well I don't have time to do anything on the side for one thing. I don't have that drive." She continued, "I really struggled for many years with well am I really an artist? ... I've met a lot of teachers and artsy people that have said the same kind of thing. It's kind of nice to know that I'm not alone."

Sarah's conclusion that she was not alone in her struggles to manage dual identities as artist and art teacher is not uncommon. Within the field of art education, much attention and research has been given to exploring art teacher identities as artists and teachers (Anderson, 1981; Ball, 1990; Hatfield, et al., 2006; Hausman, 1967; Lim, 2008; Szekeley, 1978; Zwirn,

2002, 2005, 2006). Like the participants in my study, art teachers often struggled with issues of time and worked to either integrate or balance their art teacher and artist identities. Outside perceptions and recognition were important in both positive and problematic ways. While I anticipated focusing on non-artists for this study, it became clear through the experiences of these art teachers that they too had something to gain from a curriculum that reframes ways of thinking about art and what it means to be an artist. Given the tension between artist and art teacher identities that many art teachers report, teacher educator programs might consider the benefits that validating a wide range of art, including artmaking practices closely connected to everyday life, might have for these future art teachers.

Art is everywhere, anyone can be an artist. In contrast to feeling that art is exclusive, participants also expressed that art was something that could be found everywhere and that anyone could make art. While this initially seemed to be an indication the participants had inclusive understandings of art and artists, they often resisted applying those qualifications to themselves. This might indicate that the participants had internalized ideas about art as a means for personal, creative self-expression that were widely recognized and taught in art curricula (Lowenfeld, 1987) or that they recognized that postmodern ideas about art (Barrett, 2008) and art education (Bolin & Blandy, 2003; 2011; Duncum, 2001; Freedman, 2003) were inclusive of wide ranging forms of expression, including popular, visual, and material culture. However, these adult participants often seemed to lack the language or framework to make concrete connections to their personal identities or behaviors as artists. This held true for art teachers who also struggled with their artistic identities. These teachers felt strongly that art was for everyone and applied this idea readily to their students, but did not seem to have a

framework for validating personal artistic behaviors beyond traditional definitions of what it means to be an artist.

Summary

The sentiments and experiences about art described by the participants in this study are not surprising. These expressions of discomfort should be familiar to any artist or art educator as a result of interactions with adults on the topic of art, particularly those who identify as non-artists. Rather than recognizing adult discomfort with and exclusion from art as a normal, and perhaps accepted, trajectory of early art experiences, art educators need to respond by purposefully re-envisioning art teaching and curricula with lifelong goals in mind.

The National Core Arts Standards, developed in 2014 to provide standards for learning in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual art, were guided by clearly articulated philosophical and lifelong learning goals. For example, frameworks for the standards state that lifelong outcomes of arts learning should provide a means for wellbeing so that, “artistically literate citizens find joy, inspiration, peace, intellectual stimulation, meaning and other life-enhancing qualities through participation in all of the arts” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, p. 10). However, for the adult participants in this study, their art education experiences had instead created barriers to art that were well defined in adulthood and often seem rooted in traditional or modernist mythologies and hierarchies about art and artists. If the goal of art education is to empower and enhance the wellbeing of people through the arts, and encourage lifelong engagement with art in everyday life, then art educators must think critically about designing teaching and curricula that support those goals. The following sections analyze the outcomes of a

vernacular art curricula and the ways this curriculum and teaching was used to democratize art learning and transform adult identities as artists.

Analytic Category 2: Vernacular Art Curriculum and Transformation of Attitudes Toward Art and Artistic Identity

A goal of this study was to determine if curricula that were designed to broaden traditional definitions of art and create more explicit connections between art and everyday life could improve adults' attitudes toward art and personal artistic identities. In the following sections, I analyze what influence the vernacular art curriculum had on these adult participants.

Broadening Attitudes toward Art and Artists

In this section, I describe ways the participants reflected on and shifted their attitudes toward art and artists while participating in the vernacular art curriculum. For most participants, the vernacular art curriculum provided new ways of thinking about art and artists that allowed for more explicit connections between art and everyday life.

New knowledge. For nearly all of the participants, the vernacular art curriculum provided a new framework for understanding art. This was particularly true in relation to the curricular components of making special (Dissanayake, 1988, 1995) and everyday aesthetics (Saito, 2007). Given these new parameters, the participants began to recognize everyday artifacts and behaviors as new ways to understand and define art and contrasted these with their own previously held beliefs about art and artists.

Caryn, who described struggling with her artistic identity in relation to experiences in a college art program, responded in a strong, positive way to the vernacular art curriculum. She

stated, “The whole concept and study of everyday aesthetics was new to me and supported the idea that maybe I am still an artist in this way, visually designing my life.” Anne identified in particular with one of the everyday aesthetic examples discussed during the class, “The idea that roadside memorials could be considered art surprised me. I have always thought that only the most talented artists created real art.” The vernacular art curriculum seemed to provide participants with new concepts about art that helped them reassess their prior framework for art and consider more inclusive alternatives.

Using adult transformative learning theory as a framework (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000), the goal of this study was for participants to examine prior personal perceptions of art and explore alternative ways of thinking about art that create a broader range of personal entry points into art practices. According to Mezirow, transformation begins with what he describes as a disorienting dilemma, which may lead to critical self-reflection and eventually new courses of action. For the majority of the participants in this study, the vernacular art curriculum provided new knowledge that allowed for reflection on prior points of view about art and artists. While simply providing new knowledge, or informative learning, does not constitute transformation (Kegan, 2000), given its relative newness to participants, it provided enough disorientation for them to reflect on their frames of reference in relation to their attitudes about art and presented opportunities to begin to re-examine their own self-concepts (Cranton, 2006).

Art and everyday life. The vernacular art curriculum seemed to enable participants to make easier connections between art and everyday life. Repeatedly, the participants described being “able to see” examples of behaviors and artifacts that had previously not easily fit within their conceptions of art and artists. This aligns with literature about the importance of examining everyday objects, sites, and experiences because, while they are ubiquitous and in many ways

shape our identities and worldviews, everyday aesthetic objects are often taken for granted or not critically examined (Blandy & Bolin, 2012; Duncum, 2002; Saito, 2007). For example, Jessica, who initially indicated some struggle related to examples of art she observed in museums, described new ideas about how art is valued, “I hadn't considered some of the places art is found that were presented in this class...things that we create within our home/work/community define who we are and maybe should be as important as the art that hangs in a museum.” Based on the participant responses, the vernacular art curriculum helped them broaden their understandings of art and this in turn opened up opportunities to consider their own everyday artmaking practices and behaviors.

Affirmation of prior attitudes toward art. For some participants, the vernacular art curriculum provided a new language to describe ideas about art they already held. This was particularly true for participants who identified as artists and art teachers. For one art teacher, making special provided a label or language for her personal and professional art philosophy and supported what she already does or believes. Sarah, an art teacher, stated, “It [making special] opened a whole new realm of thinking for me. I now have an identity or label for my personal and professional philosophy.” This indicated that even for participants who felt they had a broad definition of art and artists, being able to name their personal philosophies about art was constructive and empowering.

Influence of Vernacular Art Curriculum on Artistic Identity

The previous section synthesized ways in which adult participants reflected their understandings of art and artists as they participated in the vernacular art curriculum. In this

section, I analyze how these shifts in attitudes toward art and artists influenced participants' personal identities as artists.

Identifying personal artistic behaviors and artifacts. For many participants, the vernacular art curriculum provided a framework for art that allowed them to see a broader range of artistic behaviors and artifacts. For the most part, participants were also able to apply this new understanding of art to their own lives. Nearly all of the participants identified multiple personal examples of making special and everyday aesthetics and incorporated these into their visual journals. The participants identified a wide range of personal artistic behaviors and artifacts such as gardening, home décor, rituals and celebrations, important recipes or food. Anne, who identified as a non-artist, stated, "I had never thought of what I do in my home or with my family or in my environment as having very much to do with art. Without knowing it, I have tried to make things special!" Anne also shared an important event in which her family gathered for an annual walk. After considering the vernacular art curriculum, Anne recognized this ritual performance as a potential artistic behavior.

In addition to adult transformative learning theory, this study utilized the theoretical framework of situated learning (Lave, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991) as a way to consider the influence of learning within authentic contexts and communities of practice. Lave noted that knowledge that is deeply circumscribed can often lead to a sense of incompetence on the part of the student. In schools, limiting art learning to discrete skills and practices does not help students make important connections to art as it occurs through social practice in the world beyond school (Efland, 1976) and may lead to similar feelings of inadequacy as adults struggle to identify art in everyday life.

There was evidence apparent in several of the participants' comments of ways that traditional curriculum focusing on formal and technical skills limited wide-ranging connections to art knowledge, and resulted in feelings of inadequacy. For example, Caryn, who struggled with her artistic identity prior to the class for this study, remembered little about her formal school art classes, but did recall a foreshortening lesson in elementary school and also that she quit art in high school following an assignment that was highly focused on formal and technical skills and required students to create a symmetrical or asymmetrical cut paper design using geometric shapes. Caryn noted that the vernacular art curriculum influenced her in a very positive way and seemed to be a valuable way for her to reframe her prior understanding of art, learned through previous formal education experiences. A broader definition of art that was more richly connected to everyday life and artistic behaviors improved Caryn's identity as an artist.

In this study, a curriculum was used to resituate art within everyday life. Lave and Wenger (1991) note that learning in a situated context is connected to identity construction where "identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another" (p. 53). For participants, the process of being able to name or identify personal everyday art objects or behaviors was an inroad to identifying more relevant or attainable communities of practice in art that had previously been perceived as less valid or insufficient to support personally identifying as an artist. Entering into an artistic community of practice was necessary for the construction of a more positive artistic identity.

Validation, permission, legitimization, and resistance. According to Mezirow (2000), transformation through learning occurs when adults critically assess underlying assumptions, or frames of reference, to develop new frames of reference that more justly guide actions and create a greater sense of autonomy or empowerment. For some participants, the new framework for art

that was considered in the vernacular art curriculum provided what participants described as much needed permission, validation, and legitimization for their own artmaking practices and a more viable frame of reference to consider their own artistic identities.

Prior to the class, Katie had strongly identified as a non-artist. In response to the class she stated, “Liz helped to broaden my senses of ‘art.’ She made me realize that you don’t have to be famous or educationally trained to create art.” Here, Katie demonstrates a newfound capacity to resist ways of thinking about art that had previously excluded her, including being a renowned artist or having special art training. Caryn stated, “Everyday aesthetics legitimized me. I just did things and didn’t think they were necessarily artistic or art. I see myself as more creative and moving in a positive direction now.” Through the vernacular art curriculum, the participants found more viable ways of considering art and a framework for resisting prior understandings of art that were less inclusive.

Art is more accessible, attainable, and comfortable. Participants also expressed that the framework for art presented through the vernacular art curriculum made art more accessible, attainable, and comfortable. This was especially true for participants who did not identify strongly as artists prior to the class. For example, Becca stated, “I hadn’t really thought about that concept [making special] as art, but I do see that as a way to express myself artistically in a way that I am comfortable with.”

For art teachers (and other participants) finding significant time to devote to art in addition to professional and family commitments seemed unattainable. Sarah, an art teacher stated, “[Everyday aesthetics] really gave me permission to say that yes, I incorporate art into my life daily and to enjoy the effect it has on my family and friends.” Sarah was able to resist an internal and outside perception that she needed to devote significant special time and space to

creating art. Lack of time was identified by several participants in the study as a barrier to identifying as an artist. However, by valuing and situating art within the context of everyday life, the participants felt that creating art was within reason and something they were already doing.

Democratizing Viewing and Judging Art

The participants also noted that the vernacular art curriculum democratized the art viewing and judging process. Jessica stated, “In this class, I realized that art can take on so many different forms that everyone should be able to interpret something that they consider to be art.” She continued, “I liked that all of our ideas were taken into consideration and that there was no right or wrong answer to what art is meant to be.” Jessica’s statement speaks both to the content of the vernacular art curriculum and also to the ways that art was taught in this setting, allowing for and encouraging multiple points of view. As described in Chapter 2, many museums have shifted their focus from top down or expert models to making knowledge construction more transparent and multi-vocal and to involving the audience more explicitly in that process (Adair, 2010; Gurian, 1991; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Lavine, 1992; Nashashabi, 2003; Tchen, 1992). Jessica’s statement also aligns with the concept that examining everyday objects and behaviors in the context of art is inherently democratic as their familiarity allows for a broader range of participation. That is, within everyday contexts, we are all potentially experts (Blandy, 2004; Duncum, 2002).

Recognizing the Capacity of Art to Enrich Everyday Life

For several participants, the vernacular art curriculum provided an opportunity to understand art as an integral and enriching component of everyday life. This was particularly the

case for making special, which provided opportunities to reconsider rituals and celebrations the participants had not previously associated with an artistic or meaning-making behavior. In addition, the participants were interested in how everyday aesthetics could be used to empower individuals to alter their everyday environments to impact life in positive ways. Jessica stated, “Everyday aesthetics and making special in particular are ways in which art can be related to our everyday lives and makes our lives richer.” The participants also felt more aware of how they could influence their environment and vice versa and the potential for the ways they purposely acted on their everyday environments as an artmaking practice. Andrew noted, “[Everyday aesthetics] helped me recognize how a little art in your environment/home/office or in the way you do things can boost happiness and enjoyment of otherwise everyday life.” As described in Chapter 2, there is significant interest in research related to ways in which art benefits the quality-of-life, health, and wellbeing for adults and aging adults (e.g., Adams-Price & Steinman, 2007; de Guzman, et al., 2011; Kennett, 2000; Piercy & Check, 2004; Reynolds, 2000, 2002; Smith-Shank & Schwiebert, 2000). Several participants arrived at the idea that art has power to enrich everyday life.

Responding to Vernacular Art Environments

Of the three components of the vernacular art curriculum, the participants perceived the vernacular art environments (Umberger, 2007) with mixed responses. A number of the participants were already familiar with and valued these artists and their artworks. Others felt that the curriculum produced a greater appreciation for vernacular artwork and also felt that it broadened their understanding of the different forms that art can take. Additional participants indicated the vernacular art environments helped them understand how art can shape identity and

how art can be connected to place. My hope was that the artists and works included in the curriculum would be exemplars of everyday aesthetics and making special by providing concrete examples of these ideas and concepts. While the participants expressed that they enjoyed learning about these artists, several were unable to connect to them in a personal way or see themselves in the work. In contrast, Caryn saw direct correlations to her own experiences, not through the work itself, but what she felt resembled resistance to traditional definitions of art. This participant felt these artists appeared to resist the “rules of art,” something that was relevant to constructing her own artistic identity. Sam, an art teacher, noted that he had “unfinished business” when it came to his own artmaking practice. He seemed particularly inspired by the vernacular art environments and indicated that he “will be making some of [his] own.”

Summary

As illustrated by the analysis of findings described previously, carefully designed art curricula matter. Central goals of contemporary art curricula and teaching should be to democratize art learning and provide students with a framework for art practices that encourage lifelong engagement with art. As exemplified by the responses of participants in this study to the vernacular art curriculum, art educators must design curricula that broaden definitions of art and artistic communities of practice and validate artistic behaviors that are integral to everyday life. In this study, looking at art through the lens of everyday aesthetics and making special was new knowledge—meaning that it had not been a part of the participants’ prior art experiences. These ideas for understanding and creating art were empowering to participants as they considered their own artistic identities within this new framework. This new framework created more varied entry points into art and validated a broader range of relevant modes of expression—including home

decoration, ritual and ceremony, roadside memorials, and crafting groups—that went beyond traditional modes of artistic expression, like rendered drawing and formal analysis. If art educators hope the outcome of their curricula will create lifelong engagement with art for all students, then it is necessary to critically consider and enact the types of curricula that will empower learners to do so. The vernacular art curriculum, designed for this study, provides an example of the type of curricula that can democratize art, make explicit connections between art and everyday life, and promote relevant, lifelong engagement with art for learners.

Analytic Category 3: Reflections and Modifications to Teaching Practice

Adult learners are unique in that they come to learning situations with an understanding of the world that has been well shaped by prior experiences; personal, cultural, and community values; and influential ideologies. Transformative learning builds on constructivist principles that learning is situated within these personal meaning making perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). Cranton and Taylor (2012) noted that “transformative learning is a process of examining, questioning, and revising those perceptions” (p. 5) to create a more dependable and just perspective for informing action (Mezirow, 2000). In addition to outlining the distinctions of transformative learning for adults, attention has been given to determining the ways in which transformative learning can be fostered (e.g., Cranton, 2006; Lawrence, 2012; Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Weimer, 2012). While the participants in this study were not asked to respond to the class construction or teaching practices directly, many of them used a comment section on the post-class survey to do so. The responses to teaching practices, in addition to my own

observations during the vernacular art curriculum classes, were analyzed for their capacity to encourage adult transformation.

Learning Environment and Class Climate

In addition to utilizing knowledge and consciousness for transformative learning, Dirx (1997, 2008) noted the role of intuition, imagination, and emotion in this process—or what he refers to as “learning through the soul” (1997, p. 80). Dirx stated that “in nurturing soul, we value the everydayness of our learning environment and attend to its intellectual, socioemotional, and physical aspects” (p. 84). In addition to the more rational underpinnings of our investigations, affective and intuitive dimensions of our lived classroom and interactions with each other played a significant role in the process of transformative learning. A positive learning environment and class climate were acknowledged by a majority of the participants at some point during the study. I also reflected on the role of class climate in my researcher field notes and more actively worked to create a positive learning environment with each class. In the first class, I noticed how something as small as providing snacks or moving the location of the class improved the energy level and excitement of the participants. Katie, who identified strongly as a non-artist and had reservations about taking an art class noted, “This was a very fun class and brought me back to my childhood when playing with crayons, watercolors, modge podge, was so fun and liberating.” Laughter, playfulness, and joy were as essential in this context as the content of the curriculum itself. In addition to the class environment, the participants also responded to the positive interactions cultivated between the participants and the researcher. Katie stated, “Liz, you are a great teacher and have an excellent way of making people feel comfortable. I’m so glad I took the class!”

For adult learners, affective considerations are important to a transformative learning environment and to effectively utilizing democratic teaching practices. For adult participants, fostering a sense of joy and comfort was necessary for resisting barriers in learning that were deeply connected to the participants' identities—in this case, artistic identity. If adult educators want to create a transformative environment for learners, then equal consideration must be given to the learning environment and class climate. Adult educators should be conscientious of the tone and energy of the learning environment and should not underestimate simple gestures that enhance the affective dimensions of those spaces.

Teaching Practices in Adult Education

Analysis also included considerations of the teaching practices that were most effective for these adults. In the following sections, I discuss findings of this study related to teaching practices that seemed effective for facilitating adult learning in this context.

Reflective discourse and multiple points of view. Discourse was an important component of the classes for this study and is a key practice for adult transformative learning. According to Mezirow (2000), “Discourse is the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience” (p. 14). Discourse among participants in adult learning settings requires access to accurate information on a topic or context, openness to alternative points of view, the ability to critically reflect on assumptions, and equal opportunities to participate in varied roles (Mezirow). Ideally, the role of the educator is to shift authority to the participants and become an active learner, listener, and guide alongside the students (Belenky, et al., 1986; Belenky & Stanton, 2000; Mezirow).

While class time was limited in this study and did not support sustained relationship building and patterns for discourse, the participants still recognized and responded to reflective discourse and diffusing hierarchies of teacher-learners. In particular, the participants responded positively to being in a class in which open-ended discussions with other adults about a rich topic were expected. Sarah stated that “it was simply delightful to spend time having wonderful, exciting, philosophical conversations about my favorite topic with like minds. The instructor provided excellent questions for thought and great materials for an exciting project!” As I reflected anecdotally on the types of art classes usually offered to adults (often organized around a specific art material or project), I realized how novel an art class in which adult learners engaged in what Sarah considered a “philosophical” discussion of art might feel for these adults.

The participants felt that everyone was encouraged to express their ideas and seemed surprised that so many points of view about art could be seen as valid in a class setting. For example, Anne stated, “I am not an art critic. I only know what pleases me or what I think is interesting. The feeling that I interpreted from this class was that this is ok.” The participants sensed through the construction of the class that they were expected to voice their own points of view and that those points of view were both valid and part of a larger, and evolving, conversation about art.

During this study, I learned that discourse and encouraging multiple points of view were not only an important teaching strategy for transformative learning, but also a necessary tool for investigating postmodern frameworks for art. The form of our conversations, where varied points of view were considered, correlated with the goals of the vernacular art curriculum to broaden understandings and resist hierarchical, modernist frameworks of art. The content of the vernacular art curriculum was in part shaped by the discourse of the participants, which helped

reinforce the democratic goals of the vernacular art curriculum and identity transformation for participants. If adult education is to democratize art knowledge through everyday connections and help adults transform influential perspectives, then discourse and encouraging multiple points of view is essential to those goals.

Negotiation. During this study, I reflected on opportunities that emerged during each class due to the participants' interests and backgrounds for negotiating curricular activities. For example, one participant was asked to bring a documentary film he created about a vernacular art environment to view with the entire group. In the second class, the participants were eager to see additional vernacular art environments, so we negotiated about the sites we would visit and decided on additional artists to travel to as a group. I also recognized additional opportunities for these kinds of flexibilities that were missed because of my own anxieties about successfully conducting my own research. However, I believe that even our limited negotiations within each class contributed to a more positive and empowering learning environment overall. Negotiation was used to situate the participants' interests and unique experiences more centrally within the class and interrupt perceived hierarchies between the teacher and students. By utilizing negotiation as a teaching strategy, I was able to model flexibility in the ways we could explore the content of the curricula and further democratize art learning by highlighting learner expertise. If the goal of art learning is to diffuse power structures related to legitimate art knowledge, something that was identified as an inhibiting factor for these participants, then educators must utilize negotiation as a teaching strategy that makes those power structures about knowledge more flexible.

Curriculum presentation and hands-on explorations. The vernacular art curriculum was explored in several different ways for each class: in-class discussions, PowerPoint presentations

of vernacular art environments and curricular content, field trips that allowed participants to interact with vernacular art environments in person, and a hands-on art activity to more fully explore the curriculum through personal connections. Minor adjustments were made to the hands-on activity for the second and third classes, as discussed in Chapter 3, that made it more accessible during the time frame of the class while also requiring much less expectation for work outside of class. During the second and third offerings of the class, I found that the majority of the participants had a very positive response to the variety and types of activities used to explore the curricular content. In successive classes, a few participants expressed frustration with the hands-on activity, primarily because of time constraints. However, by layering a variety of different modes for learning, in addition to an art curriculum that opened up access to knowledge about art and artistic behaviors, a majority of the participants seemed to respond favorably to the activities that were introduced to help them engage with the content of the class.

Summary

Efforts to democratize art learning through curricula, like the vernacular art curriculum, must be paired with teaching strategies that also align with those democratic goals. To resist modernist notions about art in which hierarchies of art and relevant art practices are more hardened, it is important to utilize teaching practices that support more flexible and postmodern frameworks for art. It was evident from participant responses that teaching practices like negotiation, reflective discourse, honoring multiple points of view, diffusing hierarchies between teacher and learners, encouraging personal responses through hands-on exploration, and tending to a positive learning environment helped create the conditions through which they could engage with ideas about art that were more permeable than they previously thought.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs

Like adult learners, candidates come to teacher education programs with values and knowledge that shape their worldviews. For many art teacher candidates, they may have developed understandings about art, artists, and art curricula that are steeped in modernist frameworks and do not effectively prepare them to create curricula or engage in artmaking practices that make ready connections between art and everyday life.

Art teacher candidates may struggle with their future artistic identities if they are not provided with opportunities to explore frameworks for art like the one presented in this study. It is important that art teacher education programs actively engage teacher candidates in exploring artistic behaviors that are integral to everyday life so that they may find effective ways to balance and maintain their future artist/art teacher identities. Within art teacher education programs, it is necessary for teacher candidates to also learn to explore and create curricula and utilize teaching practices that will help future students transfer ideas about the inclusivity of art and artists to their own everyday experiences. This is especially important within classroom settings where art lessons that rely on rote practices can undermine goals for making personal and authentic connections through art (Efland, 1976; Gude, 2004).

Limitations

A couple of significant limitations emerged during the course of this study. These included limitations related to domain-specific language and time constraints.

During this study, a curriculum was introduced to help the participants resist tight definitions of art and consider broader definitions of art that were more open, flexible, and

directly connected to everyday life. This presented an unexpected outcome as the participants struggled to reconcile new ideas about art and artists with their personal artistic identities in discussions, personal artwork, interviews, and surveys. Words like “art” were deeply entrenched within a certain framework, making it difficult for participants to use this same language as they transitioned to newer understandings. For example, in post-class surveys, the participants often stated bluntly “no” in response to questions about whether they felt their identities as artists had changed, but followed this statement with more nuanced discussion that suggested they had experienced some transformation, but were unable to use language, like the word “artist,” that was so connected to prior understandings and frameworks. During classes, I found myself using the phrase “artistic behaviors” versus the term “art” to help make distinctions that moved us beyond language steeped in prior meanings for participants.

Several participants identified lack of time as a limiting factor in the class and there was a desire to dig deeper or go back and revisit ideas with more layers of understanding. The class was designed to be short to help ensure enrollment, given that adult summer schedules would likely not allow for an extended class on art, particularly when trying to cater to adults who identify as non-artists. I was concerned that this may not be enough time to develop a deep enough discourse so transformation could occur; however, the curriculum was so new to a majority of the participants that even in such a short time period participant transformations were observed and reported.

Implications

The implications for this study have been drawn from the findings, analytic categories discussed in this chapter, and careful analysis of the data in relation to the research questions.

The implications address the following areas: taking deliberate action to shift pervasive paradigms, developing art curricula that promote lifelong engagement and everyday connections, and the relevance of democratizing art learning.

Take Deliberate Action to Shift Pervasive Paradigms

The participants in this study identified numerous ideas and experiences of art and artists that were influential to how they identified as consumers and producers of art as adults. Many of these ideas reflected modernist ways of defining art and artists that did not help the participants' make fluid connections between art and everyday life and, in turn, situate personal everyday behaviors within the context of potential art practices. While defined by a sense of rebellion in its inception, modernism has perpetuated ideas of art as autonomous, decontextualized, individualistic, perpetually innovative and progressive, and elevated from the context of everyday life (Gablik, 2002). As illustrated by the experiences of the participants in this study, these ideas about art as something that is exclusive and situated outside everyday life are pervasive and have often created hardened boundaries in the minds of non-artists and artists alike and narrow entry points into art practices for individuals.

A pervasive and entrenched paradigm, like modernism, is not only difficult to identify, given its seeming neutrality, but exceptionally difficult to move away from. Resisting an existing paradigm requires deliberate action. Gablik (2002) called for the "reenchantment of art" and noted "the challenge of the future will be to transcend the disconnectedness and separation of the aesthetic from the social that existed within modernism" (p. 5). In this study, a vernacular art curriculum challenged participants to resist existing ideas about art that were less just and to examine ideas about art that provide more promising alternatives. Art education needs to reflect

postmodern frameworks that diffuse hierarchies of art and promote and validate broad understandings about art practices, including those that are more closely connected to everyday life. Given the responses of participants in this study that demonstrate how pervasive, modern mythologies about art, often exemplified in formal education settings, can inhibit lifelong engagement with art and identities as artists, it is imperative that art educators develop and utilize curricula and teaching that deliberately move beyond a modernist paradigm.

Develop Art Curricula that Promote Lifelong Engagement and Everyday Connections

Contemporary curricula in art must create inroads for students to construct understandings and make connections between artistic behaviors and artifacts as they are produced and consumed in a variety of contexts—including everyday experiences and settings. The growing emphasis on visual and material culture within the field of art education illustrates this point. Curricula, like the vernacular art curriculum, that make explicit connections between art and everyday life helped democratize art knowledge and practices for adult participants and enhance adult identities as artists. If what we want is an art education that allows for varied entry points for students, and promotes lifelong engagement with art and positive artistic identities, then art educators must incorporate a wide range of art practices, including those that are integral to everyday life, into art curricula.

With this curriculum I risked simply replacing modernist practices in art curricula that are easy to package, teach, and assess with another curriculum with neat boundaries and is easy to consume and reproduce. So caution is needed whenever creating art curricula. Gude (2004) illustrates this point in her article, “Postmodern Principles: In Search of 21st Century Art Education,” in which she critiques the pervasive and enshrined emphasis on the elements and

principles of art prevalent in modernist art texts and still widely used in school art settings. Gude presents a set of postmodern principles and curricular examples drawn from contemporary art practices. At the end of her article, Gude reminds the reader that “in true postmodern fashion, these principles are not a set of discrete entities, but are rhizomatic... art examples and projects in school art curricula should not be reductive representations of theoretical principles, but should reflect the complexity of actual art” (p. 12). She also notes that the principles she presents are not finite; they should change or be added to depending on investigations of contemporary art practices.

At its core, the vernacular art curriculum did what it needed to do—helped adult participants reconsider their personal artistic identities by broadening understandings of art through the use of exemplars and discussions about art that demonstrate how integral art practices and behaviors are to everyday life. This curriculum is only one way to make these lifelong connections through art, but it needs to remain a living, breathing framework that is reconstructed in response to the needs and interests of the students and ever-changing contexts.

Democratize Art Learning through New Frameworks for Artmaking Practices

In the context of this study, democratizing art meant using a vernacular art curriculum and teaching that framed art in a way that allowed for multiple entry points, especially for adults who, based on prior conceptions of art, did not think they were capable consumers and/or producers of art. It is worth repeating that a visual and material culture art curriculum that makes explicit connections between art practices and everyday life is inherently democratic because it allows for personal connections in which all learners can contribute with some level of expertise. In this study, the participants were animated by dialogue that wove conversations about art as an

integral part of everyday life with their own personal artistic behaviors—behaviors that provided individuals with opportunities for enriching and making meaningful everyday experiences, sites, and rituals. A number of participants noted that through the class in this study, they felt their abilities as consumers and producers of art were validated, indicating that democratizing and finding inroads to art practices was important. If a goal of art education is to democratize art knowledge and also model and encourage democratic dispositions for students, then art educators need to incorporate both curricula and teaching practices, like those described in this study, that actively promote those goals.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Art Teachers

Art Teachers: Recommendations for Practice

- Educators should utilize postmodern art education practices that disrupt hardened boundaries of art and artmaking and democratize art learning for students by making rich connections with everyday life and experiences. Art curricula make lifelong impressions. It is important to consider the overarching values, ideas, and ideologies perpetuated in art curricula (and teaching).
- Educators should develop teaching strategies and art curricula that actively resist and move beyond Modernist frameworks and mythologies about art and artists. Modernist frameworks for art are pervasive. As illustrated by the participants in this study, many modern ideas about art harden boundaries and do not create a spectrum of entry points to this domain for potential participants. To make art inclusive of a range of

artist behaviors and practices, including those that are closely connected to everyday life, educators need to actively work to broaden student understandings of art and artists.

- Educators should develop and utilize teaching strategies and curricula that reinforce that creativity and talent in art are learned behaviors and skills that can be cultivated. Participants in this study often articulated that they felt talent in art was innate or something you were or were not born with. This provided participants with an enduring barrier to identifying as an artist.
- Educators should encourage multiple modes of expressing and communicating ideas through art that do not privilege drawing and realistic rendering above other artmaking forms or behaviors. A majority of participants in this study expressed that ideas about art, like making special and everyday aesthetics, had not been a part of their prior understandings of art. For many of these adults, these ideas about art had a positive impact on how they identified as artists. Educators should demonstrate that valid artmaking forms and behaviors can and should vary widely, including artistic behaviors that are integral or most closely connected to everyday life.
- Art educators should acknowledge and validate a range of artistic communities of practice, particularly those that include art practices that are situated within everyday life or exist outside of traditional fine art perimeters (e.g. Cosplay, DIY forums, fanart, gardeners, and quilting groups), to encourage positive identities as artists and authentic opportunities for art learning. Communities of practice are important ways for experts and novices to share and extend knowledge and to establish personal identities.

Art Teachers: Recommendations for Research

- To build upon this research, phenomenological studies could examine vernacular art curricula, and any subsequent transformations, that take place over a longer period of time.
- Researchers should examine causal relationships between school art curricula and lifelong artistic attitudes and identities. This might substantiate the need to critically examine curricula and teaching with lifelong learning goals in mind.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs

Teacher Education Programs: Recommendations for Practice

- Educators should utilize curricula and teaching practices in teacher education programs that promote positive artistic identities for art teachers. It is important to explicitly teach about artistic behaviors, like making special and everyday aesthetics, which are embedded in daily life. For participants in this study, such curriculum helped validate and provide art teachers with the language to discuss and feel empowered by personal artmaking practices they utilize in their everyday lives as they negotiate a balance between their art teacher and artist selves.
- Education programs must engage art teacher candidates in developing art curricula and teaching practices that align with postmodern frameworks for art and democratize art knowledge and practices for their future students by examining everyday artistic practices, like making special and everyday aesthetics.

Teacher Education Programs: Recommendations for Research

- Researchers should examine causal relationships between school art curricula and lifelong artistic attitudes and identities, including how they influence art teachers' construction of their artistic identities. In addition, studies should examine how a vernacular art curriculum could benefit art teachers' identities as artists.
- Studies on the impact of different curricula that meet criteria similar to those identified in this study could examine how these curricula influence adults', K-12 learners', or art teacher candidates' personal attitudes about art and artistic identities.

Recommendations for Adult Educators

Adult Educators: Recommendations for Practice

- Reframe art classes for adult learners around concepts and investigations of ideas. As an art educator in formal and informal settings, my overwhelming sense is that art classes offered for adults are primarily based on learning about discrete mediums or hands-on processes. This privileges technical skill in art practices and perhaps discourages adults who do not feel confident in technical skills or consider art as something that stems from innate talent. In this study, the adult participants were most excited by the opportunity to have interesting conversations in which multiple points of view and personal connections were shared about ideas related to art.

Adult Educators: Recommendations for Research

- Conduct studies on the types of adult art programming currently offered in informal settings to assess the need for alternative art learning experiences for adults.

A Final Thought on Researcher Reflection

This study emerged from my personal experiences as an artist and art educator. Through those experiences, I was aware that there were patterns in my own experiences and those of others in which adults held firmly to beliefs and understandings about art that did not include them. This research has provided me with an opportunity to closely and strategically examine personal experiences as an artist, art educator, and art advocate that had given me pause. Anecdotally, I had accumulated numerous moments in which it seemed that adults had submitted to roles as outsiders to art. Through research, I was able to confirm patterns that before had been left to intuition and thoughtfully consider teaching practices and curricula that might provide greater opportunities for lifelong engagements with art.

The patterns of experiences that brought me to this research continue to surface in my own work as an art educator. I value the opportunity to share and apply the knowledge that was gained through this research as I continue to work toward forefronting and validating a wide range of artistic behaviors, including connections between art and everyday life, and creating greater potential for all learners to find their own entry points into art. This study demonstrates that contemporary curricula and teaching in art can and should be developed to diminish barriers, improve the capacity for learners to identify as capable consumers and producers of art, and promote lifelong engagement with art.

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APPENDIX A

PRE-CLASS SURVEY

**The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places
Pre-Class Survey**

Thank you for participating in *The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places*. I'm looking very forward to working with you over the next few weeks.

The following survey is meant to gather some background information and general details about your art experiences. Prior to our interview, please take a moment to fill out and return this informational survey.

Survey continues on backside.

Name:	Age:
	Gender:
Which of the following categories best describes where you currently live: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> City of 100,000+ <input type="checkbox"/> Suburb of city <input type="checkbox"/> Town of 50,000-100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Town of 10,000-50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Town of 5,000-10,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Town of less than 5,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Rural area 	What type of residence do you live in? (e.g. single family home, apartment, etc.)
What is the highest level of formal education you have obtained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school or less <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate <input type="checkbox"/> Some college <input type="checkbox"/> Associate, two-year college <input type="checkbox"/> Four-year college degree <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate degree started <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate degree finished 	What is your current profession or any pertinent professions you have held?

Describe any details you can recall about the duration and frequency you attended art classes in your formal education experiences:

(i.e. 40 minute sessions, twice a week for one semester)

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

College

Briefly describe any art education experiences you have had outside of school as a child:

(i.e. after school art club, Saturday art program, etc.)

Briefly describe any art education experiences you have had outside of school as an adult:

Describe any art making activities that you do on your own:

Circle the number on the following scale that best describes how you identify yourself as an artist:

Very					Somewhat					
Artistic.....					Artistic.....					Non-
artistic										
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	

APPENDIX B

PRE-CLASS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pre-class Interview Questions

Introductory:

1. Tell me a bit about why you decided to take this class.

Personal Identity as an Artist:

2. Describe your experience with art as a child.
3. Would you call yourself an artist?
 - a. In what ways do you think you act as an artist or non-artist?
 - b. Describe your thoughts toward art today.

Informal & Formal Art Education Experiences:

4. Describe the amount of exposure you had to art either in or out of school.
5. What do you remember about your experiences of art in school?
 - a. If you could change something about your art experiences in school, what would you change?
6. Describe any memorable experiences of art outside of school?
7. Are there any memorable art teachers who somehow influenced you?
 - a. Please elaborate. Walk me through a memorable experience with that teacher?
8. Are there any specific artworks from your prior art education experiences that are particularly memorable for you?
9. Describe anything specific about your prior experiences in art education that have stayed with you into adulthood?
 - a. Is there anything you learned in an art education experience that you have found usable in adulthood?
10. Do you continue to seek out art experiences?
 - a. Describe particular instances.
 - b. Or, Is there anything that limits you from seeking out art experiences today?
11. I notice that you indicated on your questionnaire that you lived at your current home for _____ years. Is there anything about the way you have maintained your home that you would consider artistic?

Defining Art:

12. When you think of art, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
 - a. Is there a particular reason you chose that?
13. Describe a favorite piece of art today.
14. Describe the kinds of experiences where you see art. Where is art located?
15. How do you define art?
16. Who do you think should judge and interpret art?
17. What do you think defines an artist? Who makes art?
18. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

APPENDIX C
POST-CLASS SURVEY

**The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places
Post-Class Survey**

Thank you for participating in, *The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places*. Your experiences as part of this class are important. Please take a moment to fill out the following survey.

Please note: I am most interested in how you felt about the content of this course. As you answer the following questions, please try to distinguish between the content of the course versus how it was taught.

- 1) Did any of your prior perceptions about art change during the course of this class? Please describe.**
 - a. Did any of your prior perceptions about the definition of art change during the course of this class? Please describe.**
 - b. Did any of your prior perceptions about who gets to judge and interpret art change during the course of this class? Please describe.**
 - c. Did any of your prior perceptions about where art is found or located change during the course of this class? Please describe.**
 - d. Did any of your prior perceptions about who makes art change during the course of this class? Please describe.**

- 2) Did any of your perceptions of yourself as an artist change during the course of this class? Please describe.**

- 3) Did learning about the idea of *making special* influence your identity as an artist?
Please describe.
- 4) Did learning about the idea of everyday aesthetics influence your identity as an artist? Please describe.
- 5) Did learning about vernacular art environments influence your identity as an artist?
Please describe.
- 6) Circle the number on the following scale that best describes how you identify yourself as an artist:

Very					Somewhat					
Artistic.....					Artistic.....					Non-
artistic										
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	

- 7) Is there anything else you would like to express about your experiences as part of this class?

Thank you for your time and insights!

APPENDIX D

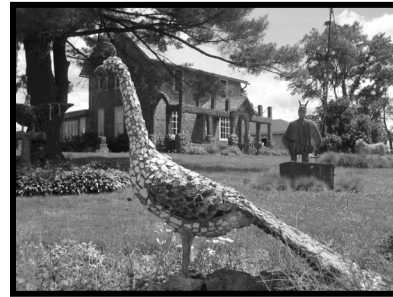
VISUAL JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places

Visual Journal

In this class we will use our visual journals to explore ideas discussed in class which included everyday aesthetics, *making special*, and of course the fabulous vernacular art environments.

Over the course of this class, see what kinds of connections you can make between these ideas and your own home or other significant places or experiences.



Nick Engelbert's Grandview

Things you may specifically address in your journal include:

1. Everyday Aesthetics

- Describe some of the visual or sensory aspects of your everyday surroundings.
- What everyday aesthetic examples might you have taken for granted until now?
- How do you actively create an everyday aesthetic?
- In what ways is the aesthetic of your everyday surroundings determined by your community or context? In what ways do you resist or work against those norms?
- Are everyday aesthetics important to you?

2. Making Special

- Do you feel that making special is an artistic behavior?
- In what ways do you *make special* in your everyday life?
- Describe rituals, traditions, or celebrations as they connect to *making special* in your life.
- Does the idea of *making special* affect how you define art?
- Is *making special* important to you?

3. Vernacular Art Environments

- What are your reactions to the VAEs?
- Is there anything that surprises you about this work?
- What comparisons or contrasts do you make between the VAEs, *making special*, & everyday aesthetics?
- In what ways do the VAEs influence your own identity or thinking about art?

4. Identity as an Artist

- How would you characterize yourself as an artist?
- Do the ideas presented in this class alter in any way how you define art or how you characterize yourself as an artist?

Process

As you weave together personal ideas related to the topics discussed in the class consider how you might convey these ideas through:

1. Image
 - Found
 - Altered
 - Personal Photographs

2. Text
 - Narratives
 - Symbolic, metaphorical, or poetic

3. Objects
 - Feel free to go beyond the 2-dimensions of your book

As you work don't be afraid to allow ideas to evolve, become layered, or erased. Feel free to be as literal, symbolic, metaphoric, or mysterious as you want to convey your ideas.

Have fun!!!!!!

APPENDIX E

ADULT PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

ADULT (18 or older)

I agree to participate in the research project titled, Art in Everyday Places: Transforming Adult Identities as Non-artists (working title) being conducted by Elizabeth Rex, a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to determine if participation in a curriculum that broadens traditional definitions of art to include everyday artistic behaviors of *making special*, art in everyday places, and vernacular art environments will positively affect the artistic self-concept of adults who define themselves as non-artists.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: Participate in a class titled, *The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places* (3 sessions, 2 hours each), pre- and post-survey interviews (45 minutes each), create a reflective journal (5 hours), create art objects (3 hours).

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Elizabeth Rex (Doctoral Student) at (815)718-5785, Dr. Kryssi Staikidis (Faculty Advisor) at (815)753-8388 or Dr. Kerry Freedman (Faculty Advisor) at (815)753-7879. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include an increased familiarity with vernacular art environments, a broadened understanding of visual art, and increased understanding of myself as an artist. For the field of art education, this research will provide deeper understanding of adult art educational experiences and needs.

I understand that all information gathered during this experiment will be kept confidential by using pseudonyms for all participants, storing all data collected in a secure location, and destroying data after five years.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant Date Signature of

I agree to be videotaped:

Signature of Participant Date

I agree to be audiotaped:

Signature of Participant Date

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL CONSENT FORM

INSTITUTIONAL CONSENT FORM

ADULT (18 or older)

I agree to participate in the research project titled, *Art in Everyday Places: Transforming Adult Identities as Non-artists* being conducted by Elizabeth Rex, a doctoral student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to determine if participation in a curriculum that broadens traditional definitions of art to include everyday artistic behaviors of *making special*, everyday aesthetics, and vernacular art environments will positively affect the artistic identity of adult participants.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: Provide facilities necessary for researcher to conduct a class titled, *The Artist Within: Exploring Art in Everyday Places* (3 sessions, 3 hours each), provide advertising for this class through JMKAC/Grandview resources (disseminated on JMKAC/Grandview website and print brochures).

John Michael Kohler Arts Center also grants permission for any publications by the researcher in relation to this study. Although JMKAC will not be evaluated as part of this research, it was chosen as a relevant site for this research project. Within all publishing by the researcher related to this study JMKAC will be described using the institution's name.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Elizabeth Rex (Doctoral Student) at (815)718-5785, Dr. Kryssi Staikidis (Faculty Advisor) at (815)753-8388, or Dr. Kerry Freedman (Faculty Advisor) at (815)753-7879. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815)753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include an increased participant familiarity with vernacular art environments and the JMKAC facilities, and art programming offered for adults. For the field of art education, this research will provide deeper understanding of adult art educational experiences and needs and ways in which art can be made relevant to adult as a lifelong, everyday endeavor.

I understand that all information gathered during this research study will be kept confidential by storing all data collected in a secure location and destroying data after five years.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Before publication, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center will be notified and presented a copy of said publication to check historical references and definitions of collections proprietary.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX G
FINDINGS CHARTS

Findings Chart: Non-artists

Findings: Non-artists	Katie	Anne	Caryn	Becca	Jessica	Judy	Andrew	Ellen	Mike
Finding 1: For non-artist adult participants, prior perceptions of how art and artists are defined impacted how they perceived of themselves as artists.	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Finding 2: For a majority of participants who identified as non-artists, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special as a framework for understanding art, was new knowledge. This new knowledge broadened, and in some cases, challenged previously held understandings of art and artists.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	MS only
Finding 3: For adult participants who identified as non-artists, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special, as components of the vernacular art curriculum provided inroads for identifying and acknowledging personal artistic behaviors in everyday life.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Finding 4: For participants who identified as non-artists, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special had a positive impact on how strongly they identified as artists.	X +4	X+3	X+3	X+2	X+1	X+1	X+1		
Finding 5: Learning about everyday aesthetics and making special democratized viewing and judging art for adults who identified as non-artists.	x		x				x		

<p>Finding 6: For adults who identified as non-artists, learning about vernacular art environments, as a component of the vernacular art curriculum, had a limited impact on how strongly they identified as artists.</p>	x	x	x Freedom from rules		x	x	Identity can be shaped by art		x
<p>Finding 7: For adult participants who identified as non-artists, a vernacular art curriculum contributed to an understanding that art has the potential to enrich and positively impact quality of everyday life.</p>	x	x	x		x	x	x		

Findings Chart: Art Teachers

Findings: Art Teachers	Sam	Sarah	Megan
Finding 1: For art teacher participants prior art education experiences were identified as contributing to less inclusive understandings of art and artists.	x	x	
Finding 2: While art teacher participants identified strongly as artists, prior perceptions of how art and artists are defined negatively impacted how they perceived of themselves as artists. In particular, art teachers struggled to balance their art teacher identities with perceptions of what it means to be an artist.	x	x	x
Finding 3: Art teacher participants believed that art had the potential to positively impact students and the world.	x	x	
Finding 4: For art teacher participants, learning about the vernacular art curriculum as a framework for understanding art reinforced previously held beliefs that art can be broadly defined and anyone can be an artist.	x	x	
Finding 5: For art teacher participants, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special, as components of the vernacular art curriculum provided inroads for identifying and acknowledging personal artistic behaviors in everyday life.	x	x	x
Finding 6: For art teacher participants, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special as components of the vernacular art curriculum had a positive impact on their identity as artists.	x+0	x+0	
Finding 7: For art teacher participants, learning about vernacular art environments provided insights for personal artmaking.	x	x	

Findings Chart: Artists

Findings: Artists	John	Erica	Gretchen
Finding 1: While artist participants identified strongly as artists, prior perceptions of how art and artists are defined negatively impacted or created a struggle with how they perceived of themselves as artists.		x	x
Finding 2: For artist participants, learning about the vernacular art curriculum as a framework for understanding art reinforced or aligned with previously held beliefs that art can be broadly defined and anyone can be an artist.		x	x
Finding 3: For art teacher participants, learning about everyday aesthetics and making special, as components of the vernacular art curriculum provided inroads for identifying and acknowledging personal artistic behaviors in everyday life.	x	x	x