

VISUAL JOURNALING TOWARDS GREATER MEANING MAKING IN THE SECONDARY ART CLASSROOM

by

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Sketchbooks have long been used in art classrooms; however, the structured assignments often leave students feeling disconnected to both the sketchbook and the art classroom. Recent shifts in educational pedagogy encourage educators to find ways to connect course content with lived experiences. This cultural, social and personal connection results in a deeper understanding of course concepts. Within the art classroom visual journals have emerged in response to this shift in pedagogy. The visual journal is a place for the student to explore self and the internal and external environments that shape the self. The student's quest for personal and aesthetic meaning making through visual journaling evolves the student's concept of self and offers opportunity for synthesizing and integrating lived experiences. The purpose of this paper is to explore visual journaling as an educational pedagogy that promotes meaning making in students.

VISUAL JOURNALING TOWARDS GREATER MEANING MAKING IN THE
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a complex, dynamic, and socially constructed activity, some times impulsive, not always logical, often unpredictable, frequently intuitive, and invariably difficult to describe and interpret.... If we characterize teaching as a form of creative expression – characterized as multimodal, nonlinear, and multidimensional – then it makes sense to search for ways of understanding teaching that are also nonlinear, multimodal, and multidimensional (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p.45).

There are few places better for exploring the nonlinear, multidimensional avenues of teaching than the art classroom. Art teachers engage learners in seeing the world another way; offering students an opportunity to make sense of things by engaging with the content rather than memorizing it. One of the most common teaching vehicles for training the student to see the world and practice art instruction is the sketchbook.

Art educators use sketchbooks as a place for students to experiment, explore, and express ideas (Sanders-Bustle, 2008). It is believed that this strategy is a valuable tool for engaging a wider range of learners in the art experience (Blacher & Jaffee, 1998). Traditionally, art educators have used sketchbooks as a tool for students to practice skills, experiment with media, and plan projects. However, a recent shift in philosophy is transforming the functional role of the sketchbook to one that “crosses disciplinary boundaries, encourages conceptual development, and fosters creative and critical inquiry” (Sanders-Bustle, 2008, p.9). This more integrative use of sketchbooks is called visual journaling.

Visual journaling is an educational tool that is “nonlinear, multimodal, and multidimensional” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p.45). The visual journal is an instructional medium that allows students the rare “opportunity to reflect in action and on action aesthetically, intellectually, and introspectively” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p.85). Visual journals encourage the use of text and images, not independently, but rather as synergistic tools that empower the student (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). The visual journal is a place for the student to explore self

and the internal and external environments that shape the self. The journal's blank pages are a place where identity "can be described, drawn, reflected on, analyzed, and put back into the classroom" (Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 1996, p.10). The student's quest for personal and aesthetic meaning making through visual journaling evolves the student's concept of self and offers opportunity for synthesizing and integrating lived experiences. The purpose of this paper is to explore visual journaling as an educational pedagogy that promotes meaning making in students.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is guided by a theoretical framework that combines an understanding of educational methodology with various theories about evolution of self. Merging varied perspectives on how students learn with theorized developmental models supports understanding and exploring the medium of visual journals as an avenue for advancing meaning making, thus learning, in students.

Journals as Educational Methodology

Educational methodology has long encouraged the use of journaling to augment and affirm both curriculum understanding and personal connection to content (Tompkins, 2003). Journals are also used as a tool for students to write about characters, create stories and “gain insight into other people’s lives and into historical events” (Tompkins, 2003, p.438). While traditional journaling appears frequently from elementary to secondary school in English classrooms, other disciplines also use variations of the journal to enhance learning. Science classrooms use journals to record observations about experiments; math classrooms use notebooks to explore formulas and theorems; social studies classrooms use a journal variation to document and explore cultures and historical movements; physical education classes use journaling to document sports plays or chart student progress; and art classes use a sketchbook as a tool for experimentation and exploration.

Although art sketchbooks are used to explore ideas and practice techniques, the only true feature shared with journaling is that sketchbooks are used for daily art activities. While it is important to explore and practice art techniques, the spirit and benefit of true journaling is often lost when used solely for impersonal, overly structured sketchbook assignments. This does not

deny the importance of recording process and practicing technique; however, when drawings of visual images combine with the power of personal writing and recollection, a higher level of synthesis occurs offering student's an avenue for personal, aesthetic and intellectual meaning making.

The Student's Quest for Personal Meaning Making

“The search for personal meaning in life is the most important work of teaching and learning” (Gibson & Shute, 1994, p. 207). This is particularly true for educators teaching the adolescent because making sense of the world on a personal level is essential to development of student self-identity separate from parents and peers. The English definition of self conjures up words like selfish or self-centered, words that have an innately negative connotation. Carl Jung considered self to be something far greater. For Jung the idea of self was the development and understanding of one's identity that was so complete that it directly affected surroundings and choices. Jung spent a lifetime studying and exploring the human psyche (Stein, 1998). “Jung often referred to himself as a pioneer and explorer of the uncharted mystery that is the human soul” (Stein, 1998, p. 2). He believed that self-discovery or realization occurred in two broad stages. The first stage included development from infancy to early adolescents, a period marked by the emergence of identity and characterized by transition from dependent and reliant infant, to independent adolescent. The second stage is triggered by the realization that one can and should exist outside of external forces like family. This stage, occurring sometime during adolescence, prompts individuals to consider life changing questions about career, relationships, and identity (Stein, 1998). The transition from dependency to independence is a pivotal and provocative change for an adolescent. If during this period the student fails to gain an understanding of their inner self and a strong sense of care for themselves, they will not be able to care for others or

their education (Noddings, 2003).

The development of independence is marked by the ability to give care to self and others; in schools the teacher should facilitate this development. Educators should serve as facilitators, bringing together “fragmented bits of information being ingested” and personal meaning making that leads to self-development (Gibson & Shute, 1994, p. 208). The art teacher has a unique opportunity to provide students with tools to aide in self-realization, one of which is the visual journal. Visual journaling prompts a student to evaluate a moment, experience, feeling or idea through the combination of words and images (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008). While words provide a static and defined explanation of an experience, when paired with an image, a visual descriptor of that moment, a more expansive and inclusive representation is created (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008). It is within this space that students have the opportunity to explore identity. “The artistic or cognitive thinking processes never begin with the urge to act; however, the sudden anticipation of what-is-soon-to-happen is often so immediate and strong that forefronts my awareness.” (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008, p.25-26). While the pages of the journals may not appear to hold the secret Jung so passionately researched, those very pages begin a process that allows the student to look introspectively, develop a sense of self, and realize a uniqueness that deserves caring and investment. Visual journaling informs the student immediately, through images and words on the page; however, the journal also benefits the student long after they put the pencil down. The creation of the journal page begins a complex process of self-discovery, marked initially with the development of a sense of care for themselves (Noddings, 2003).

A teaching philosophy characterized by caring is the fundamental theory behind educational concern for student self-discovery. Establishing self-care in a student is directly

related to fostering an ability to care for others (Noddings, 2003). Nel Noddings, professor of education at Stanford University, has explored in depth the philosophy of caring. In her book *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education* (2003), she establishes the basic rationale for care in schools.

Available empirical evidence suggests that individuals only rarely consult moral principles when making decisions that result in the prevention of harm. More often, people respond directly as carers (out of sympathy) or as faithful members of a community that espouses helping and not harming. In considering education, then, we have to ask how best to cultivate the moral sentiments and how to develop communities that will support, not destroy, caring relations (p. xv).

In the spirit of Noddings and Jung, the visual journal combines writing and images to begin identifying a sense of self, a care for self, and the emerging ability to care for others.

The Students Quest for Aesthetic Meaning Making

While personal meaning making is imperative for fostering the development of independent adolescents, aesthetic meaning making is a primary goal of the secondary art experience. Jung and Noddings' theories provide a foundation for the importance of self awareness, the knowledge of self does not just create personal meaning; rather, this emergent knowledge of self fuels a process that uses past experiences and outside materials to create a new aesthetic meaning for the student. John Dewey's theory of the aesthetic experience explains the transition from awareness of emotion to aesthetic meaning making. Dewey believed that while emotions were the basis for artistic expression, much more was needed to translate that emotion into an aesthetic experience or opportunity for aesthetic meaning making.

Impulsion for need starts an experience that does not know where it is going; resistance and check bring about the conversion of direct forward action into reflection; what is turned back upon is the relation of hindering conditions to what the self possesses as working capital in virtue of prior experiences. As the energies thus involved re-enforce the original impulsion, this operates more circumspectly with insight into end and method. Such is the outline of every experience that is clothed with meaning... Yet what is evoked is not just quantitative, or just more energy, but is qualitative, a transformation

of energy into thoughtful action, through assimilation of meanings for the background of past experiences. The junction of the new and old is not a mere composition of forces but is a re-creation in which the present impulsion gets form and solidity while the old, the stored, material is literally revived, given new life and soul through having to meet a new situation. (Dewey, p. 62-63)

According to Dewey mere awareness of self and expulsion of emotion is not enough to create an aesthetic experience; rather the artist must first experience an emotion or event, relate that experience to past experiences and finally use outside tools and methods to create a product. It is through this process of experience, reflection and action that the artist engages in aesthetic meaning making (Dewey, 1934). In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey compares this process of aesthetic meaning making to the development of a child. As infants, children cry to express a variety of needs; however, this general outcry of emotion slowly begins to develop and transform in a myriad of emotional responses. As the child matures the once universal cry evolves into a purposeful expulsion of emotion, a cry no longer represents all of the child's needs; instead, the child learns to smile, coo and eventually talk to express self needs. Dewey suggests that the evolution of the universal cry into purposeful expression and eventually articulation mimics the artistic process that results in an aesthetic experience. However, while the child transforms a cry into expression and words, the artist transforms an isolated emotion into an aesthetic response. The entire experience, facilitated by the emotional and aesthetic experience, is solidified when the artist purposefully uses materials to create a physical product fueled by the initial raw emotion, past experiences and aesthetic knowledge.

Dewey believed that what constitutes a work of art is not an instantaneous reaction to an isolated event but rather a process that occurs over time. Essentially the acts of feeling and creating are not isolated events; they are simply part of the aesthetic process that results in both entities acquiring "a form and order they did not at first possess" (Dewey, 1934, p 68). Between

the space of emotion and creation there lies a world that is far more complex and involved, and this is where the aesthetic experience exists. This world is a complex web of past experiences, related imagery and symbolism. These factors are what solidify aesthetic meaning making for an artist. The artist must sort through the vast depths of pre-existing experiences and knowledge, then select relevant material and organize this material in a way that expresses the fueling emotion. Once organized, these experiences can then be used as a tool in artistic expression.

Dewey discusses how the selection and manipulation of media mirrors the internal process of selection and organization. Just as an artist manipulates a ball of clay to create a sculpture, so do they mold and change prior knowledge and experiences into something relevant to the emotion or experience that began the artistic experience. Once initial emotion or experience has been processed and meshed with previous memories and ideas, then the artist can begin to manipulate the art media to create an aesthetic response. Dewey believed that just as words and expressions represent universal emotions, so do lines and colors. The belief that art expresses what words cannot is central to Dewey's theory. Just as a word taken out of context loses its meaning, so does a brush stroke; it is not merely the application of paint to canvas that creates a work of art, it is the process that informs the selection of the brush, the color and the placement of the paint. Taken out of context, the creation of a painting does not create meaning for the artist or the viewer; rather it is the process of feeling, relating, selecting, organizing, and creating that generates a meaningful product.

The visual journal encourages the student to mirror Dewey's description of the aesthetic experience. The art educator guides the student through a process that encourages identification of a current event or emotion, promotes the student to reflect on that emotion and build a mental frame of reference, and finally offers the student an artistic medium to express this new meaning

aesthetically. The goal of the visual journal is to encourage the student to evaluate emotions, draw on past experiences and then use art mediums to create a representation or outcome of that process. The visual journal is not meant to contain a series of individual artworks, but rather to encourage the student to understand how to convert lived experiences into aesthetic experiences.

The Student's Quest for Intellectual Meaning Making

And is not the task of aesthetics precisely to ground the fact that the experience of art is a mode of knowledge of a unique kind, certainly different from that sensory knowledge which provides science with the ultimate data from which it constructs the knowledge of nature, and certainly different from all moral rational knowledge, and indeed from all conceptual knowledge—but still knowledge, i.e., conveying truth (Gadamer, 1960, p 98)?

Hans-George Gadamer, similar to Dewey, believed that the aesthetic experience is a process that is solidified when the artist works through an intense personal process and then uses art media as a means of expressing the results of this personal experience. While Dewey believed that this process involved the artist in both a personal and aesthetic growth experience, Gadamer believed that the process resulted in the unveiling of significant meaning. Both Gadamer and Dewey's theories foreshadowed what research into cognitive thinking would soon prove, that in order for knowledge to become truly useful to an individual, the individual must question, examine, organize and build on prior knowledge; eventually building new areas of knowledge (Hurwitz & Day, 2001). Essentially cognitive thinking is what occurs during the aesthetic processes that Dewey and Gadamer theorized. As an individual experiences the world, they encounter both words and images that they identify and categorize. Research in cognitive psychology has shown that these experiences are the foundation for acquired knowledge. Thus, visual journaling not only allows students an experience of personal and aesthetic meaning making, it also fosters intellectual development and potentially, knowledge retention in students. Because visual journals promote integration and synthesis of lived experiences, in high school

students this would include personal realities and insights gained through educational encounters. One would expect the artistic products displayed in the journals to incorporate both the personal and academic world of the student.

When considering this research it becomes evident that Jung, Noddings, Dewey and Gadamer's theories support the idea that personal meaning making and intellectual meaning making is solidified by aesthetic meaning making. Visual journaling is an educational tool that offers opportunity for the student to display all of these forms of meaning making. In this research the goal is not to identify or isolate instances of personal, aesthetic or intellectual meaning making; but rather, to demonstrate how visual journaling can serve as a powerful form of educational pedagogy that allows students to create multiple types of meaning in the art classroom.

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The History of Journaling

The word journal is derived from the French word *jour*, meaning “the day,” while the English word diary is a derivative of the Latin *diurnal*, meaning “daily.” Historically speaking, a journey was a descriptor of how far a person could travel in one day. Thus, combining the origins and meanings of these root words, a journal is a written description of the day (Trueit, 1995). Modern day journals, while a relative of the more traditional written account of a day, have evolved into a broader and more creative venture. Journaling has become simply a daily process for recording life. Journals range from written descriptions of activities, documentations of emotional struggles, and dialogues between self and the world, to dictations of travel experiences (Trueit, 1995). Schiwy, a professor and founder of The Women’s Journal Workshop (1996), eloquently describes the journaling process in her book, *A Voice of Her Own* (1996).

A twelve-year-old student is required to keep a diary for her English class; in it she describes her first sensations of romantic attraction. A young lesbian explores her fear of coming out to her judgmental religious family. A businesswoman uses the half-hour ferry ride to and from work each day to focus on her inner life before facing the day’s demands. A psychotherapist keeps track of her own emotional process in brief moments between clients. An artist describes her evolving conception of a work in progress... We write in order to understand ourselves and to explore our creative impulses, to pour our emotions out onto paper and to record our ideas (p. 19-20).

There is a long history of using a journal for reflection and image making. Leonardo DaVinci’s is one of the greatest artists who used this process to brainstorm ideas, fleeting thoughts, and memorial experiences. “His journals, of which seven thousand pages exist, contained observations and thoughts of scholars he admired, personal financial records, letters, reflections on domestic problems, philosophical musings and prophecies, plans for inventions, and treatises on anatomy, botany, geology, flight, water, drawings and paintings” (Bell, 2002).

Da Vinci's journals set the stage for scientists, naturalists, architects, artists and others to record ideas, thoughts and their surroundings. The journals of Lewis and Clark have survived to this day and are still referenced in historical writings. The 1914 Trans-Artic Expedition was recorded in detail by Frank Hurley. Had Hurley not kept a meticulous journal of this adventure, the expedition would have been in vain since the film that was brought to document the trip had to be abandoned when their ship sank. Frida Kahlo kept a visual diary that provides art historians a voyeuristic look at the psychological turmoil that motivated her paintings. Thomas Edison, much like his predecessor da Vinci, planned and organized ideas for his inventions; most notable are his sketches for a machine that would record and play back telephone messages, which lead to the development of the answering machine and phonograph (New, 2005). Journals have a long history of being the home to secrets, discoveries and thoughts that have shaped the world we live in.

There is something to be said for recording one's life, for it is in the moments of everyday life that the remarkable and extraordinary happen. Journals allow the owner to record, evaluate, examine and reflect on life; and during this intense process of evaluation of self and surroundings, meaning is made. Whether it was da Vinci's idea for his next great painting, Lewis and Clark's record of a journey into uncharted territory, or Edison's next great invention, journals provided a place to think and reflect. The results of these endeavors documented the inner workings of some of the greatest minds in history. Imagine if 1000 years ago every person in the world committed to journaling and these stories were found. Historians would have answers to questions that they cannot dream of answering now. The journal provides not only an in-depth look at the person who authored it, but also serves as a reference for the culture, environment and society that surrounds that person. This is the goal of the visual journal, to

document movement through a person's greatest work of art, life.

The Power of Narrative

The concept of writing, especially writing narratives, is important to the visual journaling process. The process of writing narratives and using descriptive language is another way of enforcing the personal aspect of the visual journals. In her article, *Tell Me a Story: The Power of Narrative in the Practice of Teaching Art*, Mary Jane Zander states "As a mirror of culture, narrative appears in visual images and reflects the attitudes of society as well as the personal opinions and interest of artists and of those who use images to teach" (2007, p. 189). Zander's article focuses on the importance of narrative in the art classroom (2007). She discusses the narrative as an alternate mode of creating visual images, as well as discussing its importance in the teaching process. Zander states:

As teachers, we share our life stories with our students to build rapport and community as well as to convey our beliefs and perspectives. However, students also discover their own stories through the narratives they tell us and how they are affected by other stories or narratives. As both teachers and students, whether it is a story we tell ourselves or others about what we think or the social narratives that form our perspectives towards society and culture, these narratives play an important role in making sense of human experience and in forming self awareness (2007, p. 191).

The Power of the Visual

The concept of visual representation, much like journaling, has proven beneficial to students; however, unlike journals, the benefits of visual representations have been researched in direct relationship to student achievement. In the 60's, around the same time that journaling emerged in America, psychologists established a theory about how humans store information. This theory is commonly referred to as dual coding (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). The theory asserts that information is stored in two forms in the brain, language based information and image based information. The linguistic mode of information storage is the storage of

information in sentence style formatting. The brain receives verbal or written information and stores it in a similar format. This is reflective of narrative journaling. In contrast, the visual mode of information storage is the brain's response to visual or physical stimuli. The brain stores this information as an associated image or sensation within the context of the time it occurred (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Research consistently shows that students receive the majority of information presented in school through the linguistic mode (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Students, while strongly influenced by the visual, are more often engaged in verbal and written form. "It has been shown that explicitly engaging students in the creation of nonlinguistic representations stimulates and increases activity in the brain (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). The visual journal, while appealing to the familiar linguistic functioning through the incorporation of writing, also engages students visually, giving the student the opportunity to utilize their visual mode of thinking.

The Visual Journal

Instructors in all disciplines use journals as a way to encourage students to draw upon higher order thinking skills. These higher order thinking skills require students to use critical thought, apply information learned, and explore the curriculum. The benefits of journaling have been well researched; yet, most empirical data show no correlation between journal writing and standardized or objective test scores (Croxtton & Berger, 1996). Despite the lack of strong quantitative support of journaling, many educators still use journaling as a classroom tool (McCulley, 1986). McCulley (1986) states that there is much speculation about the benefits of writing on learning; however, little is known about what content can be taught through writing or even the specifics of writing to learn.

In the art classroom, the most common journal is the sketchbook. The sketchbook is

typically reserved for the purpose of practicing drawing and mastering method. The stronger the ability, the more frequently the journal is used. The confidence of the student is directly related to the perceived success of the journal (Sanders-Bustle, 2008). There is a vast gap between student perceptions of journaling and the art educator's perception of the process of journaling. While many students find the process of maintaining a sketchbook tedious and seemingly useless, many art educators see this journal as a place for formulating ideas, experimenting with concepts and mediums, and practicing drawing skills (Sanders-Bustle, 2008).

One way to increase the relevance of sketchbook journals for students is to make them a vehicle for personal reflection and growth, as well as a place to demonstrate practice and competency in artistic endeavors. The marriage of educational and personal content in an individual diary is the description of a visual journal. Grauer & Naths (1998) assert that any continuously changing process needs exploration through visual journaling. Many contemporary artists use this method to chronicle their creative moments.

Visual journaling is a process that encourages students to get to know themselves on a deeper, intrinsic level. This is an effective way to break down walls of communication by using the visual journaling process as a form of self-exploration and visual communication. Visual journals serve as a record of how we think, which moves us out of the world of reflex and allows us to look beyond the immediate situation and pay closer attention to the process. Teachers need to understand that during this process, the experiences gained are not only valuable in helping students establish connections to the art-making process, but also towards literacy (Grauer & Naths, 1998, p 15).

The visual journal is simply a place for students to record both visual and written events of their everyday lives and academic experiences. These entries can range from a sketch of the lunch choices in the cafeteria to notes from Algebra class. The visual journal serves as a record of the student's life. The visual journal offers the art educator a way to reformat and expand the concept of a sketchbook. The visual journal, while introduced by the art educator in the art classroom, is carried by the student to other classes and even outside of the school into the home

and community. The educator stresses that the journal is “a means to record and save what was thought, felt, discovered, or learned in the process” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). Because of its personal and individual nature, there is no definitive explanation of a visual journal. The journal is simply a combination of the visual and the written, facilitated by the art educator and used by the student to discover and establish a better sense of self. The establishment of self will hopefully allow the student to develop methods for relating outside experiences and new knowledge with the pre-existing knowledge recorded in their journal.

The student can write, draw, collage, paint, tear, smudge, or interact with the journal in any way they like. The only requirement is that the journal documents real life as they experience it (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). It is important that the journal is introduced in the art room, because, within the walls of the art room “developing critical thinking and aesthetic sensitivity” (Hurwitz & Day, 2001, p. 19) are the primary objectives.

Location, Location, Location – The Art Classroom

The art classroom is a perfect venue for fostering the student’s journey towards a greater sense of self and the visual journal is the artistic medium for this experience. Evolutionary psychology and research suggest that the arts play a pivotal role in the development and maintenance of the brain (Hurwitz & Day, 2001). Researcher Marian Diamond supports the belief that “enriched environments,” such as the art classroom greatly influence learning (Hurwitz & Day, 2001, p. 12). While research in support of arts affect on other subjects remains debatable, overwhelming research exists in support of arts influence on brain development and learning (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007). Louis Arnold Reid, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy of Education, wrote an extensive essay exploring meaning that is created through the art experience; Reid implies that the benefits of the arts are far reaching, well outside the art

classroom (Ross, 1980). The visual journals while encouraging the student to draw, experiment with mediums and observe their surroundings does much more than fine tune hand eye coordination and develop observation skills. Reid suggests that art materials and processes, encouraged by the art teacher, are not interpreted as constant, unchanging elements, rather they are dynamic, evolving elements that change dependent on the context in which utilized (Ross, 1980). Thus, the process of art, unlike other subjects, allows the student to construct meaningful and personal representations that are fluid in nature. The visual journal is not just concerned with factual knowledge, but rather the art of the journal embodies facts about how the artist feels, allowing the fact to become personally significant, rather than isolated information (Ross, 1980). With a constant emphasis placed on rationalizing and justifying arts importance in schools (Hurwitz & Day, 2001), visual journaling provides art educators with a powerful method for promoting self-exploration, artistic development, and perhaps academic integration.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

“Art-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies” (McNiff, 1998, p. 29). The themes and ideas discussed in this paper are focused around the practice of visual journaling, which based on the review of related literature has proven to be “nonlinear, multimodal, and multidimensional” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p.45). Thus, it would be impossible to examine and discuss the pedagogy surrounding the visual journals using the linear processes outlined in traditional quantitative or qualitative research methodologies. The ever-evolving field of art-based research is the foundation for the following discourse.

Traditionally, researchers deem visual data as subjective; however, visual forms can be strong indicators of social, cultural, or symbolic processes and practices, as well as different ways of interpreting and comprehending information (Sullivan, 2005). “Although scientific inquiry has enormous status, the capacity to cater for the full dimensions of human need and knowing is shown to be limited. A greater intellectual and imaginative space that opens up options for inquiry is now part of the discussion” (Sullivan, 2005, p.65). The visual arts are beginning to be explored as a solution to this need for alternate methods of inquiry and research. The fields of sociology and anthropology have debated the validity of images as data sources and as a result of these debates two viewpoints have emerged. The first is that photography and film are viewed as subjective, providing me with material that is not conducive to traditional analysis. Conversely, some researchers believe that images are in fact an “objective artifact” (Sullivan, 2005, p. 62). Ball and Smith in their book *Analyzing Visual Data* (1992) argue that images

represent something far more accurate than a narrative.

While the debates for using visual imagery in traditional research opened the scientific community to the idea of images as data, both of these theories contrast with a third emerging opinion of the power of the visual in research. The idea that the role of the image is not to merely document or index situations or encounters is central to the research methods utilized in this paper. Rather than the research relying on the image to support analysis, art-based research challenges me to use the image to explore and understand how people construct meaning during the artistic process (Sullivan, 2005).

Participants

Participants for this study will be 9-12th grade Art I students in a low-socioeconomic public high school in Wilmington, North Carolina. The high school is organized around a block schedule, meaning the 180-day school year is divided into two 90-day semesters. The data collection for this study occurred during the 2nd semester of the 2009-2010 school year. Additionally, in this study I was the art teacher employed by the school system. The students were assigned the Art I course based on a course selection process that occurred at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. During the summer prior to the 2009-2010 year, the administration at the high school assigned schedules, thus I had no control over what students were enrolled in the Art I classes.

Procedure

This paper uses art-based research methods to explore my educational pedagogy of visual journaling. The goal of this examination is to evidence the effectiveness of these teaching practices in aiding students in personal, aesthetic, and intellectual meaning making. Five lessons and journal prompts will be examined. I will use the images and words recorded in visual

journals by students in response to these lessons to support meaning making for the student. Each journaling activity discussed was designed and developed based on a conscious effort by the educator to encourage the student's development of personal, aesthetic, and intellectual meaning making as discussed previously in the paper. The activities have all been based in research of artist's techniques, visual journaling processes, and reflective writing exercises. I believe careful examination of images and text from student work will evidence visual journaling as an educational pedagogy that fosters meaning making.

The images collected for evaluation in this study were acquired over a five-week period. In order to ensure a collaborative atmosphere between the teacher and students and to provide the students with a foundation in art terms and techniques, the visual journaling lessons were taught after the first five weeks of class. During the first five weeks the students were taught art terms, techniques, and history as outlined in the North Carolina Standard Course of study (NCSCS). Appendix C is a copy of the NCSCS as found on the North Carolina Public Schools website (2001).

With a five-week foundation of art techniques and terms, the students were ready to begin the visual journaling activities. It is important to note that the visual journals were not completed solely during class time. Rather, each Friday the students were introduced to a new visual journaling lesson. In addition to an introduction to each journaling lesson, the students had the remainder of the hour and half block of class on Friday to work in their visual journal. The remainder of the weekly work in the journal was completed outside of class; specifically, students were encouraged to work for 10-15 minutes each day outside of class on their visual journals, resulting in an additional hour of work time outside of the allotted class time on Friday. Each Friday the journal pages from the previous week were documented with a digital camera or

scanner and saved on a hard drive. This research examines the first five lessons taught using the visual journals. Prior to these lessons the students created and personalized their journals. While students were encouraged to use multiple art media, the journaling assignments did not specifically incorporate art techniques and methods learned during regular class time. I hope by evaluating the following visual journal lessons, a connection between the visual journal and student meaning making will emerge.

Lesson 1: What is a Thought?

Whoever denies the existence of the unconscious is in fact assuming that our present knowledge of the psyche is total. And this belief is clearly just as false as the assumption that we know all there is to be known about the natural universe. Our psyche is part of nature, and its enigma is as limitless. Thus we cannot define either the psyche or nature. We can merely state what we believe them to be and describe, as best we can, how they function (Jung, 1964, p. 6).

To begin the visual journaling process it is important that students first understand the concept of the subconscious, how to access that information and how to create visuals from subconscious thoughts. Freud argued that our conscious thoughts are only a small fraction of our entire mind, in fact the subconscious mind accounts for the vast majority of thought processes in the brain. This phenomenon can be witnessed in day-dreaming or night-dreaming. When one enters a dream like state it essentially allows the subconscious mind to dominate thought. When control over those thoughts can be established, then imaginative thinking occurs. Essentially, the imagination is the mind taking previously unconnected ideas and sorting and organizing them in a way that forms connections (Ladd, 1979).

The initial goal in the visual journals was to encourage the students to consciously access their subconscious thought and begin the process of imaginative thinking. While most artists cannot explain how or why they come up with ideas, all artists can agree that their art is the result of an extended process of thinking, reworking, evaluating, assessing and creating. For the trained

artist this process comes naturally; however, the novice has not been given the tools necessary to create unique, imaginative outcomes. The first lesson in the visual journals is a series of exercises that encourage students to begin to think in this new way. To promote student engagement, the first pages of the journals hold a series of exercises that use words to guide students through the process.

While drawing, scribbling and doodling are a child's first experience with "exercising control over their environment," these activities are often discouraged as the child develops (Hurwitz & Day, 2001, p. 50). Despite the perceived benefits of visual communication, children are not only encouraged to verbally communicate, but this skill is rigorously taught during all 13 years of public schooling and is often guided by a system called semantics. This system is based on the belief that words and phrases possess meaning; further, instruction guided by this system encourages students to use and acquire an extensive meaningful vocabulary. (Tompkins, 2003). Upon entry into the secondary environment the students in this study have experienced 9 years of instruction intensely focused on language, while receiving only one 30-45 minute session of art instruction per week in elementary school and only voluntary, elected instruction in the middle school. Keeping this information in mind, I believe that the best way to encourage creative thinking is to draw upon the linguistic skills that the student currently has, in an attempt to use those skills as an aide in developing creative visual thinking and eventually solidifying personal meaning within their journals.

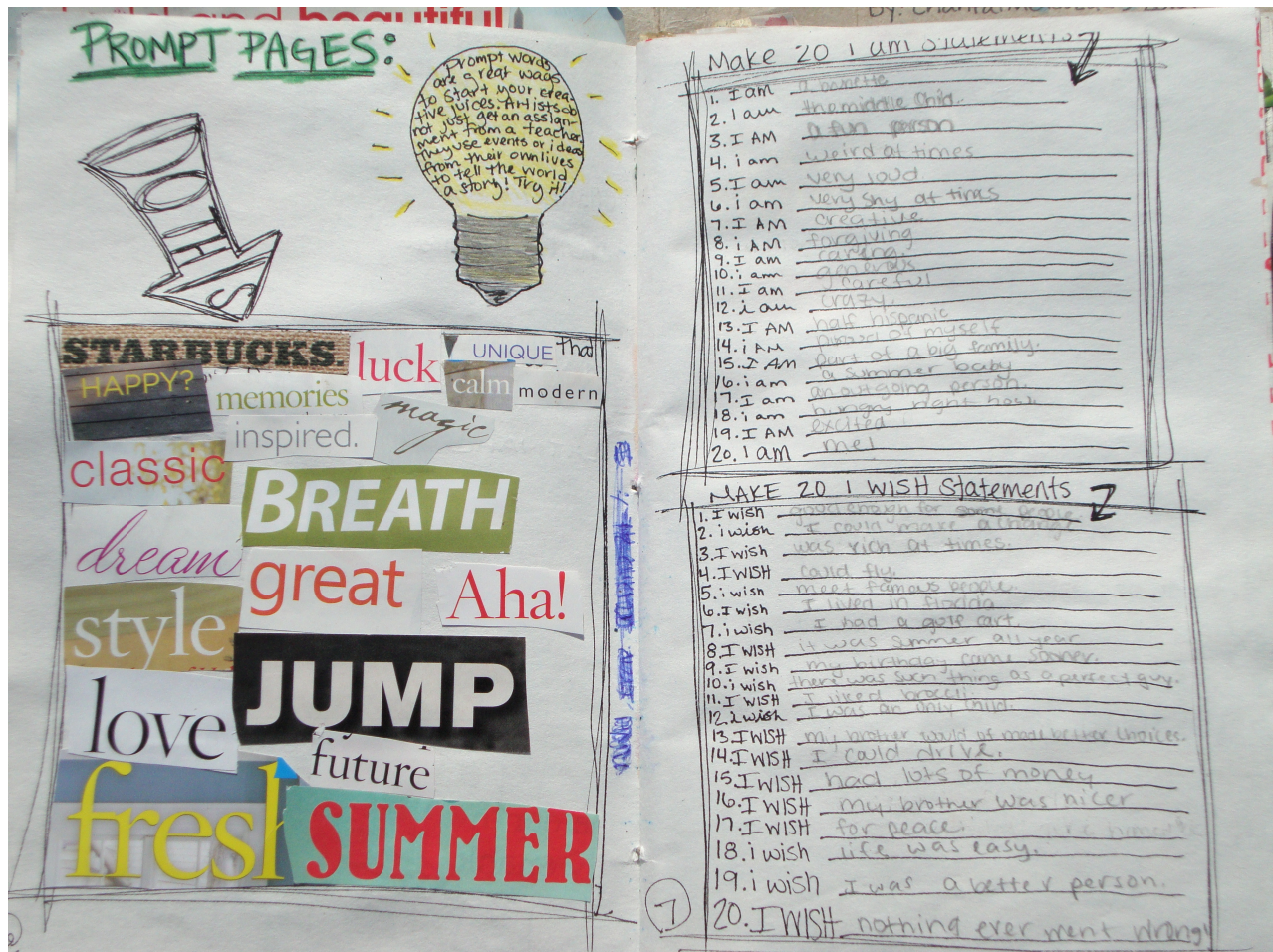


Figure 1



Figure 2

The first task students are asked to complete can be found on the two pages shown in *Figures 1 and 2*. The left hand page instructs students: *Prompt words are great ways to start your creative juices. Artists do not just get an assignment from a teacher. They use events or ideas from their own lives to tell a story to the world. Try it!! Pick 20 words from magazines that jump out at you.* The purpose of this task is to use student vocabulary and link it to a subconscious association. By instructing students to pick 20 words that jump out at them, I hoped to encourage students to pick words that create meaningful or significant or relevant or personal mental pictures for the students. In *Figure 1* you see words like *Jump, Happy?, Calm, and Love*. The student has picked words that describe an action or a feeling. This is the first step in showing

students a glimpse of imagery. There are no definite instructions for what kind of words to select; rather the student selects words that appeal directly to them. In *Figure 2* the student has selected far more than 20 words, in fact they have covered the instructions to accommodate room for more options. This student has taken the assignment one step further by selecting phrases or collections of words like *Shape your life, grab life, I have a saucy secret*. Even without knowing the individual student or understanding the dynamic of the classroom it becomes apparent that these students have selected words that possess personal meaning to them. The presence of adjectives and verbs shows the students understand the ability a word has to create a mental image.

To take this exercise further I had students participate in a second word activity on the next page (see *Figure 1*). For this activity, students are asked to *make twenty “I am” statements and twenty “I wish” statements*. In *Figure 1* the student lists these words *brunette, a middle child, a fun person, weird at times, very loud, very shy at times, creative, forgiving, caring, generous, careful, crazy, half Hispanic, proud of myself, part of a big family, a summer baby, an outgoing person, hungry right now, excited, me*. The “I am” exercise forces students to evaluate concrete examples of what they are; additionally, requiring the student to list 20 different statements forces them to loose themselves in the monotony of the exercise, with the goal of drawing out genuine intrinsic descriptors of who they are as people. In looking at the student responses in *Figure 1* a pattern emerges. At the beginning of the exercise the student lists concrete facts about themselves such as their hair color. As they progress they move from this objective level to a more reflective one. Continuing through the statements there is a shift from external descriptors to internal descriptors as words like *forgiving, careful, proud* emerge. Towards the end of the list there is yet another shift to qualities specific to this individual, such as *a summer baby, an outgoing person, and hungry right now*. The monotony of this exercise

combined with the personal nature of the statements, forces the student to work from their conscious, linear thought, into their subconscious, non-linear thought, evidenced by the evolution of the kinds of words used through out the exercise. The second half of the page requires students to make 20 “*I wish*” statements. In *Figure 2* the student composes a list of wishes that give the viewer insight into what this student finds important like *a new phone, a car, my license, money, a job, clothes, shoes, my birthday, Christmas, not going to school, going on a cruise, no homework, summer, the end of the school year, being tall, not taking a foreign language, being a senior, wealthy, more wishes*. The contents of this list stands in stark contrast to those listed on the “*I am*” activity, instead of being descriptive the words and statements are physical in nature. The “*I wish*” statements in *Figure 2* are all comprised of the currently unobtainable. While these exercises may seem redundant, the hope is that the student begins to think in a new way. Rarely does school encourage students to think about themselves, rather they are encouraged to learn information that is often disjointed and unrelated to their lives. Research has proven that for knowledge to be obtained it must be related to previously existing knowledge. This exercise calls upon the student to access what they know about themselves, to find words that appeal to them personally and to ponder what they want that they do not currently possess. In essence this exercise encourages the student to create a personal connection with the assignment and to formulate that connection through a medium that they are comfortable with, words.

Lesson 2: What Is an Image?

At the center of everything we call “the arts,” and children call “play”, is something, which seems somehow alive. It’s not alive in the way you and I are alive, but it’s certainly not dead. It’s alive in the way our memory is alive. Alive in the way the ocean is alive and able to transport us and contain us. Alive in the way thinking is NOT, but experiencing IS, made of BOTH memory and IMAGINATION, This is THE THING we mean by “an image. (Barry, 2008, p. 14)

While words exist within a space that is comfortable to students, images often do not.

Unlike words, the art of conjuring images is foreign and largely untaught through out public school curriculums. I felt that it was important to not only show students that words are often associated with images, but also that images can become a way for words to manifest themselves and present previously unrecognized meaning. The next lesson in the visual journaling process is based on a writing exercise found in Lynda Barry's book *What It Is* (2008). Lynda Barry has worked as a painter, cartoonist, illustrator, writer, editor and teacher. During her years of experience she has formulated various exercises that she uses in her widely acclaimed workshop "Writing the Unthinkable" and published in her book *What It Is*. Barry describes her book as an activity book that "we use in the class to help us find images and follow them as they take form. Though we use writing here, once you feel what an image is, the form is up to you" (Barry, 2008, p. 138).

The following journaling exercise is adapted from an activity in Barry's book, called "Picture the car" (2008, p. 144). As the class entered the room they were immediately asked to take out their journals and a pen or pencil. Once everyone was seated, the students were asked to place their pens and pencils down and close their eyes. As silence enveloped the room, the following was read aloud: *Phone numbers are interesting entities. Can you remember your very first phone number? Think of it, reflect on it, picture that number floating in your mind. "For most of us just saying our first phone number gives us a kind of feeling we do not find in other phone numbers. It seems to jump at the chance to come back to us – we don't have to think it up. It is the opposite of dead. It feels somehow alive. This is one thing we mean when we say an image"* (Barry, 2008, p. 143). *When I tell you to open your eyes I want you to make a list of the first 10 cars that come to mind based on actual experiences you have had. 1...2...3...open your eyes.* Once the student's list their 10 cars they are asked to select one that has a strong and clear

car (see Figure 4). This student wrote the following: *I am on my way from an awesome surf encounter at Masonboro and we are on our way to Tower 7 to eat dinner which is my absolute favorite place to eat. I love surfing and it's nice to do with my dad and it gives us time to spend together. He is my boy. We do everything together and I enjoy that...I'm glad we bond in such a fun way.*

In Figure 4 we see two men, holding surfboards looking out at the ocean. One man is taller than the other, showing the taller man's dominance over the boy to his left. The shorter figure, presumably the student is wearing swim trunks decorated with textural patterns, while the older man has plain trunks on. The two figures have their arms wrapped around each other, a gesture that shows the bond these two figures have. In the distance there are waves rolling towards them and a sun setting with dynamic, vibrating lines radiating away from it. The drawing is done in black ink over a yellow watercolor wash. It appears that this student has used color to represent the emotions associated with being with his father. Color has the ability to evoke emotion and cool colors are used by artists to represent somber and quiet moods while warm colors tend to represent excited and passionate moods (Hobbs and Salome, 1995). The student's decision to use a yellow watercolor wash over the entire page shows an understanding of the emotional quality of color. Additionally, the presence of a foreground and background shows an understanding of space as an art element, the presence of a design in the boys shorts and the attention to detail in the drawing of their hair shows an understanding of pattern and texture, the lines radiating off the sun show the student's ability to translate the physical sensation of heat into a visual cue, and the student's ability to draw the human figure with accurate proportion shows and understanding of human anatomy.

While the student's journal page obviously shows the development of a meaningful

understanding of art terms and processes, the intense emotion felt radiating from the page serves as a testament to the overall success of the lesson. The written, when paired with the visual, gives the viewer a glimpse at the overwhelming personal nature of this scene. While the focus of this assignment begins with a list of cars, the journal page that emerges is completely unrelated to a physical car. The focus shifts to a more intimate and personal connection to a car. An emotional image and relevant text spark the beginning of personal meaning making and emerges in the visual journal. By beginning with the car, focusing on a memory related to that car, gathering details about that experience, engaging in written dialogue about the situation that caused the experience, and then using art materials to create a visual representation of that experience, I believe that the student has effectively moved through Dewey's aesthetic experience.

Additionally, through this process they have found new meaning about who they are as individuals and how to interact with art materials and processes independent of direct instruction.

Lesson 3: Seeing and Saying

We find that as we say what we see (that is, as we observe and write in our journals), we come to see more. And as we see more, we have more to say; and as we say more, we see even more. And on and on, seeing and saying, saying and seeing, spiraling out of boredom and into wonder As E.E. Cummings writes at the end of his prayer-poem "I thank you God for most this amazing (now the ears of my ears awake and / now the eyes of my eyes are opened)." And so it continues, over and over again as we do this work (Nelson, 2004, p. 60).

Continuing on the theme of the previous lesson, lesson three calls students to begin to write from their own experiences and realms of interest and use that writing as a springboard for imagery and/or use their imagery as a springboard for writing. The first portion of this assignment encourages the students to use words in a new and creative way. Lynn Nelson is a teacher at Arizona State University and the director of the Greater Phoenix Area Writing Project, in his book *Writing and Being: Embracing your life through creative journaling* (2004), he has

comprised a series of activities that provide the reader with tools that aide in discovering a true sense of self. In his writing he discusses the two ways that individuals write. The first method of writing involves using words to categorize information, fitting ideas and thoughts into neatly organized and predefined spaces within our left-brain (Nelson, 2004). This mode of writing is similar to the symbol systems that children develop from the ages of six to thirteen; additionally just as adolescents rarely move beyond this type of writing, they also cease to develop artistic skills (Hurwitz & Day, 2001). While their interests and awareness continues to grow and develop, their ability to communicate their impressions of the world through writing and drawing often remain stagnant. The second mode of writing that Nelson discusses also closely parallels the goal of most art educators. Nelson challenges the reader to move beyond a structured form of writing and to let go of the judgment that accompanies it, for it is in this new found freedom that true awareness of surroundings is found and from that awareness new observations are made, and a cycle of seeing and saying begins (Nelson, 2004). I believe that through increased freedom in writing, students will be able to discover increased freedom in imagery. No longer will the stress of outside judgment cloud their ability to create. Rather, the students will be empowered by a renewed sense of self esteem and begin to create from a place of genuine curiosity and wonder. This awareness of self will hopefully lead to greater personal meaning making, and through experimentation with visual media also lead to artistic and intellectual meaning making.

symbolism. Further the student wrote part of this portion about the symbolism of the color black in black ink, leaving the viewer to wonder if this was a conscious choice to further illustrate the conundrum with black as a representation of death. Continuing to the right the student changes both the direction of the text and the color of the ink; again, this portion of the writing is done in Spanish. The selection written in brown is roughly translated as follows: *Another thing about death is that people feel really bad. I have never experienced it, but I do not know how you could take it well. One thing that I dislike, a thing that brings me fear, is what I cannot see. I think I would prefer to be cremated when I die instead of being locked inside of an ugly coffin. The thought of it gives me goose bumps.* While the student is still speaking about death in this excerpt, she has moved to a more personal understanding of the concept. She has taken a word that is familiar and begun to explore the concept of death as it relates to her personally. She has not defined the word. Instead she has created a personal understanding of the word. The final selection of the writing is written in red, a color that stands out in contrast to the rest of the writing. The selection reads: *Why do parents kill their children? Why are siblings killing each other? What is the world turning into these days? Why are we teaching our children to be violent people? There should be something to stop this, look at us!!! At least 10-20 people are dying only in NC (North Carolina) per day. This has to stop, we are killing ourselves and at the end there will be nothing to stop us. We are so surprised of what Hitler did! Look all around you that is what we are turning into killers. I hope the world realizes that we need to civilize ourselves and stop killing innocent people! Please stop!!* Suddenly she moves from writing about death's symbolic color and her personal associations with death to writing that revolves around how society views death and dying. She has begun to connect the abstract idea of death to the society that influences her directly.

The writing in this student's journal is a perfect example of the written aspect of the seeing and saying exercise in Nelson's book (2004). This student has discussed all aspects of death, more importantly it appears that she has begun to construct solid and well-rounded meaning surrounding the term. Additionally, she uses color to express different aspects of the word's meaning. By beginning with the color blue, typically associated with calm and slowly changing to neutrals in her discussion of death's color symbolism, and ending with red in her discussion of death's destructive influence on society. While this student included no images in her writing, she did illustrate movement through a more advanced cognitive process by associating color, personal experience and cultural norms to the word death.

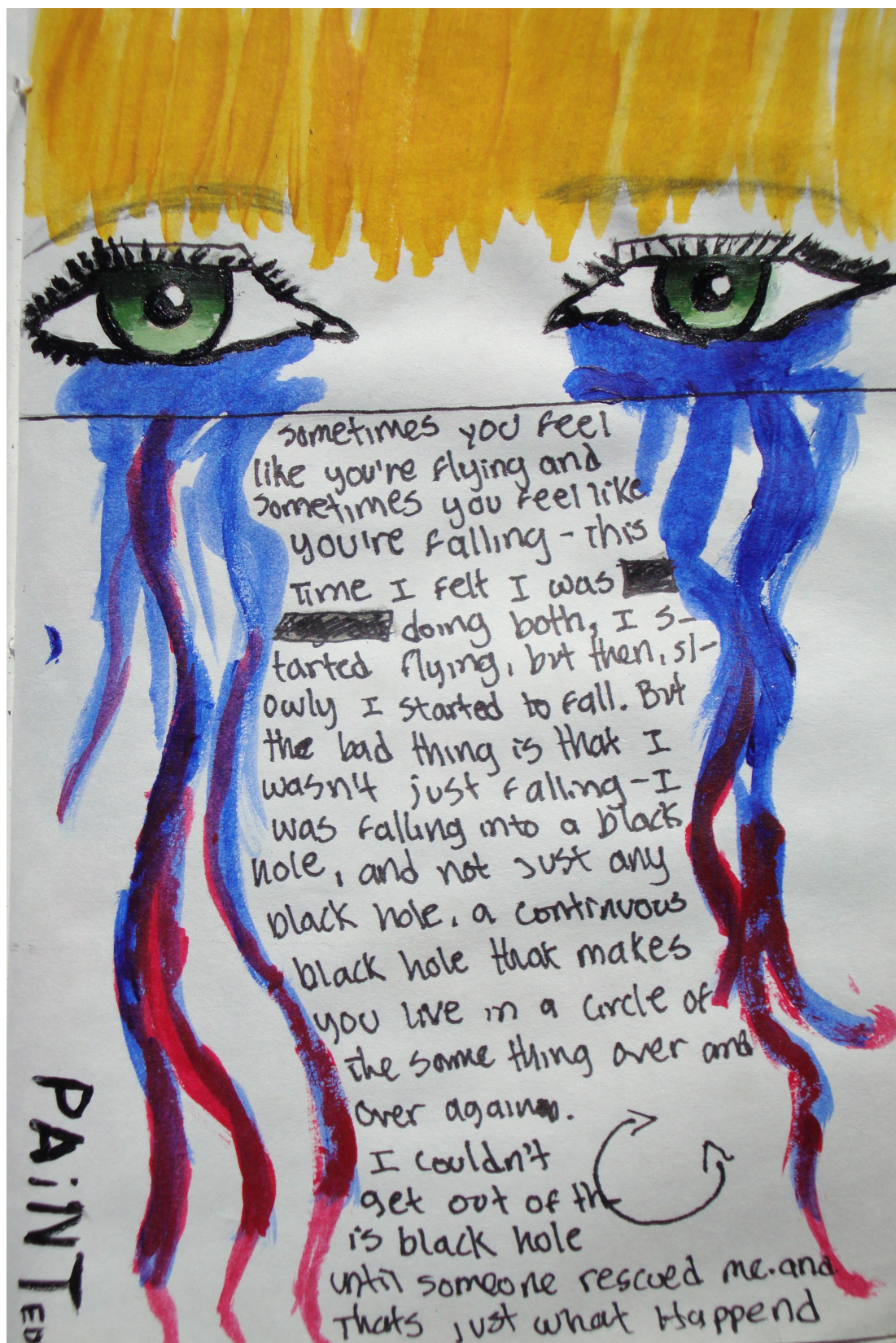


Figure 6

Figure 6 shows another student's response to lesson three's objectives; however, this student incorporated visual imagery with her writing. It appears that this student first created the visual and then wrote in the negative space of the image. The image on the page is done in watercolor and incorporates several techniques introduced in class. The composition is symmetrical and depicts a pair of eyes that appear to be crying blue and red tears. The student has intentionally left out the other features of the face to force the viewer to gaze into the eyes drawn on the page. You see an understanding of shading and highlights in the color of the eyes and the white reflection left unpainted. Additionally, the student has left almost an eye width between the two eyes, demonstrating an understanding of facial proportions. She has included details in the eyes like the tear ducts and the crease above the eye, showing an understanding of detail and perception in drawing. Finally, the choice of color in the tears shows a basic understanding of color mixing, since blue and red can be mixed to create purple.

The colors chosen also add an emotional element to the image, encouraging the viewer to question what kind of tears would appear both blue and red. In the center of the image the student has written briefly about an emotional experience she had. The description is not specific or detailed; however, the viewer senses the intense emotional importance of the event. She writes, *I started flying, but then, slowly I started to fall. But the bad thing wasn't just falling - I was falling into a black hole, a continuous black hole that makes you live in a circle of the same thing over and over again.* It becomes clear to the viewer that the emotional nature of the image was influenced by the writing and visa versa. The tears falling from the eyes in the image are falling, first blue, then red. The blue tears feel calm, as if they are tears releasing something, much like the sensation of flying is a release from gravity; however, these same calm tears turn red, conveying a much more intense and disturbing emotion that is opposite of the calming blue.

The red tears seem to correlate with the students writing about falling and the desperation of falling into a black abyss. She continues with her discussion of flying and falling by talking about a black hole that leads to a cycle of repetition. She is not specific about what cycle is being repeated, but she does provide the viewer with assurance that the cycle is broken when she says, *I couldn't get out of this black hole until someone rescued me, and that's just what happened.* Until reading this portion of the writing the calm nature of the eyes, indicated by the relaxed expression in the eyebrows seems puzzling. The sensation of falling into a black hole conjures images of intense fear and uncertainty; however, the student indicates that she was rescued from her terrifying descent, thus the calm expression in the eyes becomes relevant.

This student has paired her writing with her image so completely that the two rely on one another to convey the message. I believe that this student shows the development of intellectual meaning making in her understanding of art concepts and aesthetic meaning in her ability to use this new knowledge in a unique and inventive way. Further, she also exhibits a quest for personal meaning in the choice of subject matter in both her writing and drawing.

While Figure 5 has no images, the words show the student's quest for understanding. It is apparent that this student is looking at death through a lens of previous generalizations, personal experience and societal expectations. It is apparent to me that she is seeing this word completely and creating new meanings about death and dying. It is this kind of vantage point and exploration that is at the core of the artistic experience. She has begun to see words in a new way, thus seeing the world in a new way and hopefully allowing herself to create images in a new way. In Figure 6 the student has explored emotion through experimentation with artistic media and mastery of art techniques. This artistic exploration paired with her written dialogue shows the student's quest for meaning through her exploration in the visual journal.

Lesson 4: What if no one was looking?

Let's tell our secrets, share the images that tickle and haunt us and let loose with the sound reels that repeat in our minds. Opening up your covert operations doesn't have to scare or hurt anyone (you, most importantly). Your journals can speak briefly, symbolically and without judgment, if you want. We have been known to judge every once in a while, but we try to judge only the edible or the dead. You can also accuse, blame, applaud and curse...Remember; you do not have to show your journal pages to anyone. What would you make, if no one were looking? (Woods & Dinino, 2007, p.33)

Thus far the journaling lessons encouraged students to write and draw separately while using their own lives as fuel for ideas. The fourth lesson is aimed at encouraging students to utilize multiple art mediums, symbolism and personal experiences to create a page that expresses those ideas and emotions that have yet to be explored. To begin this journaling assignment the class discussed why people create art and how art effects history. It was important for students to realize that the goal of art has traditionally been to record and represent the artist's surroundings and that when this artwork is viewed in a different time context, the images speak to the state of the world the artist was living in. The basis of what art is, at its very core is a reflection of the artist. Art is often all that is left to document great civilizations and societies. Without these artifacts the voices of lost worlds may have never been heard. Through this discussion I wanted students to begin to see that artists are simply people that use visual imagery to convey a message. Thus anyone with knowledge and intent can view themselves as an artist.

The second part of the lesson was to encourage students to work with materials that were immediately accessible to them. Common place items like scraps of paper, napkins, ticket stubs, magazine clippings and other household artifacts, all have the potential to be transformed into viable art materials if placed in the hands of someone with intent and motivation (Gregory, 2006). Additionally, these materials have the ability to become artifacts representing a specific time or place. Everyday materials can become powerful tools in capturing a moment in time.

I felt that it was important for the students to begin to see the visual journal as a place for expression both inside and outside the art classroom; essentially a vessel that could be easily integrated into their own lives, encouraging them to experiment with new materials and invent new uses for old materials. During the adolescent years there is a marked decline in voluntary art production, for it is during the adolescent stage that self-criticism becomes a factor in the creation of art. Essentially, if students do not find their own work appealing they will cease to have desire and motivation to create (Hurwitz & Day, 2001). “If children are to continue artistic production during adulthood, they must work with diligence, mastering the technical and expressive conventions of adult art that provide a bridge between the art worlds of the child and the adult” (Hurwitz & Day, 2001, p.63). I believe that through a personal connection to both subject matter and material the students will be motivated to create journal pages that reflect their own lives. This eventually allows the students to gain confidence as artists. Ideally this renewed confidence will translate into their everyday lives and students will begin to think creatively, work artistically and reflect internally.

While the quest for meaning making is central to this study, it is important to note that meaning is not found but made (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). Using this as the underpinning of the meaning making process, I intentionally created a series of activities that encourage increased independence. This fourth lesson is aimed at allowing the student’s own artistic voice to emerge within the pages of their journals. Keeping this in mind, the direct instruction for this lesson was intentionally vague. Students were asked to simply utilize three or more everyday materials in an artistic way and focus their journaling around the question: *What would you journal if no one was looking?*

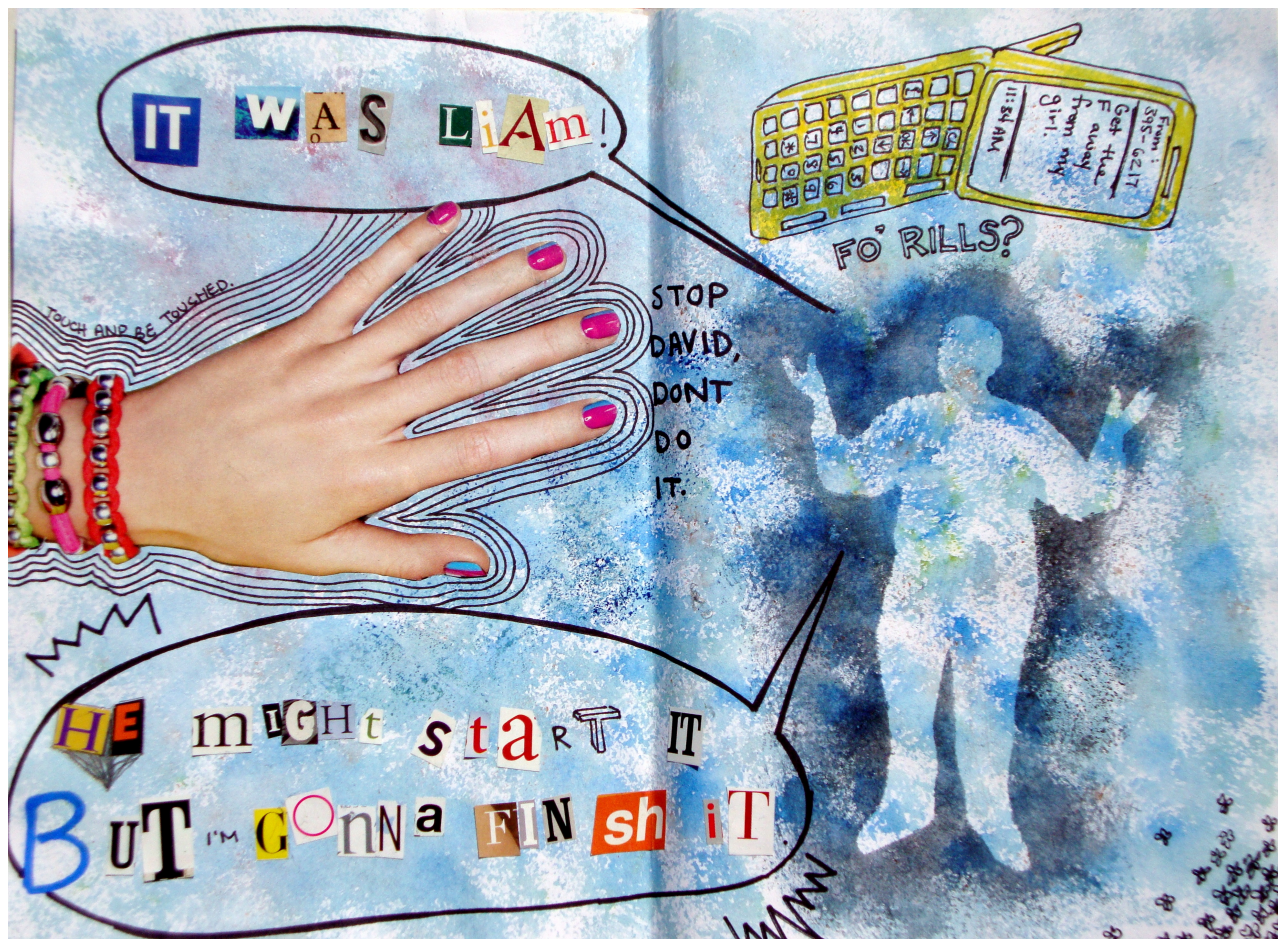


Figure 7

As the journaling lessons progressed I began to notice the incorporation of more concepts from class. In Figure 7 the student has used their understanding of scale to create meaning. Scale can be used to create emphasis on certain elements in a composition (Gatto, Porter & Selleck, 2000). In this journal page the student has juxtaposed a large-scale hand next to a small-scale silhouette of a figure. This juxtaposition of images engages the viewer in creating a dialogue about this journal page. The viewer begins to understand that the hand represents the student who created the page. Further, the student has used repetition and movement by drawing concentric lines around the hand establishing this image as a point of interest. Since the hand, thought bubbles, and cell phone all point to or frame this figure, the opposing figure of the male silhouette seems to be a central component when establishing the overall meaning of this journal

page. The student also chose to contrast the detail in the cutout of the hand with the simplicity in the negative space of the silhouette, possibly indicating opposing ideas. When viewing the composition in its entirety the viewer begins to see the meaning behind the images. The bubbles read *It was Liam!* and *He might start it but I'm gonna finish it.* The student has included jagged geometric lines around the second statement, indicating that the page is about a conflict between the student, represented by the hand, and the boy, represented by the silhouette. While the conflict between the student and the boy is apparent, she also uses symbolism to represent a third party involved in the argument. The cell phone above the silhouette indicates that this whole argument revolves around a mysterious third party and the ignition for the dispute may have been the caller portrayed on the phone.

While the personal motivation behind the journal page is evident, the message would not have been as clear if the student had not utilized problem-solving skills to manipulate art materials in new and innovative ways. She has used collaged letter cut outs combined with her own handwriting to create the text on the page; additionally, she has created a negative space in the shape of a figure by cutting out the shape from a magazine, sponging watercolor over it and then removing the cutout to leave the silhouette. The innovation in art techniques shows the student's emerging ability to work with everyday materials to create imagery that is both intellectually and visually stimulating. This journal page is ripe with evidence of understanding of art concepts and the student's ability to utilize course concepts in her own imaginative artwork. This demonstrates artistic meaning making; however, this visual journal page also shows the student's quest for personal meaning making. This journal page illustrates the technical ingenuity of this student as an artist and also allows the viewer insight into the student's quest for understanding of her personal struggles.

Figure 8 shows another student's response to the fourth lesson. While the composition of this visual journal entry is more chaotic than Figure 7, the student has shown an understanding of art and design principles, while also experimenting with new art materials. Also she has explored symbolism and imagery as a means of portraying personally significant subject matter. In Figure 8 the student has utilized everyday materials like masking tape, stickers and photographs in inventive ways. On the far left hand side of the image the student has applied a layer of masking tape and on top of the tape has drawn 12 simple symbols. Each drawing seems to represent a different month, possibly suggesting the passage of time. Moving right from these symbols, the student has included a manipulated photograph of a dog and 3 sparkly stickers of smiling faces. Central to the page is a stack of books with text written on the pages of each book. The student's understanding of perspective is evident in the way she drew the books. Continuing across the page the student has drawn a female figure drinking from a milkshake that has been collaged on top of a small white cloud. The positioning of the female figure suggests that she may be reading or writing in the book in front of her. The page has a surrealist feel to it, almost as if the imagery is representative of various fleeting thoughts the student had while working on the page. Unlike Figure 7 the imagery in Figure 8 hints at a collection of scattered events over an extended period of time. The student has utilized repetition of pattern and colored in the negative space near the dog picture and the shirt of the girl. Additionally, the composition has a strong linear influence that is evident in both the organization of images and in the images themselves. There is even a reference to outside knowledge of math shown in the measured angles to the left and right of the central book. While the linear aspects of the composition clearly indicated the passage of time, when paired with the text written in the open book, the student's exploration of personal experience becomes more evident. She writes, *I just kinda wanna get out of here. I do love it*

here, it's nice. But I just think that it's more of a place that is for visiting or maybe I could stay if the people who cause me agony and pain and tension or any kind of negativity would leave. Maybe that way I can stay and finish high school here. Otherwise I don't know what I'm gonna do for the next 3 ½ years. Unless maybe she got help. I just really think she needs it. And if she relapses I'm done. I'm moving out because I can't deal with something like that. I would no longer be able to get through things. She talks about giving up but she never does. If she actually did, I'm done. I've thought about leaving, not running away exactly but going to an alternative. Now that Buddy is gone it would be easier to get her out and for me to move in. I'm just glad I have a good supportive group of friends. She makes fun of me for staying because of them, but you know what? These girls are my new family.

After reading the students writing it becomes clear that the chaos portrayed in the imagery is reflective of her personal situation. While the viewer does not know exact details of the student's life, it is evident that she is not happy and feels like her life is out of control, much like the imagery in the journal page especially in the blank expression on the girl drawn on the page. The student also writes about how her friends have become her new family and are a big part of why she wants to stay. The three smile stickers seem to be a reflection of this thought since they appear to radiate energy and actually change the hand of the girl at the bottom of the page. The emotion seems to be stifled excitement. This can be seen in the array of color; however, all the colors seem to be slightly muted, with the three stickers jumping out at the viewer because of the vibrancy of the color and shimmer in the sticker. While the exact meaning of this image is not completely clear, the page emotes the confusion and uncertainty reflected in the writing, making Figure 8 an outstanding example of this assignment. Not only did the student experiment with new art materials, but she also paired images with words so completely that their

meanings rely on each other. Her exploration of thought makes us ask the question, what has happened to her when no one was looking?

Lesson 5: Rise up and CREATE

Listen. There's a beat within you, and it's more that your heart. It's the sound of your personal rhythm, the words in you shout in your bones, the leaps you dance in your dreams, and the grief you hide behind your smiles. Embrace that beat and start creating to it. Let it become a beautiful symphony before your eyes. Rise up and CREATE. Truth is beauty. Art journals are visual expressions of the true noise, colors, clutter, emotions and people within us. Anything is possible on the pages of our journals, and only we set the limits. So...what if we refuse to limit our expression? What if we drop right into the deepest parts of our noise and clutter...(Woods & Dinino, 2007, p. 7)

Thus far in the journaling exercises the students have gradually been permitted more and more freedom of choice. The lessons have encouraged students to explore their personal identities, experiment with artistic mediums and draw upon the fundamentals of art and design learned in class. Lesson five in the visual journaling process is almost absent of instruction, with the goal of empowering students to create unique and experimental pages on their own. On the last day of instruction the students are shown a documentary about Dan Eldon titled *The art of life* (Tsai, 2008). Dan Eldon began keeping detailed journals of his life when he was only 14 years old, much of which documented his life while living in Africa. Eldon died during a political riot when he was only 22 years old and his 17 journals have served as artistic and emotional inspiration for a vast assortment of people (Tsai, 2008).

I chose this particular documentary because student's can identify with Eldon in both age and experiences. Dan Eldon is not a name in the art history books, rather he serves as a contemporary for the students, providing them with evidence of journaling from someone in a similar demographic as them. After watching the documentary the students are challenged to embrace life and journaling as Dan Eldon did, seeing everyday as an opportunity to explore and

grow as individuals. This 5th visual journaling assignment marks the true beginning of the student's individual journaling process. Since they are not given a prompt or specific materials to use, students must combine lived experiences, learned art techniques and creative experiments to create truly personal and significant pages. The beginning of this independent journaling allows the students to call upon higher order thinking skills like problem solving and application of knowledge when creating their pages. There are no examples to follow, no right or wrong way to complete each week's collection of pages, rather the student is empowered to make choices when determining the direction of their journals.

The hope is that through this guided process ending in complete artistic freedom, the students will pursue personally significant subject matter, thus creating personal meaning, while also solidifying artistic and intellectual meaning through experimentation and application of art media and techniques. Lesson 5 transforms the visual journal from a receiver of assignments into a receiver of lived experiences. When reviewing the 5th entries the students journeyed about their past, present and futures, with the resulting pages being filled with an energy and essence previously unseen. There is a raw emotion present and a vibrant energy can be felt radiating from each page.

The images that follow are student examples from this 5th assignment. While each lesson has included my analysis after the student examples, I felt that it was important for the reader to experience these final pages in their purest form, without commentary or outside interpretation. The pages that follow combine word and image to create something unique and meaningful for both the reader and the student responsible for the page. These images speak to the power of the visual journaling experiences and the success of the previous four lessons.

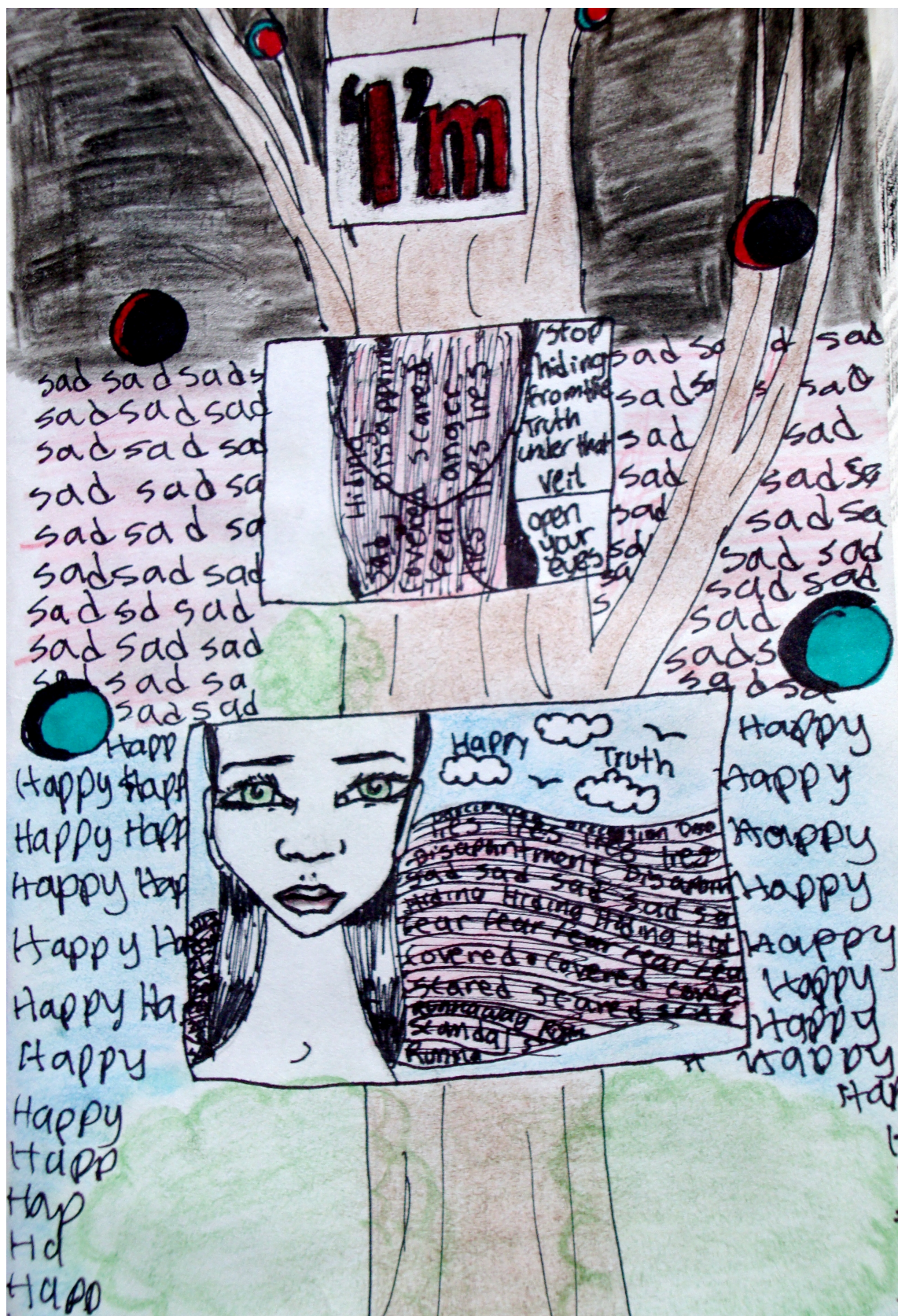


Figure 9

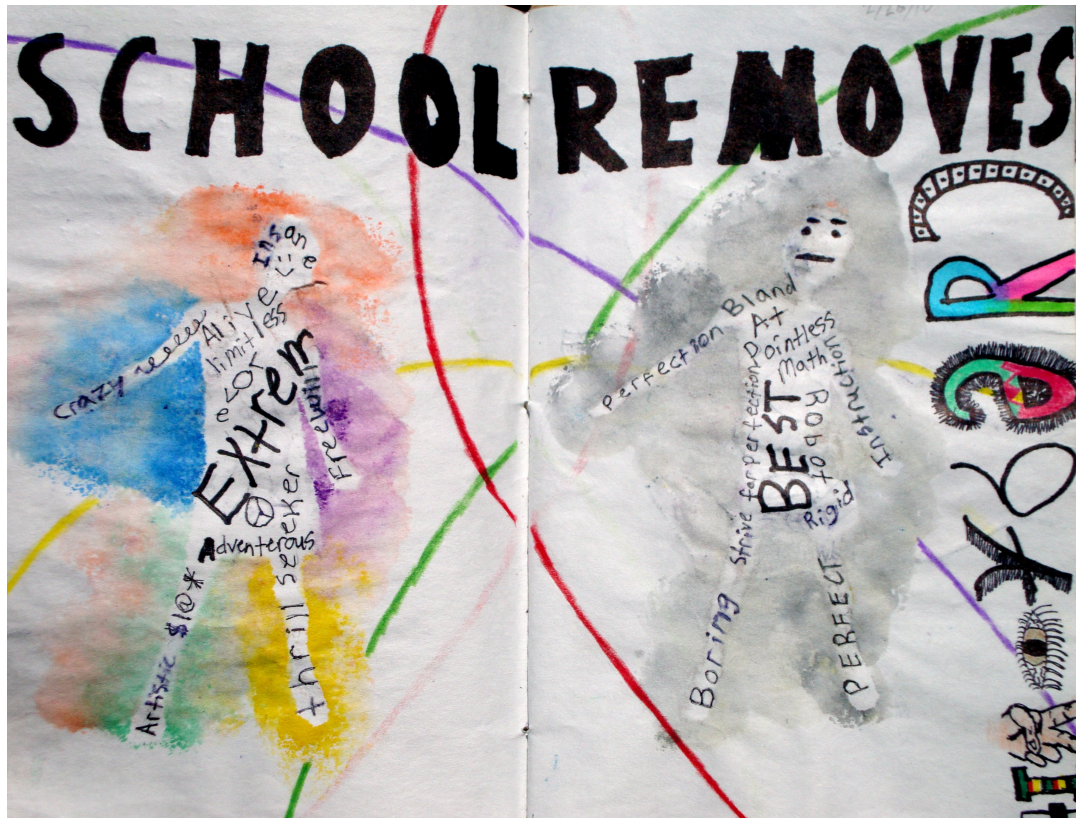


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

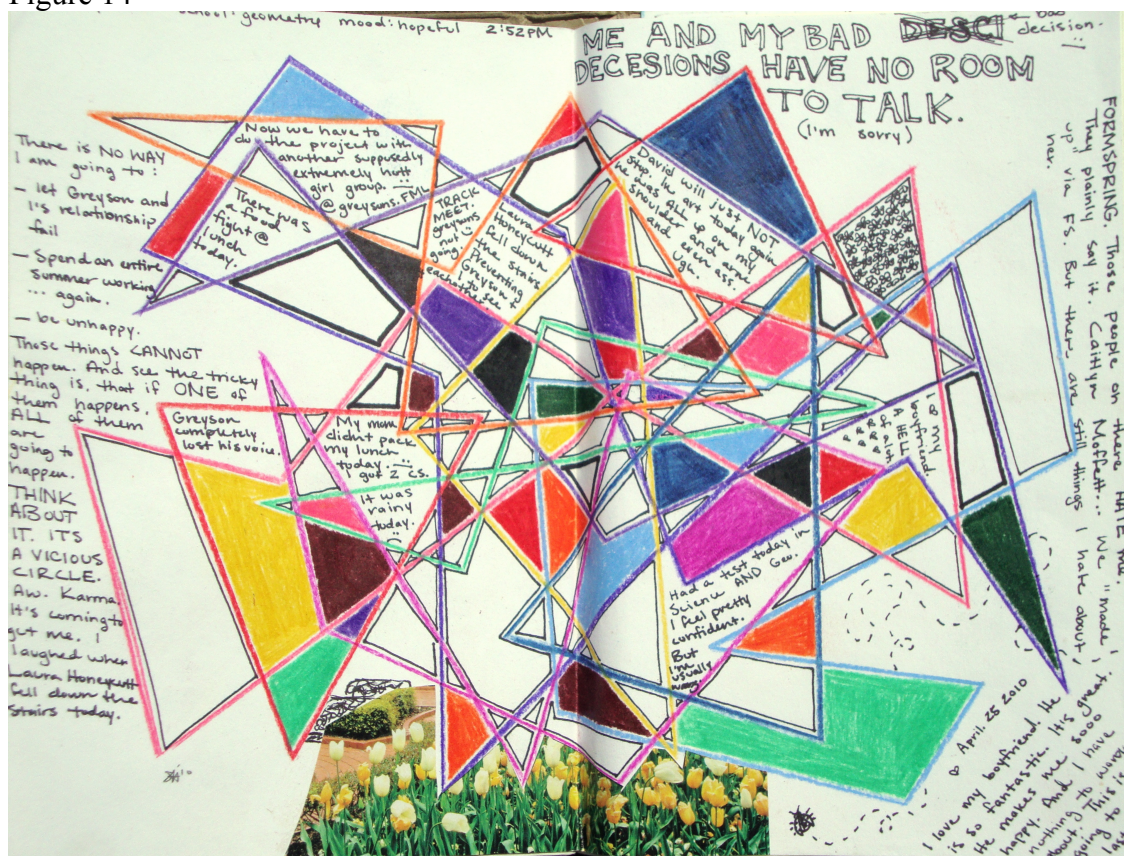


Figure 15



Figure 16

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

What is an experience unless it is reflected upon and connected to the world? Too often the popular pedagogy moves along a linear path that offers no place to sit and pause. I (and others) need mango trees and Visual Journals to record and reflect on living and learning. Teaching and learning is a continuous process of reconstruction of experience and meaning. Teaching requires caring and caring drives inquiry and reflection – the quest for better, more meaningful connections among teachers, students, and subject matter. (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p.125)

The evidence that visual journaling is an effective educational pedagogy for student meaning making is clearly demonstrated in the powerful collection of student images and text. Long after these students leave high school they will be able to return to their journals and reflect. The once blank pages have become visual and written indicators of lived experiences and through the process of journaling about those experiences, students come to know themselves as individuals. Essentially, the pages of their journals have become artifacts marking their discovery of self. The visual journal is a work of art in its entirety. Some pages stand out as outstanding examples of artistic mastery and others showcase the student's emotional state; however, taken as a whole the visual journal is a physical representation of the process towards aesthetic meaning making. These journals literally map the student's journey through Dewey's aesthetic experience by beginning with the understanding of emotion, moving to the incorporation of past experiences and ideas, and culminating in the ability to create new and unique visuals fueled by the growth of the student's ability to create both personal and aesthetic meaning.

While personal and aesthetic meaning making are central to the secondary art experience, it is the overall goal of the educational system to empower students with the tools they need to think both critically and creatively in their daily experiences both in and out of school. The introduction of the visual journal in the high school art room is a step towards encouraging

students to think critically and respond creatively. Through the process of realizing, synthesizing and utilizing experiences and emotions, students learn to guide themselves through the critical thinking process. The journals are not defined by strict guidelines or carefully constructed examples, rather they encourage students to problem solve and work through ideas. Independent, innovative and imaginative thinkers have shaped great societies and the visual journaling process encourages this type of intellectual thought.

Through the marriage of image and text, past and present experiences, art methods and techniques, the visual journal begins a process that molds the individual as they work through it's pages. However, the power of these journals as tools for establishing meaning cannot be merely stumbled across. The five lessons examined in this research guide students through a process that first focuses on the establishment of personal meaning, then incorporates the aesthetic experience and finally encourages independent thought. While the lessons themselves serve as strong indicators of the effectiveness of the visual journal, when paired with the images of student work these lessons become landmarks in the student's journey towards personal, aesthetic and intellectual growth.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board
 East Carolina University, 600 Moye Boulevard
 1L-09 Brody Medical Sciences Bldg. • Greenville, NC 27834
 Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • www.ecu.edu/irb
 Chair and Director of Biomedical IRB: L. Wiley Nifong, MD
 Chair and Director of Behavioral and Social Science IRB: Susan L. McCammon, PhD

Date: April 8, 2010

Principal Investigator: Sara Scott, MAED Candidate
Dept./Ctr./Institute: 1794 Sloop Pt. Loop Road
Mailstop or Address: Hampstead, NC 28443

RE: Exempt Certification *WCK*
UMCIRB# 10-0185
Funding Source: Unfunded

Title: Visual Journaling Towards Greater Meaning Making in the Secondary Art Classroom

Dear Sara Scott:

On 4.8.10, the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) determined that your research meets ECU requirements and federal exemption criterion #1 which includes research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices,.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your Internal Processing Form and Protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

The UMCIRB Office will hold your exemption application for a period of five years from the date of this letter. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit an Exemption Certification Request at least 30 days before the end of the five year period.

Sincerely,

Chairperson, University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board

Attachments:
 Parental Permission Form (received 4.8.10)

Cc: Alice Arnold, EdD

APPENDIX B: PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I'm presently working on my Master's of Art Education at East Carolina University. As part of my degree requirements, I am planning an educational research project to take place in my classroom that will help me to learn more about and improve visual journaling in the secondary art classroom. The fundamental goal of this research study is evaluate and analyze the use of visual journals in the secondary art room.

As part of this research project in my classroom, your child will participate in various journaling activities that will allow me to track journaling progress. As this study is for educational research purposes only, the results of these activities **will not** affect your child's grade.

I am requesting permission from you to use your child's visual journal in my research study. Please know that participation is entirely voluntary.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at school at 910-251-6100 (ext. 329) or by emailing me at sara.scott@nhcs.net. If you permit your child's data to be used in my study, please return the attached form. Thank you for your interest in my educational research study.

Your Partner in Education,

Ms. Sara Scott

As the parent or guardian of _____,
(write your child's name)

I grant my permission for Ms. Scott to use his/her visual journal in her educational research project regarding visual journaling. I voluntarily consent to Ms. Scott using images or information from my child's visual journal in her study. I fully understand that the data collected will not affect my child's grade, will be kept completely confidential, and will be used only for the purposes of her research study.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date _____

Signature of Student: _____ Date _____

UMCIRB
APPROVED
FROM 4-8-10
TO no expiration

APPENDIX C: NCSCS COMPETENCY GOALS

COMPETENCY GOAL 1: The learner will develop critical and creative thinking skills and perceptual awareness necessary for understanding and producing art.

Objectives

- 1.01 Plan and organize for creating art.
- 1.02 Devise and use strategies for imagining and implementing images.
- 1.03 Create multiple solutions in problem solving and discuss that some solutions are better than others.
- 1.04 Recognize and discuss that concepts and images from a variety of sources can be used to create original art.
- 1.05 Show how ideas develop and evolve over a period of time.
- 1.06 Manipulate sensory stimuli to develop perceptual awareness.
- 1.07 Use the vocabulary of art in written and oral form.

COMPETENCY GOAL 2: The learner will develop skills necessary for understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes. (National Standard 1)

Objectives

- 2.01 Explore and discuss unique properties and potential of art materials.
- 2.02 Demonstrate techniques and processes for working with each art material.
- 2.03 Communicate and express ideas through a variety of materials and techniques.
- 2.04 Evaluate and select materials, techniques and processes to facilitate the creation of artwork
- 2.05 Demonstrate the safe and responsible use of tools and materials.

COMPETENCY GOAL 3: The learner will organize the components of a work into a cohesive whole through knowledge of organizational principles of design and art elements. (National Standard 2)

Objectives

3.01 Recognize, apply and evaluate the elements of art in an aesthetic composition.

3.02 Recognize, apply and evaluate the design principles used in composition.

3.03 Use intuitive perception to solve problems.

3.04 Use experimentation to solve problems.

3.05 Use critical thought and analysis in the problem-solving process.

3.06 Demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal or other purposes of art.

APPENDIX D: STUDENT QUESTIONS

1. Where are you?
2. Are you in the car or out of the car?
3. If you are inside – Which seat are you in?
4. What are you doing?
5. If you are out of the car, what part of it are you facing?
6. What time of day or night does it seem to be?
7. Who else is there?
8. Why are you there?
9. What season?
10. About how old are you?
11. What's in front of you?
12. What's to your left?
13. What's to your right?
14. What's behind you?
15. What's above your head?
16. What's below your feet?

(Barry, 2008, p. 144-145).

