

AN A/R/TOGRAPHIC STUDY OF MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S BOOK ARTISTS:  
DEVELOPING A PLACE-BASED PEDAGOGY OF PLEASURE

By  
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of MIRA REISBERG find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Chair

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# acknowledgements

Before entering this body of work known as my dissertation, I would like to gratefully acknowledge that I have not produced this epic piece of work all alone. My committee members have been with me throughout my doctoral life. Mike Hayes taught me social theory, inspiring me with his passion for the practical and intellectual uses of theory. Gail Furman taught me qualitative research methods and created an inspired lifelong researcher out of this intensely curious person. Rita Irwin led me into the life of living inquiry through a/r/tography, patiently helping me try to make sense of some of the more abstract elements. And finally, my chair David Gruenewald inspired me to embrace place-based education as a radical and effective pedagogy for empowering children and their communities to live well, love well, learn through pleasure and do good in the world. Along with inspiring me to be a place-based pedagogue, David also mentored me throughout the sometimes grueling process of writing this dissertation with great patience, perseverance, brilliance, and courage.

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Throughout this process I have felt nurtured in many ways and I think this deep sense of being cared for has influenced this product to be one that cares for. Thus this dissertation serves as a synthesis of the many traditions it has built upon, the many people that have helped in its creation, and the places that have helped bring it into being. Because of all these factors, while it has been one of the most difficult things I've ever done in my life, creating this dissertation has also been one of the most pleasurable.

An **A/R/TOGRAPHIC** study of  
Multicultural Children's Book Artists:  
Developing a Place-Based Pedagogy of **PLEASURE**



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DEVELOPING A PLACE-BASED PEDAGOGY OF PLEASURE

**aBStRact**

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Chair: David A. Gruenewald

The participants in this study are six multicultural children's book artists, including myself. Between us we have won many awards, while our images have been seen by literally millions of children. These pictures exist outside the official curriculum presenting as part of children's educative experiences in mostly unspoken, unattended, and unacknowledged ways. Thus, the images in our books exist as possibilities within this liminal space to activate processes of inquiry such as those related to themes such as race, place, and art.

My study utilized a range of pedagogies and theoretical lenses including a/r/tography, critical multicultural education and analysis, place-based education, cultural production, and visual culture studies to explore the interconnections between race, place, and art in the participants' lives and art. The use of these lenses also enabled exploration of the intersecting contexts of place and culture, i.e., looking at where each of us comes from as sites of colonialist appropriation and resistance (including our bodies) while positioning our books and lives as counter-narratives to the ideologies that have, and continue to oppress and marginalize us.

In addition, my primary methodology of a/r/tography with its dual practice of image and text creation as both reflection and representation, coming from the subjective position of the researcher as an artist/researcher and teacher, has led me to begin developing a new pedagogy. This pedagogy draws on the many themes that emerged in the research to propose a method of integrated fine art education that combines place-based and critical multicultural art education with a strong dose of the pleasure principle.

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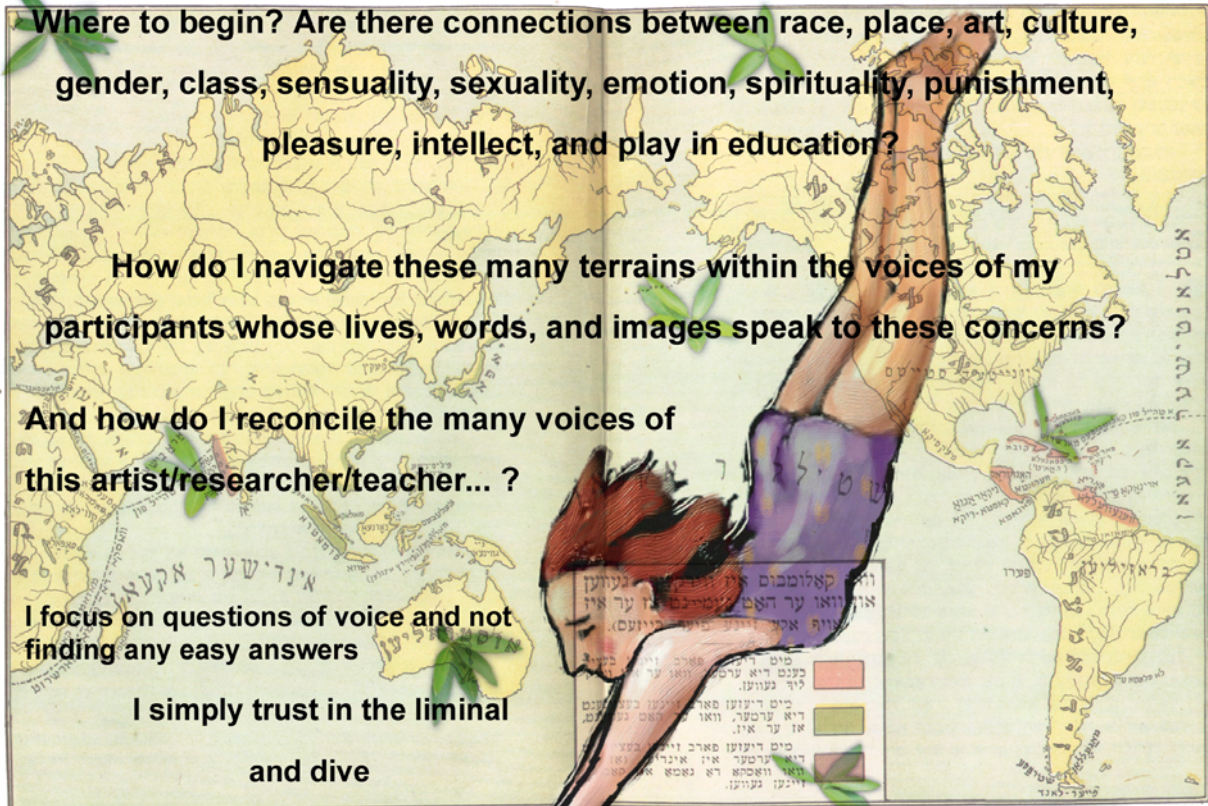
# dedication

For Guy with all my love



# chapter one

## Introduction/Immersion/Overview



Where to begin? Are there connections between race, place, art, culture, gender, class, sensuality, sexuality, emotion, spirituality, punishment, pleasure, intellect, and play in education?

How do I navigate these many terrains within the voices of my participants whose lives, words, and images speak to these concerns?

And how do I reconcile the many voices of this artist/researcher/teacher... ?

I focus on questions of voice and not finding any easy answers

I simply trust in the liminal and dive

in

The poetic voice

the academic voice

using my voice

giving voice

sharing voice

finding and

amplifying voice

making space for my participants' voices

to come through loud and clear

soft and powerful

Who speaks for whom?

Creating space for my participants' voices to be heard in the world of academia...

Swimming in uncertainty, reveling in ambiguity, exploring unknown territory, starting with the blank sheet, the blank canvas, the blank screen... my work in this dissertation is concerned with a wide range of themes and issues that constitute various forms of border crossings. I transgress boundaries that are often separated and firmly proscribed to show the interrelationships of territories such as race, place, art, culture, gender, class, sensuality, sexuality, emotion, spirituality, punishment, pleasure, intellect, and play in education. By exploring the lives and work of six multicultural children's book artists (including myself) I hope to make clear these interrelationships while highlighting their importance in the field of education. Utilizing an a/r/tographic methodology, which emphasizes the dual meaning-making systems of writing and image making, further permeates borders such as those between the social sciences and humanities by combining image and text as both data and interpretation. Furthermore, engaging in a process of "living inquiry" contests notions of the researcher as dispassionate, objective observer through the interrelated positionality of the researcher as artist/researcher/teacher. Thus this research is both portrait and self-portrait; biography and autobiography; the project both cultural and consumer product.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) writes: "Voice in portraiture encompasses... epistemology, ideology, and method [as well as] reflecting the portraitist's explicit interest in authorship, interpretation, relationship, aesthetics and narrative" (p.87). While reading this I ask: What voice do images have? How can they dance with words, against words, underneath and above words to provide meanings beyond the textual, complementing the textual, in partnership with and independent of the written and spoken words for which I wish to give voice? What dance do I create with the words and images that arise as a result of this research? There is a well-known truism—children's picture books are a marriage of pictures and words. This research is an academic wedding of images and texts.

### ***The Participants***

My participants are six multicultural artists (including me) who make children's picture books. We are all artists, inquirers, and teachers in some capacity or another. And now I am also an academic. Elizabeth Gomez, Joe Sam, Carl Angel, Maya Gonzalez, George Littlechild, and I are all deeply reflective artists who also live in the world of the senses, the imagination, the

spirit, and the emotions—finding great pleasure and meaning in our work and in our relationships with place and community. I work in a wonderfully progressive university, but I rarely hear terms such as *the senses*, *the imagination*, *the spirit*, and *the emotions* discussed in concert, and it is not often that I read about them in relation to race, place, culture, and art in educational literature. My participants are mostly close friends whose work I admire. I don't pretend to possess complete objectivity. I don't pretend to be an omniscient narrator. I am deeply suspicious of words like "totally objective" or "the truth," reeking as they do of some kind of absolutist positivism less suited to the nuances of arts-based qualitative research. My participants are taking me on a journey of exploration with their words, actions, and images. Through a process of discovery I hope to uncover and share deeper understandings of multicultural children's literature and visual culture through exploring how our books and lives reflect and refract issues of race, place, culture, and art.

Although most children's literature professors, progressive teachers, and librarians at work in the world of multicultural education know my participants' books and my books, they rarely know our words, our histories, and the interconnections between them and our art. Often they are unaware of and unskilled in reading the texts embedded in the art, being far more comfortable and literate in the world of words. In addition, few art educators use our books as art exemplars as though this art-as-illustration does not qualify for the hallowed walls of "high" art education. And, this too, is worth questioning. As stated earlier, my research is a journey of exploration. There are no definitive truths or answers here, just possibilities, avenues for consideration, avenues for learning, questions leading to more questions and perhaps in the space between these questions, as Rita Irwin says, there is meaning rather than answers, both "certainty and ambiguity" (2004, p. 29). Or as someone once said, "Perhaps the rainbow *is* the pot of gold."

My own experiences as a multicultural children's book illustrator have taught me that as artists we bring our own stories into our children's book art. These narratives frequently address issues of race, place, culture, spirituality, emotion, sensuality, and pleasure on both liminal and explicit levels. In addition, my experiences as a teacher have made clear how our books, particularly the images within them, are used both in the education system and outside of it as part of children's experiences of visual culture. This latter space is known as the "liminal currere," a concept Sameshima and Irwin (2006) have extended from Grumet and Pinar's (1976) writing

about currere (curriculum as a verb) into the liminal. This is also a theme that I will be exploring further on in the dissertation. Finally as a researcher, I am aware of the dearth of academic literature available linking these many themes together in an organic and interrelated web, much like the web of life itself, and thus I wish to address these interconnections with my dissertation. One of the goals of academic research is to study areas of importance that are under-represented or missing from the literature (Boote & Beile, 2005). This lack in the literature provided me with support for my intuitive sense that this research was worth doing.

When I went looking for literature on multicultural children's book artists, I found a wealth of information on the importance of authentic multicultural literature for creating awareness, equity, and representation (Harris, 1997; Ladson Billings, 2000; Mitchell, 2003; Nieto, 2000; Yenika Agbaw, 1997). I also found some brief literature that examines stereotypes in children's books. One example of the latter is Mitchell's (2003) adaptation from the Council on Interracial Books for Children:

Check the illustrations. Look for stereotypes—oversimplified generalizations... which usually carry derogatory implications.... Look for tokenism.... [Do racial minorities] look just like whites except for being tinted or colored in?.... Do the illustrations depict minorities in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles? (p.180)

I also found a great deal of literature on the purposes of illustration in children's picture books (Goldsmith, 1984; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991; Temple, Martinez, Yokota, & Naylor, 2002); the techniques and styles of illustrations in children's picture books (Mitchell, 2003; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Temple, Martinez, Yokota et al., 2002); and the visual texts of images in children's picture books (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Nodelman, 1988; Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991; Spitz, 1999). But my attempts to find more than very brief examples (Mitchell, 2003) linking the lives, ideas, and images of multicultural children's book artists were to no avail. Nor was I able to find any in-depth literature specifically giving voice and allowing voice to and from the multicultural artists themselves.

Also lacking in the literature are texts investigating the importance of images with race, place, and culture as interweaving threads in multicultural children's books. How do these threads connect and contribute to the construction of the art, particularly from the point of view of the illustrators themselves? By providing a forum to explore these ideas of race, place, culture,

imagery, identity, sensuality, emotion, experience, spirit, and the imagination, I hope to also address this absence in the literature.

Through constructing portraits with a/r/tographic methods that create an intertextual dance of written and visual forms of inquiry, reflection, and representation, I plan on exploring the lives and work of my participants, addressing these themes along with my own process in creating these multimodal representations of the research. In other words, I will be creating texts about texts, and texts about images, sometimes portrayed as images and other times as words, to which readers/viewers/academics will bring their own historically crafted lenses as they interpret/construct meaning/understand, and question my text. In this way I hope to deepen and perhaps even challenge our notions of what these multicultural children's books and the artists who help make them are about while self-reflexively commenting on my own process as an a/r/tographer interweaving my artistic, researching, and teaching practices.

### **The Structure**

The chapters of this dissertation are organized to create a cohesive narrative that also addresses the major requirements of the genre. However, instead of situating my literature review as a "stand alone" chapter, I have integrated it throughout the dissertation so that, to paraphrase Herr and Anderson (2005), the literature functions "in conversation with the data."

In addition I have also interspersed my own a/r/tographic reflections throughout the dissertation to both comment on the research and connect it to practice in ways that are reminiscent of some of Freire's (1970/2003) ideas on praxis, i.e, that words without action are essentially meaningless. I would now like to provide an overview of each of the chapters to further guide the reader before launching into Chapter Two—Art and Art Education.

#### ***Chapter Two: Art and Art Education***

In chapter two I look at the relationships between art theory and practice, and art education theory and practice. I do so by comparing modern and postmodern theories and how they have played out in the field of education. However, postmodernism, as Rita Irwin points out, also incorporates modernism because without the modern there is no postmodern (Irwin, 2006, personal communication). In looking at some of the many approaches to art education, I explore the following methodologies and conceptual lenses: instrumentalist arts education, discipline



based arts education, social reconstructionist arts education, multicultural arts education, critical multicultural arts education, visual culture studies, and artists as teachers in the schools. Each of these traditions has distinct approaches to education; however, some of these approaches—such as social reconstructionist arts education, critical multicultural arts education, and visual culture studies—are interrelated in their activist stances. In addition, I position visual cultural studies in this chapter, though it is a theoretical lens that will inform the entire dissertation. I also include several personal reflections on my own experiences with different art education approaches and my process as an art educator, as well as a reflection on what education means to me, and what I believe can happen by utilizing place-based multicultural arts education.

### ***Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives***

In chapter three I explicate my major theoretical perspectives: a/r/tography, critical multicultural education and analysis (CMEA), and place-based education. The first of these, a/r/tography, is both a theoretical lens and a methodology, and will be explored in detail in my methodology chapter. However, it conceptually informs this dissertation in profound ways; hence I introduce it here. CMEA is an umbrella for a variety of critical pedagogies that address issues of race, culture, gender, class, and sexual orientation, all of which concern the lives and work of my participants in different capacities. The final perspective, place-based education, is one that I find especially meaningful and effective in my work as an art educator.

Utilizing concepts of place and place-based education I explore why context counts, paying particular attention to David Gruenewald's (2003b) concepts of "decolonization and reinhabitation." Gruenewald proposes a frame to connect social and environmental justice by asking how we can divest ourselves from the effects of colonization that impact people, places, and animals, and how can we make all our places (and lives) more habitable by starting with the local.

In addition to covering a variety of place related approaches and perspectives, I include a rubric created by Birgitte Brander, David Gruenewald, and myself (2006) for an article titled "Your Place or Mine? Reading Art, Place, and Culture in Multicultural Picture Books." This rubric provides prompts for examining place, culture, and art in multicultural children's picture books through place-based, critical pedagogy, and social reconstructionist art lenses. Another section describes how "place is a multifaceted construct" to highlight the importance of connecting to and gaining wisdom from the places that we live so as to participate in the process of de-

colonization and reinhabitation using place-based education practices.

Personal reflections in this section include looking at the way my own teaching strives to incorporate critical place-based, multicultural arts education as a form of culturally responsive teaching and my own complex relationship with place and placelessness.

#### ***Chapter Four: Methodology: The How That Follows the What and Why***

My methodology chapter begins by addressing the use of each of the theoretical perspectives described in the previous chapter. However, it focuses more in-depth on the use of a/r/tography as a main methodology. Along with a/r/tography, I also discuss other qualitative research practices including the following: self as researcher and participant, my method of participant selection, data collection, validity, ethics, benefits to participants, and my methods of reflective interpretation and children's book analysis. In addition, I include two personal reflections commenting on my process as an a/r/tographer.

#### ***Chapter Five: The Portraits***

My portraits provide the meat of this dissertation where the participants' voices speak directly to their experiences and ideas while I explore both their words and art as they give life to the major themes in the dissertation. In addition, as part of my process of "living inquiry" I have created two visual portraits as bookends to each participant's narrative. The first portrait is a photographic collage of the artist including some of his or her work, and when possible, a glimpse into where the artist lives. The second portrait, which the participants will receive as a thank you gift, is how I see them and includes an animal that the artist either said was important to them or that I felt represents him or her.

#### ***Chapter Six: Concluding/Meaning Making/Understanding/Reflecting: Developing a Place-Based Pedagogy of Pleasure***

In chapter six, my final chapter within the body of this dissertation, I continue the creative process of meaning making/understanding and reflecting on the themes and issues that arose in the study. I pay particular attention to the words and images of each of the participants as viewed through my theoretical perspectives, sometimes finding meaning or understanding and other times finding more questions. Through looking, listening, reading, creating art, and reflecting, I come to develop a new pedagogy, which I call "A Place-Based Pedagogy of Pleasure." Thus, chapter six serves to not only reflect on what emerged in the data as viewed through each of my

theoretical lenses, but also to reflect on my process in creating this pedagogy.

### **Appendices**

Following a bibliography of all sources cited, my dissertation ends with a series of appendices, which include the interview guide, as well as a series of resources for educators, some of which have been collaboratively written with my students. Each of the students whose writing and art is included wished to be intentionally identified so they could be credited for their work in this dissertation and future publications. These resources, all of which address my participants' lives or books in some way, include:

Appendix A: The Interview Guide

Appendix B: Participants' Awards and Honors List

Appendix C: Integrated Fine Art's Required Course Packet Readings and Video List

Appendix D: Integrated Fine Art's Lesson Plans

Appendix E: Integrated Fine Art's Student Handouts on the Artists

Appendix F: Integrated Fine Art's Student Handouts on Books

Appendix G: Integrated Fine Art's Selected Student Book Projects

## I WORRY

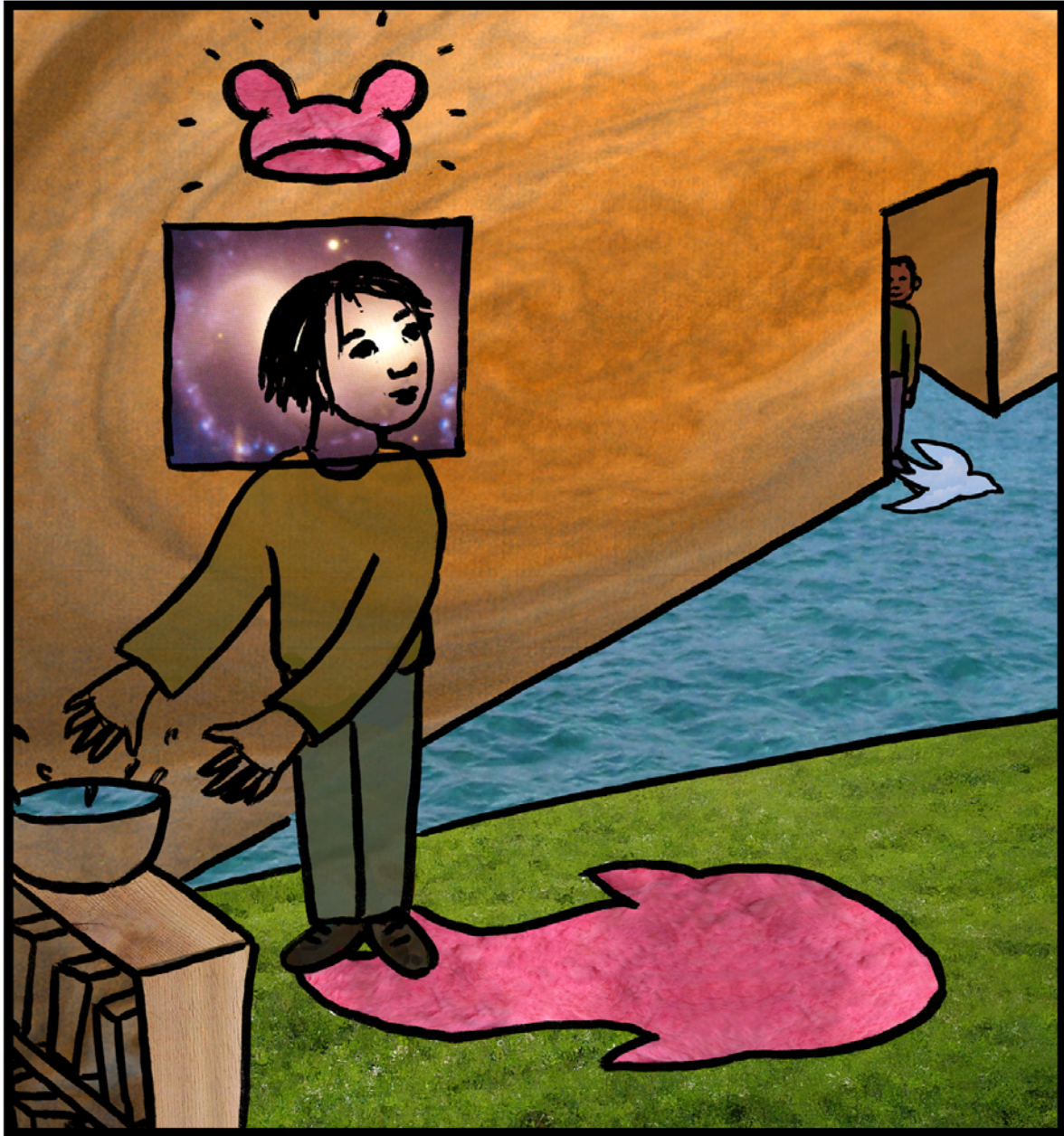
I made this image while immersed in the many perspectives involved in the coming chapter. It was part exploration, part explanation of what art education means to me, and what I believe can happen *through* the field of art education. In many ways, this image serves as a synthesis of my research and teaching interests in the field of art and education. It is an exploration rather than an illustration and thus is "open to interpretation." Consequently, I worry that it may be interpreted in ways other than intended. As a Jew I am sensitive to the ways that Jews are portrayed in various media. Think Shylock-or the frequent portrayal of Jews as greedy or neurotic. In films, if Jewish characters are attractive, they are usually portrayed by non-Jews. I try to bring what I have learned from my own experiences and what I have learned in critical race studies about the injustice of many racial depictions to all my work. At this point in my career as a children's book illustrator I am hesitant to depict people from cultures other than my own both from fear of "getting it wrong" and also from wanting to allow the space for people of the culture to depict their own stories. And here I've drawn an African-American child in the shadows of a doorway with a White child foregrounded in light. Why?

My art making process is one where I usually work intuitively and then I understand what I have created later. This was certainly the case here. I believe that art and art education can influence society, bringing an awareness that foregrounds racial inequality while promoting activism for both social justice and environmental stewardship. This is what I imagine my picture is telling me about how I wish to implement art education theory and practice.

The point of view is an elevated one looking down as a theorist would at a slight distance. The White child is androgynous, perhaps a girl or a boy (I'll call her a girl) looking back toward the African-American child. The two children show socio/economic relationships of privilege and disadvantage with the White child foregrounded and standing on a fishy shadow of fluffy pink White privilege, also manifested in the Mickey Mouse ears signifying the Disneyfication of culture and concomitant reification of

# chapter two

## Art and Education Theories and Practices



White privilege. The African American child has been held back in the background, but his shadow is a bird already taking flight saying “no more”. The girl is reaching toward a bowl of energized water, the same water that the boy is standing in, connecting them. The girl’s shadow is a fish, signifying movement and the unconscious. It is made

of the same fluffy pink fur of privilege, grounding her in all that that implies. Her head is framed by what might be a television screen or a computer monitor and within the frame is an image of nebula forming representing the paradigm shift that needs to occur. The wall shows a close-up of Jupiter representing space, travel, the natural world and great possibilities. In Roman mythology Jupiter was the agricultural god in charge of the seasons, weather, and the sowing of seeds. He was also the god of creative forces. Finally, the energized water sits on a bookshelf full of books symbolizing the learning process to which I am so deeply committed.



Before delving into art education theories and practices, I believe it is important to first provide an overview of art in general that gives a sense of history to the areas of art and creative thinking. I believe the artists in my study fall within the purview of postmodernist art theory and thus, I would like to situate my research within modernist and postmodernist art terminology and perspectives. Providing this overview will thus help position much of what follows later in this dissertation as I explore the lives and work of participants who are primarily fine artists, as well as children’s book illustrators, contributing in varying ways to the field of education. To begin, I will start with an overview of modernism and postmodernism in social theory followed by its equivalent in art theory and practice. This will then lead into a discussion on issues raised in Suzi Gablik’s book, *The Reenchantment of Art* (1991), before I conclude the chapter with an exploration of some of the theories and practices related to art education in K-12 settings.

**Modern and Postmodern Social Theory  
and its Application in Art Theory and Practice**

Within the past century in the world of art theory (and practice) there have been two major movements that are both connected to and separate from the social theories of their times—Modernism and Postmodernism.

***Modernism***

Modernism as a normative project built on Enlightenment ideals originating around the time of the European Renaissance. Modernism later became the dominant ideology with the emergence of democracy toward the end of the eighteenth century. Modernism’s central tenets

privileged science and rationalism, binary oppositional thinking – such as mind/body, intellect/emotion, right and wrong – and saw history as a linear progress toward an inevitable beneficent advancement (Dodd, 1999; Fehr, 1997; Sullivan, 2005). Fehr describes Modernist ideals as including "the notion of respect for the individual over the group; belief in the supremacy of Western culture and in reason as a superior way of knowing; the assumption that psychology can explain behavior, and science the universe; and the advent of global war" (Fehr, 1997, p. 27).

### ***Modernist Art***

Modernism as an art movement spans a large swath of time with many artists representing different "schools of art" within each time period. As it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explicate the entirety of Modernist art practice I am only going to provide a brief overview within the past hundred years, ultimately focusing on Abstract Expression as an art movement that helped trigger the beginnings of postmodernism in art.

Art theorists and historians during the Modernist era have fashioned a linear chronology of art styles and concerns labeled as different "schools of art." These are seen as a value-laden progression from one school of art or time period to the next. Within the past century these models have included: Impressionism, Post Impressionism, Surrealism, Cubism, Expressionism, Social Realism, and Abstract Expressionism. This trajectory of art history canonizes certain Western artists within these "schools" of art, while artists who fall outside the "schools," primarily women and those of non-European descent, have mostly been lost to the waste-bin of time and historical neglect (Fehr, 1997; Freedman, 2003; Gablik, 1991).

When looking at art theorists within the past fifty years, Clement Greenberg could easily be held as epitomizing the late-Modernist art theoretician. He made his own career, as well as those of a handful of artists he championed (mainly White male artists) such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, by asserting the primary value of formal qualities such as the flatness of paint and the process of the artist over the content of the work. He believed that content stood in the way of "pure art" and that truly modern art held no message other than to comment on the material of art itself (Williams, 2004). This form of art became known as Abstract Expressionism.

Jagodzinski (1997b) describes how abstract expressionism as a Modernist force was

solidified during the 1950s following the devastation of Europe and the destruction of its many museums. He writes:

America emerged as the cultural and capital spearhead. Abstract Expressionism proved to be ideologically advantageous in promoting the Cold War rhetoric during this post-World War II period. *Modernism was therefore integrated into a conservative ideology of art.*  
(p.140)

Jagodzinski cites Serge Guilbaut's (1983) book, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, and Eva Cockcroft's (1974) article, "Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War," whose authors described "the interrelationship between J.D. Rockefeller, the Museum of Modern Art, and the CIA involvement in promoting Abstract Expressionism as *the* expression of artists freed of political and state interventions" (p. 139).

This particular Modernist art movement was presented as being ostensibly apolitical in that it held no message other than its own form. However, in effect, Abstract Expressionism supported an uncritical ideology of capitalist hegemony in contrast to the highly political and critical art that had preceded it. Social realist artists such as Ben Shahn and Dorothea Lange whose work explicitly commented on social and political injustice were now supplanted by abstract expressionists whose art made no comment on anything other than its own aesthetics. By contextualizing this last form of Modernist art theory manifested in Greenberg's vision of Abstract Expressionism, we can imagine, that consciously or not, Abstract Expressionism fit neatly within the Cold War paradigm. This paradigm promoted individual wealth accumulation through the new technology of television as an American response to Russian collectivism or communism. At the same time that this specific modernist sensibility was being extolled, communities were breaking down and being replaced with the new burgeoning suburbs made possible by transportation engineer and urban planner Robert Moses's freeway system which privileged cars over people. Meanwhile, home ownership and status through the accumulation of goods became the new American dream. Those who benefited most from this paradigm shift – such as wealthy industrialist J. D. Rockefeller and the CIA—whose primary function was to protect American business interests—actively supported Modernism and abstract expressionism, a cultural art form that questioned none of these major paradigm shifts (Guilbaut, 1983).



## *Postmodernism*

As the name implies, postmodernism followed modernism chronologically. While some describe this as a progression, others such as Fehr (1997) and Jagodzinski (1997) describe it as a rupture, an oppositional move away from modernism and toward its opposite. In an increasingly fragmented world characterized by new technologies like the Internet, along with the social and environmental devastation brought on by capitalism-run-amok in the form of globalization and Disneyfication, postmodernists challenge as untenable the long-held beliefs of normative projects from the Enlightenment and Modernism. For example, Dodd (1999) describes seminal postmodernist theoreticians Lyotard and Baudrillard's work as, "refer[ring] to the demise or exhaustion of modernity as a project" (p.133). He further describes Lyotard as contending that "modern conceptions of progress are ill-suited to a postmodern age in which the grand narratives of history have fallen into disrepair" (p.132).

These "grand narratives" have privileged White, Christian heterosexuals at the expense of all others. Authors such as Fehr (1997), Said (1979), Willinsky (1998), and Bowers (1997) note the effectiveness with which science and reason have been used to justify atrocities such as slavery, the decimation of indigenous peoples, the denigration of women, and the abuse of the environment. Consequently, postmodernist theory broadens ways of knowing, validates different value systems, and challenges hegemonic power relations.

Modernist ideologies have centered on black and white constructions of reality with depictions of Western superiority, either/or answers, and justification for the exploitations of non-Westerners and the environment. In contrast, postmodernists have also broadened conceptions of what constitutes reality and what might be construed as "truth." Fehr (1997) describes the "general points of separation between modernism and postmodernism" as "the willingness of the latter to embrace, with comparative comfort, multiple, even contradictory, meanings simultaneously; to accept the tension of perpetual uncertainty as given; and to define truth as specific to time and place" (p. 28). McLaren (1995) describes postmodernism as "a time of cultural and epistemological coupure, a time during which borders are breaking down and disciplinary genres are becoming blurred" (p. 179).

Postmodernism, as exemplified by authors such as Derrida (Caputo & Derrida, 1997), Foucault (Ramazanoglu, 1993), Lyotard (Gottdiener, 1994), and Baudrillard (Jagodzinski,

1997a), has primarily been associated with the deconstruction of texts, discourses, and media to explore and critique their underlying messages of representation and social control. For example, Denzin (1994) describes postmodernist deconstruction as "the interrogation of texts... to expose the underlying meanings, biases, and preconceptions that structure the way a text conceptualizes its relation to what it describes" (p. 185).

Within this dissertation I position both image and writing as texts to explore and deconstruct looking at underlying messages that may have multiple and contradictory meanings and specific truths grounded in time, place, and culture. Using a postmodern lens enables me to look at the interrelationships between my participants' lives and work, as well as how our various cultural experiences have influenced the world-views we impart in our various texts—written, spoken, painted, drawn, etc. These world-views are encoded both literally and non-literally in these texts. However, the lens the viewer/reader brings to the texts colors the readings and, particularly in the case of visual art, the content or message can be ambiguous and open to a wide range of interpretations. This openness to interpretation will be explored in greater depth further on in the dissertation.

### ***Postmodernist Art***

Postmodernist artists and art theorists, like social theorists, also question notions of "power," "truth," "culture" and "reality." A wide range of approaches exist in the deconstruction of traditional approaches to modes of art-making, ranging from Jeff Koons to Fred Wilson, among many others. Koons markets himself and his work as aesthetic commodities that can be read as commentaries on narcissistic consumption in pieces like the all white ceramic portrait of Michael Jackson and his chimp Buddy or the soft-core, self-portrait images of Koons and his former wife, Italian pop/pornstar/politician Cicciolina, making love. Fred Wilson's work, documented in "Mining the Museum" (Corrin, King-Hammond, & Berlin, 1994), exists in the practice and product of creatively juxtaposing pieces from the Maryland Art Museum's collection to expose how racism can be so taken for granted as to be invisible. Particularly powerful pieces include the placing of a KKK hood in a vintage baby carriage, the contrast of silverware and metal shackles positioned together, and an elegant wooden chair positioned near a wooden whipping post. By mixing pieces from different collections within the museum Wilson is able to highlight the cul-

tural and historical interconnections between the different objects.

While Koon's work comments on postmodern issues of media—deconstructing our fascination with popular culture icons, voyeurism, and narcissism—his work does not immediately signify conflict or the need for social change. Wilson's work, on the other hand, raises serious issues about race and how museums unwittingly perpetuate racism in their display and labeling practices. His work has been instrumental in challenging many museums to think about the unspoken ideologies (such as which work is labeled art and which work is given the lesser label of craft) in their exhibition practices.

Contemporary art theorist Suzi Gablik (1991) categorizes these two approaches to postmodernist art as deconstructionism and reconstructionism. She is highly critical of deconstructionism, seeing it in the tradition of Jameson and Lyotard's writings as nihilistic, fragmented, and disembodied from society and the core issues threatening our planet. Gablik (1991) writes:

Despite claims by social critics like Lyotard and Fredric Jameson that our society reflects the absence of any great integrating vision or collective project, the great collective project has, in fact, presented itself. It is that of saving the earth—at this point, nothing else really matters—though this is not always readily apparent. (p. 26)

In contrast, she advocates for a reconstructionist approach that seeks connection and healing through innovative forms of activist art. However, this linguistic divide between deconstructionist and reconstructionist postmodernism seems problematic. Sullivan (2005) describes deconstruction as a method of unpacking theories and ideas to challenge perspectives "knowingly or unknowingly framed around myths such as race, culture, gender and class." He describes this form of deconstruction as "the basis for 'praxis,' for theory without action is mere rhetoric, and action without theory is anarchy" (p. 27). This, then, is a form of reconstructionism where the two terms are inextricably linked; without the deep unpacking of underlying messages that deconstruction effects, reconstruction in the form of activism can only occur at a superficial level.

My own understanding of postmodernism has been influenced by these authors among many others: Fehr (1997), Jameson (2003), Jagodzinski (1997), Dodd, (1999) and Gablik (1991), as described above; and Irwin (2004), Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2005), and Cahan and Kocur (1996), to follow. In addition, artists such as Sue Coe, Komar and Melamid, Fred Wilson,

Enriquez Chagoya, and Keith Haring as well as filmmakers such as Maya Deren, Quentin Tarantino, and Atom Egoyan have all contributed to my understanding of a theoretical perspective that advocates for a multiplicity of critical and aesthetic possibilities and interpretations rather than a narrowing of definitions. For example this quote from Fehr (1997) epitomizes my understanding of postmodernism in many ways:

Postmodernists are wary of the tidiness of modernist art histories, in which each artist and movement has its own drawer. They call the entire chest of drawers into question.

Who made the chest of drawers and why? Who wanted to make it but could not get a job in the factory? Is it *even* a chest of drawers? Is it furniture at all, or is that merely a label intended to create a line between furniture and the rest of cultural production? And last, who sells the chest of drawers, who buys it and how is the money divvied up? (p. 30)

Thus this understanding of postmodernism is fluid and in flux with openings for a wide range of understandings and expressions and even wider possibilities for deepening inquiry.

## Q U E S T I O N S L E A D I N G T O M O R E Q U E S T I O N S L E A D I N G T O M O R E Q U E S T I O N S

In this study, my questions gravitate around and spiral off the interconnections between art, place, race, and culture in the lives and work of my participants and myself. In addition, there are questions to explore in navigating the connections and disconnections between my multiple roles as artist, researcher, and teacher. Where do all these constructs fit within education and society at large? How does the art of my participants fit within the postmodern paradigm?

How do I gracefully deconstruct their various texts including visual, written, and aural texts to form an a/r/tographic whole that situates them within all of the parameters I have established for myself? How do I employ a critical perspective without compromising my relationships with the participants or compromising my integrity in this project? Where do my participants and I fit as individuals within our home culture, within our artists' culture, within the culture of geographic space, within the dominant culture, and within the globalized space of cultural production?

Fortunately a postmodernist perspective does not require finite answers. What it does require is a willingness to sit with ambiguity, unknowing, and multiplicity in a process of deepening inquiry at home with questions leading to more questions, leading to more questions.



### **The Reenchantment of Art**

My participants' art falls within a reconstructionist model of postmodernism because of the ways that it challenges normative myths associated with race, gender, and class. In addition, this work also frequently references subject matter related to the love and care of environment. These themes are frequently ignored in texts addressing multiculturalism and social justice issues (Bowers, 1997, 2005; Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b). Gablik's book, *The Reenchantment of Art* (1991), focuses on reconstructionist art theory in relation to the multicultural constructs mentioned above; however, she urgently foregrounds the importance of environment as part of an ethos of care, stewardship, and ultimate salvation that needs to be addressed and brought to the public's attention by artists. She writes: "The new questions that are being raised are no longer issues of style or content, but issues of social and environmental responsibility and of multiculturalism or 'parallel' cultures, rather than a dominant monoculturalism" (p. 4).

While some have criticized Gablik for being too strident in her view that artists must abandon all forms of art other than activist art (Sullivan, 2005), I admire the passion and poetry of her writing and share many of the concerns she describes. I, too, am experiencing a great sense of alarm at the devastating effects of rampant consumerism combined with spiritual alienation and the life-threatening impact this is having on our planet. Although I find her views to be somewhat narrow in their assertion that there is only one "valid" type of art to make in these times of environmental crisis, there is great value in much of her writing.

For example, she writes:

If Thomas Berry is correct, and the historical mission of our times is to develop a new cultural coding for the ecological age—a more integral language of being and value that can overcome the devastating consequences of the existing mode of cultural coding, which encourages high consumption and high waste—then creating an art that is integral

with this new coding may well be the next phase of our aesthetic tradition. (p. 90)  
Gablik (1991) challenges the image of the maverick artist as alienated genius with no responsibilities to anything other than his own genius (and market success), describing this approach as part of a tradition of patriarchal consumer product providers in a "dominator" (p. 91) mode of existence. Fehr (1997) also challenges this classic image of the artist:

The modern notion that the artwork is a message from the artist/god is jostled by the postmodern notion that the artwork is a conglomeration of quotations cobbled together from countless corners of culture.... Perhaps it is no surprise that given their heightened awareness of art's ability to influence society, postmodern artists prefer narration over abstraction when they prod society's belly about social concerns. (p. 29).

While *The Reenchantment of Art* (Gablik, 1991) provides many examples of artists whose work connects them with local and global concerns, it is the explicit foregrounding of the importance of connectedness that I wish to highlight in the work and lives of the artists in this study.

## C o n n e c t i o n

Part of the great affection and admiration I feel for the participants in this study is from a sense of connection or kinship I experience with their work and with them personally. Over the years, I have seen how our work and philosophies are grounded in an ethic of care and a desire for social justice, "minority empowerment," and a love of animals and nature. I see that in our art narrative is a core concern intertwined with a cultural aesthetic tweaked by each of our discreet histories.

A wide range of art traditions, both specific to our individual ethnic heritages and independent of them, informs this aesthetic which forms a kind of bricollage frequently associated with postmodernism. The content of our public and private works deal in some way with issues related to different combinations of these constructs - ethnicity, gender, social and environmental care, and for most of us some kind of spirituality connected to nature. These are all concerns whose underlying values I connect with in profound ways. The study of my own and my participants' lives and work has provided me with an opportunity to explore in depth what I had previously perceived on a

mostly unconscious and emotive level and to follow my intuitive hunch that all of this connects to a larger context that can be of value in helping to transform education and society at large.



### **Art Theories and Practices in Education**

Each of the artists in this dissertation is a survivor of the education system, although the experience of schooling was harsher for some of us than others. In addition, each of us has taught art to children in various capacities, primarily through different artist-in-the-schools programs or residencies.

As early as 1921, Dewey described a lack of vision in education leading to "an unimaginative acquiring of specialized skill [while] amassing [a] load of information" (pp. 276-277). He was a great advocate for the arts in education, testifying to their potential to "enagag[e] the emotions and the imagination" (p. 278), while simultaneously assisting in the development of important educational skills in children.

Dewey was concerned with the fragmentary nature of education separated into individualized disciplines such as "some civics and history politically and patriotically viewed; some utilitarian studies; some science; some art (mainly literature, of course); some provision for recreation; some moral education; and so on" (1921, pp. 288-289). He describes this as leading to a "congestion of the course of study, over-pressure and distraction of pupils, and a narrow specialization fatal to the very idea of education.... These bad results," he writes, "usually lead to more of the same sort of thing as a remedy" resulting in the elimination of "many studies as fads and frills, and [a] return to the good old curriculum of the three R's in elementary education" (p. 289).

Amazingly, in the eight-plus decades since Dewey wrote these words, little has changed in the organizational structure of education. Dewey's words have not been heeded in any lasting way, nor have the many words spoken and written since by arts education advocates describing the value of imagination and creativity in learning and the human experience. Apart from some technological changes, the same factory model of education that existed in Dewey's time is still

instituted today, with the same reifying effects. Schools still primarily benefit the wealthy, although there are the exceptions that maintain the illusion of equity, and schools are still focused on a mechanistic drill-and-skill approach to teaching and learning with the three R's of arithmetic (now called math), reading, and writing (now called literacy) held above and beyond all else. The purpose of schooling for the majority of students is primarily oriented toward preparing future workers rather than critical citizens. An indepth analysis of the history and current state of schooling can be found in Tozer, Violas, and Senese (2002)

However, other voices maintain that there is more to education than creating workers and teaching the three R's. For example, art in education theorist, Maxine Greene, writes eloquently of the value of the arts both in knowledge generation and in creating a healthier world. She states:

[E]ncounters with [the arts] frequently... move us to want to restore some kind of order, to repair, and to heal. Participatory involvement with the many forms of art does enable us, at the very least, to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines, habits, and conventions have obscured. (1995, p. 378)

Greene (1995) is frustrated and angered by policy makers oblivious to the many arguments put forth by arts advocates. She describes educational policy maker's goals as, "consistent with the focus on the manageable, the predictable, and the measurable" and "of a piece with the arguments for education geared toward economic competitiveness, technological mastery, and the rest" (p. 379). She is deeply critical of policy makers who emphasize molding young people's lives "in the service of technology and the market, no matter who they are" (p. 378). Instead, she advocates for a pedagogy that connects students' learning experiences in time and place through aesthetic encounters that provide meaning and context to what they are learning.

In Washington State where I currently live, children (elementary only) are lucky enough to receive state-mandated arts education. However, this exposure to the practice, theory, and history of art is limited to a 50-minute class every two weeks, rendering any consistent or meaningful engagement impossible. The deep disconnect between policy makers and arts advocates continues to be challenging. Arts education advocates come from a wide range of positions pro-



posing differing theories for the purpose and practice of art education. However, while they are all concerned with the constantly endangered status of the arts in education, they approach this issue in different ways (for a more comprehensive examination of art education theories and practices see Day and Eisner, 2004). In the following section dealing with art and education in K-12 settings, I will focus on five of these theoretical approaches: Instrumentalist Arts Education, Discipline Based Arts Education, Social Reconstructionist Arts Education, Multicultural Arts Education and Visual Culture Studies.

### ***Instrumentalist Arts Education***

The first of these approaches is an instrumentalist perspective advocated by arts education supporters such as Fiske (2001), Catteral (1998) and organizations like the National Arts Education Partnership (NAEP) (1997) and the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) (2000). These individuals and organizations, among others, have conducted research studies to determine the cognitive and emotive benefits of the arts in areas such as raising test scores, reducing school drop-out rates, and increasing the number of low-income and minority students continuing on to college. Based on these studies, they theorize that the arts are useful for supporting children within the existing system of schooling. For example, Fiske (2001) describes in the Arts Educational Partnership's Presidential Committee on the Arts and Humanities Report many benefits of the arts in education. He notes findings that the arts provide some students with "the only reason for being engaged with school" (p. iix). "Problem" students "often become the high-achievers in arts learning settings" (p. ix), providing cross-transferable experiences of success into other areas of learning. Students "feel invested in ways deeper than knowing the answer" based on personal engagement in art-infused settings that have become "places of discovery" (p. ix). Already successful students gain greater mastery when "the arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge" (p. x). Experiences in the arts provide future workplace training—"A company is a company whether producing an opera or a breakthrough technology service" (p. x).

These and other instrumentalist approaches have increasingly become more popular with the rise in testing mandates and are one of the major ways that art is justified as being of value in education.

## Appropriating Instrumentalist Arts Education

I had mixed feelings when I first began teaching Integrated Fine Arts. Having an extensive background as a fine artist I wanted my students (and their future students) to experience the sheer sensual joy of art making that I have enjoyed in making art freed of instrumentalist purposes. I also felt a moral obligation to teach multicultural art education beyond the superficial heroes, holidays, and ethnic crafts approach of my predecessors. In addition, it was important for me to teach the value of connecting students' learning experiences to their community and environment and thus develop an ethic of care toward others and the environment. Accordingly, I designed my course so that it met the college of education's requirements as well as my own desires and imperatives.

Integrated Fine Arts could easily be described as an instrumentalist approach to arts education in that the arts are harnessed in service of other goals. The purpose of the class is to teach pre-service educators how to use the arts to teach math, history, science, language arts, etc. This course exists outside the College of Education's block system where students move through courses in a prescribed order to learn sequentially while developing bonded cohorts. Consequently, students take the course whenever they wish, and I have students in the same class ranging from just-admitted-to-the-program to just-about-to-graduate. As in most aspects of general education, art appears to be viewed as an "add on" rather than something of core importance like math, literacy, or science, hence its disconnection from the block system and the hiring of adjunct artists in many colleges of education throughout the country rather than PhD trained arts educators. It is easy to believe that it is only because our state standards include the arts that I am able to teach this art education course.

Since I am aware that many of my students may end up teaching in schools lacking in any kind of arts education, I prepare them to teach art through the backdoor of

teaching other content areas. Each class includes a presentation on an artist and a multicultural children's book that connects to the day's lesson. For example, we learn about math, civics, reading, and writing by making and trading currency about role model activists instead of Presidents. We read *So You Want to be President* (St. George, 2000), which points out the lack of women and minorities in presidential positions. At the same time, we learn about the extraordinary painter Diego Velasquez's life and art, in particular, his brutally honest portraits of people in positions of power such as the members of the Catholic Church and royalty. We contextualize his work in time and place i.e., Spain toward the end of the Spanish Inquisition. This opens the door to discussions on power and agency—who has it and how, while asking what might alternative forms of power be?

In class we also study more recent multicultural artists such as Diego Rivera, Fred Wilson, and Keith Haring, as well as all of the participants in this study. An ethic of care toward the environment is encouraged by exploring Maya Gonzalez's beautiful depictions of landscape in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. We read and discuss Sheri Klein's "Art and Spirituality: Looking to Place" and Ronald Neperud's "Personal Journey into the Participatory Aesthetics of Farming" before creating our own exquisite "sacred place" portraits. These are pastel landscapes of places where we experience deep connection. While reveling in the sensual and spiritual joys of art making, this lesson can easily be extended into the sciences by exploring the animals and vegetation that exist within these particular eco-systems.

In projects such as the role-model currency and the sacred place portraits, we are using the arts for instrumentalist reasons, but we are also connecting to the historic, emotive, and aesthetic qualities of the arts as evinced by Discipline Based Arts Education proponents whose views I explore in the next section. In addition we are utilizing the collaborative and communicative aspects of the arts to promote issues of social and environmental care. On completion, student work completed in the class is exhibited in public spaces so community members can learn from the students, and students can become more visible members of the community.

Because I pack so much practical art instruction and theory into this course, I

take care to inform my students of the importance of having free drawing or art making times with their students. I stress that much of education is about control; consequently, allowing students free time for artistic expression unconstrained by any instrumentalist purposes is vitally important in allowing children to explore their own personal interests, aesthetics, and learning processes.



### ***Discipline Based Arts Education***

Contesting the instrumentalist approach to arts advocacy, authors like Bumgarner Gee (2004) challenge claims such as those made by Fiske (2001), the NAEP (1997), and AEP (2000), questioning the validity of the studies and worrying that “an art cures all” approach may harm more than help arts education. In a similar manner, arts education theorists from Discipline Based Arts Education (DBAE), such as Elliott Eisner (1976; 1991), argue that the arts should be valued for their own sensual and meaning-making qualities, which positively affect cognitive and emotive domains, rather than be justified as a handmaiden to raise test scores and improve other content areas. While they see the benefits of the arts in all areas of education, they are concerned that art as its own discrete subject of learning will be lost in the never-ending budget cuts that always decimate the arts first. Eisner describes the arts as existing in constant danger of being, “swamped by subjects often regarded as more important” (1987, p.15, cited in Cahan & Kocur, 1997, p. xxiv).

DBAE proponents believe that a four-pronged approach to art education should be taught so students can explore the creative, sensual, and intellectual qualities that only exploring aesthetics, canons of art, and creating art for its own sake can provide. In an interview with Brandt (1988), Eisner describes DBAE as providing “systematic, sequential teaching in the four things people do with the arts” (p. 7)—making works of art (art production), learning to appreciate art (art criticism), understanding art in relation to culture (art history), and making judgments about art (aesthetics).

Nevertheless, despite Eisner and DBAE’s best intentions, DBAE has received a great deal of criticism from a variety of sources, including a recent qualified criticism by Eisner himself. Eisner (2005a) describes how he was and is against promoting a single “one size fits all”

approach to arts education, preferring a multiplicity of approaches. However, the Los Angeles based Getty Museum (one of the most powerful proponents of DBAE) believed that focusing on only one theoretical approach to arts education such as DBAE was more pragmatic and would be more readily accepted, and Eisner acquiesced. Not coincidentally, the Getty Museum's collection of European fine art holds some of the major work that has been extolled by traditional DBAE proponents and practitioners.

Despite the discrediting of DBAE, Eisner still has much of value to say about arts education as evidenced by this quote:

We wish to say that the arts are deeply engaged in the development of mind. The curriculum that we design is basically a mind-altering device that makes certain kinds of experiences possible. A life without the arts is an impoverished life. The ability to shape form so that it imaginatively shapes feeling is a profoundly intellectual task. (Eisner, 2005b, p.10)

While DBAE's critics such as Cahan & Kocur (1996), Trend (1992), and Jagodzinski (1996), among others, would definitely not dispute this statement, they challenge what they see as DBAE's Eurocentric modernist orientation. Instead they call for a more critical, pluralistic approach to arts education. These authors, and others, claim an alternative pedagogy known as social reconstructionist arts education.

### ***Social Reconstructionist Arts Education***

Social reconstructionist arts education theorists (e.g., Cahan & Kocur, 1996; Galbraith, 1992; Klein, 1992; Milbrandt, 2002) advocate for a socially responsive approach to arts education that encompasses social and environmental justice themes and art as a form of activism similar in many ways to Gublik's (1991) position. Cahan and Kocur (1997) describe social reconstructionist arts education as:

challeng[ing] monolithic and homogenous views of history in the name of diverse, multiple, and heterogeneous perspectives; to reject abstract, general, and universal pronouncements in light of concrete, specific, and particular realities; and to acknowledge historical specificity and plurality. (pp. xxii-xiii)

Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr (2001) describe social reconstructionist education as one where:

teachers, students, staff members, and communities are all enabled and expected to practice democratic action for the benefit of disenfranchised social and cultural groups identified and investigated as a result of enlightened curriculum. In this approach the results of learning are practiced within the classroom setting. But the expectation is that results will reach beyond the school setting to the larger community. This requires that one go beyond mere exploration into the realm of social/political/economic action. (p. 9)

Cahan and Kocur (1996) also call for a socially reconstructive multicultural arts education approach that "connects everyday experience, social critique, and creative expression." The focus is on students connecting their learning to real life issues that are relevant "within a larger-life-world context, [thus] art becomes a vital means of reflecting upon the nature of society and social existence" (p. xxii).

Over time Social Reconstructionist Arts Education and DBAE have become less polarized, with DBAE incorporating more diversity into its canons and educational approaches. While I see this as a positive step, Jagodzinski (1997b) is more skeptical, describing these changes as, "feeling some pressure from its Other, [DBAE] has metamorphosed into a more benevolent benefactor of the arts; 'difference' is now given more rhetorical space" (p. xiii). In the same vein, Cahan and Kocur (1996) write: "Can the DBAE model address cultural diversity and interdisciplinary studies effectively? Those who say yes skirt the issue by claiming that the art discipline has changed with the times." They criticize the inclusion of cultural diversity in DBAE as "if it were merely a 'theme' or curriculum unit rather than a multi-faceted, global, sociopolitical reality" (p. xiii). Similarly, Fehr (1997) critiques DBAE's inclusion of non-Western art as being limited by "viewing non-Western art through the Western lenses of history, aesthetics, and criticism." He further notes: "Modern aesthetic study rarely encompasses the beliefs about visual imagery held by Asian, African, Native-American, or other cultures, perhaps because the construct of aesthetics is incongruent with such beliefs" (p. 28).

## I n f o r m a t i o n a l a n d I n s p i r a t i o n a l C o u r s e P a c k e t T e x t s & O n l i n e V i d e o s

Personally, I find value in each of the approaches described above, so I include articles from many perspectives in both the course packet of informational and

inspirational readings that I have prepared for my Integrated Fine Arts students, and the online artist videos that they are required to watch. These texts come from each of the perspectives discussed in this chapter. However, there is a greater preponderance of social reconstructionist arts educators' texts, and, in particular, place-based and critical multicultural arts education texts. This reflects my own personal bias, which I imagine will become more explicit throughout this dissertation.

The texts draw from DBAE, social reconstructionist, instrumentalist arts research summaries, place-based education, critical multicultural arts theory, and visual culture sources. They cover a wide range of conceptual ground. In an article about gay artists David Wojnarowicz, who was a child prostitute at the age of nine, the author notes that Wojnarowicz's teachers were more concerned with getting him to be still in his seat rather than finding out what might be going on with him. The author describes how important art was to Wojnarowicz both as a child, and as an adult who died prematurely from AIDS. For many of my conservative students coming from small rural communities this is powerful reading, opening their minds and hearts to the importance of caring and having compassion for all children.

Other texts in the 150-page course packet teach students how to conduct intergenerational oral histories connecting them with nearby elders' funds of knowledge to learn about local lived history. In addition, there are texts about self-reflexivity in art education addressing White pre-service teachers' fears regarding their ignorance in teaching students from highly divergent backgrounds; texts about spirituality and place in art education; instrumentalist art and mathematics articles; multiple intelligences texts; and a slew of art technique articles.



Clearly my own teaching falls in the social reconstructionist model. So, to conclude this chapter's overview of K–12 art and education I would like to note two additional perspectives that come from social reconstructionism—critical multicultural art education and visual culture studies. Additionally, I will briefly describe an arts education practice known as "artists in the schools." This practice has professional artists, like my participants, rather than professional edu-

cators, teach art in the schools. As you will see, this has both positive and negative aspects.

### ***Multicultural Arts Education***

To state the obvious, multicultural arts education is an offshoot of multicultural education. Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr (2001) note the historical roots of multicultural education contextualizing its origins in the 1960's as part of the Civil Rights Movement's fight against racism. Drawing on Sleeter and Grant's (1987) work, they write:

cultural pluralism and social equity are promoted through reforming the schooling process. *Multicultural Education* is the most popular term used by educators to describe working with students who are different because of age, gender, or sexuality, social and economic class, exceptionality, geographic location, religion, political status, language, ethnicity, and race. (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001, p. 8)

They describe the goals of this approach as being to "provide a more equitable distribution of power, to reduce discrimination and prejudice [why reduce and not eliminate?], and to provide social justice and equitable opportunities." The aim is for schools to become models for social justice transformation by reforming the institution of schooling in both its process and the "social or ethnic structure of the institution's population" (p. 8). Unfortunately these aims continue to remain unfulfilled in any meaningful way.

In the introduction to Cahan and Kocur's book on contemporary multicultural artists, *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education* (1996), Cahan and Kocur describe a range of theoretical and practical approaches to multicultural arts education ranging from a normative "heroes and holidays" celebrating diversity approach to "radical critiques of institutionalized racism, sexism, and classism within the educational system" (p. xix). They note that while art from non-European cultures may be promoted through mainstream multicultural approaches, what is generally lacking is a contextual investigation of the ways that multicultural art fits into the larger picture of history and politics.

Cahan and Kocur (1996) also point out that even within critical multicultural education the value of art as a tool for transformation has largely been ignored. Thus non-critical multicultural arts education and critical multicultural education miss openings to explore the systemic roots of cultural oppression and provide opportunities for alternative approaches to addressing



inequities. Instead these fragmented approaches mostly provide a kind of band-aid to patch a rotting system of White privilege grounded in schooling's Eurocentric patriarchal foundations.

These ideas from critical multicultural pedagogy are important in looking contextually at my participants' transformative and critical experiences with multiculturalism, art, and education. Cahan and Kocur (1996) continue:

Generally missing from multicultural art education is an approach, which connects everyday experience, social critique, and creative expression. When the focus is shifted to issues and ideas that students truly care about and that are relevant within a larger life-world context, art becomes a vital means of reflecting upon the nature of society and existence. (p. xxii)

Consequently, Cahan and Kocur, among other authors, call for using art to connect culture and experience in meaningful ways. By connecting students' education with their lived experiences in ways that are both critical and creative, a critical multicultural, place-based arts education pedagogy can be developed that not only empowers and benefits students, but also their communities, and by extension, society at large.

Meanwhile, Galbraith (1992) writes about how ill-prepared many pre-service teachers feel in addressing multicultural art education concerns. She notes that both pre-service and practicing teachers may "encounter personal conflict and a lack of empowerment, if asked to pursue a multicultural agenda, when they have little personal knowledge about such issues, and so little time for research" (p. 93). With this awareness, Galbraith asks:

How can we help novice art teachers interweave notions of multicultural issues and pedagogy, with their own beliefs and perspectives? How can we get them to question, unpack and analyze traditional and alternative views or art teaching?" (p. 93)

These are questions that I continue to struggle with and which I believe are vitally important in teacher education.

### **p l a n t i n g a S e e d**

In my own practice, I try to help my students become culturally responsive teachers able to attend creatively to the many cultures represented in their future classrooms. The class discussions of course packet readings, use of online videos, and the exposure

to contemporary multicultural artists and children's book illustrators whose work challenges the normative project of Whiteness are some of the ways I try do this. The inclusion of authentic multicultural literature created primarily by members of the communities depicted is another. However, I worry that by covering so much territory in such a brief time (including drawing, watercolor and tempera painting, paper maché, collage, oil and chalk pastels, drama, mask making, music, and puppetry, DBAE, Social Reconstructionists and instrumentalist art theory, multicultural education, and visual culture studies) while learning about eleven different artists and sixteen different children's books spread out over a total of 45 hours, I am not providing any real depth to any of these artists, ideas, or techniques. All I can do is expose my students as much as possible to what I consider "good stuff" and hope that a seed will be planted. At the end of the course they leave with a binder full of easy-to-use lesson plans, tons of handouts, and stunning exemplars. My hope is that the seed will take root and my students will integrate critical social reconstructionist, multicultural, place-based arts education into their own teaching.

I have to admit though, at times I am flummoxed. While studying Keith Haring and reading an article about gay artist David Wojnarowicz, in preparation for a class project on environmental billboards, the students visited [www.haringkids.com](http://www.haringkids.com), a website for children and teachers about Haring's work. The next week a student told me he had visited [www.haringkids.com](http://www.haringkids.com) and was horrified at some of Haring's more explicit sexual art. He told me that his brother researches everything his kids see and if he knew his kids were learning about Keith Haring, he'd be down at the principle's office trying to get that teacher fired. I didn't know how to respond—I love Keith Haring's work, and yes, he was a sexual being. And children could stumble on this site, which includes images of gay sex, glorified penises, and a stylized image of someone having sex with an alien dog diety. The site has a small disclaimer about its content and a link to [haringkids.com](http://haringkids.com), but they don't censor Haring's work. I don't want my future teachers getting fired, nor do I want to self-censor. So I thanked him for bringing it to my attention and told him that he'd either want to be very careful or choose not to study Haring and his work in his class.

I thought about this interaction a lot\_feeling dissatisfied, uncertain, and unresolved in my response. I didn't really knowing how to handle the situation. Children are sexual beings (not that they are ready to engage in, or be exposed to, sexual activity other than touching themselves), and yet we vigorously repress and deny any acknowledgement of this. At the same time, the construct of sexuality is so politically loaded and charged, that I felt ill-equipped to deal with it. So I spoke with my chair and mentor, David Gruenewald, about this issue. He engaged me in a conversation about unspoken regimes of censorship, and we spoke about the many areas that we take for granted that "should" be censored. The next semester my classes studied Keith Haring and his work and read the article about David Wojnarowicz, but this time we spoke about censorship issues and how my emerging teachers might deal with this issue in their own future classrooms. They spoke about discussing it with the principal, notifying parents, just dropping him from their syllabi. Although I was pleased to open the door to discuss issues of censorship, I still feel dissatisfied and unresolved in not being able to give my students more concrete and positive suggestions on how they can safely include important artists like Keith Haring in their teaching practices.

I have taken the essence of Galbraith's questions to heart-how do we address multicultural (and social reconstructionist) issues in our own beliefs and perspectives so that we can become better teachers? And while, my ability to inspire critical multicultural education in all my students has had mixed results, her questions have helped me focus on attending to these issues in both my own teaching and research. I believe this question is relevant for all citizens and all educators, not just art educators, thus I will be questioning, unpacking, responding to, and reflecting on this question in my own research journey throughout this dissertation.



### *Visual Culture Studies*

Finally, one last view of social reconstructionist arts education that I would like to explore here is from visual culture. Visual culture theorists such as Tavin (2000), Duncum (2000), Freedman (2003), Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr (2001), and Pauly (2003) draw attention to the in-

creasing power of the visual in everyday life. For example, Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr (2001) describe how visual culture studies, informed and promoted by cultural studies and critical theory, includes all imagistic aspects of culture from "mass media [including:] television, movies, music videos, computer technology, advertisements, magazines, and newspapers, and so forth" (p. 13). They believe, as do I, that "visual images create meaning and a vision of life for today's students and for all of us" (p. 13). Freedman and Stuhr's statement, "Much of our visual culture is the visual arts—all visual arts" (2000, cited in Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001, p. 13) also brings attention to the ways that visual culture theorists challenge distinctions between high and low art, high and low culture, and elitist and popular media. These authors note, as does Bourdieu in his aptly titled book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Bourdieu, 1984), the inherent class and power relationships embedded in these different categorizations. Visual culturalists explore how visual art is no longer a province solely for the wealthy but is realized daily through the various media described above. For example "fine artist" Gary Baseman exhibits in galleries, has his own animated television series, a film, and an adult game all featuring his art. The arbitrary boundaries of high and low art are breaking down under the gaze of the postmodern eye.

Drawing on Jameson's (1984, 1991) work, Freedman (2003) notes that the visual arts have expanded not only in their form but also in their content ranging from advertising to activist art addressing issues such as ecology and identity. Consequently, she writes, "the visual arts have become fundamental to the cultural transformation of political discourse, social interaction, and cultural identity that characterizes the postmodern condition" (p. 1).

Examples of discursive relations to power abound in education literature such as Heath's (1983) *Ways with Words* and Delpit's (1995) *Other People's Children*. These books and other texts explore issues of access to power in who is being "heard" or not heard according to who is doing the talking (race and class) and how it is being said (culturally related linguistic styles). In the realm of the visual these discourses are enacted through signs, icons, and media images. These include media images such as those found in the television series *Cops* with its never-ending stream of minority miscreants, Disney's animated film *Aladdin* where the good guys have light skin and the bad guys have dark skin and Semitic noses, and even the wildly popular Harry Potter series that lacks a single child of color in any substantial role. These kinds of images maintain a subliminal racist discourse of lightness and Whiteness as normal and desirable.

At the same time, branding in advertising creates a ubiquitous discourse generating the illusionary image of power through name brand product ownership. Those who benefit most from these images, which support current systems of power and privilege, either have access to or directly control the discourse through ownership of media content and distribution. Bearing this in mind, Pauly (2003) demonstrates the importance of visual culture studies in education. She describes how even though visual images have

emerged in the last century as one of the most pervasive forms of communication, their enormous social, historical, and cultural power as cultural texts is largely ignored in schools. Yet, visual images, and the experiences associated with seeing or being seen, saturate public and private spaces and influence how children, adolescents, and teachers learn, perform, or transform their identities, values, and behaviors. (p. 264)

Visual cultural theorists, like other critical pedagogues, note how visual texts, not unlike written texts, are culturally and socially mediated where "meaning is negotiated by viewers through culturally learned lenses, sociocultural contexts, and embodied experiences" (p. 264). Others, such as Hall (2004/1993), however, argue that images are produced to be consumed in ways that prescribe certain meanings. Thus a basic understanding of visual culture is important in exploring the work and lives of artists who produce both popular visual culture products, i.e., mass-produced children's books and "fine art"—the "high art" end of visual culture. Mirzoeff's *The Visual Culture Reader* (1995) provides an excellent resource for learning more about visual culture, primarily in relation to media such as film, television, and photography. It is also helpful in looking at our work as visual culture texts providing opportunities to explore issues of agency in the alternative discourses created through these social reconstructionist art products while also exploring their position within Bourdieu's (1993) "field of cultural production."

Finally, in addition to providing fertile ground for visual culture studies through both our children's books and our own personal art products, the participants in this study also function as art educators through various "artists in the schools" programs.

### ***Artists in the Schools***

Each of us has worked as an artist educator through a range of programs. However, the majority of these programs have been through Children's Book Press's Community Outreach program which primarily benefits low-income and minority children. Children's Book Press

has received funding from a variety of sources including the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA); hence, I will focus initially on Bumgarner's (1994) intensive study of "artists in the schools" programs in Pennsylvania which also draws funding from the NEA's Artists in Education funding program. Following a lengthy look at Bumgarner's (1994) study, I will be exploring three smaller and more recent studies by Mello (2000); Kind, Irwin, Grauer & de Cosson (2005); and Bosetti & Calvert (1999).

Artists-in-the-schools programs usually consist of residencies where professional artists visit schools for a period of time ranging from a "one-off" visit, to consecutive visits ranging from two days to a week, or to semester-or year-long weekly visits. Bumgarner (1994) writes that artists-in-the-schools programs originated in 1966 funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) through their Arts in Education programs (AIE). She writes that the NEA's basic arts education goals as described by the NEA's 1988 report *Toward Civilization*, were to:

provide all students, not only the gifted and talented, with knowledge of, and skills in the arts. Basic arts education must give students the essence of our civilization, the civilizations which have contributed to ours, and the more distant civilizations which enrich civilization as a whole. It must also give students tools for creating, for communicating and understanding others' communications, and for making informed and critical choices. . . . Like other school subjects, basic arts education must be taught sequentially by qualified teachers; instruction must include the history, critical theory, and ideas of the arts as well as creation, production, and performance; and knowledge of, and skills in, the arts must be tested. (p. 15)

Bumgarner is highly critical of artists-in-the-schools programs for not fulfilling the NEA's mandate and for the NEA's lack of success in integrating art into education as a "basic" like math, science, reading, etc. She wrote a scathing report of her one-year in-depth study of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA) artists-in-the-schools program finding these programs greatly lacking apart from two exceptions. Bumgarner (1994) noted that the prior existence of a school arts program, combined with clarity of expectations, learning objectives, and goals, as well as the "professional expertise and teaching experience of the artist; the expertise of the host teacher; [and] the knowledge base and interest level of the participating students" were the determining factors as to the success of the residency (p. 18). However, in her report she only cited two suc-

cessful programs.

One of Bumgarner's concerns about artist-in-the-schools programs was that after doing the math based on the number of children "reached" by the 10,000 artists employed by the NEA in 1990, only seven percent of the nation's students had access to these programs with many of those children being from more affluent schools with the resources to access them.

Another concern was that because of the revolving nature of residencies these programs mostly operated on a superficial and introductory level dealing primarily with materials and technique. She wrote:

Rarely did I witness or hear of any extension of residency content to include historical, philosophical, or sociological inquiry into the meaning or significance of works of art or use of a particular art form. This meant that while student learning in residencies generally paralleled student learning in their regular arts classes, residency programs did not serve to broaden the traditional arts curriculum but only reinforced it. (Bumgarner, 1994, p. 21)

Finally, Bumgarner seemed to have an almost derisive attitude toward most of the artists in the program because of their lack of knowledge of formal arts education theory and terminology and their desire to have clearly defined and reliable employment. She states: "Basically, many artists seemed to want it all" (p. 24). This included a desire for a commitment that they would indeed be paid before undertaking the time consuming planning of residency activities as well as a desire to be paid for the time spent in creating this curriculum. They also wanted a commitment to being employed certain days and times of the year for their work at the residency's inception and to have their expenses paid for attending the annual AIE conference. Bumgarner noted that the artists she spoke with were unaware that teachers have to pay their own expenses for attending conferences.

At the time, one of the requirements of many state agencies was for artist residents to spend a half-day making their art in an on-site studio which was frequently makeshift and inadequate for the task. The AIE program had a two-fold mission to assist artists as well as provide educational opportunities for children. Bumgarner seemed to be upset that artists wished to be paid for this half-day and to be able to work in their own studios where they could actually get work done rather than spend the whole day on site. Finally, she wrote:

Artists who participated in the PCA residency program wanted to teach but only for short periods of time and at their convenience. They did not want to be thought of as teachers or to assume the responsibilities of teachers. In short, they wanted to be treated better and more professionally than teachers--but they still claimed that they wished to teach. (p. 24)

As someone who has spent time on the other side of the fence, it seems important to point out what Bumgarner appears to have missed. First, teachers are treated appallingly. They should be paid for attending conferences as just about every other profession does for its employees. Secondly, teachers should be treated with greater respect and more more professional courtesy as well as being afforded greater financial remuneration for their hard work. Rather than deriding artists for wishing to be treated decently, critics could advocate for teachers to be treated better. Thirdly, Bumgarner seemed unaware of the great financial hardships and insecurities that accompany professional artists' lives—including no regular income, no health benefits, no worker's compensation, no sick pay, no retirement, and no holiday or vacation pay. Finally, she seemed oblivious that artists' primary identities may be as artists who also wish to teach but need time to do their "own" work as well. Commitments to dates and times of employment, and remuneration for work done does not seem unreasonable to me under these or any circumstances.

I think the problem is not artists-in-the-schools programs but the unrealistic expectations for them. Regular art instruction should be provided by all teachers who receive training and confidence in teacher education programs the way they do with math, science, and reading programs learning to teach through the arts. In addition, schools should provide expert art educators as well as supporting artists-in-the-schools programs to work in collaboration with teachers. Bumgarner acknowledges the importance of artists-in-the-schools programs in playing a supporting role. She states: "An inspired performance can introduce students, teachers, and school administrators to new art forms in a stimulating and memorable fashion." Residencies can enrich students learning providing "students with alternative, informal, interactive learning environments. These residency program qualities should be preserved and exploited" (26).

## N O T E S F R O M T H E O T H E R S I D E O F T H E F E N C E

It was hard for me to relate to Bumgarner's study from both my own experiences and from what I know of other artists who have participated in artists-in-the-schools



programs. I wondered if the PAC program was particularly bad because it seemed so at odds with what I knew. I have worked through San Francisco based Children's Book Press's outreach programs in low-income and minority schools; as an elementary school art teacher through SPECTRA's artists-in-the-schools program in Santa Cruz; in Libros Y Familias's program in Independence, Oregon, working with primarily Latino children in an elementary school, teaching teachers in professional in-services, and parents in an evening family literacy program. In addition I worked with Artists and Writers Out Loud (AWOL), a volunteer artist activist group working with students at McAteer High School in San Francisco, where many students spoke limited English, few students knew each others' names, students were dodging bullets at night, and the loudspeaker constantly announced: "No guns, no knives, no chains allowed on school premises."

In these programs, along with others, I have been able to present alternative representations of "ways of being" that children might not otherwise experience. As an artist, society gives me permission to be more fully alive in my senses, emotions, intuitions, spirituality and desires. I'm allowed to be more eccentric, playful, direct, irreverent, and unconventional, while exploring life. These are not "ways of being" that are normally privileged in everyday schooling.

While my experiences as an artist-in-the-schools have not necessarily been life changing for children, many have told me that they have created art that was meaningful for them or "the first thing they've ever done that they liked." Where the art making connected with language arts activities it was clear that, especially for those from non-English speaking backgrounds, learning literacy through art was not only fun but effective.

And finally, by the end of the AWOL residency students knew each others names, formed relationships, learned about each other and participated in an extraordinary exhibition at a contemporary gallery where their work, words, and lives were celebrated. Unfortunately AWOL eventually disbanded because we couldn't afford to keep working at the level we had without being able to pay for basics like food and rent. For the students we worked with, I hope that we planted seeds presenting alternative ways of

being than what they had been exposed to before, and that community was formed in their classrooms. One of my few regrets with this project was that we did not conduct any follow-up activities with the students beyond celebrating their work with the exhibition in a prestigious gallery.



Clearly artists-in-the-schools programs should be one of many colors on the arts education palette. The studies of Mello (2000), Kind, Irwin, Grauer and de Cosson (2005), and Bosetti and Calvert's (1999) reported very different results than Baumgarner's (1994). I wondered if this was because of the difference in time between Baumgarner's study and the more favorable later studies. I also wondered if the reported differences were due to the researchers personal involvement in each of the studies. Another factor contributing to the different perceived outcomes of the studies may have been that the later studies were more limited in scope and more intimate; the orientation of the researchers was one of not looking at artists in the schools as a solution to the lack of art education but one of looking at what the artists brought as artists who also teach.

Mello's (2000) study looked at four performing artists from the Maine Touring Artist Program (MTAP). She included herself as a participant observer, asking how artists perceive their roles as teachers to create an artist's pedagogy. Kind, Irwin, Grauer and de Cosson (2005) focused on observing Gabriel, a Coast-Salish First Nation's artist participating in one of Canada's artists in the schools programs – Learning through the Arts.™ They were particularly interested in asking "how teachers and artists can respond to th[e] call for more aware, inclusive, and holistic ways of learning and knowing" (p. 34). And Bosetti and Calvert (1999) studied teachers' responses to Calgary Arts Partnership in Education Society (CAPES) programs. Interestingly, like Bumgarner all of the studies apart from Mello's, noted that the success of the program was "to a large degree dependent on the teacher's attitude, engagement, and response" (Kind, Irwin, & Grauer, *et al.*, 2005, p. 35).

While these studies are not a comprehensive overview of artist-in-the-schools programs, they do show a range of approaches and perspectives to artist school residencies. However, it is Kind, Irwin, and Grauer *et al.*'s (2005) report on Gabriel that is of most interest to me because of

the author's keen observations of the multiple cultural roles Gabriel brought to his teaching both as an artist and as a First Nation's member. The authors write:

Relationship was at the heart of Gabriel's intentions. His primary goal was to make connections with the students. He saw himself as a bridge between his history, knowledge, and experiences and children's lives and experiences and was passing on what he knew and what he was taught. (p. 35)

To me this aspect of relationship and culture is one of the most powerful expressions of teaching and learning an artist can bring to the classroom and is one that I will be exploring later in the lives and work of the participants in this study.

### **Art and Education Theories and Practices: A Recap**

To summarize this lengthy chapter: Each of the theories and practices described provides assistance in exploring the lives and work of the participants within an educational context.

The instrumentalist approach in the form of appended lesson plans, student presentations handouts on the artists' lives, work and books, and student book reports show practical ways that our books can be used to teach across the content areas in socially and environmentally conscious ways. The Discipline Based Arts Education approach is useful in looking at the aesthetics of our art and in situating this art within the context of other art histories and traditions. Social reconstructionist art education's emphasis on social and environmental justice using art as a means of activism fits well with the embedded content in our books and art, where issues of race and class, gender and place, are either explicitly or implicitly addressed. Meanwhile, visual culture studies is helpful in exploring the lives and work of visual culture producers and our products within the field of cultural production, as well as the impact our books and school experiences have on children who rarely see positive depictions of minorities. In addition, information about the practice of being "artists in the schools" contextualizes our experiences as educators in K-12 settings.

Having described a range of art and education theories and practices and how they are helpful in this study, I will now focus on my relationship to theory and the major perspectives that inform both my research and teaching practices.



# chapter three

Picture These Theoretical Frames



Choosing from the myriad of theories available to help a budding researcher like me

construct meaning from the mass of data I might collect, making sense of it (or not, another theoretical option), situating my data and myself contextually within larger frames of meaning or inquiry—I find that a good theory is a beautiful thing. Within this dissertation a "good theory" is one that provides clear and guiding lenses through which to look as I embark on enlarging the body of knowledge about multicultural children's literature, arts education, and arts based educational research, while also exploring the importance of place in life, education, and culture. Accordingly, I draw from a wide range of theoretical perspectives such as those mentioned in the preceeding chapter; the major theoretical lenses that I employ in this dissertation are: a/r/tography, critical multicultural education and analysis, visual culture studies, Bourdieu's theory on the fields of cultural production, and place-based education.

Each of these theories comes from a critical perspective, however, they each provide specific components addressing particular issues and interests in my research, which when combined give me the broad array of theoretical lenses required for a projects as expansive as this. In many ways my dissertation deals with the disconnections in life and education by forging connections between constructs like place, race, art, and culture, as explored through the lives and work of my participants.

### **A/r/tography**

A/r/tography is an arts-based educational research method and the major methodology that I will be using throughout this dissertation as well as a theoretical perspective. Consequently, I will save the details of its application as a methodology for later and focus here on the post-modernist lens it provides.

The term "a/r/tography" is an acronym for artists/researchers/teachers who conduct research through these interdependent roles. This hybridized identity is one of the core components of a/r/tography situated in the idea of *métissage* promoting the blurring of boundaries and a crossing of borders. Irwin (2004), one of the founders of a/r/tography, describes *métissage* as: "an act of interdisciplinarity. It hyphenates, bridges, slashes, and creates other forms of thirdness that provides the space for exploration, translation, and understanding in deeper and more enhanced ways of meaning-making" (p. 30). Drawing on Richardson's (2000) work, Irwin notes, many of us have been taught to construct a thesis, teach foundations, look for support, and build frameworks. These notions reveal a long-standing metaphor; "Theory as

architecture." When we adopt a/r/t as *métissage*, we are adopting an image that is both modernist *and* postmodernist. It is not about dichotomous thinking but rather dialogical thinking, relating and perceiving. It is about living in the borderlands, the spaces between and amidst artists, researchers, and teachers. (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p. 30)

Irwin (2004) writes of diffusing the borders to open up space between a/r/tography's multiple roles of artist/researcher/teacher, the combination of art and graphy, and the borders or spaces between theory, *métissage*, and practice. Expanding the notion of *métissage*, Irwin (2004) states:

And all the while we do not dismiss the lands that create the blurred perimeter of the borderlands. With presence comes absence, with light comes darkness, and with sadness comes joy, knowing multiple variations exist between each.... Theory as a/r/t is at once textual *and* visual, and a/r/tography as *métissage* is at once visual *and* interlingual. Different texts, images, and languages merge, pull apart, and merge again and again. Theory is not limited to but includes textual discussion and analysis set within and/or alongside visual imagery of educational phenomena and/or performance. (p. 32)

Thus *métissage*, like most forms of creative meaning making, is a messy endeavor without the safety of clearly defined and proscribed borders that readily define the edges of what is or isn't. Instead it questions what is and is not together with what might or might not be, as both separate and interrelated to create this third mutable space.

Irwin (2004) describes the theoretical and practical aspects of a/r/tography as dialectical, being "in equal relationship to one another" (p. 28). She notes that although "a dialectical stance assists many educational endeavours, it still favours two categories, and in education this usually means favouring theory over practice" (p. 28). However, the constant need to organize information (or experience) into categories sometimes requires the necessity of choice—here *or* there, this one *or* that one, which while often including this here *and* that there, or this one *and* that one, prompts Irwin to write: "[I]f preference needs be given... [to a/r/tography's role as theory *or* practice] it would be practice rather than theory" (p. 28).

As a lens a/r/tography plays a powerful role in this dissertation enabling me to question what the process of inquiry can be along with who I am as an artist/researcher and teacher, while as a methodology, it expands the means of *how* I can conduct that research.

## **Critical Multicultural Education and Analysis (CMEA)**

The second theoretical lens that informs my research is critical multicultural education and analysis (CMEA). This theoretical perspective is actually an amalgam of many theories pertaining to race and multiculturalism, each of which holds great relevance for this study. These include but are not limited to critical pedagogy, critical multicultural education, critical multicultural arts education, critical race theory, culturally responsive teaching, postcolonial theory, and critical multicultural analysis. I will begin with a description of critical pedagogy (focusing on the seminal work of Paulo Freire) before describing the other theoretical frames that I am positioning under the umbrella of CMEA. It is this combination of critical lenses that I will be using in looking at the life experiences and work of my participants, particularly in relation to our books and personal experiences of race, class, and gender, as well as my own practice as an a/r/tographic teacher.

### ***Critical Pedagogy***

All critical pedagogues contest the inequitable distribution of power instituted through education. They do so, primarily, by advocating a combination of research (or theory), reflection, and action (or practice), i.e., praxis. Because of Paulo Freire's influence on critical pedagogies (Aronowitz, 1993; Bresler, Cooper, & Palmer, 2001; hooks, 1993; Lankshear, 1993; Macedo & Freire, 1987; Shor & Freire, 1987), focusing on his life and work here will help set the stage for what follows in this section. Giroux (1993), for example, writes:

The work of Paulo Freire continues to exercise a strong influence on a variety of liberal and radical educators. In some quarters his name has become synonymous with the very concept and practice of critical pedagogy. Increasingly, Freire's work has become the standard reference for engaging in what is often referred to as teaching for critical thinking, dialogical pedagogy, or critical literacy. (p. 177)

Freire wrote his revolutionary book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2003/1970) while exiled in Chile following the 1964 military coup in Brazil. The book was based on his personal experiences of poverty and the understandings he gained as an adult educator witnessing firsthand the oppressive conditions in such third world countries as Brazil, Chile, Angola, Mozambique, Cape-Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Nicaragua and other places (Bresler, Cooper, & Palmer,



2001). He saw that a lack of critical literacy effectively rendered the working-class voiceless and powerless against the dominant capitalist class (Torres & Freire, 1994; Bressler, Cooper, & Palmer, 2001). As a result of this awareness, Freire developed a pedagogy of emancipation, linking politics and education with students' lived experiences. He described his pedagogy of the oppressed as:

a pedagogy which must be forged with, not *for*, the oppressed (be they individuals or whole peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade. (Freire, 2003/1970, p. 48)

This became the basis of critical pedagogy for many theorists. In *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (Macedo & Freire, 1987) Freire expanded his notion of critical literacy by advocating for the critical investigation of texts. Bressler, Cooper, & Palmer (2001) write,

Emancipatory education for Freire is never a simple transmission of knowledge. Knowing is not accumulating facts or information, what he called "banking." Rather, *knowing is constructing oneself as a subject in the world, one who is able both to rewrite what one reads and to act in the world to radically alter it* [italics added]. Thus, Freire's idea of literacy went well beyond the subject's capacity to read words. Rather, the act of reading must be about the ability to "read" the world. (p. 130)

This connection between word and world, or in this case, image and world, is pivotal in critically examining multicultural artists who hold an activist agenda.

The practical application of Freire's work centers on a process called "conscientization." In conscientization a "[p]edagogical process" is developed based on a dialogical relationship "grounded in the cultural and social realities of teachers and students" (Bressler, Cooper & Palmer, 2001, p. 130). This process unearths the contradictions between subjects' personal experiences and the politics constraining them to forge a basis for individual and political transformation. Critical teachers are not authorities mirroring the hierarchical structure of capitalism (or other oppressive systems of regulation) but instead are deeply committed to a self-reflective learning process and struggle for liberation. Freire describes in both *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2003/1970) and *Pedagogy in Process: the Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (1978) the notion of authentic help freed

from power relations of domination through a process of praxis where helper and helpee work and learn with and from each other to overcome systems of oppression. Thus the relationship is one of mutual learning and teaching. This was a radical concept at a time when the major validated form of education in Brazil and much of the world was an authoritarian "top-down, knowledge as information delivery" system of education with students memorizing or "banking" these "deposited" pieces of disconnected information.

In contrast, Freire advocated for a "problem solving" pedagogy that engaged students in real world experiences. For Freire it was very clear that the banking method ensured the continuation of exploitative power relations by creating a disempowering educational environment that discouraged any forms of true inquiry or agency, privileging only the ruling class culture's ways of being and systems of knowledge. Consequently Freire's "problem solving" approach began by validating the lives, experiences, knowledge, and cultures of disenfranchised and oppressed peoples in their quest for liberation. These sites of knowledge became the basis for decoding and rewriting texts to reflect participants' own lives, challenging authoritarian practices in an ongoing process of critical literacy and praxis.

While Freire is beloved by many, he also has and has had many critics within academia. Feminists in particular (Ellsworth, 1989; Gore, 1992; Lather, 1998) have been critical of Freire's patriarchal "assumption of a single kind of experience of oppression" (Weiler, 1991). bell hooks falls in both camps as both a great admirer of Freire's work and a vocal critic of Freire's sexism. She points out that one of the things she appreciated about Freire was that he was open to criticism, "walking the talk" of critical pedagogy. After being challenged about gender issues he owned his sexism and in his later writings and speeches addressed sexism as an important part of the ongoing struggle against oppression (hooks, 1993).

In more recent years, critical environmental pedagogues such as Chet Bowers (2005) have been highly critical of Freire's dismissal of non-human life and lack of awareness in linking environmental and social concerns. They believe this failure has had destructive consequences in the field of education and thus to society at large. This issue is one that I will return to in my discussion on place-based education. Meanwhile, I would like to explore critical pedagogy as it is manifested in critical multicultural education.

### ***Critical Multicultural Education***

The goal of critical multicultural education as described by Banks (1994) is to reform the education system to create equity for students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class groups. He references Klein (1985) and Sadker & Sadker (1982) to note the importance of including gender issues in multicultural education so that "both male and female students [have] an equal chance to experience educational success and mobility" (p.3). Banks's definition of multicultural education consists of five dimensions, which are worth describing here because of their importance in both my teaching practice and the way they inform this study.

- *Content integration* is the most widely implemented aspect of multicultural education where teachers include examples from different cultural groups highlighting or illustrating key concepts within specific disciplines.
- *The knowledge construction process* explores with students how inherent and invisible cultural assumptions influence the ways disciplines are constructed, such as whose perspectives, and what knowledge is valued.
- *Prejudice reduction* focuses on creating pedagogy that changes racial attitudes to create greater tolerance and acceptance of those different from oneself.
- *An equity pedagogy* is a form of culturally responsive teaching where teachers assist students from various backgrounds achieve equity in academic achievement. This necessitates teachers becoming knowledgeable about their students' cultural learning styles, being self-reflective about their own cultural background, and adjusting their teaching styles accordingly.
- *An empowering school culture and social structure* addresses issues such as tracking, achievement equity, sports participation, the interrelationships between faculty and students across racial and ethnic groups, and diversity in staff and faculty hiring practices (Banks, 1994).

Unfortunately, as Banks notes, due to confusion put forth by a popular press that saw multicultural education solely as "content integration and as an educational movement that benefits people of color" (p. 4), multicultural education has not been properly integrated and is mostly

used in a very limited, superficial, and unchallenging way.

## Banks's Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education: A Personal Approach

In my own teaching practice I incorporate these different dimensions in different ways. For example:

I practice *content integration* through the inclusion of critical multicultural texts such as those described in Appendix C. In addition, the inclusion of multicultural children's books such as those created by my participants and the study of multicultural artists are classic examples of content integration.

We explore *the knowledge construction process* by looking at European canons of art and the ways museums privilege Western art through display practices that unconsciously include linguistic racism. We study the work of African-American artist Fred Wilson who reconfigures museum collections recontextualizing their labeling practices to make the knowledge construction process in art education a little clearer while broadening and challenging notions of what art really is.

I attempt to facilitate *prejudice reduction* by encouraging the development of empathy. Students learn about the difficulties of their own family's immigrant history through the research and creation of immigrant cartoon narratives. In addition, we read and create visual texts such as painting while listening to Alan Lomax's recordings of Louisiana State Penitentiary Negro Prison Music, discussing the emotions brought on by both the music and the discussion of historical and contemporary incarceration of African-Americans. We contrast this recording with other forms of music and their historical contexts.

I also try and model *an equity pedagogy* by being culturally responsive to what students' home languages and cultural styles are. In the first class we create "self portraits from my home culture." This enables us to both explore our own culture and learn about each others' cultures. These portraits facilitate the exploration of place as culture-rural, urban, suburban etc., as well as ethnically related. The immigrant

cartoon narratives, that follow the self portraits, also provide cues that I can respond to in my teaching.

And finally, *an empowering school culture and social structure* is one that the college of education, where I currently teach and am completing my dissertation, strives for. However, even though the college has recently conducted cluster hires of "minority" professors, life is difficult for most students "of color" in a primarily White institution where racist incidents continue, often without consequences.



As useful as Banks is in establishing guidelines for a responsive classroom situation, he fails to completely fulfill his own goals. While Banks (1994) describes multicultural education as wishing to reform racial, ethnic, class, and gender attitudes in education, his five perspectives focus primarily on race and ethnicity.

Schwartz (1995) describes a slightly different approach to multicultural education. She references Sleeter and Grant's (1987) "five different approaches to multicultural education." These "represent a diversity of curricular, pedagogical, and social justice perspectives: 1) Teaching the Culturally Different; 2) Human Relations; 3) Single Group Studies; 4) Multicultural Education; and 5) Education That Is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist" (p.635). Drawing on Vincent's (1992) work she notes that the first four approaches fall within mainstream approaches that "reform rather than transform schools, communities and society at large" (p. 635). Because these approaches to multiculturalism do not in any way challenge "the rationalism, binary thinking, and capitalism of twentieth century modernism" they remain "politically safe, non-confrontational and well within the dominant ideology of modernism" (Schwartz, 1995, p. 635). In other words, these non-confrontational approaches simply serve to maintain the dominant modernist ideology.

However, it is the fifth approach, "education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist," which holds a radical transformative agenda, and that is of great interest to me personally and within this dissertation. Using "education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist" will facilitate my exploration of my participants' lives and work, as well as our teaching practices positioned as artist/activists. Schwartz (1995) writes that the goal of this approach is transfor-

mation, where, quoting Sleeter & Grant, (1987): "social change becomes an integral part of the curriculum, [and] the systemic causes of social inequities and issues of gender, social class, race, and culture are considered a main focus" (cited in Schwartz, 1995, p. 635). Schwartz describes other names used for this transformative and critical approach to education as: "emancipatory education" (Gordon, 1985), "transformative education" (Giroux, 1985), and "critical teaching" (Shor, 1980). She further notes that these perspectives "foreshadow the paradigm shift currently taking place in multiculturalism from the culture of modernism to that of postmodernism, and specifically to a critical postmodernism" (p. 635).

Thus, critical postmodern multicultural education, situated within an explicit agenda of transformation, does not see "diversity as a goal, but rather argues that diversity must be framed within a politics of cultural criticism and a commitment to social justice" (Estrada & McLaren, 1993, cited in Schwartz, 1995, p. 636). Yet another term for critical postmodern multiculturalism is Giroux's (1995) "insurgent multiculturalism" (p. 107) or McLaren's "revolutionary multiculturalism" (McLaren, 1997). Giroux (1995) writes eloquently of the importance of critical multicultural education in ways that are particularly relevant for this study, hence I will take the liberty of quoting him at length:

At stake here is the need to develop a language that challenges the boundaries of cultural and racial difference as sites of exclusion and discrimination while simultaneously rewriting the script of cultural difference as part of a broader attempt to provide new spaces for expanding and deepening the imperatives of a multicultural and multiracial democracy. In short, I want to address what it means to treat schools and other public sites as border institutions in which teachers, students, and others learn to think and imagine otherwise in order to act otherwise. *For it is within such institutions, engaged in daily acts of cultural translation and negotiation, that students and teachers are offered the opportunity to become border crossers, to recognize that schooling is really an introduction to how culture is organized, a demonstration of who is authorized to speak about particular forms of culture, what culture is considered worthy of valorization, and what forms of culture are considered invalid and unworthy of public esteem* [italics added]. (p. 10)

Each of the critical multicultural theorists described here, using different terminologies,

advocates for forms of praxis. This praxis is essential to identify, examine, and challenge the ways that culture is framed within systems of power within the field of education and beyond that perpetuate various forms of injustice.

### ***Critical Multicultural Arts Education (CMAE)***

Critical multicultural arts education draws on the same theoretical foundations listed above, however it focuses on the role of the arts. It looks at the ways the art world has and does maintains the status quo by privileging European artists in art history and in the present, glorifying images of White men in power, with women and minorities primarily depicted and treated as chattel or objects. In addition, CMAE looks at contemporary artists whose artwork acts as resistance to the forces of domination such as Fred Wilson, Kerry James Marshall, Enriquez Chagoya, Yolanda Lopez, Edgar Heap of Birds, Hung Liu (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Cahan & Kocur, 1996; Corrin, King-Hammond, & Berlin, 1994; Kind, Irwin, Grauer, *et al.*, 2005; Lippard, 1990, 1997). Critical multicultural arts educators highlight diverse artists in the curriculum not only to acknowledge and respond to the fact that we live in a culturally pluralistic society where every culture needs to be honored, but also to further the rich terrain of aesthetics and cultural studies inherent in the field of art that can be used in socially reconstructive ways. In designing curriculum, critical multicultural art educators need to look beyond the White male canons of art history and into the world around us, embracing the creative possibilities of multiple ways of being, seeing, and critically engaging with the world. Thus, I propose incorporating critical multicultural children's book artists, such as those in this study, and their work into the critical multicultural arts education curriculum and throughout the curriculum in general.

### ***Critical Race Theory***

Various reports describe critical race theory (CRT) as originating either in the mid-1970s (Delgado, 1995, cited in Ladson Billings, 1998, p. 10), or the 1980s (Crenshaw, Neil, Garry, & Kendall, 1995). With the formation of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), accompanying the ongoing work of the Civil Rights Movement, legal scholars such as Derrick Bell (an African-American) and Alan Freeman (a European-American) were disillusioned with the legal system's ineffectiveness in combating endemic racism (Ladson Billings, 1998). While (primarily White) liberal lawyers believed in an inherently fair and rational system of law where slow incremental and

progressive changes could be made to combat racism as it is institutionalized, CLS scholars saw that without a critical analysis of race and power little could or would change. Thus CLS along with the Civil Rights Movement laid the foundations for Critical Race Theory.

According to Ladson-Billing's (1998) article "What is Critical Race Theory and What Is It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education," Critical Race Theory begins with these four premises. First, "racism is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture" (p. 11). Second, CRT privileges narrative as an alternative form of discourse to make visible stories related to race such as the life stories of multicultural artists and the stories located within their art and books. The use of storytelling (whether visual or verbal) integrates "*experiential knowledge*, drawn from a shared history [as racialized others]... with their ongoing struggles to transform a world deteriorating under the albatross of racial hegemony" (Barnes, 1990, pp. 1864-1865, cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998, p.11). A third principle of CRT is its critique of liberalism's ineffectiveness in creating the changes needed to eradicate racism: noting that "liberalism has no mechanisms for such change" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 3). Finally, Ladson-Billing's fourth principle of CRT addresses the fact that it is primarily White women who have benefited from affirmative action and other liberal civil rights legislation thus confirming CLS's disaffection with White liberalist ideologies.

Concurrently, Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas (1995) point out that while there is no single doctrine for all critical race theorists, they do note two major themes. First is a commitment to understand how White supremacy and domination has operated historically and continues to operate. And second, critical race theorists are committed to working toward changing these racially inscribed relationships of power and subjugation.

Yet another facet of CRT is its expressive "unpacking" of Whiteness (McIntosh, 1990) in education, particularly in the demographics of White teachers teaching non-White students and their resistance to owning White privilege (Carter, 1997; Gay, 2000; Lawrence, 1997; Phoenix, 1997).

In Sleeter's (2001) review of research on teacher education schools training teachers for historically underserved multicultural populations, she found many studies describing how the majority of White pre-service students lacked either understanding or awareness of racial discrimination and its effects (King, 1991; Su, 1996, 1997). Sleeter (2001) also found that in studies



of predominantly White teacher education programs there are few systematic attempts to address this (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Davis, 1995; Grant & Koskela, 1986; Parker & Hood, 1995; Weiner, 1990).

The well-documented research on White pre-service students' resistance to race-based discourse frequently finds students advocating for a colorblind approach to race as a coping strategy (Sleeter, 2001). Brander (2005) also describes her pre-service students' longing for a colorblind philosophy noting that in her students' resistance to "even discuss race and racism" they fail to see the privilege they have of not having to think about racism and race in their daily lives. In a more positive light, Roman (1993) writes:

If white students and educators are to become empowered critical analysts of their/our own claims to know the privileged world in which their racial interests function, then such privileges and the injustices they reap for others would necessarily become the *objects* of analyses of structural racism. This allows white students and educators, for example, to move from *white defensiveness* and *appropriative speech* to stances in which we/they take effective responsibility and action for 'disinvesting' in racial privilege. (p. 84)

Critical Race Theory thus serves several functions within this dissertation. It serves to bring to the foreground the pervasive presence of racism within the United States, the privileging of narrative as an ideological strategy, and the need to address issues of Whiteness as privilege.

## Looking in the Mirror of Whiteness as Privilege

This "unpacking" of "whiteness as privilege" was initially extremely challenging for me having carried the baggage of ethnic persecution as the lone Jewish family in an anti-Semitic neighborhood and as the daughter of holocaust survivors. This baggage metaphorically resembled a huge "chip on my shoulder." I also had a somewhat distorted self-identification as "minority other" from my childhood in Australia, where people from non-English speaking backgrounds are considered minorities. Consequently, for many years I held great resistance to identifying as White and owning the privilege that

comes with Whiteness. It wasn't until studying critical race theory in an intense course that I was able to begin the process of owning my privilege and begin exploring where I fit within multicultural discourses. Consequently, I can have empathy for my own students' resistance. As a multicultural children's book artist who represented images of both her own culture and others, and as a researcher fearful of being insensitive or inappropriate in my research with people of color, this aspect of CRT is of vital importance to me both personally and as an educator.

By positioning the exploration of quality multicultural artists and children's books as a means of opening a door to develop a love for multiculturalism and a window/mirror to explore constructs of Whiteness and race, I hope to ease the difficulty and resistance of my White pre-service teachers to acknowledge their own privilege and work toward empowering those less privileged by breaking down the walls of racism.

When I first came to Pullman, Washington, I experienced huge culture shock. I had come from San Francisco where I mostly worked with minority children and lived in diverse low-income neighborhoods. I found myself teaching mostly blue-eyed, blonde, middle-class, 20 year-old pre-service students who were extremely resistant to participate in class discussions on multiculturalism and race. Most of the time I was frustrated or angry. My teaching was resentful and torturous, and I doubt that I inspired much empathy or love for multiculturalism.

It wasn't until I acknowledged my own resistance to owning Whiteness and implemented Kit Grauer's teaching ideas that I realized I wanted to, as my friend Nora Pirquet says, "lead from the front rather than kick from behind." I wanted to inspire delight and empathy in promoting equity and stewardship, along with outrage and activism against injustice, rather than provoking unconstructive fear and defensiveness. I wanted to encourage learning that, although uncomfortable at times, also provided a sense of safety for students to be vulnerable, so they could acknowledge their privilege and their fears. I rethought everything I thought I knew about teaching and shifted my teaching from teaching *to* my students, to teaching and learning *with* my students. This meant acknowledging both commonalities and differences and opening my heart to my students. It also meant learning to be more comfortable with the discomfort of

change and the awkwardness of transformative teaching practices.



### ***Culturally Responsive Teaching***

Culturally responsive teaching is a recent phenomenon in the world of multicultural education. It consists of three different but interconnected areas. First is the acknowledgement that the vast majority of pre-service and in-service teachers are White and middle-class. Coming from these backgrounds pre-service and in-service teachers usually hold culturally-derived teaching styles learned in the mainstream culture of which they are a part. These teaching and learning styles are divergent, and at times oppositional to the culturally-related learning styles of their minority students. In addition, the majority of pre-service and in-service teachers bring a range of prejudices and biases from growing up in a racist society that has provided them privileges both unavailable to and at the expense of non-Whites. Part of dealing with these issues requires teachers to recognize their own privilege and move beyond the current deficit view of minority populations to one that learns about and builds upon minority students' and their communities' assets (Gay, 2002, 2005; Martin, 1997; Sleeter, 2001; Thompson, 2002).

Second is the need to include curricula reflective of diverse cultural groups including all of the diverse students represented in the classroom similar to Banks's (1994) content integration. Gay (2002) notes that although different cultural groups and individuals have made vitally important contributions since the beginning of humankind, these contributions are largely ignored, further exacerbating minority students sense of alienation in schools. Thus, culturally responsive teachers need to make the effort to incorporate culturally relevant teaching materials across the curriculum. Gay (2002) argues that pre-service teachers need to learn multicultural inclusion strategies in each of the disciplines of their teacher training programs as well as in discrete multicultural education courses to address this inequity.

Finally, teachers need to learn about the distinct cultural backgrounds and cultural learning styles of each of the students in the class and adapt their teaching styles accordingly. For example, Delpit (1995) describes the difference in intent when a White teacher asks her students if they would like to sit down. The Black students respond according to their home culture's explicitly directive style and believing this to be is a genuine question, choose not to sit. If their parents want them to sit they simply say so. However, the White teacher interprets the African-American

students decision to continue whatever they are doing as defiant behavior and immediately starts a process of negative labeling rather than questioning the congruence between her own teaching style and her students' learning styles. Not surprisingly, Martin's (1997) review of literature on culturally responsive teaching found that students learned more when the classroom structure, style, and content were changed to be more congruent with students' home cultures.

Culturally responsive teaching also addresses cultural assumptions made about students' homes based on the teachers' own background. For example, if parents do not attend school organizations or functions, it frequently has less to do with parent's caring about their children's progress than economics, exhaustion, or negative impressions and experiences of schools and schooling. Comer and Poussaint (1992) describe that African-American parents may not attend school functions or meet with teachers because they "feel uncomfortable and intimidated with professional people" (p. 190, cited in Thompson, 2002, p. 157). Thompson also notes Ladson-Billings's (1994) description of how her parents supported her academically with high expectations of both grades and behavior even though they rarely visited her school.

Thompson (2002) reports that, combined with an almost overwhelmingly negative portrayal of African-Americans in mainstream media (Foster & Peele, 1999), African-American children who enter school with great potential, excitement, and enthusiasm for learning have mostly lost it by fourth grade (Kozol, 1986; Kunjufu, 1990; Morgan, 1980). In addition, many minority students live in poverty further diminishing their chance of academic success and the class related rewards that accompany continuing on to higher education (Delpit, 1995; Kozol, 1991).

Clearly, there is a great need for an education system that teaches multiple discourses (Delpit, 1995). One that would acknowledge, validate, and draw from the "funds of knowledge" embedded in students' home cultures (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), while another type of discourse would teach students about the "culture of power" from which they have historically been excluded (Delpit, 1995). Because minority students have not been explicitly taught the rules and regulations of the dominant White culture they are effectively punished for not knowing something they have no way of knowing (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Delpit, 1995).

Culturally responsive teachers are aware of the political implications of the current "one size fits all" mode of instruction privileging European-American students both in terms of the

curriculum and in the teacher's instructional style. Gay (2002) writes:

There are several recurrent trends in how formal school curricula deal with ethnic diversity that culturally responsive teachers need to correct. Among them are avoiding controversial issues such as racism, historical atrocities, powerlessness, and hegemony; focusing on the accomplishments of the same few high-profile individuals repeatedly and ignoring the actions of groups; giving proportionally more attention to African-Americans than other groups of color; decontextualizing women, their issues and their actions from their race and ethnicity; ignoring poverty; and emphasizing factual information while minimizing other kinds of knowledge (such as values, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and ethics). (p. 108)

Gay and other theorists advocating culturally responsive teaching thus emphasize the importance of addressing racism and other forms of bias while challenging normative practices in education.

These theorists and others make clear that teachers need to learn both about and from their students' cultures, meaning teaching needs to be student-centered. Gay, in particular, points out that the focus needs to be on the cooperative values of many minority groups rather than the competitive ethic of European-Americans. Culturally responsive teachers also allow students to "set their own pace" and not be "penalized for calling out answers to questions that [are] out of sync with the teacher's own rhythm" (Tharp & Yamauchi, 1994, cited in Martin, 1997, p. 22), learning about and responding to their student different communication styles. In addition, culturally responsive teachers need to be direct and explicit in terms of expectations and discipline while also being deeply caring both in and out of the classroom (Delpit, 1995; Ladson Billings, 1994). Gay (2002) describes communication problems that arise when mainstream communication in schools is "passive-receptive" with students listening quietly and responding "at prescribed times when granted permission by the teacher" (p. 111). She contrasts this with the active/participatory styles of "most ethnic groups of color" who function in what is referred to in African-American cultures as "call-response" (Baber, 1987; Smitherman, 1977, cited in Gay, 2002, p. 111), in Native Hawaiian cultures as "talk-story" (Au, 1993; Au & Kawakami, 1994, cited in Gay 2002, p.111) and in European-American females "to show involvement, support, and confirmation" as "rapport talk" (Tannen, 1990, cited in Gay, p. 111). While European-American cultures tend to communicate dispassionately, sequentially, and succinctly in what Au, (1993),

Kochman, (1981), and Michaels, (1981; 1984) call *topic-centered*. Gay (2002) writes: "[m]any African-Americans, Asian, Latino, and Native-Americans use a different approach to organizing and transmitting ideas... called *topic-chaining*" (p. 112). This approach favors lengthy expositions setting the stage and contextualizing the information with background information. Communication is frequently subjective, passionate, poetic, intense and conversational. Metaphor, innuendo, and symbolism are often employed to advance a position of advocacy with divergent stories coming together in a single narrative. This style of communication can appear circular, fragmented, rambling, and disjointed to a non-culturally responsive teacher who may respond disapprovingly, further silencing and alienating a non-White student.

The need for cultural responsiveness in education is evident. There are several ways this can be accomplished. Students of color need to be hired and supported as teachers. Teacher education programs need to foreground the importance of culturally responsive teaching by integrating culturally relevant materials into the existing curriculum and becoming educated about the cultural learning styles in their classrooms. A third approach is to incorporate place-based education or service learning where pre-service and in-service teachers develop culturally responsive curricula connected to places where they and their students learn with and about their own communities while giving back to the community.

### ***Place-based education is culturally responsive teaching***

While I will be writing at length about place-based education later on in this chapter, I would like to foreshadow this here by discussing some of the ways that place-based education is culturally responsive teaching. David Gruenewald (2006) in his article: "Place-Based Education: Grounding Culturally-Responsive Teaching in Geographical Diversity" draws attention to the obvious ways that place-based education is inherently culturally-responsive when students learn about, from, and with their communities in ways that benefit their communities. At the same time, he contests the very notion of diversity as it is currently institutionalized in education, describing how school settings are strictly segregated by age, class, and race. In addition, homogenized and standardized schooling (the polar opposite of diversity) isolates students and teachers in facilities kept separate from their surrounding communities. Gruenewald writes "from a structural, organizational, temporal, spatial, architectural, cultural, intellectual, and ecological

perspective, schools lack diversity. Big time" (p. 27).

While Gruenewald (2006) is fully aware of the importance of addressing issues of "difference" and "identity" he notes that the focus on "difference" has neglected the realm of "relationship" which is intrinsic to ecological studies. The concept of relationship does not equate with essentialist ideas such as "we are all the same" or platitudes like "common humanity" that dismiss difference, but instead looks at our interconnected relationships to place, each other, and "the more than human world" (Abram, 1996) as they play out in systems of oppression, liberation, habitation, conservation and reclamation.

Boyle-Baise (2005) in a more practitioner-oriented text draws attention to learning from place as a means of culturally responsive teaching. She calls this "multicultural service learning" (p. 448), although it sounds very much like place-based education, where pre-service teachers learn from and benefit local environments. She advocates for pre-service teachers to spend time in low income and/or minority communities where they learn about local needs and then create projects that address those needs. Thus students work with communities to both help and learn from their environment in a form of "problem solving" education (Freire, 2003/1970). In the process they learn from local "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, & Neff, *et al.*, 1992) to develop an appreciation of diverse communities as possessing assets rather than deficits. She writes: "Families can hold funds of knowledge in terms of life skills, moral teachings, cultural information, or historic memories" (p. 448).

By teaching pre-service teachers how to connect with their local environment, meaningful forms of culturally responsive education are engaged to the benefit of both students and their communities.

### The Heart of It

Culturally responsive teaching is probably at the heart of my personal pedagogy where I try to connect my students with both their own cultures while teaching them about the importance of finding ways to validate and learn about and from each classroom member's culture. The histories, art, and books of my participants provide an excellent starting point for this. They do so not as a means of essentializing, such

as having George Littlechild represent all Native-Americans or Carl Angel represent all Asian-Americans, but as a means of showing a range of experiences and ways of being in the world coming from a variety of discreet cultural backgrounds. Their visual and oral stories represent explorations of race, place, art, and culture in an assortment of ways that not only inspire aesthetic appreciation but also promote discussions related to these themes and the creation of place-based, social reconstructionist art projects where students both learn about their community and give back to the community.

However, engaging in multicultural service learning as advocated by Boyle-Baise is more problematic in the primarily White area where I teach, and even if there were more diverse neighborhoods nearby I imagine it could be yet another form of voyeuristic colonialistic exploitation if local stakeholders were not extensively consulted and receptive to hosting my primarily White students. In my past life I have had the opportunity to engage in culturally responsive teaching with homeless children around the notion of home and place exploring the construct from multiple perspectives as a dreamscape, internal space, and a literal place. Children were able to look at what gives them comfort enabling them to make guardian angels and envision places of security and warmth in the images they created. While this did not in anyway provide any kind of critical analysis of how homelessness and the idea of disposable citizens is enacted in a society that has an abundance of riches, it did enable the kids (and myself) to learn about each other's dreams, experiences, and different cultural responses to place.



### *Postcolonial Theory*

Because postcolonial theory recognizes the centrality of place or geography in the history of colonialist oppression, it shares common ground with place-based education and multicultural service learning's foregrounding of place as a pivotal site for investigation, albeit from a somewhat different perspective. The colonial project of European expansion was initially justified through educational exhibitions of various species of animals and plants as well as detailed



artistic illustrations and imaginative paintings of these "exotic" lands and their inhabitants. Later it extended to the capture and exploitation of indigenous people for exhibition, and following this dehumanization, the capture and exploitation of many of these indigenous people for wholesale slavery or other forms of economic gain (Said, 1979; Willinsky, 1998). Thus, postcolonial theory looks at places as sites of colonialist desire, appropriation and exploitation. It analyzes the technologies of appropriation enacted within historical and contemporary justifications for racism through geographic discourses such as Orientalism, and popular culture periodicals such as National Geographic's imagistic depictions.

These images and narratives position non-Whites as either exotic or barbaric and always as "other" (Bhabha, 2004; Clifford, 1998; Said, 1979; Willinsky, 1998). Said describes Orientalism as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts" (1998, p.12, cited in Willinsky, p. 4). Said's work traces the West's study of the East and the ways that this "scholarship" contributed to the Imperialist project by marginalizing the voices, accomplishments and rights of Arab peoples. Imperialism thus was able to claim land and resources from indigenous peoples and this in fact is still very much in effect as witnessed by the ongoing wars over land and oil in the Middle East and Africa. Similarly, Clifford (1998) describes the cultural artifacts collected by ethnographers as "artifacts of otherness" (p. 134) displayed in museums to pique the Western imagination of the foreign and exotic. He writes:

If the notion of the African "fetish" had any meaning in the twenties, it described not a mode of African belief but rather the way in which exotic artifacts were consumed by European aficionados. A mask or statue or any shred of black culture could effectively summon a complete world of dreams and possibilities—passionate, rhythmic, concrete, mystical, unchained: an "Africa" (p. 136).

In this and many other ways Imperialism profited from the exploitation and colonization of indigenous people's lands, bodies, and cultures.

Postcolonial theorists have been instrumental in highlighting the ways that ethnographers, artists, museums, and other academics have been complicit in colonial appropriations of non-Western cultural identities and practices for their own voyeuristic or touristic purposes and for (sometimes inadvertently) supporting the appropriation of both Western and non-Western lands

and bodies to further imperialistic ends.

These distorted depictions of non-Europeans as different, less than, and suspect continues today in the form of mass media productions such as *COPS*, *Aladdin*, and *Blackhawk Down* that feature images of dark-skinned African-Americans, Latinos, and Arabs as criminals and terrorists, as well as seemingly innocuous publications like *National Geographic* with its depictions of "exotic natives." Willinsky (1998) describes *National Geographic's* exoticized depictions of indigenous peoples as a "packaging of the educational fantasy of colonization" (p.149), noting that these native populations were at the very same time struggling against the colonization *National Geographic* was re-inscribing. Gruenewald's (2003b) notions of decolonization and reinhabitation come in handy here whereby pedagogues, artists, authors, and educators can ask questions such as: Who and what has been colonized, and how can we effect a process of reclamation and restitution? What and where has been rendered uninhabitable, and how can we effect a process of restoration? Giroux (1993) provides another voice arguing against the continuing effects of colonization.

[P]ostcolonial critics have argued that the history and politics of difference is often informed by a legacy of colonialism that warrants analyzing the exclusions and repressions that allow specific forms of privilege to remain unacknowledged in the language of Western educators and cultural workers.... forms of privilege... benefit maleness, whiteness, and property... [while] disabl[ing] others to speak in places where those who are privileged by virtue of the legacy of colonial power assume authority and the conditions for human agency. (p. 185)

He also notes that explicating the interconnections between European culture and colonialism requires "more than rewriting or recovering the repressed stories and social memories of the Other." In addition, it requires foregrounding "how Western knowledge is encased in historical and institutional structures that both privilege and exclude particular readings, particular voices, certain aesthetics, forms of authority, specific representations, and modes of sociality" (p. 185). In other words, Giroux calls for a dialectic that not only advocates for the inclusion of marginalized texts (and art) but that also critiques the system of power that enabled that marginalization to occur in the first place.

For many centuries Westerners have spoken both about and for non-Westerners leaving

little to no room for non-Westerners to speak for themselves. Nor have non-Westerner's voices been welcomed. Clifford (1998) describes the early work of Leiris (1950) who created the first in-depth analysis connecting anthropology and colonialism. Leiris brought to attention the complicity of Western writers in promulgating colonialism. Clifford (1998) writes:

Leiris pointed to a basic imbalance. Westerners had for centuries studied and spoken for the rest of the world; the reverse had not been the case. He announced a new situation, one in which the 'objects' of observation would begin to write back. The Western gaze would be met and scattered. Since 1950 Asians, Africans, Arab Orientals, Pacific Islanders, and Native-Americans have in a variety of ways asserted their independence from Western cultural and political hegemony and established a new multivocal field of intercultural discourse" (p. 256).

Thus voices that had been silenced for centuries began to not only speak up, but also back, to those that had been vested in profiting from representing/misrepresenting them. "Experts" on the "other" such as Orientalists were now finding their authority challenged and not liking it at all.

## B e l o n g i n g

I believe the participants in this study fall within this "multivocal field of intercultural discourse." By actively resisting the label of "less than" and "other" to re-construct and affirm their own cultural identities, artists and authors such as those in my study, create their own images and narratives in opposition to racist and marginalizing mainstream representations. Thus they actively contest the imperialist project by presenting alternative representations of ways of being by, for, and about individual minorities that broaden perceptions of minorities for all children. These images come from that place of "speaking back" saying "we belong" and "our voices have value." The images and stories in our books are both literal and symbolic approaching issues of decolonization and reinhabitation on conscious, liminal, playful serious, intellectual and emotive levels. As will become evident later on in this dissertation, this is effected through intuitive as well as analytical methodologies to create images and understandings that further this quest in our work for inclusion, reclamation and reinhabitation through

bilingual texts and multivocal images.

As a Jew, I have many issues about belonging, which I shall also be exploring further on. Am I one of those who has spoken for? At what point does an artist become a colonizer when working outside her own culture? Does this mean I can only illustrate Jewish-Australian books? And then here I am as the sole White person in this study, hopefully not speaking for, but *with* my participants. I have worked hard in all my endeavors to come from that place of good faith but I don't know if I have always been successful. There are no easy answers for these questions. I rely on my participants to make sure I'm on the right track and so far they tell me I am



In addition to the use of marginalizing images, postcolonial studies authors draw attention to the colonizing aspects of language instituted through the privileging of English and the discrediting of other languages. Willinsky (1998) points out that although the benefits of early instruction in children's native language have been established, "the practice in the United States, typically involving Spanish, is under assault by the 'official English movement.' The status of the language we speak and of the language in which the young are educated form no less a part of the legacy of imperialism" (p. 190). He notes that it is no coincidence that the dominant languages spoken throughout the world are the languages of the colonizers (English, French, and Spanish). Willinsky (1998) writes: "With the expansion of the British Empire, English was made an instrument of domination and silencing; it was used to regulate and police access to authority and knowledge among colonized peoples" (p. 191). He further explicates the role of schools in the generational losses of languages to further disempower non-Western cultural communities:

More than righteous indignation over the school's violation of the right to a voice is called for. At issue is the immediate task of mastering language skills that make a difference, that are heard and attended to, while appreciating the winding road that has led to this linguistic juncture, to lives being lived out through these first- and second-language lessons." (Willinsky, 1998, p. 191-192)

Thus language becomes another form of "border crossing" for those of us from non-English speaking backgrounds. In addition many of our books are bilingual in English and Spanish

(Maya, Elizabeth, Joe, Carl and myself), while two of Carl's books are in English and Tagalog. Carl's books, in fact, were the first bilingual Tagalog and English children's books ever published in the United States. Consequently, this aspect of postcolonial studies is one that I will be looking at further in this dissertation.

### ***Critical Multicultural Analysis***

Critical Multicultural Analysis (CMA), the final theoretical perspective that I have positioned under the CMEA umbrella, critically focuses on the analysis of class, gender and race in multicultural children's literature. While class and gender are given lip service as being a part of multicultural studies and practices, in reality the multicultural focus has been primarily on race, ignoring the interrelationships of class and gender as critical parts of the same system of oppression. Thus CMA seeks to address this lack (Botelho, 2004; Botelho & Rudman, 2004; Kelley, Botelho, Rosenberger, & Rudman, 2004).

As CMA is a relatively new theoretical perspective, it does not as yet have a body of published work. However, because of the concrete focus on children's literature and the combined analysis it brings both individually and to the interrelationships between class, gender, and race, it is a useful tool in examining the lives and work of children's book artists from both sexes and diverse sexual orientations, classes and ethnicities. Embedded within critical multicultural analysis are a variety of social theory lenses. These include, critical literacy (Hollindale, 1992; Mitchell, 2003; J. Stephens, 1992), feminist poststructuralism (Davies, 1993, 2002), and critical multiculturalism (Harris, 1997; Nieto, 1997; Reese, 1997; Yenika Agbaw, 1997), which are used to deconstruct children's literary texts to "identify contradictions, dilemmas, social and institutional practices and traditions, conflicting values and dominant worldviews" (Botelho & Rudman, 2004). Accordingly, CMA serves a useful function in looking at these issues of race, class, gender, and agency in children's literature.

CMA advocates for all stakeholders in the field of children's literature—including authors, illustrators, teachers, children, librarians, publishers and booksellers—to "think critically about what is being communicated, purposefully, or unwittingly" and to read beyond the aesthetic qualities of the books to examine issues of power and agency (Botelho & Rudman, 2004). The authors write: "All literature is evidence of how our society is organized and children's literature is

no exception" (Botelho & Rudman, 2004, n.p). In ways that are reminiscent of Bourdieu's (1994) "fields of cultural production," critical multicultural analysts note that:

[t]he writing, illustrating, and publishing of children's books are influenced by society whose institutions still discriminate against individuals based on their class, race, ethnicity, gender, language, physical ability, and sexual orientation. [Thus, r]eading is a sociopolitical activity. (Kelley, Botelho, Rosenberger et al., 2004, n.p.)

In other words, those involved in the production of children's books are enmeshed in the economics and values of a larger field of publishing which is an integral part of the status quo that it then reproduces.

CMA asks core questions about issues such as authenticity: Who speaks for whom?; how is the relationship between text and reader "historically, sociopolitically, and discursively shaped" (Kelley, Botelho, Rosenberger et al., 2004, n.p.)? What assumptions are made regarding how gender, class and race are portrayed in relation to what is considered normative, i.e., male, middleclass, and White? And, how do we avoid essentializing complex issues such as "cultural pride," the "idealization of particular cultural traits," and the "complexity of assumed universal traits" (Kelley, Botelho, Rosenberger et al., 2004, n.p.)? These questions and explorations are filtered through four constructs—"domination, collusion, resistance, and agency" as factors constituting a "power continuum" in children's literature located within a specific time and place (Kelley, Botelho, Rosenberger et al., 2004, n.p.).

## Questioning Who I am as a Multicultural Children's Book Illustrator

I find myself in a strange place within my own work as a multicultural children's book illustrator looking at CMAE issues. So I'd like to provide a little background as to how I became one and describe the shaky turf I now stand on.

When I first began working for Children's Book press in early 1988 there were few multicultural children's books available. I had been working at a Latino community organization called La Raza Graphics where they invited me to have an exhibition in their gallery. I was allowed to invite anyone connected with the center to curate the

show so, I asked Enriquez Chagoya whose large scale charcoal portrayals of Mickey Mouse and other political figures had infatuated me for years. Enriquez encouraged me to hang my most honest and tortured work; he designed the exhibit in an intense and creative way where parts of the paintings were extended on to the walls, spilling over and crossing the borders of object and space. It was terrifying for me to expose myself in this way, but the exhibition was a big success. Harriet Rohmer, the visionary founder of Children's Book Press, saw the show and asked me if I wanted to illustrate a children's book about change. The story was from a Nicaraguan puppet show and Harriet had tried and been unsuccessful in finding an artist within the Latino community for the book. I was shocked because my work at the time was raw and bloody, but it turned out Harriet only used intense edgy artists, preferably from the culture depicted, and she thought I would be a good match. Thus I came to illustrate my first multicultural children's book even though I'm White. This book and the books that followed came to change my life and empowered many minority children.

With each of my books I did a tremendous amount of research and used people within the communities as models, running my work by friends and acquaintances from within the communities depicted to make sure I got it "right." With the passage of time, the growing success of CBP, plus a growing awareness of issues of representation, my position as a multicultural children's book illustrator became more tenuous. I remember being upset and angry when Harriet retired, and the new editor at CBP told me that although she loved my work they would only be using minority artists from the community. Wasn't I a member of the community, having lived there and actively participated in it for 20 years? I'd helped build the press from a small non-profit into a successful business-illustrating seven books, designing and art directing twelve books, designing their new office space and painting murals there, bringing in other artists and participating in the press in a myriad of other ways. It was as if I had worked for civil rights and now was "passed over" because of affirmative action. It wasn't until I studied critical race theory and critical multicultural analysis that I "got it." And while it is unlikely that I will illustrate any Jewish-Australian children's books, representing my own culture (except perhaps one day my own story), I am still

questioning what kinds of children's books I can make within the critical multicultural arena, remaining in a place of discomfort and unknowing while focusing my creative endeavors on projects like this research, my personal art, and non-"multicultural" children's books instead.



In addition to issues of representation, critical multicultural analysts extend current discourses around multiculturalism to investigate how the literary category of "multicultural children's literature... obfuscates issues of social power and privilege, [where] the characters' social circumstances are rendered as private, personal, and cultural, neglecting to link individual lives to power structures (Botelho, 1995, p. 5). Thus much multicultural children's literature, although well meaning, does nothing to challenge institutions of power that create oppressive systems of discrimination and exploitation. In addition, as critical multiculturalists working in the field of children's literature point out—due to the fact that the majority of publishers, authors, and illustrators creating multicultural children's books are European-Americans—many stereotypes, inaccuracies, and misrepresentations are perpetrated and perpetuated, providing little benefit to the underrepresented populations they are supposed to be representing (Buffington Duren, 2000; Jenkins, 1997; Ladson Billings, 2000; Newling, 2001; Nieto, 1997; Reese, 1997; Yamate, 1997).

These are meaty themes I will be exploring by using CMA in the analysis of my participant's children's books. As Botelho and Rudman (2004) write: "Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature equips the reader with strategies to unmask the dominant ideology, integrate what they know about themselves with what they learn about others, and translate their reading and thinking into social action" (n.p.). These strategies help in looking beneath the surface of stories to examine issues of power and agency and whether they extend beyond the "individual's problem" and into the larger social framework facilitating the process of "reading the world."

Because Critical Multicultural Education and Analysis has been a long and complex section I would like to briefly summarize it and contextualize how I will be using it before moving on to my final two theoretical perspectives—Cultural Production and Place-Based Education.

I have positioned each of these critical perspectives in CMEA for a variety of reasons. Critical pedagogy focusing on Freire's work forms a foundational understanding of many of the



critical pedagogies that followed, and in particular, looks at visual and written texts as sites for praxis. Critical multicultural education situates my participants within an educational context both as members of minority communities and as producers of books used in the field of multicultural education, while also exploring our teaching practices and ideas on education. Critical race theory facilitates investigation into issues of race in both our lives and work, plus it privileges narratives, such as the portraits I will be constructing, as valuable discourses to challenge racism; culturally responsive teaching provides a lens for studying my participants lives and work as springboards to create culturally responsive projects; postcolonial theory grounds my project in examining both geographic place and the fields of colonizing and decolonizing practices and theories; and critical multicultural analysis promotes discourse investigating the socio-historic constructs of race, class and gender, as they are situated within institutionalized systems manifested in multicultural children's literature. Each of these perspectives when used together form a gestalt, making possible an in-depth exploration into these aspects of race, class, gender and multiculturalism within my participants lives and work, the education system, and society at large.

### **Cultural Production**

Surrounding multicultural education is a field of production that both supports and profits from this pedagogy. Because my participants and I as multicultural book producers are a part of this field, a look at Bourdieu's theory on the field of cultural production is helpful here. Bourdieu's (1993) book *The Field of Cultural Production* investigates the many cultural and socioeconomic factors involved in the construction of cultural products such as film, art, music, dance, theater, and different forms of literature. For example in looking at the field of art production Bourdieu (1993) describes some of the factors that need to be taken into account:

the social conditions of artists, art critics, dealers, patrons, etc., as revealed by indices such as social origin, education or qualifications, but also the social conditions of a set of objects socially constituted as works of *art*, i.e., the conditions of production of the field of social agents (e.g., museums, galleries, academies, etc.) which help to define and produce the value of works of art. In short, it is a question of understanding works of art as a *manifestation* of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated. (p. 37)

Because the artists in this study act as producers of culture in both our fine art, and children's

book products, analyzing the field of cultural production that surrounds, constrains and makes possible our work helps explain its cultural contexts and critical significance.

In the field of children's book production various interconnected agents include: authors and artists, book agents, editors, acquisitions' committees, marketing departments, graphic designers, art directors, publishers, accountants, printers, book reviewers, award committees, distribution networks, bookstores and online book sites, librarians, teachers, children, and the buying public.

Many factors within the field of children's book production influence which books are acquired for publication and by whom; how books once acquired are molded by editors, art directors, marketing departments and publishers to fit the tastes, ideologies, and ideas of what they believe will be both of quality and marketable. Additionally, what resources are devoted to printing, marketing and publicizing the book also influence the degree of access the public has to these books, whether the books make a profit, and whether they stay in print. As anyone who has worked in book publishing knows, these decisions are made in innumerable meetings with publishers, editors, and marketing people. The cultural capital in the room is often decidedly White and middle-class, bringing accompanying White, middle-class worldviews of what is deemed marketable and appropriate in children's literature. Johnson (1993) in his introduction to Bourdieu's book *The Field of Cultural Production* writes:

Although they do not create or cause class divisions and inequalities, art and cultural consumption are disposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences and thus contribute to the process of social reproduction. (p. 2)

Danaher, Fensham, Shirato, Threadgold, and Webb (2002) describe the role of cultural production "in shaping community and national identity, because it produces images and stories that represent 'us' to ourselves and to others, and [thus] contributes to the reproduction of the social order" (p. 165). For children who do not reap the rewards of belonging to the dominant culture these stories and images have not exactly been empowering. Giroux (2000) writes:

Mass-produced images fill our daily lives and condition our most intimate perceptions and desires. At issue... is how culture, particularly media culture, has become a

substantive, if not the primary, educational force in regulating the meanings, values, and tastes that set the norms and conventions that offer up and legitimate particular subject positions. In other words, media culture influences what it means to claim an identity as male, female, white, black, citizen, or noncitizen as well as defining the meaning of childhood, the national past, beauty, truth, and social agency. (pp.108-109)

Here, Giroux brings attention to how pervasive and powerful popular media is as a normative technology in children's lives.

Multinational corporations such as Disney reach far into the popular imagination and extend into the world of children's literature where literature is used as a technology of cultural production to inscribe and re-inscribe difference and normalcy in an all-pervasive manner (Giroux, 2000). Thus, characters such as Disney's depictions of Aladin and Pocahontas affect a kind of colonization of the imagination. Within these media constructions, children are being socialized to understand themselves as either attractive, big-eyed, small nosed (and even sometimes nose-less), light or lighter-skinned heroes and heroines, i.e., privileged; or darker skinned, beady-eyed, hook-nosed (or generally big-nosed) villains i.e., undeserving. Willinsky (1998) writes:

In more recent times, a number of writers, artists, educators, and curators have made it their business to challenge the spectacle that is made of racial and cultural difference, whether in biology textbooks or Disney cartoons, although they are faced with charges of "political correctness" from those who, not wanting their education disturbed, seek to trivialize their acts of concern for these acts of misrepresentation. (p. 61)

Thus, those in positions of power maintain that power through the media texts and images which they control, reinscribing power relations of dominance and denigrating anyone who contests those representations.

Alternatively, artists such as those in this study represent the kinds of cultural workers Willinsky describes. They represent an alternative to Disney and other global media giants' hegemonic simulations perpetrated through both mass media and education. By exploring the artists' personal histories and cultural work both within, and as resistance to, the dictates of colonialist and mainstream hyperreal culture, I seek to shed light on the complexities of multicultural representations and the cultural constrictions of late-capitalist market forces. The stories in the participants' children's books are frequently autobiographical giving them an authenticity and

credibility, while the artists have rendered themselves and their friends and families into the pictures making them more specific, and believable as counter-representations to the demonized or exoticized "other."

However, having said this, even though publishers such as Children's Book Press and the artists in this study have been effective in and dedicated to producing alternative images and narratives to those put forth by Disney and other mainstream culture producers, we still operate within a field of cultural production that requires acceptance and good reviews by primarily White reviewers, teachers, librarians and book stores to ensure decent sales that will allow the press to continue. These are some of the factors influencing our experiences as cultural producers, which I will explore further in the dissertation. In addition to exploring cultural production, I will also be exploring the role of place in our lives and work.

### **Place and Place-Based Education: Why Context Counts**

My fourth and final theoretical perspective calls on the many traditions located within place-based education (PBE), along with several related fields of contextual and environmental inquiry. Earlier in this chapter, under the heading of "Culturally Responsive Teaching," I briefly described PBE. However, because place is so pivotal in all three aspects of my life as an artist, researcher and teacher, as well as being a core construct in this study, I would like to take the time here to explore PBE in much greater depth. I will begin by providing an overview of the concepts and practices of place-based education. In addition, I will also describe some of the parallel terms and concepts related to place-based education as well as exploring why learning about place might be important. This will include looking at the literature of some prominent environmental and place-based pedagogues and exploring the interconnections between economics, culture, and environment. Following this, I will explore the role place plays in art and how this is of value in my study. And finally, I will conclude with an exploration of the role of place in children's literature. Within my personal reflections, I will also be commenting on the role of place in my own life and work. In other words, I will be investigating why the construct/context/culture of place is so important in the fields of art, education, and life in general.

Fortunately, I am far from alone in my passion for place. Nor am I alone in the sense of urgency I hold with others for the need to educate for a global citizenship that foregrounds democratic responsibility in caring for others (both human and non-human) while caring for our

planet, beginning with where we stand right now.

### ***Place in Education or Learning from the Local***

Approaches to place-based education include the exploration of both man-made and natural environments including rural, urban, suburban, and wilderness places. These become sites of investigation, conservation, reclamation, and celebration as students learn about and benefit the nature, history, culture, and local resources of where they live. Gruenewald (2003a) writes:

Place-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the well being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit. Critical pedagogies are needed to challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant culture and in conventional education. Chief among these are the assumptions that education should mainly support individualistic and nationalistic competition in the global economy and that an educational competition of winners and losers is in the best interest of public life in a diverse society. (p. 3)

These pedagogies are necessary to enact the kind of decolonization and reinhabitation that Gruenewald (2003b) writes about. We need to question: What does a "good life" look like? What does success in education or life mean? And, at whose and what cost?

In 1891, Dewey described in *Schools and Society* the alienating effects of education divorced from students' lives, interests, and communities. Instead of participating in a personally meaningful curriculum the child "painfully" learns an abstracted course in school studies divorced from any practical purpose or value (cited in Sobel, 2004, p. 18). Reflecting on Dewey's words, Sobel writes:

This fragmentation of the school from the community is mirrored in the fragmented curriculum. Not only is the math curriculum not connected to shopping at the local Piggly Wiggly supermarket, it's not connected to the history or art curricula in any programmatic way. (pp. 18-19)

Instead, Sobel (2004) proposes that place-based educators create meaningful integrated project-based curricula with teachers and community members as collaborators and resources, and the local environment as source material and beneficiary.

Another prominent proponent of place-based education, Greg Smith (2002), notes that because PBE is specific to explicit places there are no prescriptive curricula models for its prac-

tice. However he has located "five thematic patterns that can be adapted to different settings" (p.587), which I shall briefly describe here:

*Cultural studies*—The theme of cultural studies encourages students to learn about and share stories (and art) relating to the cultural life of their community including its history, myths, songs, and dreams.

*Nature stories*—Here students investigate "local natural phenomenon...serv[ing] as the foundation on which investigations of more distant or abstract phenomena can be constructed... teaching children about the requirements and opportunities presented by their own place in the world" (p. 589). Leaving the synthetic environment of the classroom, place-base education creates "living laboratories" (p.598) outside the school in wild, and man made environments, as well as in the cultivation of learning gardens.

*Real world problems*—"Real world problem solving involves students identifying school or community problems, conducting research, developing potential solutions, and then organizing and participating in efforts to solve the problem" (p. 589). By participating in the well being of their communities and local environments students create agency for themselves bettering these places through the practice of democratic participation.

*Internship and entrepreneurial opportunities*—This strand addresses the economic aspects of educating students for future employment by challenging the industrial belief that "young people need to leave home to establish a place in the world" (p. 590). This belief system has proven disastrous for many small towns, rural communities, and working-class communities. Consequently, it is of great importance that this myth be challenged.

*Induction and community process*—This final strand involves "drawing students not only into the economic life of their community but also into its decision making process" (p. 591). By working with local merchants, government, and community organizations students learn to "work at the intersection of science, [culture,] and politics in the service of their community" (p. 592).

Smith provides a wealth of wonderful examples of elementary to high school students democratically participating in their communities in ways that are not only congruent with their curriculum, but that also improved achievement scores while students developed leadership roles

locating and addressing their communities' needs. These students are responding in culturally sensitive ways by both learning about and participating in their own communities.

Gruenewald (2003a) offers three simple questions to investigate and address place-based themes: "What happened here? What is happening here? What could happen here?" He writes of educational policies that ignore the relationship "between education and the politics of economic development" (2003a, p. 3) as it impacts communities and environments. To address this Gruenewald (2003a) advocates developing "a critical pedagogy of place" to connect

experiential learning, contextual learning, problem-based learning, constructivism, outdoor education, indigenous education, environmental and ecological education, bioregional education, democratic education, multicultural education, community-based education, critical pedagogy itself, as well as other approaches that are concerned with context and the value of learning from and nurturing specific places, communities, or regions. (p. 3)

This list of place, and community-based educational philosophies and methods, demonstrates not only Gruenewald's integrationist approach to culture and place in education, but also how widely these methods are being embraced as viable pedagogies.

As intimated by the preceding list of educational traditions, place-based education shares common ground and kinship with several other educational models. Melville, Berg, & Blank's (2006) article shows the many diverse ways concepts of place can connect students' learning with their communities. Their model of "community focused learning" (n.p.) includes these principles:

- *Civic Education*—prepares students to democratically participate as citizens in their communities through their curriculum.
- *Environment-Based Education (EBE)*—foregrounds students' innate curiosity about both natural environments and the interrelated social relationships by taking students out of their classrooms and into the world around them so they can engage directly in their own learning processes.
- *Place-Based Learning*—connects students with the particulars of the place where they live in problem solving projects where they learn about the local history, environment, cultures, and socio-economic factors of their community and respond in ways that benefit

the community as well as their own learning.

- *Service-learning*—shares many similarities with place-based education in that it integrates service to the community with students' academic studies by locating and addressing community needs.
- *Work-based Learning*—is essentially the same as Smith's (2002) description of *Internships and Entrepreneurial Opportunities* where students are mentored and supported by adults in learning about careers.

Noting the "growing body of experience and research" on the efficacy of these strategies as a powerful alternative to the current disconnected means of education Melaville, Berg, and Blank (2006) propose that "[t]aken together [these models] create a comprehensive pedagogy for educational reform—one that harnesses young people's natural sense of connection to their communities as an incentive for learning" (n.p.). While each of these strategies is distinct with its own, history and perspectives, they are all deeply interconnected in their pedagogical approach, which shares a commitment to "youth development and collaborative community partnerships" connecting students' learning to their place in valuable and meaningful ways. Melaville, et al sum up the goals of these strategies coming from a "shared sense of agency, place, and public purpose":

- Young people are recognized as active agents of their own learning.
- Students' own neighborhoods provide a context for learning that matters to children.
- Local action connects students to the larger world and promotes a sense of personal and public purpose.
- Multiple assessment helps students see the impact of their own actions.
- Partnerships increase the number of caring adults in children's lives and expand the number of community institutions accountable for educating children.

It is only common sense that students learn better when they are actively engaged in the construction of knowledge that has some value to them and others, rather than constrained as passive receptors of meaningless, abstract information. Numerous authors cite compelling evidence to support the effectiveness of this pedagogy (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Smith, 2002; Sobel, 2004). Each of these authors describes pages and pages of positive effects of place and



community based learning coming from a wide range of research studies documenting diverse positive outcomes. For Melaville, Berg, & Blank (2006), these include "moral outcomes," "personal and social outcomes," and "career outcomes." Given the wide swath of positive outcomes—ranging from happier and more engaged students, increased test scores, and more liveable communities—one might wonder why more educators have not embraced place-based education. Personally, I have witnessed many positive outcomes of place-based practices as representing a practical, soulful, and pleasurable means of education.

### Critical Place-Based, Multicultural, Arts Education is Culturally Responsive Teaching

Drawing from David Gruenewald's article "Place-Based Education: Grounding Culturally-Responsive Teaching in Geographical Diversity," I would like to extend his analysis from a generalist approach to PBE specifically into my area, the arts, and propose that critical place-based multicultural arts education is culturally responsive teaching. Unlike Gertrude Stein's famous dictum upon landing in Oakland, "But there is no there, there," I believe there is always a there, and that there is really here.

Coming of age in the early 1970s I read Ram Dass's *Be Here Now*; the sentiment of living in the present time and place is something I strive to do in my many lives as an artist, researcher, and teacher. I consider myself a passionate place-based pedagogue and enumerate the numerous benefits of practicing PBE to my students . These range from demonstrated increased engagement in coursework, to higher academic scores, to connecting students with their communities so that students learn from and about, their local cultures (including their own) while giving back to their local communities and environments. Thus parents and community members become allies and resources for teachers and their students and the school ceases to be an isolated island, cut off from the world around it. Finally, I point out the "pleasure principle," which is that when students enjoy and care about what they are doing they are more likely to commit energy, spirit, and heart to it, and excel. Using place-based, multicultural, integrated fine arts is deeply pleasurable.

Some of the place-based multicultural integrated fine arts projects my students

and I have enjoyed include learning about local non-profits such as the Community Action Center that provides services to the poor and homeless in our area and the humane society that cares for orphaned, injured, and unwanted animals. Students collaboratively make animal banks inspired by one of my participants, Joe Sam, and his wild sense of color, texture, and pattern-placing them in local banks and businesses to raise both dollars and awareness, for and about these non-profits. At the same time, we study Joe Sam's book, *The Invisible Hunters*, which is also about caring for community. The animal banks project involves math in counting the money and science in studying the animals created. Another project involved looking at participating community members as local heroes and making cut paper silhouettes with brief texts honoring them. The goal was to place them in the community, but this proved to be problematic as most of the students where I teach are from far away and have very shallow or non-existent roots here. Therefore I allowed them to honor members from their home communities. In addition, we have also made mini-environmental billboards in the style of Keith Haring's playful, simplified shapes addressing local concerns such as the relationship between childhood asthma and Idaho farmer's grass burning, the importance of water conservation, and the value of supporting organic farming.

I have many examples of place-based, multicultural, integrated fine arts projects where students learn about what happened here, what is happening here and what could happen here. Suffice to say, I believe that when students learn about their environment, and the history of where they live, they can contribute to making a better future. And finally, when they do this through the intensely pleasurable medium of art, learning holds the potential to be culturally responsive, civically responsible, deeply empowering, *and* highly pleasurable.



### ***Ecological Identity***

In Nabhan and Trimble's (1994) *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places*, the authors describe the importance of sensory experience for young children in forming their identities in relation to place—be it urban, rural; suburban; or wilderness. These places all

hold unique sights, smells, and sounds with which children, like all animals, form lifelong connections and associations. In addition, the authors highlight the importance of children interacting with nature, both for their own personal growth, and for the survival of the planet. By connecting with nature as something real, physical, sensual, and spiritual, children acquire a sense of connection and responsibility to help care for and prevent its destruction. However, this is becoming more difficult with the rise in suburban and recreational developments encroaching on what remains of natural areas.

Thomashow (1995) also advocates for a deep connection with natural places. He describes this as developing an "ecological identity" and writes

To have an identity crisis is to be lost in the world, lacking the ability... to connect the self to meaningful objects, people, or ideas—typical sources of identification.... Adding the word *ecological* substantially challenges the notion of identity. Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self. Nature becomes an object of identification. For the individual this has extraordinary conceptual ramifications. (p. 3)

Thus, Thomashow (1995) and Nabhan and Trimble (1994) draw connections between identity and place often found missing in the discourses related to issues of identity and social justice in education. However, until recently, environmental and social justice themes have been competing or disconnected themes within educational scholarship and practice, with environment receiving considerably less space in the ensuing discourse. Because of this, connections between race, class, and ecological place have been left unexplored, minimized, or marginalized on the sidelines.

### ***Chet Bowers Versus the Critical Pedagogues: The Clash of the Titans***

Gruenewald (2003a), synthesizes the disconnect between critical pedagogy's emphasis on urban multicultural education and place-based education's foregrounding of ecological concerns in primarily rural environments when he writes:

place-based education is frequently discussed at a distance from the urban, multicultural arena, territory most often claimed by critical pedagogues. If place-based education emphasizes ecological and rural contexts, critical pedagogy in a near mirror image emphasizes social and urban contexts and often neglects the ecological and rural scene

entirely. (p. 3)

Unfortunately, in recent years there has been an ideological battle between one of environmental education's foremost theorists, Chet Bowers, and some of critical pedagogy's foremost theorists, Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux. Bowers (1997) is deeply critical of both Freire's and other critical pedagogues dismissal of environmental concerns. He points out that in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1974), Freire's ideas on individuality, such as naming the world as a means of transforming it, furthers the illusion of man as separate from his environment with dominion over it. Bowers (1997) writes:

All forms of liberalism have had difficulty reconciling the moral responsibility of humans with the larger biotic community because of their emphasis on individual freedom, the emancipatory power of critical reflection and instrumental rationalism, and the expectation that change represents a continual expansion of human possibilities. (p. 120)

What is of interest in this quote is Bower's highlighting of the ways that critical pedagogy situated itself as separate from environment and nature, as something purely social that lacks relationship to anything other than self and other people, and as such has helped enable the destruction of environmental habitats as well as both human and non-human life.

While Bowers has been instrumental in bringing environmental concerns into the academic light, the following inflammatory indictment is typical of the attitude that has alienated Bowers from others who could be helpful in addressing our current ecological crisis, hence I will quote it at length here:

It is ... clear that emancipatory liberals have not taken seriously the educational implications of the ecological crisis. Indeed, the writings of emancipatory liberals who became prominent during the rise of environmental awareness (e.g., Freire, Giroux, McLaren) do not even acknowledge that there is an environmental crisis. While they often identify themselves with oppressed groups (in a highly abstract way that does not take account of specific cultural patterns), their modernist assumptions about the progressive nature of change, viewing critical reflection as the only basis of knowledge and moral judgment, and an anthropocentric world view, put them in a conceptual and moral double bind that seems beyond their grasp. In order to maintain their image of being on the cutting edge of radical thinking, they now use the language of Derrida and

other postmodernist thinkers—who represent the latest and most nihilistic expression of modernity. (1997, p. 125)

Bowers is concerned that because of critical pedagogy's limited focus on race, class, and gender, it has poorly served education and the world at large. Rather than acknowledging that human communities exist within total environmental contexts and seeing the deep connections between environmental degradation, capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and globalization, Bowers believes critical pedagogy, as the dominant discourse in critical education, is complicit in the perpetuation of destructive practices leading to the current environmental crisis.

Instead, (1997) Bowers asks us to question which knowledge systems and cultural belief systems are privileged in schools and academia. He describes these as "high-status" and low-status" systems. High-status knowledge is scientific, technological, individualistic, and based on the premise that change or progress is good. Low-status knowledge is class- related and is often holistic, community oriented, environmentally respectful, and connected to spiritual traditions. High-status knowledge is found in the primarily White male middle and upper class world of science and academia, while low-status knowledge is often found in indigenous cultures, many of which have lived in harmony with their environment for millennia. In addition, these cultures are rich in art, music, dance, ritual, celebration, spirituality and relationship. Their relationships are not only with each other but also with the land, the animals, and the elements that sustain them. In contrast, high-status cultures seek primarily to dominate, exploit, and profit from nature and knowledge with little concern of consequences for others less privileged, or for future generations.

However, despite (or perhaps because of) Bowers personal attacks, McLaren has recently embraced ecological concerns in his work, and in a book published after his death, Freire (2004) had begun to acknowledge the ecological crisis as a product of capitalism's destructive culture developed through education. McLaren and Houston (2004) drawing on the work of Pulido (2000), Faber (1998), and Horfrichter (2002), write:

Environmental justice as both a diverse grassroots movement and field of academic research explicitly makes connections between race, class, environmental degradation and political economy in order to tacitly link the poisoning of workplaces, communities and children to the geography of capitalism. (p 31)

Noting the inequitable distribution of, "Toxic Release Inventory sites, hazardous waste facilities, mining tailing ponds and a whole plethora of locally undesirable land uses and work-related environmental hazards," McLaren and Houston (2004) write:

It is imperative that critical pedagogies engaged in place-based approaches, remain carefully attuned to the sociospatial practices, historical relations and economic processes that contribute to environmental inequity.... [P]laces are not simply social constructions or containers for human attachment and meaning, they are also made through circuits of social, political and economic power that are more often than not profoundly shaped through the extractive politics of capital. (p. 32)

Thus McLaren and Houston have embraced the need to make those critical connections between place and culture; between environmental degradation, classism, racism, and all those other "isms" that come from an individualistic, patriarchal craving for power, and control; and an individualistic desire for short-term gain and a "bugger-the-consequences" denial of the crucial interrelationships of all things.

### ***Forging Alliance/Making Connections***

Because Bowers' ideas are so important in the field of education and beyond, I am dismayed by the aspects of his approach that alienate many of the educators and pedagogues with whom he should be forming alliances. While there is always room for disagreement, personal attacks further no one's cause. I would hope that as an educator Bowers could open up to the possibility of mutual exchanges, critically educating those he is in disagreement with rather than judgmentally dismissing them. Instead, authors such as Gruenewald (2003b) and Furman and Gruenewald (2004), among others, have taken on the task of forging alliances by theoretically connecting critical pedagogy with place in a respectful manner. For example in his article "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," Gruenewald (2003b) writes of the need to "emphasize the spatial aspects of social experience" noting "the general absence of ecological thinking demonstrated in critical social analysis concerned exclusively with human relationships" (p.3).

Together Furman and Gruenewald (2004) actively connect the "social justice discourse in a larger ecological narrative" which they call "socioecological justice" (p. 50). In ways that are similar to McLaren and Houston, Furman and Gruenewald (2004) argue that

ecological problems are experienced differently by different social groups and that any analysis of social or environmental justice must include an analysis of the tensions between racism, classism, environmentalism, and economic development" (p. 50).

However, Furman and Gruenewald extend this analysis deeper into Bowers' territory by foregrounding how social justice discourses are almost exclusively anthropocentric, failing to contest "existing cultural patterns (e.g., economic expansion and hyperconsumerism)... [that] lack the conceptual vision to acknowledge the social problems humans create for themselves when they damage their nonhuman environments" (p. 54). These ecological problems exacerbate the social inequities described by authors such as Kozol (1991), Haymes (1995, 2003), and Keith and Pile (1993). Low-income and minority children "who already face a lifetime of social and economic barriers" (McLaren & Houston, 2004, p. 32) are exposed to toxic levels of wastes and pollution further devaluing their life chances. This lack of care, which I see as a form of alienation between self and others, humans and non-humans, man and nature has had devastating effects on all concerned.

### ***Place and Spirituality***

Like Bowers (1997), Berry (1990), Jagodzinski (1987), Gablik (1991), and others, I believe this alienation is connected to the discrediting of nature-connected spirituality, creating a soul destroying numbness filled by rampant greed and consumerism. As Gablik (1991) so poetically states: "What happens to a culture without a living mythology is that it gets addicted to whatever numbs the pain of archetypal starvation and the vacuum of meaning" (p. 51). It is clear we live in a world rife with addictions such as consumerism, alcoholism, drug, sex, and/or food addiction. These provide a means of escaping conscious awareness of how truly degraded our relationships are with our environment, each other, and our innermost heartfelt and spiritual selves.

These authors make explicit the connections between the lack of spirituality, which traditionally has been intrinsically linked with nature, and the current environmental devastation. Berry (1990) and Jagodzinski (1987) trace this back to the beginnings of patriarchy and the decimation of matriarchal and goddess cultures, which later led to the formation and domination of Christianity. Jagodzinski (1987) writes

The Greek bifurcation into what Nietzsche (1901/1967) characterizes as the Apollonian (masculine) and Dionysian (feminine) sides of ourselves has resulted in the domination

of humanity over Nature and the triumph of patriarchal values. The reparation of this situation means that complementary, holistic thinking must replace the current oppositional logic. (141)

In a similar manner, Berry (1990) explores Christianity's belief in redemption from this world "through a personal savior relationship" (p. 129), which leaves little concern for and with the natural world. Berry states that Darwin's theory of natural selection "presents the universe as a random sequence of physical and biological interactions with no inherent meaning, [thus] the society supported by this vision has no adequate way of identifying any spiritual or moral values" (p. 130). Connecting these various strands of analysis, Berry writes, "The pathos in our own situation is that our secular society does not see the numinous quality or the deeper psychic powers associated with its own story, while the religious society rejects the story because it is presented only in its physical aspect" (p. 131). Berry proposes that the remedy for this is to integrate the spiritual and the scientific. Just as humans are a part of the universe, and the universe is a part of humans, so science, rationalism, and spirituality are interconnected. What is required is a paradigm shift enacted through the use of narrative and empirical inquiry to enable us to critically see our place in the world and respond before it is too late.

This is where art can step in.

### P a i n t i n g   m y   P l a c e

Historically, my own practice of art making has changed according to where I live. When I lived in New Mexico I painted my girlfriends and myself playing in the Rio Grande. I painted the mesas and plains full of piñon, sage and other native plants dotting the landscape in patterned excess. I memorialized a friend's cat's death as she floated over the Rio Grande heavenward bound. In San Francisco I painted the Victorian buildings in the Mission where I lived, the beautiful lagoon of Bolinas where I included the native seals and birds along with a fanciful mother and mer-boy emerging from the water. While living in San Francisco I also painted someone's view of the San Francisco Bay that they commissioned me to paint so they could take their view with them when they moved back East. Here in Pullman, red barns have found their way



into my paintings as have the golden fields of the Palouse in summer. Although Pullman is landlocked and many miles from any substantial body of water one of the paintings shows a boat within a wheat field—alluding to the water table underneath which is being rapidly depleted. In addition, the boat represents this place, which is a university town, as a place of passage. Now that I am about to move to Northern Illinois, into the midst of miles and miles of corn fields fertilized by petroleum products, I know that corn will be appearing in my paintings in many ways unknown to me as yet.

When creating my paintings, what I didn't realize was that through the practice of art I have learned about every place I've lived. I've studied its architecture, its native animals, birds, plants, and land forms and through this visual learning I have developed an intense love of place in each of these environments.

As an art educator I now try and inspire in my students this same love of place for wherever they live by encouraging them to visually pay attention and engage with place on aesthetic and activist levels through place-based art education. If where we live has become ugly, what can we do to reclaim (or decolonize) it and reinhabit it? What can we do to make it a beautiful, sustainable, and habitable place to live?



### **Place in Art/Art in Place**

Suzi Gablik (1991) writes at length about place in art, and art in place:

We live in a toxic culture, not just environmentally but spiritually as well. If one's work is to succeed as part of a necessary process of cultural healing, there must be a willingness to abandon old programming—to let go of negative ideas and beliefs that are destructive to the planet and to life on earth. But what does this mean for art? Jungian psychoanalyst Marie-Louise von Franz says: "A civilization which has no creative people is doomed.... The person who is really in touch with the future is the creative personality." Heinz Kohut, another psychoanalyst, has called this "the anticipatory function" of art; those artists who are in touch with the necessary psychological tasks of a culture prepare the way for the culturally supported solution to a conflict to emerge, or for the healing of a psychological defect. (p. 24)

Clearly Gablik endorses the role of artists as activists that many artists have embraced through time, ranging from Goya's anti-war etchings to contemporary artists working with environmental and social justice issues. In addition, art education theorists and practitioners working at the intersection of art and place advocate including the study of a wide range of artists who work with local communities and environmental themes (Gablik, 1991; Lacy, 1995; Lippard, 1997); the study of local artists and forms of vernacular art (that could fall under the heading of visual culture studies) (Klein, 2000; Lai & Ball, 2002; Neperud, 2000; Ulbricht, 1998); and the creation of social reconstructionist community or environmentally-based art curricula (Lai & Ball, 2002; Saava, Trimis, & Zachariou, 2004; Thurber, 1997; Ulbricht, 1998). Artists have always worked with place in some capacity or other, consciously or not, either through presence or absence. Beginning with the cave paintings at Lascaux (and before); extending on through time into dis-placed religious paintings both supported by and supporting the church's political power and ideology; continuing on into artists such as Gauguin's indigenous women in Tahiti, inadvertently supporting colonialist justifications for appropriation; and Van Gogh's more earthy yet spiritual works showing the land and the working and living conditions of the people who live there. In more recent times Dorothea Lange's photographs of Depression era misery in an environmentally devastated landscape; Fred Wilson's work with museum collection holdings; Merle Laderman Ukeles's artwork with garbage and sanitation workers; and Andy Goldsworthy's ephemeral meditations on place-specific beauty, all contribute to specific understandings of spatiality and place.

Merle Lademan Ukeles is an excellent example of a postmodern environmental artist whose work also addresses class issues. Ukeles became the unpaid self-designated artist-in-residence for the New York City Sanitation Department in 1979 designing a host of art pieces and performances to raise awareness about garbage and those who make it "go away." These included performances such as riding with every garbage collector in New York City and personally shaking the hands of each of Manhattan's 8,000 garbage workers while thanking them for making New York City liveable. She choreographed garbage barges and trucks ballets, and placed mirrored facings on the outsides of garbage trucks so that the city's residents could reflect on their own role in the production and collection of garbage. In addition, Lippard (1997) writes: [Ukeles also] "built celebratory gateways and roadways of trash, recyclables, and workers gloves" (p.

187) and finally, in *Flow City*, her masterwork, Ukeles created an aesthetic and educational participatory environment at the Marine Transfer Facility on Hudson River pier that "expose[d ] for the first time the guts and underbelly of urban circulation" (p. 186). Lippard asks "What could be more local than a landfill, embracing all our buried secrets?" (p. 186) She quotes Ukeles: "Can the same inventiveness that we use for production and accumulation of goods be applied to its disposal?" (p. 186). In a later passage, Lippard tells us that Ukeles suggests that: "the problem of citizens' unwillingness to take responsibility for the garbage we produce reflects our inability to visualize our relationship to our world as a whole." (p. 187)

Lippard (1995, 1997), Gablik (1995), and Lacy's (1976, 1984) books all provide a wealth of information about artists who work with place and community in inspirational and socially reconstructive ways. These books provide exceptional exemplars for placed-based art educators to use in their teaching. What remains key in these authors' books is the emphasizing of spirituality in relation to place and art. Historically place in art has served several functions. First and foremost, it has exemplified a spiritual connection to environment and the life forces within environment. This is evidenced in much traditional and contemporary indigenous art such as that created by Aboriginal artists from antiquity to Albert Namajira to Rover Thomas; Native-American artists such as Jaune Quick To See and George Littlechild; Asian artists such as Hokusai and Hung Liu; and African cultures whose influences can be found in African-American artists such as Romare Beardon, Jacob Lawrence, Basquiat and Joe Sam. The spiritual and numinous qualities of place in art can also be found in the work of Western artists as well such as Van Gogh and Gauguin, British landscape painter William Turner's luminous oil paintings of place, and Scottish artist Andy Goldsworthy's temporal and exquisite on-site sculptures using organic materials.

### ***Art, Place, and Power***

Historically, a second use of art has been as a political tool, re-inscribing power relations of those in positions of authority by showing such things as hunting scenes, ancestral castles, and portraits of royalty and Lords and Ladies at home in their material glory wearing furs and jewels. These images of power, wealth and grandeur both flattered and validated the roles and rights of ownership of the powerful, wealthy and grand. Art created for the Church reflected the church's desire for submission and physical disconnection in scenes of suffering Christs and beatific vir-

ginal Madonnas. Referencing Gimpel (1976, 1984) Jagodzinski writes:

In the patriarchal view, god is perceived as transcendent being, above and beyond Nature. Under such a view, rules of religious orthodoxy require strict aesthetic canons. The theoretical or contemplative side of the dichotomy is stressed. A male priestly class prescribes the artistic tradition and generates the aesthetic theory, since it has access to the sacred texts. It also oversees the interpretations of the various forms of the deity and dictates the ritualistic reception of the image. (1987, p. 142)

Thus art produced under the auspices of the church, including paintings, murals, and sculptures, along with the cathedrals they were displayed in, were instrumental in developing the fear and reverence necessary to inspire awe and unquestioning submission in the loyal church-going viewer.

In more recent times, Gablik (1991) describes the art industry as a hegemonic tool for maintaining power relations writing that the art industry is: "not only a very effective protector of the status quo, but also an active contributor to the deforming effects of a whole cultural pathology. The mechanism doesn't require that art do much, just reproduce the economic will-to-power of the dominator system" (p. 117). In many ways this connects with postcolonial texts (Clifford, 1998; Said, 1979; Willinsky, 1998) on the employment of art in colonization, but perhaps in a more passive form. The art industry supports capitalism's selling-off of all forms of culture as product and status object, in contrast with many indigenous culture's attitudes to art as a sacred means for relating to the natural world and beyond.

The current system of art education is also complicit with this dominator model in the emphasis on success being related to "making it," i.e., making money, in the White, male dominated art world. Thus, the mainstream art world is driven more by market forces than spiritual, environmental, or social concerns.

### ***Art, Place, and Colonialism***

A third use of art related to art, place, and power is art's role as the handmaiden of colonialism. Ship artists/naturalists such as Joseph Banks were instrumental in promoting the colonization of various places by promoting the view of empire building as scientific, educational, and beneficent. While artists such as Frederick Remington's depictions of wild open Western

spaces, "ripe for the picking," apart from the heathen savages, were instrumental in American expansionist colonial projects. Sharrett (2004) referencing Mahan in Zimmerman (2002), notes that Remington, a close friend of Theodore Roosevelt "wanted the annihilation of 'Jews, Injuns, Chinamen, Italians, Huns—the rubbish of the earth'" (p. 127). Willinsky (1998) and Said (1979) also write extensively of the use of the arts as a harbinger of and justification for colonialism. In more recent times, Sharrett (2004) documents the role of artists in perpetuating Imperialist aims in mass media, writing:

Spectacle has also been a key element supporting dominant interests. The sale by the Topps Company of Operation Desert Storm trading cards during the first Persian Gulf War, of "Most Wanted" poker decks of Middle East terrorists, and of coffee-table books packaged with "shock and awe" DVDs after the invasion of Iraq must not be seen as tasteless emblems of the postmodern media environment but as contiguous with a century-long propaganda strategy whereby the state fused anger, militarism, and disinformation with popular culture. (p. 128)

This use of visual culture has been instrumental in "selling" war as well as selling products that negatively impact environments. For example, commercial artists' create product-packaging depictions of bucolic landscapes and contented livestock for huge conglomerate food companies. These images are very different than the reality the conglomerates have created in "farming" their products while destroying local cultures and natural environments, and making livestock's lives a living hell.

However, just as the arts have been employed for destructive purposes, they have also been harnessed to protect places and benefit both wildlife and people. For example, Gussow (1974) describes how Thomas Moran's paintings of Yellowstone were so convincing "that he is personally credited with moving Congress... to set aside Yellowstone as a national park" (p. 29). While Lippard (1991) writes:

Although art has been used in the past as propaganda for colonialism and expansionism (especially during the nineteenth-century movement west), and much contemporary public art is still propaganda for existing power structures (especially development and banking), no better medium exists in this society to reimagine nature, to negotiate in

Donna Haraway's (1991) words, 'the terms on which love of nature could be part of the solution rather than part of the imposition of colonial domination and environmental destruction.' (p. 119)

Consequently, it is imperative that both artists and educators develop a critical love of place so they can actively partake in two of the most important issues of our times—social justice and environmental stewardship, in other words, "decolonization and reinhabitation." And what better way to do this than through the aesthetic and emotive domains of the arts.

### ***Art, Place, and Resistance***

As noted earlier, there are many artists at work today whose creativity focuses on transforming environmental and community issues. As Gablik (1991) so astutely points out:

Although it may seem as if the individual in today's world has little power, the truth is that only we have the power to transform our situation: *there is no one else*. The source of creativity in society is the person. Where individuals and social transformation converge is in this personal breakthrough to a new way of seeing. (p. 23)

In *The Lure of the Local* (1997), Lippard explores place and place-specific art looking at the many sites that art, culture, and place intersect while creating a kind of travelogue of place and place history within the US. These include urban, suburban, homelessness, and remaining wilderness landscapes. She examines public spaces, private spaces, parks, lawns, landscape architecture and gardens as "healing sources" (p. 257) and catalogues a list of place-based art spaces, which exist as sites of marking, interacting, and at times, reclaiming place: yard art, land art, mural art, environmental and community oriented performance art, garbage and recycling art, mapmaking, memorials, theme-parks, archeology, museums, houses, cemeteries, freeways, farming and agribusiness, environmental racism, gentrification, graffiti, class related ideas of beauty in the American landscape, photography, oral histories, and community gardens. Lippard locates artists who work with nuclear waste issues, conservation issues, garbage and recycling issues, poverty, tourism, water issues, Native-American land rights issues (and the accompanying problems of displacement and reservation life, casinos, uranium mining, and toxic waste dumps), Japanese internment camps, and the relationships of different racial groups to history and place in America. Clearly there is no lack of source material for artists and teachers to work with in

exploring social and environmental justice issues through art.

While there are many artists whose place-based and community art work inspires me, due to space and time constraints I have chosen three artists to provide examples of "place-based artists as local activists" in hopes of inspiring educators to find ways to work with art, community, and place.

Photographer Jim Hubbard was able to provide cameras for children aged seven to eighteen living in homeless shelters, who by photographing in their immediate environment were able to provide an inspiring and heartbreaking look at poverty and homelessness from the participants' point of view. The images became a nationwide traveling exhibition called *Shooting Back*, then a book of the same title, and now a website ([www.shootingback.org](http://www.shootingback.org)). Hubbard is currently the Artistic Director of *Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods*, a nonprofit organization whose goal is to partner experienced artists with low-income youth to build creativity, academic achievement, and community. Some of their "Social arts initiative" projects include titles like: *I Live Here: Lives affected by AIDS/HIV*; *In a New Land: Stories of Russian Refugee Youth*; *Picturing Race: From Los Angeles to South Africa* (Hubbard, 2006). My second artist, Edgar Heap of Birds uses language and signage to bring attention to Native-American land rights with site-specific signs reminding passerbys "who their hosts are (Native peoples who originally occupied the area)." In another example, Heap of Birds' sign states: "Fort Pitt Victory Destiny Anglo Saxon Supremacy Who Owns History?" next to the official plaque commemorating General Forbes, which confidently declares: "His victory determined the destiny of the West and established Anglo Saxon supremacy in the United States" (Lippard, 1997, p. 86). The third art piece, which I will describe here, is a mural created by Jerry Burchfield and Mark Chamberlain with the help of residents from Orange County. Titled *The Tell* after the archeological term for a "mound of artifacts" the 600-foot long sculpted mural was created in response to "a massive proposed transportation corridor" in "California's last unspoiled coastal canyon. Thousands of people contributed 80,000 family and local photographs that were collaged to a "mountain-contoured wall" to create larger symbolic images, which changed over time. Hundreds of people came to help construct this 'uncensored story of California life'" (Lippard, 1997, n.p.). After 7,000-10,000 people marched to the wall in demonstration "the major development was defeated and a natural park created." However, Lippard writes, "part of the canyon has been bulldozed, sparking more art works and a

continuation of the Laguna Canyon Project" (Lippard, 1997, n.p.). I included these particular artists and projects for several reasons. They each address place in different ways and they all create transformative art that acts as resistance to the dominant culture's images of people and places, while also incorporating intriguing aesthetic choices that provoke thought, discourse, and possibilities for activism.

Lippard (1997) describes art (and by extension art education) "governed by [her]... place ethic" in ways that are extremely attractive to me. Hence I will quote her at length here:

- SPECIFIC enough to engage people on the level of their own experiences, to say something about the place as it is or was or could be.
- COLLABORATIVE at least to the extent of seeking information, advice and feedback from the community in which the work will be placed.
- GENEROUS AND OPEN-ENDED enough to be accessible to a wide variety of people from different classes and cultures, and to different interpretations and tastes.
- APPEALING enough either visually or emotionally to catch the eye and be memorable.
- SIMPLE AND FAMILIAR enough, at least on the surface, not to confuse or repel potential viewer participants.
- LAYERED, COMPLEX AND UNFAMILIAR enough to hold people's attention once they've been attracted, to make them wonder, and to offer ever deeper experiences and references to those who hang in.
- EVOCATIVE enough to make people recall related moments, places, and emotions in their own lives.
- PROVOCATIVE AND CRITICAL enough to make people think about issues beyond the scope of the work, to call into question superficial assumptions about the place, its history, and its use. (pp. 286-287)

Lippard's place-conscious framework, also provides a rubric to explore my participants' art and books, while developing principles for place-based art education. Thus I will be returning to this framework later on in this dissertation. Meanwhile I would like to comment on environmental art educator J. Ulbricht's (1998) article where he muses on Gablik's (1991) comment that "art should be made as if the world mattered" (cited in Ulbricht, 1998, p. 33).

Ulbricht considers relationships between art, ecology, and culture and wonders what an



art education based on Gablik's philosophy might look like. He proposes ideas such as designing and implementing "ecological landscape designs for a small plot of school property" (p. 33); studying and creating advertising for "world improvement" (p. 33); and researching and exchanging regional art information with sister cities to "improve communication and enhance cultural knowledge" (p. 34). Other place-based art educators such as Lai and Ball (2002), drawing on the work of Blandy, Congdon, and King (1998), Krug (2002), and Irwin, Rogers and Wan (1997, 1999), describe how focusing on place in art education can "provide discursive and conceptual means for educators to ask how local art can help students understand the position of the community in relation to its bioregion, state, nation, and the planet" (p. 49).

Another art educator, Frances Thurber (1997), describes the work of local artist Cynthia Harper in a project called *Site Omaha*, who with the help of 49 other artists created postcard-sized art images of "the Omaha community that reflect[ed] some aspect of the nature, symbolism, grandeur, history, or visual impact of locations within th[e] city or its geographical surroundings" (p. 36). For example, Harper's image, "interprets the Omaha Stockyards, a blighted urban site used in the recent past for processing the bulk of the world's pork and beef for consumption" (p. 36). With the help of volunteers, the images were folded and inserted in plastic capsules, loaded into 33 donated vending machines, and placed in strategic public places throughout the community. Thurber writes, "by the end of the project... all of the capsules had been purchased... for 50 cents each" (p. 37). He encourages art educators to learn from this project and "create learning experiences for their students that are interactive with the community; innovative; address social, environmental, or ecological urban issues; and feasible within the limits of time and budget constraints" (p. 38). Thurber notes many possible ecologically related theme clusters, which could include the interrelationships between the city, river, and the state line of Omaha, whose eastern side provides a gateway into Nebraska and the West, and is bounded by the Missouri River. He also suggests themes such as "historic preservation; altered histories (the evolution of community and its power structure over time); homelessness; pollution; or the design, improvement, or interpretation of urban public spaces" (p. 38). Thus, place-based art education provides many opportunities for cross-curricular learning in meaningful, dynamic, and pleasurable ways, engaging students with where they live while bettering both their own communities and their own learning.

Lai and Ball (2002) ask the question: How can art facilitate understandings of a *specific place*? (p. 49). Drawing on Vitek and Jackson's (1996) work Lai and Ball write:

As humans become increasingly sensitized to the developments and pressures of globalization and environmental change, the fate of the particular places people live—our homes—is a growing concern. Among artists, scholars and educators, there is renewed interest in "placed communities" aware that their own futures are at stake in the quality of community life and the nature of their relationship to the land. (p. 47)

Consequently more artists are engaging with their communities to engage in social justice and environmental stewardship issues through art projects, which serve to conserve, educate, beautify, and reinhabit their environments. At the same time, a growing number of art educators are teaching their students how to do the same thing.

### Where the Heart Is

Having learned so much about place in education I wonder how my life would have been if place-based education had been around when I was growing up. Would I have stayed in East Preston and helped transform it into a healthful and art-full community? Or would I still have become the world traveler and adventurer that I am?

Where I grew up anyone with any "get up and go" got up and went. Of course I was one of the ones who got up and went and kept on going. In my younger adult life (17-26) I lived in over 30 houses ranging from the cities of Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane as well as by the uninhabited ocean at Cape Tribulation on the tip of North Queensland and in the seaside resort town of Caloundra in central Queensland. I lived in the bush in the Obi Obi Valley, also in Queensland, and on a mountain top wilderness with a bunch of wild women in a place called Amazon Acres where we were the stuff of local myths and legends. I lived in run down Victorian mansions and derelict squats where we sledge-hammered a wall wherever we wanted a window and defied local eviction attempts (not to mention building codes). I also lived in a garage where the only rule was no spiders on the bed, a goat shed, a tent, and in a variety of vintage houses. Whenever my past caught up with me—that deep, dark trough of despair—I packed up and moved on, motivated both by the prospect of escape and the call of the

unknown located in a new unknown place. The excitement of the new, the practical necessities of finding somewhere to live, learning to navigate the terrain, making new friends all proved to be effective distractions and I would do another "geographic." When I was 25 I met a credible palm reader who told me I would find everything I was looking for in the United States, and so, I came.

Throughout these moves the only constant was my art, which came with me wherever I went. I would draw where I was or where I wanted to be. My art either helped me make sense of my world or helped me escape it.

The plane from Australia landed in San Francisco, and for the first time in my life I felt at home. There were all these people who looked like me. Safeway had matzoh, and people knew what Passover was. Every second person was an artist, and the city was full of outsiders, eccentrics, and the walking wounded, unconsciously drawn to this city of refuge and healing. The many languages, accents and ethnicities were like a tower of Babel, but one where people communicated with each other in cafés, movie theaters, and on the street. At night the city twinkled and by day it glistened with the light reflected from the pastel colored buildings. Sometimes the fog would roll in, enveloping the city in an aura of mysterious ambiguity. I stayed in San Francisco until some Australian girlfriends from my old Amazon Acres days insisted I had to come live with them in an adobe house right on the Rio Grande midway between Santa Fe and Taos, and so I went.

New Mexico was another reality; full of eccentric people and eccentric landscapes. I would laugh out loud at the absurdity of the landscape, imagining an ancient dinosaur lumbering around the corner of a huge rock. I painted the place, and I painted my life within the place of New Mexico. I had several exhibitions there, sustaining myself by selling art and working in a roadside fireworks stand. I left when I ran out of money and the weather started turning cold. I returned to San Francisco where I finally stopped running. I faced and slew some of my demons, and finally found some peace within myself. I stayed in San Francisco for 23 years.

During this time both San Francisco and I changed. San Francisco became a city for the wealthy. My neighborhood, the Mission, had been a neighborhood of Latino

families and artists, drug dealers, prostitutes, and throbbing vitality. But during the 1990's technology boom it became dot-com central. Many of the Latino families, and the artists who had begun the process of gentrification, were displaced. Expensive new cars were now a part of our local landscape where previously a new car meant someone was lost (and usually scared). The pace, the stress, the expense all increased, while the warmth, generosity and openness all decreased. When the opportunity to come to Pullman, Washington and pursue a PhD arose, we took it. The night before we left our rent controlled apartment forever, my husband Guy and I both cried knowing that in all likelihood we could never afford to live in San Francisco again.

Pullman is a small rural university town-population 25,000 except during breaks when it goes down to 7,000. It is incredibly beautiful, located in the Palouse area of rolling hills of fertile loesy soil built up over millennia. The area is planted with mono-crop fields of wheat, peas, and lentils. It is an ever-changing landscape according to the weather, the cycles of farming, and the aesthetic choices of farmers. Being in beauty gives me great joy. The combination of the place, and the faculty at WSU, provided me with an ideal environment to do a Ph.D. While completing the process, through writing this dissertation, I was also applying for jobs around the country. I read the names of places out to Guy, and he either said sure or made a face. Occasionally he groaned and I'd say "OK honey, I won't apply there." It was strange to have absolutely no idea of where we were going next. As always, I find myself grateful to have Guy and my art, both of which provide me with a form of home wherever I am.

During my life I have traveled throughout the eastern side of Australia (Tasmania, Victoria, Adelaide, New South Wales and Queensland), visited Italy, Spain, France, Holland, New Zealand, England, Hong Kong, Bali, Mexico, and Canada. Within the United States, I have lived in New Mexico, San Francisco, and Pullman, Washington, and traveled in California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Connecticut, Louisiana, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Hawaii.

I have a complex relationship with place, one that as a "multicentered" person in a transient world I am constantly negotiating. And like Lucy Lippard, I, too, see "the lure of the local" in many different places and the cultures that live there

### *Place as Character in Children's Literature*

Children's picture books also provide complex representations of place. When looking at place in children's literature there are several approaches. One is to look at ecological and environmental themes connected to both the natural world and built environments and the human connections with these places; the other is to look at place as character, context, and culture each of which is completely interdependent with the other. My approach is an amalgam of both but focuses primarily on the latter.

While reviewing the literature on children's books pertaining to multiculturalism and place or environment, it became clear that the lens with which I would be viewing environment in children's literature is one of absence rather than presence. Of the many fine teacher education "selecting and evaluating children's literature" survey books that I examined very few addressed environment or place as anything other than background or setting. Anderson (2002) provides a good short description differentiating "integral" and "backdrop" settings:

**Setting** is *where and when the story takes place*. Every story occurs in some time period at some geographical location(s).... Setting is more important in some stories than in others.... The **backdrop setting** is relatively unimportant to the story. The name is derived from traditional theater where flat, nondescript painted scenery was dropped from the ceiling at the back of the stage.... The **integral setting** is essential to the story, meaning that the story could not have taken place anywhere but in the setting specified by the author. (p. 29)

Cornett (2003) also has a short description of setting which includes: "**Setting is the time and place: when and where**. Setting provides the backdrop or "scenery" for the character to act out the plot" (p. 89). Cornett describes how setting can be an antagonist such as in wilderness survival stories, which help "create mood" and add... plot tension, or provide "symbolic" value (p. 90). Concurrently, Temple, Martinez, Yokota, and Naylor (2002) have a list of books in the science fiction section under the subject heading of "Environmental Catastrophes" (p. 372) as well as descriptions of various settings (pp. 31-35 and 330-331). Although none of these books explicitly addresses the interconnections between place, environment, and culture, Temple, Martinez, Yokota, and Naylor (2002) in the biographical author/illustrator inserts, do make the

connections between place and culture in examples such as this one: "Eve Bunting's early life in Northern Ireland, an area long beset by inter-group strife nurtured her concern for the underdog and interest in social issues. Her story telling abilities were honed during her childhood, entertaining the girls in her boarding school" (p. 301). This is more than just "setting." This description tells us much about the intersection of place and culture, but the authors either aren't aware of this connection, or don't realize the importance of acknowledging it. Unfortunately, even this level of place/culture connection is missing from the majority of the book descriptions.

In another teacher education text, *Children's Literature: An Issues Approach* (Rudman, 1995), the author begins to integrate place with history and culture when she writes:

The specific heritage of characters should reflect the care the author takes about detail. For example, whenever possible, the particular African country from which a person or group came should be identified. A general reference to Africa is insufficient. So too with Asians. Look for the name of the Native-American nation and the setting of a story. The origin of a Spanish-speaking person should be included. He or she should not be called Latino or Latina or Hispanic. A lack of specificity can communicate that there are no distinctions among people or that the author is either ignorant of them, does not care about them, or is not demonstrating respect for the particular person or group. (p. 221)

While Rudman does not make explicit the connections between people and places she is pointing out that people come from "specific" places. In a section titled "Peopling the Country" Rudman provides an excellent overview of United States and settlement history. However, in a book dealing with "issues" in children's literature, the themes of environment/ecology and place present important concerns of core importance to the majority of children's books and yet within this text, and most other children's literature texts, these interconnections remain largely unexamined. Good stories generally do not exist outside of place—nor does class, gender, ethnicity, race, history or culture. Our environment is in danger, and large numbers of people are alienated and disconnected from the places they live further exacerbating this problem, thus foregrounding place would seem an important issue to include in a teacher education book such as this.

One of the few survey books that does look at place/environment in children's picture books, integrated into the larger field of children's literature studies, is *The Picture Book Comes*

*of Age* (Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991). Schwarcz and Schwarcz dedicate a chapter to the construct of place in children's literature titled, "A Sense of Place." The authors describe several ways that place is approached in children's literature. In one type of book that they describe as a "panoramic book" the author takes the reader/viewer through a specific place much like a tour guide or an "annotated catalog... exhibition of paintings" (p. 119). In a somewhat more engaged manner than the panoramic book, described as "The child as observer" (p. 120), Schwarcz and Schwarcz note that the author employs a child character as a narrative device to guide the reader/viewer to the heart of the matter—the place that the book is about. In a third type of book that the authors call "child and environment as co-heroes" (p. 123), the plot is more developed but still serves to explore the connections between environment and art where "time and space combine to convey a double meaning—explicitly from here to there and implicitly from then to now" (p. 125). A fourth category, "the sympathetic representation of urban life" (p. 126), is included because of the dearth of positive urban representation. The authors note that rural and historical sites tend to be more aesthetic choices for artists working with children. However, in many countries "two-thirds or more of all children grow up" in urban settings (p. 126). Schwarcz and Schwarcz's fifth and final category builds on the fourth by looking at books that do represent city life. They call this "The city as an integral element" (p. 129). Here the authors note the lack of children's books, which show urban life as a positive environment for children. Instead the city environments are depicted in stereotypical, humdrum, or generic ways. Schwartz and Schwartz thus provide a frame for looking at my participants' children's books, which do include positive representations of urban life as well as rural environments, including what could be described as "child and environment as co-heroes" in many of our books. Unfortunately, valuable as Schwarcz and Schwarcz's book is for anyone interested in pursuing these links between place, art, and culture in children's literature, *The Picture Book Comes of Age* is now out of print.

Perhaps because place is so pervasive and so obvious, few people see it, and while it appears in all children's picture books, (except those where events occur in a generic everywhere or a groundless no-place), explicit connections are rarely made between place and culture, and culture and the natural world. I believe this absence is linked to the disconnection of people and place, people and nature, and people with themselves and others. Consequently this is one of the major reasons I am foregrounding the three central constructs of race (or culture), place, and art

in this dissertation through the lives and work of my participants.

How then can we bring place and our role in it into the foreground so that children can develop critical consciousness and caring for where they live, while connecting it to social justice issues? By affecting a kind of silence or ignorance in the discourse on place and environment in the field of children's literature studies, the split between social and environmental concerns is once again reinforced. Rather than be included in the excellent survey books on evaluating and selecting children's literature in teacher education programs mentioned previously, which frequently foreground multicultural themes, authors and publishers have created "stand alone" survey books on environmentally themed children's literature which largely omit multicultural texts other than "folk tales" or "folk literature." These include books such as: *Language Arts and Environmental Awareness: 100+ Integrated Books and Activities for Children* (Roberts, 1998), *E for Environment: An Annotated Bibliography of Children's Books with Environmental Themes* (Sinclair, 1992), and *Reading the Environment: Children's Literature in the Classroom* (Cerullo, 1997). Although these books are highly valuable in developing environmental awareness, few of them provide any critical analysis of the connections between place and culture explicit in events such as environmental racism and Anglo-American appropriations and misrepresentations of indigenous cultural stories.

A fourth survey book that I would like to mention is *A Sense of Place: Teaching Children About the Environment with Picture Books* (Kriesberg, 1999). *A Sense of Place* has an interdisciplinarian approach to using children's books designed to develop awareness and love for environment and place. Kriesberg's approach is similar to that of Sobel's (2004) approach in *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities* in advocating for connection to place through sensual experiences that delight rather than scare children into caring for their environment. Kriesberg uses children's books as a starting point to promote discussions and activities both inside of the classroom and outside in their natural environments, using all of their senses in creative ways. Kriesberg believes that environmental education needs to be integrated into all areas of schooling to help develop the sense of wonder and curiosity that is so important in successful education (and in life). The book includes sections on animals, plants, geologic and natural histories as well as a section on "place in history." While the section primarily focuses on Native-Americans and early settlers, Kriesberg contextualizes this writing:



It is easy to romanticize and stereotype native people's views of the natural world. We can teach and learn from it, but that doesn't mean it can become our view. Each of us has to look at our own culture, religion, and traditions for stories, knowledge, and values about the natural world. (p. 92)

Kriesberg describes looking into his own Judaic history to discover "a long tradition in Judaism of ecological consciousness," realizing that his connection with the natural world could bring him closer to his own culture. In response to this discovery Kriesberg writes: "Children can look at their own religions and ethnic backgrounds for folk tales, beliefs, and knowledge about the natural world" (p. 92). The final chapter deals with protecting places providing moving stories and resources to inspire children's activism. Of the three books described above, Kriesberg's book was definitely the most pleasurable and satisfying text, exploring place in children's literature in an integrated, holistic, and experiential manner.

In an article exploring the connections between environment, place, and culture in children's books titled "Your Place or Mine? Reading Art, Place, and Culture in Multicultural Picture Books" (Reisberg, Brander, & Gruenewald, 2006), my co-authors and I discussed the fragmentary nature of education and suggested that, although not a panacea for the shortcomings of schooling, collaborative readings of quality multicultural picture books could provide meaningful, integrated curriculum development for some educators. Each of us approached the project of reading a piece of literature (one of my children's books) from our respective lenses of art, place, and critical pedagogy, developing both lesson ideas and a rubric for others to use so they could select children's books that facilitate the interdisciplinary, interconnections between art, place, and culture. The process of "reading" the books, paying equal attention to both the images and the text, provided each of us with a deeper understanding of these relationships. In addition, it provided a means for enriching our teaching through the exploration of multicultural children's books that inspired cross-cultural and culturally responsive investigations into local places and cultures. One point that became very clear through this process was that looking at place and environment in children's literature should not be limited just to books specifically labeled "environmental." Instead educators can draw attention to place and environment and its cultural connections in most children's picture books simply by paying deep attention, particularly to the images. What animals, birds, flora, and geographic landscapes are depicted? What does the built

environment look like? What does the clothing tell us about the weather, culture, and place? How do people interact with each other? What does this tell us about the culture/place? How do the people or animals interact with their environment? These are all important questions to attend to in exploring children's literature and then extend that sense of inquiry into students' own environments to facilitate place-based education. To facilitate this process of "deep reading" we created the following rubric for other educators interested in forging these connections between place, environment, and people in their teaching practice by examining place, culture, and art in multicultural children's picture books

### ***Place***

What are the unique cultural, geographical, and ecological features of the places described by the narrative and the illustrations?

What is the relationship between the places in the story and the story's characters, plots, and themes?

How are the places and people you know the same or different from the places and people in the story?

How are some places, both in the story and in your experience, more desirable than others?

Should any of the places in the story, or people's relationships with them, be transformed or conserved? If so, why? How?

### ***Culture/Critical pedagogy***

What are some of the cultural and community based characteristics described or illustrated in the text?

How are the interactions between family and community shown in the text, and through your own experiences?

Do the characters in the text have any agency? If so, how? How are you an agent in your life?

Is the culture(s) of the text similar or different from your culture? If so, how?

Describe your own culture.

Do you see any cultural stereotypes depicted in the text and/or illustrations? How are these stereotypes described?

How is democracy depicted in the text? What does democracy mean to you, your family, and your community?

What kinds of change do you see in the text? How has change helped you in your life?

### **Art**

If the illustration style is cartoony, does it still convey emotion while avoiding stereotypes?

Do the illustrations convey the mood of the writing, details of the place, and present believable characters?

Do they provide dignity for the characters?

If you were to illustrate this book – how would you do it differently?

Is there a second story embedded in the visuals not included in the text?

What might it represent for the illustrator?

Do the pictures engage, inspire, and/or delight you?

Do they make you want to know what happens next?

(Reisberg, Brander, & Gruenewald, 2006, p. 129).

Despite my inability to find many survey books that specifically addressed the interconnections between culture and place, I was gratified to find Dobrin and Kidd's edited book *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism* (2004). In *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*, Marion Copeland (2004) writes about Beatrix Potter's and Gene Stratton-Porter's work. She posits them as early ecofeminists, writing: "Ecofeminism's concern with the domination of nature and of all animals, wild and domestic, human and nonhuman, lies at the heart of the work of both women" (p. 71). Copeland believes that both "Potter and Stratton-Porter experienced enough oppression in their lives and careers to be drawn to ecofeminism's linking of the oppression of women and the domination of nature" (p. 71). Of relevance to Potter and Stratton-Porter's children's book writing, Dobrin and Kidd in their introduction note the importance of animals in children's lives and books. Describing Melson's (2001) "fascinating research on children's bonds with animals both real and imagined" they write: "Melson speculates that '[b]ecause animals were the most salient aspects of the environment of human evaluation, the human mind may be prewired to vibrate to *animal* as an innate category of thought and emotion'" (p. 146, cited in Dobrin & Kidd, 2004, p. 5). Melson describes the need to decode "the symbolic roles" animal

characters play in "children's books, stories, and school readers, many of which are tales told by and about animal characters" (p. 15). Melson notes that "[f]olklorists have long viewed animal tales as vehicles to convey children's ideas about relationships, both among humans and between humans and animals" (p. 15).

In Kamala Platt's (2004) section in *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism* titled "Environmental Justice Children's Literature: Depicting, Defending, and Celebrating Trees and Birds, Colors and People," she describes her work as "'environmental justice poetics'" (p. 184). Platt explores children's books that are created to promote environmental well-being and social justice, as well as to expose environmental racism and the closely-linked degradation of the earth. These include books such as *The People Who Hugged the Trees* (Rose, 2000), *The Story of Colors* (Marcos, 1999), and *Rani and Felicity: The Story of Two Chickens* (Shiva & Radha, 1996). She writes:

While each story has its own ideological and formal storytelling strategy, these tales hold a resolute ideological stance in their common ecocriticism. In each ecocriticism is contextualized historically and politically; readers learn legendary histories of people's resistance to domination of themselves and their natural environments (*The People Who Hugged the Trees*), of the origins of the natural(ly peopled) world (*The Story of Colors*), and of the detrimental effects of capitalist globalization (*Rani and Felicity: The Story of Two Chickens*). (p. 188)

Platt (2004) is inspired by Dorceta Taylor's (1993) work in promoting the Environmental Justice movement describing it as being more inclusive in connecting social and environmental concerns. Taylor (cited in Platt, 2004) writes:

[The Environmental Justice Movement] does not treat the problem of oppression and social exploitation as separable from the rape and exploitation of the natural world. Instead, it argues that human societies and the natural environment are intricately linked and that the health of one depends on the health of the other (p. p. 184).

Platt (2004) believes "as cultural critics, [we need] to look for both ideological and empirical links between environmental and social ills and to search for means of transformation" (p. 185). She suggests that by looking at our "our interpretations of the physical environment in literature" we might "also engage an understanding of the roles of activists and artists in social and natural

history, of political relations of domination such as colonialism, of structural oppression such as environmental racism" (p. 185). This suggestion is one that I will be taking to heart in exploring my participants' children's books, looking at the embedded stories about animals, nature, culture, and the environment in both the text, and more importantly in this study, in the art.

Before concluding this section on place in children's literature I would like to briefly introduce three other authors whose work falls within the purview of environment or place in children's literature and thus are helpful in situating my study (Meyer, 2002; Rahn, 1995; Wood, 1995). However, insightful as these articles are in addressing diverse environmental concerns in children's books, they too ignore the multicultural arena, presenting a mostly White world created by mostly White authors.

Meyer's (2002) article, "Accuracy and Bias in Children's Environmental Literature: A Look at Lynne Cherry's Books" draws on the work of Catton and Dunlap (2001) when he describes "three paradigms through which humans view their environment" (p. 277). Meyer describes the first as, "the Dominant Western World view," where humans in their difference have dominion over other creatures and thus "the world provides them unlimited opportunities." The second is "the Human Exemptionalism Paradigm," which posits that humans are exceptional because they "exist in social and cultural environments," thus "the biophysical environment is considered largely irrelevant." Meyer describes the third paradigm as "the New Ecological Paradigm," where humans participate as "one of many species in the 'web of life,'" noting that: "no matter how technology may delay the inevitable, ecological laws cannot be repealed" (p. 277). Meyer also believes that quality children's literature rather than expository texts provide an ideal place to explore these paradigms and after discussing many of Lynne Cherry's books, puts forth her work as holding great value in explicating the interrelationships of living beings. Like Platt (and myself), Meyer advocates for using engaging, narratives for education to facilitate exploring "the web of life." However, unlike Platt's article, Meyer's "web of life" makes no mention of the cultural sphere.

In the second article, which I'd like to discuss here, Wood (1995) describes how a children's book led to social reform legislation. In Naomi Wood's article on Kingsley's *Water-Babies* (a seminal book in my own childhood because of its imaginative underwater illustrations detailing the adventures of Tom the chimney sweep who is cleansed and revitalized when he enters the

world of the water-babies ruled by Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby), she explores "Charles Kingsley's characteristically Victorian naturalism as proto-environmentalism" in his linking of "the relationship between human action and natural process" (p. 233). Wood's notes: "In much of his writing, Kingsley rebuked industrialists for pursuing wealth so blindly that they chose not to see the wasteful byproducts: the horrendously polluted cities and waterways, and, important to Kingsley, the concomitant pollution of the inhabitants" (p. 239). Within the article, Wood relates the information that Kingsley's book was credited with "influencing the passage of the Chimney-Sweeper's Act of 1864 by causing a flurry of public distress about the condition of child-sweeps.... Tom is not just a pathetic victim, but a type representing the begrimed social body of the English working-class" (p. 240). Thus, Wood shows how the art and literature of children's books can be influential in enacting far reaching sociopolitical effects.

In the final article that I would like to note here, Rahn's "Green Worlds for Children," she provides a fascinating overview of the history of environmental consciousness beginning around a century ago with the Romantic era in England, and Transcendentalism in America. Rahn writes:

Not surprisingly--if one believes, like the Romantics, that children and the green world belong together--children were informed and involved from the outset. In fact, merely by studying the old volumes of *St. Nicholas Magazine* that children read in the 1870s and '80s and '90s, one can trace the changes in attitudes toward the wilderness and its creatures with which environmentalism began. (p. 151)

Rahn continues to show the connections between children's literature and society at large in examples such as the Victorian/Enlightenment era's mania for collecting, categorizing, and controlling nature evidenced in *St. Nicholas Magazine* and in books that extolled "adventure stories combining hunting with adventure" as well as stories that celebrated the joys of collecting. Rahn notes that concurrently with these stories "Such displays of control and dominance often required the destruction of the natural object itself" (p. 154). This "contributed to the decline of many species--and the rarer the species, the more avid the collector. Huge numbers of birds were shot and butterflies chloroformed in the name of scientific study" (p. 154). In addition, sport hunting and zoos also took a tremendous toll on wildlife. Thus children's

literature has served to both provide destructive as well as positive consequences for nature and wildlife. Additionally, Rahn wonders if the scores of children's books written about wild animals at the turn of the century "helped bring about... changes in attitude toward the natural world and its creatures, or furthered the widespread acceptance of environmentalism that exists today." Rahn believes it,

unlikely that without the generations of stories about good wolves, from 'Lobo' and *The Jungle Book* to *Never Cry Wolf* and *Julie of the Wolves*, the weight of cumulative public opinion could ever have overcome centuries of hatred and allowed the wolf's return to Yellowstone in 1995. (p. 162)

Each of these three authors, Meyer, Wood, and Rahn, advocates for the use of children's literature to promote environmental activism and love of nature and place. However, a major shortcoming in their work is the lack of critical analysis of multicultural issues connected to environment and place. In a culturally pluralistic society this is highly problematic. Consequently this lack of investigation into the connections between place, environment and cultural pluralism is one that I plan to address as part of this study.

### **Place as a Multifaceted Construct**

As this section on place has shown, connecting with, and understanding our place on emotional, spiritual, aesthetic, and practical levels is of vital importance for both the welfare of our planet and "more-than-human" beings, and for the interconnected social and individual well-being of ourselves.

Within schooling place-based education provides a wonderfully creative and fulfilling means of doing this. In well-documented studies PBE is shown to be a successful alternative pedagogy to the abstracted, alienated, test-driven institution that is currently failing millions of children. At the same time PBE benefits the communities students live in while preparing them for democratic participation foregrounding an ethic of care with the development of skills needed to enact changes beneficial to their own lives and others.

Extending place-based education into the arena of the arts through place-based arts education (PBAE) also provides a means for bringing attention to the need for and means of enacting Grunewald's (2003b) "decolonization and 'reinhabitation'" which he proposes as the purpose

of PBE. Supporting the need for healing and stewardship Bergman writes:

Art may not change anything... but the ideas we have about ourselves we project into the world... Negative images have a way of coming alive just as positive images have. If we project images of beauty, hope, healing, courage, survival, cooperation, interrelatedness, serenity, imagination and harmony, this will have a positive effect. Imagine what artists could do if they became committed to the long-term good of the planet. The possibilities are beyond imagination. If all artists would ever pull together for the survival of humankind, it would be a power such as the world has never known. (cited in Gablik, 1991, p. 155)

Bergman's words exhort us to participate in healing and surviving through connecting with each other and our world. Thus, I would like to suggest that using art as a methodology for place-based education speaks to the emotive, spiritual, and aesthetic domains of experience by employing different meaning making systems beyond the verbal and textual systems currently dominating education. In addition, I would like to propose that by extending Bergman's call to artists into the field of education we can all participate in promoting democratic participation in these acts of decolonization and reinhabitation, where the exponential effects could be truly awesome. And finally, I would like to propose that exploring place in children's literature provides yet another means of enacting place-based education while practicing culturally responsive teaching and bridging the gap between social and environmental justice.

In this study, the notion of place provides a means of looking at the interrelationships of socio-economic and cultural histories, and the relationship between art and environment while looking at the spiritual and numinous qualities of place and non-human life in the lives and work of my participants. Each of us practices some form of place-specific art and have intuitively known to locate our teaching within students' lives and communities as will become evident later while exploring the participants' individual and collective "visions for education" in this study.

Theoretically and practically, through the constructs of decolonization and reinhabitation, place-based education provides many avenues to explore awareness of environment and our place in it enabling advocacy toward social justice and environmental stewardship. By connecting place-based education with art and children's books I hope to show how these constructs can be of service to the field of education and the world at large through various forms of "praxis"



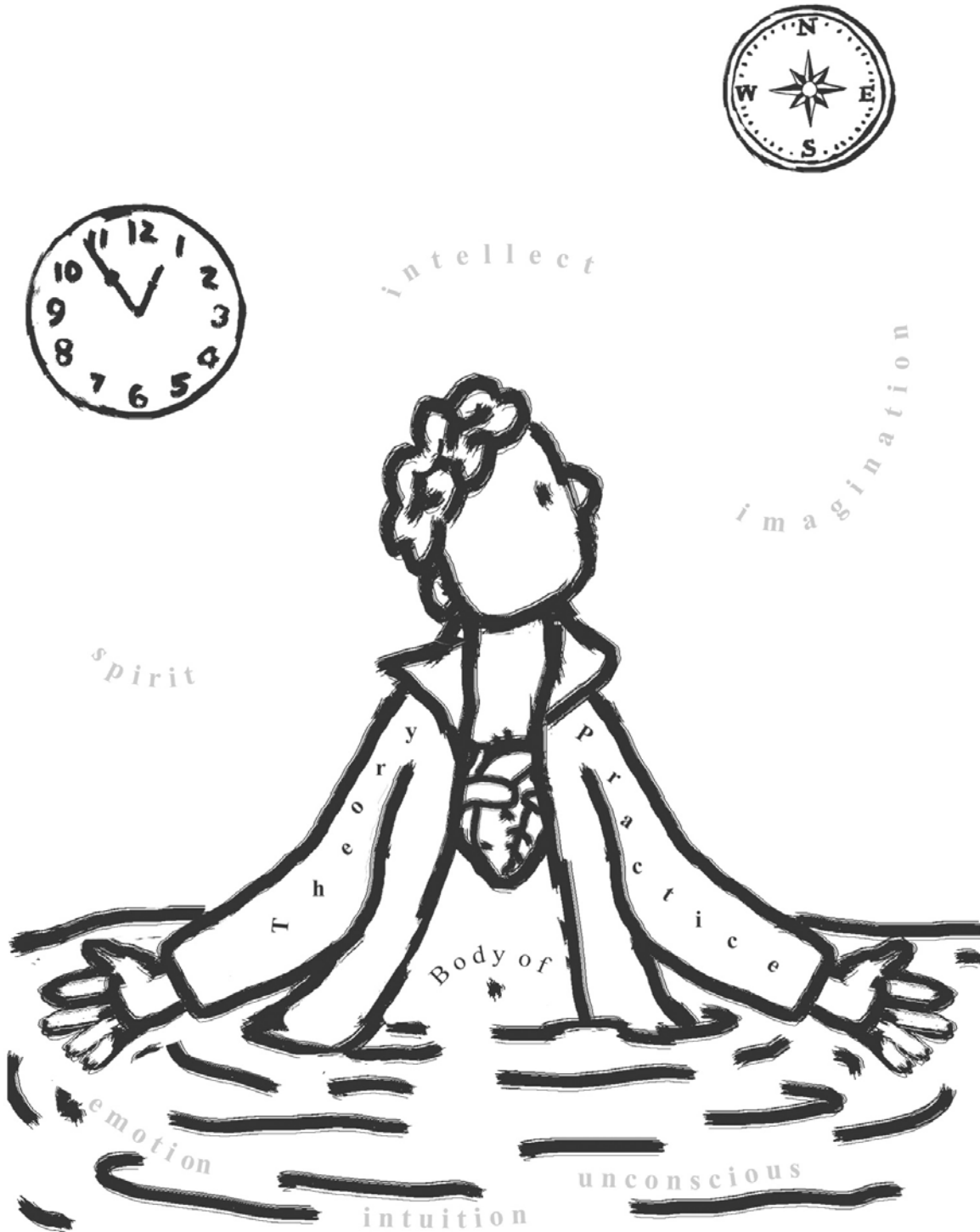
while framing my research journey. As Freire states so eloquently when describing praxis as the combination of reflection and action wherein: "When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, into an alienated and alienating 'blah'" (2003/1970, p. 87). Consequently I seek to connect reflection and action through the words and images of this study, the images from my participants' books, and the actions of both my participants and myself in our teaching practices. In the process, I will be asking many questions such as: Where is the *there* that my participants grew up in and where is that there now in where we choose to live as adults? How do these places relate to culture and manifest in our work and lives? Why is connecting to place important and how does exploring these ideas of place benefit educational theory? These are some of the many questions that place-based education provides a beautiful lens to guide and frame this study.

### **Chapter Summary or What *Was* All That About?**

This epic chapter on my theoretical perspectives, in conversation with related literature, was of core importance for a variety of reasons. Because this is a multifaceted study of six complex people that covers a wide range of territory in its exploration of place, race, art, and culture, no one theoretical lens was enough. A/r/tography provides me with an artful lens to explore these constructs as well as a methodology to document and reflect on the journey; critical multicultural education and analysis provides lenses for looking at race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class and colonialism as it appears in our lives and work; cultural production and visual culture studies provide lenses to look at my participants' art and book work as visual products holding their own stories, which are both enabled and constrained by the forces of cultural production; while place as a lens facilitates looking at a broad range of elements such as connection, context, spirituality, education, and community as it has impacted our lives and work as artists, educators, and children's book makers located in specific places. Although each of these lenses shares commonality in its critical approach, each addresses specific themes of importance in my study, complimenting the other lenses and providing me with tools to create an artful, indepth exploration into the lives and work of my participants, while deepening and extending the theoretical and practical application of these perspectives.

# chapter four

Methodology: The How that Follows the Why and What



My methodology draws on each of the theoretical perspectives described in the preceding chapter providing a foundation for framing, collecting, organizing, and reflecting on the data from this study. However, in this chapter, it is the methodological aspects of a/r/tography that I would like to address first before providing details regarding myself as researcher, the participant selection process, and information on data collection, validity, ethics, and the methods used for my interpretive reflection.

### **A/r/tography**

Recent theorists working in and through the arts and education have begun to question the centrality of the social sciences as a model for *all* forms of educational inquiry as well as the near absolute privileging of written and oral forms of language. Sullivan's (2005) *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts* and Irwin and de Cosson's (2004) *A/r/tography: Rendering Self through Arts-Based Living Inquiry* are two books that investigate locating the practice of art making as central to both a theoretical model and a method of research. Sullivan describes a need to ground how art making and research contribute to human understanding, not through the social sciences that are inadequate to the task, but in "the theories and practices that surround art making... [where] from this central site of investigation... other derivative practices emerge, such as critical and philosophical analysis, historical and cultural commentary, and educational experiences" (p. 74). He describes the contemporary artist as:

[P]art theorist, performer, installer, writer, entertainer, and shaman who creates in material, matter, media, text, and time, all of which takes shape in real, simulated, and virtual worlds. These characteristics of contemporary art practice change the way we think about the visual arts, which influences what we do in educational settings. (p. 4)

Sullivan advocates for a theoretically based practice of research that "investigates how knowledge is created *in* the process of making art... question[ing] the processes and products of artistic knowing [whereby] the artist is both the researcher and the *object* of study" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 79).

While a/r/tography holds great kinship with Sullivan's ideas on art-making as a powerful method of research, it is differentiated by an emphasis on the multiple roles of artist/researcher/teacher manifested through the twinning of images and text. A/r/tographers bring the different sensibilities and concerns of each of their lived roles to their research in a form called "living

inquiry." Consequently, using a/r/tography enabled me to broaden the kinds of data collected beyond the limits of the spoken or written word and beyond the focus of my participants' words. These various forms of data include: images and written texts from my participants, class handouts my students created about the participants and one of their books, lesson plans I created to accompany the lesson on the artists, and my own a/r/tographic images. A/r/tography as a methodology allowed me to utilize my natural language of choice, art-making, to synthesize the multiple roles of artist/researcher/teacher with the different theoretical perspectives employed in the research. In other words, a/r/tography enabled me to focus these multiple perspectives and sources of data in a synergistic blend of image and text to create and represent different ways of meaning making and understanding while facilitating a deepening of the research process.

### A n A / r / t o g r a p h i c M o m e n t

At times, the form of this dissertation mimics that of a children's picture book in its use of image to both illustrate and extend beyond the written text into emotive and alternate ways of knowing (Cornett, 2003; Leland et al., 2000).

As a reflective artist/researcher/teacher I am constantly aware of my own presence in conducting research and how my interests and experiences shape both what I choose to research and how I choose to conduct, present, and interpret this inquiry. For this, too, a/r/tography is of great assistance. For example, the image introducing chapter one shows an image of a woman who could be myself diving (not that I know how to dive).

On the surface this is a fairly literal interpretation/illustration of the text that documents the process of beginning (or diving into) the dissertation. If you look at my facial expression it could be read as a mixture of apprehension and concentration, or serenity and confidence, depending on your personal lens. You might wonder why the head is slightly larger than it should be. Does it signal a conscious or unconscious privileging of the head/mind over the body? Or is it showing a children's book artist's habit of using child-like proportions? Leaves fall down the page in the background. These falling leaves are not mentioned in the text and yet they evoke a sense of change (seasons and the passage of time? perhaps movement?) and a moment of ambiguity.

They suggest that the figure is not only diving but also falling into something, perhaps indicating both a conscious and an unconscious process. A question of voice arises and the words form lapping waves that touch on many of the concerns around voice that must be addressed in a dissertation such as this. These waves lead us into a reflection on "beginning" followed by Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) text on the different functions of "voice" in portraiture. This provides an academic grounding after my free-falling poetic, "open to interpretation," a/r/tographic rumination on beginning this dissertation process. At the same time, the process of making this piece of art led me to reconsider some of the language I was using and make changes to this content as well.

Another example might be the self-portrait at the beginning of my theoretical perspectives in chapter four. Here I am a pirate—my theoretical lens a spyglass, and my steering wheel a color wheel. The pirate evokes images of transgression and border crossings, the spyglass extends out of the frame being both contained while also extending beyond the borders of the picture, while the color wheel could be read as art or color steering my work and life. My description of these particular images as both product and process hopefully illuminates how images can simultaneously hold the potential for both multiple meanings/interpretations and deepening inquiry.



### *Artographic Renderings*

As a theory and a methodology a/r/tography can be filtered through six inquiry-based constructs known as "renderings"—a word with multiple meanings that evoke associations with drawing, representing, and separating fat from meat using slow heat (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2005). Although renderings are not prescriptive, they can be helpful in conducting a/r/tographic research. The renderings are fluid and mutable, floating with possibilities and opportunities for engagement on a multitude of levels while staying grounded in the data. They include the concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess. Drawing on Springgay, Kind, and Irwin, (2005), and Irwin and De Cosson's (2004)

work, what follows is a fairly in-depth description of these six interconnected renderings providing open and un-fixed, evocative portrayals that will hopefully clarify the methodological use of a/r/tography within this dissertation.

### ***Contiguity***

What lies beside, between, beneath and beyond the text? How do we explore the meanings and experiences that exist contiguously and dis-contiguously within and beyond duality and non-duality? What is beside and between the multiple roles of artist/researcher and teacher, or image and text, process, and product? Where do abstraction and concreteness, certainty and uncertainty come together and drift apart in the process of research? Contiguity uses these and other forms of questioning and doubling to deepen the means and methods of inquiry.

### ***Living inquiry***

Through living inquiry a/r/tographers embody a life that is constantly engaged with the transformative power of art. Image and text bounce off each other to create "*understandings and experiences* rather than mere... *representations*." By paying attention to "memory, identity, autobiography, reflection, meditation, story telling, interpretation and/or representation, artists/researchers/teachers expose their living practices in evocative ways" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, p. 902). Thus living inquiry delves into the many facets of "being" in both researcher and participants' lives including the "personal, political and professional aspects" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, p. 902).

### ***Metaphor and metonymy***

Metaphor and metonymy provide sign systems that displace or re-present meaning. They provide a/r/tographers opportunities to poetically and imaginatively construct non-literal images. For example, this metaphor, "her eyes shimmered like the full moon on a summer's eve" does not mean to say that her eyes really resembled the moon. Rather, the statement evokes the luminosity of the moon suffused by a feeling of warmth, enabling us to imagine the beauty of the protagonist in this story. Metonymy on the other hand creates a kind of re-presentative "stand-in" such as someone "watching the clock" is highly conscious of time, or a statement coming from "the Vatican" comes from someone in the upper echelons of the Roman Catholic religion, not the Vatican building itself. These images are "provocative, and suggestive... allow[ing] for the ambi-

guity of meaning to shift in space and time" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 902). In effect, metaphor/metonym create another layer of doubling—image and text, signified and signifier.

### ***Openings***

Openings invite multiple meaning making opportunities for both "sensual and textual ways of knowing" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005). They depend on shared conversations between researcher and participant, art and text, listening and reading, writing and looking, and the various means of creating. These conversations are embedded in "opening up" to reveal what each mode has to teach by looking at both the presence and absence of what is there. Thus, openings "unsettle, create movement, collide and nestle side-by-side, as meanings are negotiated in relationship to other meanings" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 905).

### ***Reverberations***

Within a/r/tography there is a constant shifting, going back and forth between the different aspects of living inquiry through the diverse roles of artist/researcher and teacher and the multiple ways of rendering research. These create reverberations where conflict lies between which realm of experience is privileged and which system of meaning making or experience is neglected. Ultimately these conflicts collide in the a/r/tographic question of how to integrate each of these arenas into a holistic totality of living inquiry. This grappling with ideas and co-laboring creates a kind of energy that pushes inquiry into deeper unsuspected places creating an energizing form of discomfort situated in the moments of confusion and unknowing before actual learning and meaning making occurs (R. L. Irwin, personal communication, August 5, 2005).

### ***Excess***

Visionary poet William Blake once wrote that "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" (1975, p. xviii). Within a/r/tography this is certainly true. Here excess has many meanings allowing for multiple interpretations. There is excess as in what is left over—both what is wasteful and what is sublime. In addition, excess exists in the often unseen negative space allowing a/r/tographers to notice what may be invisible to others. And then there is excess as in excessive—extreme emotions, excessive details, excessive practices, or excessive stuff (Irwin, 2005, personal communication). While excess as an a/r/tographic practice is not concerned with "inserting facts and figures, images and representations into language" its goal is to "creat[e] an

opening where control and regulation disappears. [It] is a way to re-image ourselves into being; re-assembling the mundane of our experiences" (Springgay, 2003, cited in Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 907). Springgay, Irwin, & Kind (2005), describe excess as "the flesh of being, the space-between interiority and exteriority, where touching touches and touches back in continual reverberations. It is in the space of excess that knowledge is negotiated as intimate and sensuous" (p. 907). Thus, excess encourages explorations beyond the material and the mundane delving into the ontological roots of epistemology.

## I R e n d e r

In the drawing or rendering at the beginning of this chapter I was trying to clarify the relationship between theory and practice, or theory and methodology, for myself. I have set up a large canvas in my living room for these visual musings and came up with this figure that I transcribed into my computer to redraw. In the process I added a compass and clock to ground my work in time and space; I used the words "emotion," "intuition," and "unconscious" in the water, and "spirit," "intellect," and "imagination" in the sky to show their importance in art, teaching, and research. I wanted to show how theory and method are intertwined and not separate for me, how closely linked ideas and action are, or should be. I printed a copy of the drawing for my friend Keisha Brown and she said:

That is so cool. I love how the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. It's just like academics and teachers in the field. The academics are off doing their thing publishing all these articles and the teachers don't have time to read any of it and the academics are just totally clueless as to what's really going on in the classroom.

I was surprised. This interpretation was so different from how I saw the drawing. I saw an invisible, horizontal figure-eight piece of string going from the right hand to the left hand to symbolize an infinite connection of reverberations going back and forth between the two hands. Should I draw the figure-eight in and make what I saw explicit or leave it ambiguous and open to interpretation? Had I done this I would never have heard Keisha's response, which should I choose, could have led me down a very



different path of inquiry. And what's with the "body of"? Is it the corporeal body made real within all these heady ideas? Is it the body of knowledge, or the body of work held within my belly? I could spend days and days delving deeper and deeper into this one drawing in ever widening arcs of inquiry with questions leading to more questions and that is both the beauty and the challenge of a/r/tography - where to begin and where to end. Or as Wallace Steven (1995) said so beautifully in his poem "Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird":

I do not know which to prefer  
The beauty of inflections  
Or the beauty of innuendos  
The blackbird whistling  
Or just after (p. 93)

If I were to interpret the theory and practice image in terms of rendering descriptors I could say: In symbolic language water serves as a metaphor for emotion and the unconscious, while air, particularly in the Jewish tradition, has been a metaphor for ideas and the intellect. The Yiddish word "luftmensch" literally means an "air person"—someone who lives with their head in the clouds with no visible means of support. My figure-eight could be seen as a form of excess in that it exists in negative space, important but unseen. Openings occur when the combination of art and graphy open up dialogue such as the conversation with Keisha reflecting on the space between the two hands, and the closely related, contiguous constructs of time and place, theory and practice, emotion and intellect, brain and heart reverberate off each other to create an embodiment of living inquiry and self-reflexivity.

This experience of rendering in both written and visual forms will be a constant thread throughout this dissertation.



### ***Renderings of Research***

Rendering research is an active process of living inquiry. It is enacted through text and

image where the separate and interconnected roles of artist, researcher, and teacher combine to create a practice of being in, of, and with the world. To render research is to engage with life, with self, and with others to make meaning through the sensual, emotive, intellectual, and physical aspects of our humanity. "Renderings themselves are living, contiguous, metaphoric/metonymic, [full of] openings, and... excess. Each rendering moves along side and between the others" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p.909). Thus, the a/r/tographic research process is slippery, elusive, ambiguous and uncertain, requiring a/r/tographers to be at home in the discomfort of navigating in a constantly shifting landscape. Because of the power these multiple roles and renderings hold for me I have used different configurations of these constructs as a conceptual foundation to examine, reflect on, and represent the data from this study. These renderings allow opportunities for investigation that reinforce a postmodern sensibility and appreciation for ambiguity and deepening levels of inquiry with questions leading to more questions. As a theoretical lens and a methodology these renderings provide a body of ideas and principles that help make sense of the lives and work of my participants as well as a means of conducting a/r/tographic research. For example, I will be using the constructs of contiguity, living inquiry, metaphor and metonymy, openings, reverberations, and excess while reading and coding the transcripts as well as exploring the images in my participants art and books. Where does conducting art, research and teaching intersect in my participants' lives as primarily artists who also teach and research their books? What about in my own life now that I am primarily a researcher and a teacher who is also an artist? How do the artists play with metaphor and metonymy—qualities that are inherent in the creation of much art? What openings do they create through the ambiguous use of images? Looking for both presence and absence, the positive and negative shapes of the ideas embedded in both the artists words and their works will enable me to create a fuller picture of my participants and their art while exploring the themes that emerge. Rendering research will enable me to communicate my exploration through a variety of means that embrace my emotive, sensual, and intellectual curiosity. In the case of this dissertation this consists of the creation of images and written texts. In addition, I also plan on making a documentary film that will enable me to deepen my a/r/tographic research in a more image driven direction.

## **Further Methodologies: More on How**

### ***Self as Researcher and Participant***

When Ellis and Bochner (2000), write about creating "personal, intimate, and embodied writing" that "champion[s] the cause of reflexive, experimental, autobiographical, and vulnerable texts" (p.735), I think, "Yes this is the kind of research I want to do—research that is creative and emotionally honest." The congruency of a/r/tography's advocacy of self-reflexivity and living inquiry combined with the experimental use of image and text beckons invitingly.

To assist with concerns of bias Herr and Anderson (2005) recommend acknowledging "one's presence in the study and build[ing] in self-reflection" (p.35). In other words, "coming clean" about one's positionality. They describe insider/outsider arcs of positionality, which for myself are a blend of both. My background as a multicultural children's book artist published by the same radical press as my participants situates me in a unique place to conduct this study. As a children's book artist I am an insider in that I know how the illustration process works, both in terms of making the books and in working in their educational outreach programs. As a friend and colleague of most of the participants, I am also an insider. As the daughter of holocaust survivors growing up in an anti-Semitic working-class neighborhood of Australia, I am also a survivor of racism, having an insider's knowledge of the harm that racism causes and the importance of quality multicultural education and critical race theory. However, my White privilege situates me as an outsider to those forms of marginalization and injustice specific to people of color, and now in this new position as an academic and a researcher I am further positioned as an outsider from my fellow artists and friends.

Harkening back to a/r/tography and Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) description of portraiture, my love of drawing and painting portraits has taught me how to look for the subtleties of light and shade and the nuances of expression and coloration. It has taught me to look closely while studying the sitter in both objective and subjective ways, to create a representational portrait that both feels like and looks like the subject I am representing in varying degrees. I have been able to transfer this love of looking, seeing, feeling, and creating visual art to a love of writing that employs the same passionate sense of adventure, exploration, and aesthetic journey. Through the a/r/tographic integration of written and visual self-reflexive responses to the process

of this dissertation's creation/production, I can embody Ellis and Bockner's call to champion "reflexive, experimental, autobiographical, and vulnerable texts" (2004, p.735).

### ***Participant Selection***

Obviously one of the most important aspects of this study is whom it studies, consequently I would now like to briefly introduce you to the artists who serve as my participants, subjects, and co-constructors of this dissertation. You will get to know them in much greater depth in the following chapters.

Elizabeth Gomez—A soulful Mexican born artist in her thirties also living in the Bay Area of California. Elizabeth is also a multi-award winning artist and every school age child in Texas has access to one of her books.

Joe Sam—A feisty award winning African-American mixed media artist in his 60s, with a PhD in education and psychology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Long time resident of the Bay Area of California.

Maya Gonzalez—A beautiful lesbian Chicana in her forties living in San Francisco. She is a multi-award winning children's book artist currently struggling with healing from heavy metal poisoning from exposure to toxic art materials.

Carl Angel—A funny Filipino-American artist, somewhere in his thirties, living in the Bay Area of California, whose fanciful books are the first bilingual English/Tagalog children's books in the United States.

George Littlechild—A beautiful First Nations artist living on Vancouver Island, Canada, also in his forties. His books have also won many awards.

Mira Reisberg—An irreverent Jewish Australian artist just turned fifty, long-time resident of the Bay Area, currently writing her dissertation in Pullman, Washington. Also an award winning artist with every school age child in Texas having access to one of her books.

Among us our books have sold over three and a half million copies (primarily in the education market) and won over 50 awards and honors

## Descriptoꝛs

Pause.

When I use adjectives like "funny, feisty, beautiful, irreverent, and soulful" it sets up an essentializing and totalizing dilemma. Each of us is so much more than these quick descriptive adjectives, and yet I want to give you a brief sense of we are, particularly my five participants. I want you to want to know them as I do. I want you to know me but this part feels awkward. How do I navigate the me, them, and us? We are all beautiful, feisty, funny, irreverent, and soulful, and so much more, but for literary purposes we only get one adjective apiece here as I move on with this narrative.



I purposefully selected my chosen participants for several reasons. All of us had illustrated beautiful books for Children's Book Press (CBP), an independent non-profit, multicultural publisher with a radical transformative agenda. CBP works with diverse authors and illustrators in creating the highest quality authentic, multicultural, children's literature, bringing their books, along with their authors and illustrators, into low-income and minority schools and communities to work directly with disadvantaged populations using children's literature and art. Their editorial guidelines located on their website (<http://www.childrensbookpress.org/editorial.html>) make clear their philosophical stance, stating that CBP currently publishes books "about contemporary... minority and new immigrant communities.... [These] stories should encourage critical thinking about social and/or personal issues."

Having illustrated eight books and designed or art-directed many others for CBP, I either knew or was familiar with all of the artists and knew they would provide fascinating insights for research. Also because of the mix in ages (ranging from thirties to sixties), nationalities (Australian, American, Mexican, and Canadian), and ethnicities (First Nations, Asian-American, Latin-American, Jewish-Australian, and African-American) we bring a rich history of what Habermas calls "lifeworld" (Dodd, 1999) experience, and what Bourdieu calls "habitus" (1977) to the project. In my original pilot study for this dissertation, one of my mentors encouraged me to include myself as a participant but the difficulties of navigating the language of-I, me,

mine, ours, them, they, us, and we—was and is daunting. Another problem was that the length of the paper I was writing was becoming unpublishable with six participants and a wealth of fascinating data. So I simplified things and pulled myself out of the article. Given the length of this dissertation there is now room to return. In addition, using a/r/tography as a primary lens that relies on reflection between self and others, it feels emotionally dishonest not to ask myself the same questions I ask my participants and not to explore my own sense of belonging, and not belonging, within the study.

### ***Data Collection***

Two sets of in-depth interviews occurred ranging in time from two to five hours each. While most of the interviews were in person, due to geographic factors my interview with George Littlechild was by telephone. Also because Maya was too ill during my visit her interview was conducted by her friend Mickey Lee following my interview protocol and then mailed to me on CD. My husband, Guy Geduldig, also came to the in-person interviews and filmed them, and at the end of the interviews participants were invited to ask me any questions they wanted, and this, too, became part of the data set. Data collection also included gathering the artists' books together to bring to each of the interviews. This facilitated inquiry into the relationship between the participants' identities and their art as it connects with race, place, culture, and representation while exploring themes related to sensuality, emotion, and intuition that may be evidenced in the books.

Throughout each stage of both the pilot and dissertation studies, each of the participants was given multiple opportunities to member check with follow up conversations occurring either by telephone or email. For my part in the study, David Gruenewald, my chair, mentor, and friend interviewed me on two separate occasions using the same interview guide as my participants.

I would like to credit Dr. Mike Hayes for his great help in developing the protocol for this interview guide. It incorporated two touchstones to which I constantly referred while framing the questions within the major theoretical perspectives guiding the research—a/r/tography, critical multicultural education and analysis and place-based education. These touchstones included the personal, cultural frameworks that give meaning to our lives such as family, relationship, place and culture; and the socially and politically constructed frames of race, class and gender. The

questions began with inquiry into either of these cultural or sociopolitical influences and then flowed into how the participants subsequently produced their own imagery from those influences (see Appendix A for the Interview Guide). The interviewing process was grounded in Seidman's (1998) interviewing suggestions to: Ask for concrete details, listen more than speak, listen in particular for the "inner voice" (p. 63) that is unaware of its audience, take notes to avoid interruptions, ask participants to reconstruct rather than remember, avoid reinforcing participants responses, and to use the interview guide cautiously as a starting point to follow through with subsequent questions based on the participants' responses.

In addition, other sources of data included:

- Examining the artists' books along with their personal art displayed in their homes, studios, and on the web. These provided rich sources of data for later analysis/interpretation. I spent a great deal of time with the books and used a rubric created by Birgitte Brander, David Gruenewald, and myself (2006) to explore themes of place, culture and art in the books. In addition, I used aspects of critical multicultural analysis to further explore the books looking at constructs of class, gender, and race.
- Integrating approximately 500 pages of transcribed interviews from my initial pilot study where the data that emerged from that study, provided both a strong foundation and useable data for this study.
- Generating data from my own a/r/tographic process of researching, reflecting, writing, and art making assisted both conceptually and practically in the process of understanding or meaning making. In addition, I created visual portraits for each of the participants that also served as sources of data.
- Incorporating the artists and their books as topics of study in my classroom enabled my students to generate fascinating data in the handouts they prepared on the artists and their books, artwork they created inspired by the participants' work, and reflections they wrote about the artists. A final writing and art project where some of them chose my participants' books to reflectively analyze and create

lesson ideas relevant to the books provided additional data as did the lesson plans that I created for my students based on the artists and their work. (See Appendices B–E for these lesson plans, artist handouts, and book projects.)

These multiple sources of data provide a wealth of material to explore and render, creating a rich exploration using a/r/tographic research methods. Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to do more than include the appendices as resources for other academics and educators, saving any meaningful reflection or analysis of this particular data set for a later date.

### ***Validity***

Because of the unconventional aspects of some of this dissertation, certain questions might arise such as: "Does my involvement with CBP and friendships with the artists create validity concerns in the inherent lack of impartiality and obvious weakening of any real (or imagined) boundaries between researcher and participant?" To which I would answer: "Of course it does." But, I also believe that these prior relationships provide a rapport and trust, enabling me to ask the kinds of penetrating questions that an unknown, non-insider researcher might not know to ask, be able to ask, or receive a deep response to. In an attempt to compensate for these validity concerns along with a desire to enrich the study, I used multiple sources of data collection as described above. In addition, I also drew on Herr and Anderson's (2005) five validity criteria from *The Action Research Dissertation*. These include asking questions such as:

1. Is there ***dialogic and process validity***, which leads to the generation of new knowledge?
2. Is there ***outcome validity*** where the action-research goals have been achieved?
3. Does ***catalytic validity*** occur where both the researcher and the participants learn from each other and the process?
4. Is there ***democratic validity*** where results are relevant to the local setting?
5. Is there ***process validity*** in that a sound and appropriate methodology has been used?

I believe my research has met all these validity criteria as will become clear further on in this dissertation. However, I would like to initially foreground two of these criteria: Dialogic and process validity, and catalytic validity to demonstrate the usefulness of my study.



Because this study breaks new ground in explicitly addressing the interconnections between the various constructs of race, place, art, and culture in multicultural children's book images, as well as in the life experiences of my participants, created and rendered through an a/r/tographic methodology, I will be generating new knowledge and thus meeting the requirements of *dialogic and process validity*. Forging these connections between my participants' life experiences and these various constructs as they manifest in our art and ideas will also create novel data to support the growing body of literature on a/r/tography, place-based art education, and critical multicultural art education. In addition, the various sub-themes that have arisen as a result of this study will also generate new understandings contributing to the field of education.

In addition, *catalytic validity* occurred whereby my participants and I all learned both about and from each other on a variety of levels. We learned about place-related similarities and differences in our experiences as ethnic minorities, as well as the impact of art in our lives as either a form of resistance, empowerment, healing, and/or pleasure. In addition, we learned about each other's creative and spiritual processes, and how for most of us these were deeply linked together. We also learned about our own processes by consciously reflecting on how and why we do certain things as artists and educators. And finally, we learned that this process of research is one that we wish to continue in various forms and media such as in films and other publication projects beyond the dissertation.

However, having said all this, I need to establish that while my analysis of the books are critical, my portraits are loving and deeply respectful as this is how I feel about the participants. I would like to briefly quote here Native-American author/activist Jeannette Armstrong (2006), who writing about indigenous community rights and the importance of honoring and protecting the Earth, states:

I know that being Okanagan helps me have the capacity to bond with every-thing and every person I encounter. I try always to personalize everything. I try not to be "objective" about anything. I fear those who are unemotional, and I solicit emotional response wherever I can. I do not stand silently by. I stand with you against the disorder.  
(p. 36)

And although I am not Okanagan, I believe I too share this capacity.

### ***Ethics***

To meet both ethical and institutional requirements of this study, each of the participants was provided with an Institutional Review Board approved informed consent form during my pilot study. This form is still in effect. It details the methods of data collection and data dissemination, assuring the participants that they could withdraw at any time. Because participants were aware that that they would be intentionally identified in the report of the study, the concept of confidentiality shifted to concerns with issues of respect for privacy, consequently I provided many opportunities to member check and remove anything that the participants felt uncomfortable about being publicly revealed.

### ***Benefits to Participants***

Tuhiwai Smith (2004) asks researchers to question who benefits from the research project, and this is a question I have asked myself. While my initial motivation was to fulfill my dissertation requirements, creating something with potential value in the world that at the same time would also be engaging and challenging for me; this project has since become a place of passionate inquiry connecting me with my participants in a gestalt that is larger than the sum of each of our parts. Each of us is learning from this project touching and being touched by each other's experiences, images, and ideas. I believe the field of education can learn from this study in ways that will give back to (the soon to be non-minority) minority communities and educate the dominant culture as well.

Tuhiwai Smith (2004) describes key words for the indigenous research agenda, "such as healing, decolonization, spiritual, [and] recovery" (p.117). These are words that speak to me in my own art process and now in my research process as well. I recently made my first film about Maya, which I sent to her. She wrote back, "I felt as if I had received a part of myself... You have very much touched me." These words reassured and comforted me that I was successful in connecting with both her and her work on a mindful and heartfelt level. Maya was also able to use the thirteen-minute film at a fundraiser for her medical bills. This film is the first part of a larger project I hope to make for PBS in the future incorporating all the artists in this study and drawing on what I have discovered through this research process.

In addition, the participants will benefit in other ways from the study, such as learning

more about their own process of art making and the effects of what they do in ways that they may not have considered before, as well as learning more about and from each other's experiences and ideas in the emailed drafts and final products I sent each of them. Additionally, I plan on disseminating information about their art and insights to a larger public through publication of the pilot study and articles that will follow from this dissertation, as well as in conference presentations such as the 2006 American Educational Research Association conference where I recently presented the pilot study. And finally, each participant will receive their portrait and a copy of this dissertation.

### ***Method of Reflective Interpretation and Book Analysis***

After completing the written and visual portraits of the artists and our books, including images from our books, I created a reflective interpretation of what the study revealed, making connections whenever possible between the complex phenomena that have shaped our lived histories, identities, and art. By using my theoretical lenses of autoethnography, critical multicultural analysis, and place-based education, along with Bourdieu's (1993) theories of cultural production (i.e., how we are both enabled and constrained in what we are able to do as children's book artists), I was able to autoethnographically reflect on and render what the data revealed.

In dealing with transforming raw qualitative data Wolcott (1994) describes three main methods:

1. Descriptive—where the researcher stays as close to the original data as possible letting the data "speak for themselves."
2. Analytical—that usually builds on the descriptive to "expand and extend the description" into "an analysis that proceeds in some careful systematic way to identify key factors and the relationships among them."
3. Interpretation—which springs from either description or analysis or both seeking to "make sense of what goes on, to reach out for understanding or explanation beyond what can be explained with the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis" (p.10).

Wolcott further clarifies his differentiation between analysis and interpretation with this grab bag of associations: Analysis: "*cautious, controlled, structured, formal, bounded, scientific,*

*systematic, logico-deductive, grounded, methodological, objective, particularistic, carefully documented, reductionist, impassive.*" Interpretative terms "are largely complementary to the first: *freewheeling, casual, unbounded, aesthetically satisfying, inductive, subjective, holistic, generative, systemic, impassioned*" (p. 23).

While Wolcott (1993) admits in his text to a lingering bias against comparative methods of analysis such as Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory, critiquing comparison as a cataloging process that looks at the parts rather than whole living systems, I disagree and find grounded theory a helpful tool for comparing, contrasting, and coding similarities and dissimilarities between the artists' experiences to form generative themes showing the connections or disconnections between the artists, their work, and their lives within the larger socio-political context. Alternatively, using a/r/tography allowed me to "disrupt traditional modes of scholarship and knowledge production" (Slattery, 2003, cited in Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 898) by foregrounding liminal processes and drawing upon various renderings such as those described earlier. Another a/r/tographic concept is "loss, shift, and rupture" as "metonymns for a/r/tography" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 898). Loss, shift, and rupture provide an opening to look at the spaces between things—what isn't said as well as what is; the negative space that defines the positive form. This provides a very different method, or concept, with which to reflect on and interpret the data. Consequently I used aspects of each of Wolcott's three methods of transforming qualitative data such as providing in-depth descriptions of the participants' environments and included lengthy quotes to allow the participants to speak for themselves as much as possible. I used the coding aspects of Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory where I looked within each interview to find common areas, grouping them together as an organizing principle within the portraits to assist with my a/r/tographic methodology. And finally, I used my theoretical lenses—a/r/tography, critical multicultural education and analysis, cultural production, visual culture studies, and place-based education to reflect on what emerged from the study.

Like a/r/tography itself, my methodology is a hybrid drawing from the many theories and methods mentioned above. For example, I used aspects of grounded theory by coding the interviews into loose themes. However, when writing my interpretive reflection in chapter six, I did not rely on these themes as a major organizational principle, choosing instead to a/r/tographically reflect using a/r/tography's various renderings, leaving the liminal space open to flow with what

emerged in the interviews, treating each portrait accordingly, while acknowledging the commonalities between them. I then used my other theoretical lenses to explore what commonalities or differences occurred between the artists' histories and our work, and the artists and each other.

### ***The Portraits***

Because of a/r/tography's openness to the liminal, I originally wrote my portraits by cutting and pasting chunks from the coded transcripts focusing on playing with ideas, images, and language, only to find that my portraits had no narrative structure.

Despite my interview chunks, or perhaps because of them, my portraits lacked temporal clarity or any kind of narrative structure. They were like a collage that wasn't working. David suggested I create headings to guide the reader. So I reread the portraits, re-coding and re-combining the chunks in different ways. I put in headings and then re-printed them. My next steps involved cutting the portraits up and rearranging them to create temporal flow. At this point the portraits made temporal sense but were choppy and disjointed because of all the headings. So I removed most of the headings and focused on creating smoother transitions.

My final narrative structure loosely begins by contextualizing the artist in their environment, followed by exploring: childhood experiences connected to race, place, and art; their creative processes and experiences in making children's books; and discussing their ideas about teaching and education. I bookended each of the portraits with images I created for the study. The beginning portrait contextualizes the artist and their work, and whenever possible their environment, while the ending portrait is one that I drew, symbolizing aspects of their personality in relation to animals they chose or that I intuitively chose for them. In between these bookends I included appropriate images from our children's picture books to further enrich the study both conceptually and aesthetically. While I have provided explanations or reflections on most of the images created for this dissertation, I have left the drawn portraits wide open for the reader/viewer to forge their own interpretations based on the written portraits.

### ***Aesthetic Choices***

An a/r/tographic dissertation by its very nature requires many aesthetic choices. In the case of this dissertation these choices involved not only deciding which image to use, but also which fonts and which aspects of APA formatting to use. Much like my art making process, I ini-

tially made these choices intuitively and later on understood why I had made them.

The bulk of the dissertation is in Times New Roman, a standard font choice for academic writing because of its legibility. My personal reflections are in Trebuchet, a contrasting sans serif font, which is both legible and slightly quirky. I used Arial, another legible sans serif font to distinguish the different narrative style of the portraits, and then in chapter six, I used Franklin Gothic, a sans serif font with a little bit of the serif in its g's and a's and t's to symbolize the coming together of the many voices and narratives within this dissertation. I conclude the dissertation with my reference section and appendices by returning to Times New Roman because of its formality and academic authority. In many ways the majority of the appendices also serve to synthesize much of what has transpired in this study by showing the practical applications of learning from my participants' work and lives. The appendices, which feature my students writing or co-authoring about topics related to my participants, show the ways that emerging teachers can integrate some of the many themes discussed in this study into their own learning.

There are four other font choices I would briefly like to discuss because of their symbolic relevance. The chapter numbers use a funky font called Bighouse, which contains qualities similar to a kidnapper's ransom note, suggesting transgression and a possible hijacking of the reader/viewer into alternative routes of consideration. Positioned beneath Bighouse is a font called Chalkboard introducing the chapter's title. This font is reminiscent of teacher's writing on the old blackboards, and both compliments and contrasts with the somewhat chaotic sprawl of Bighouse. My reflection titles, along with the portrait name introductions, both use "Chicken," no doubt named for its chicken scratch appearance. This font resembles a child's writing and also my own process of writing, rewriting, drawing, redrawing, and "scratching out" then reinscribing images and ideas. The final font I would like to discuss is Diamond Inlay, which I used while discussing a/r/tographic renderings. This Western-style font positively screams "excess" (one of a/r/tography's renderings) with its excessively decorative qualities. I imagine that it was once used in saloons and gambling halls. This is significant for me as my choice to create an a/r/tographic dissertation, hundreds of miles away from my a/r/tographic mentor, or any other a/r/tographer, was a huge gamble, one that I believe has paid off.

Thus my methodology contains a multitude of choices, each of which fulfill specific functions—the various theoretical perspectives, the different methods of coding and transforming data,

and the diverse aesthetic choices; each of these contribute to the a/r/tographic whole of exploring the interconnections between my participants' lives and work as multicultural children's book artists including how these interconnections are relevant to the field of education.





Elizabeth Gomez



Elizabeth looks up with childlike wonder at her natural cosmology framed by details from her painting "Insect embroidery with cats." Above right is Juan Felipe from *The Upside Down Boy*. Below are her self and husband childhood portraits with their favorite cartoons and toys, followed by yoyos from *A Movie in My Pillow*. Bottom left to right: Elizabeth in her basement studio full of light, color, and plants; "Moth prayer" painting; and an ongoing collaboration with her daughter.



The entry to Elizabeth Gomez's house, located 25 miles south of San Francisco, welcomes me with a profusion of plants and flowers while a fecund mandarin tree spills a multitude of delicious, ripe mandarins onto her brick walkway. Inside Elizabeth has a fire going, furthering the sense of warmth and informality. Her walls are covered with a wealth of artwork and photography, including her own and her children's art, archival family photos from her childhood and family in Mexico and her husband's Jewish-Argentinian background, watercolor paintings of colorful beetles, wooden boxes of childhood miniatures, and assorted art from around the world. A diptych (two painted panels that together form one picture) of her and her husband as children, complete with favorite toys and television cartoon characters, is particularly arresting, attesting to the continuing influence of childhood artifacts. Elizabeth has many books on different kinds of art, particularly the medieval and mythological art that clearly influences her own artwork. Another painting in the living area titled "Little Miracles" is of her grandmother with her dog walking on water. She told me how her grandmother always had candies in her pockets and how that was like a "little miracle" to her. In South America there are lizards called "Christ Lizards" that seem to walk on water, and these are also a part of the painting. In another painting called "Woman Caressing Spiders Tenderly," Elizabeth shows her love and reverence for literally all living beings.

Elizabeth's home is full of art and color and life. She told me that when she first came to the United States she noticed very different attitudes about art and artists than those in her native Mexico:

[In Mexico] the idea of beautifying what you have is so incredibly natural. It doesn't matter your social class, it doesn't matter whether you live in the city or in the countryside, you know, you paint the door with a flower.... Even in the poorest cities or towns, you have the little planters with the plants outside. There is a respect of what's handmade, and there's also a respect of being creative and being an artist, it is in the culture. In Mexico, if you have an art show, it is such a big, big, big deal, and everyone looks at you as if you know something they don't know, even if you don't. There is a lot of respect for artists. Any show you have, you are in all the newspapers, and people come, it's a big deal.... [Here] it's a more closed world where artists are with artists, and lawyers are with lawyers.... It's hard to explain, but even the cookies, everything is very

handmade in Mexico. And there is a respect and a love for that. And here, of course, it's a richer country... a lot of things are machine made, and that just gives you a different aesthetic—the cities, the towns, the cookies, you know, everything.

According to Elizabeth's sister, she has always wanted to illustrate children's books. Because her family was poor during her early childhood they didn't have many children's books. What they did have were encyclopedias, which her mother thought were very important for the whole family, and her school textbooks. Luckily for Elizabeth her mother was a fabulous storyteller. Elizabeth was encouraged to use her imagination, first in illustrating her mother's stories and then her own. A highly developed sense of imagination is one of the key features of Elizabeth's art today. For example, in her books, flying cows and beds born aloft by birds fly and soar in a cornucopia of deep rich colors. Speaking of color, Elizabeth said: "Because I grew up in Mexico, I have all the artistic qualities of Mexican art totally ingrained in my system. I started doing art in Mexico. I went to university there first. So all my building blocks of what I think art is are very Mexican." She described the high hued, contrasting colors, the love of detail and ornamentation as "typical characteristics of Mexican art [that] I did not know were typical of Mexican art until I left."

Elizabeth came to the United States ten years ago, and it is here that her two daughters were born, so even though she considers herself "Mexican forever" she also considers herself a "global citizen." Unfortunately it was in the United States that Elizabeth first encountered racism and the sense of being "undesirable." For example, when she and her husband were buying their home a neighbor warned her to be careful because "Mexicans were moving into that part of town"—not realizing Elizabeth was Mexican herself.

### **Immigration**

Elizabeth spoke in depth about her identification with Mexico as a place and herself as a Mexican native, which she links to her experiences as an immigrant:

[A]s soon as you come... [to the United States] you can tell how much you are not what the mainstream is. And all that which is not exactly what the mainstream is, [is] what you are because of your culture... so I have had a chance to really see what I have brought from Mexico, within myself as a person, my tastes, the colors of Mexico, the tastes of Mexico, and I have been here a really long time, but I still feel Mexican to the core. And

actually the more I stay here, [the more] it increases. It's like a protection of myself, of who I am. If I were in Mexico, maybe it wouldn't be as strong.

Consequently, it is very meaningful for Elizabeth to create bilingual books, which include her native tongue as well as elements from her cultural heritage such as the bright, bold colors and patterns of Mexico in her artwork. Elizabeth is proud of creating bilingual books and completely supports bilingual education. We spoke about California's Proposition 181, which banned bilingual education, and proposition 187, which tried to ban services such as education and health services for undocumented children. Elizabeth exclaimed:

[A]ll of these books connect to Prop.187 in the sense that Prop.187 is very much anti-immigrant, anti-Spanish, anti-difference, anti-this and anti-that... anti-giving services to children. These children are not going back to Mexico or Central America.... If you deny education or health to these children you are denying... humanity not even for Mexico, for Americans.... So I think it's a crime.

Elizabeth was adamant that all children have access to health care, education, and other social services, regardless of their origin. In addition, she spoke of the value of: "having Spanish in the classroom... [as] an intelligent way of making the children become part of the classroom, otherwise you totally erase Spanish. You make these children totally ignorant because that's all they know. And you make them lose their voice." Language and voice are important issues not only for immigrants but also for all non-White residents of the United States.

### **Terminology**

We spoke about the problematic language issue of terminology where the word "minorities" infers "minor" or "less than" status. Elizabeth stated:

It is so artificial in many ways, for many reasons. In a few years, Latinos won't be a minority. In my case, I was never a minority in Mexico—I was a Mexican in Mexico, so I was never a minority until I came here as a grown up, so you know, I was not, now I am. It's a typical sensation of who I am, and am I a minority? And I typically feel mainstream, but then I open my mouth and I have an accent, and so on and so forth. So I always have to readjust whether I feel like a minority or not. Sometimes I'm treated as a minority, like when I was buying in [this] neighborhood. Sometimes I'm not treated as a minority because, after all, I'm middle-class, I have a college education. I always have to

switch my position, but I have antennas, like... a vision that protects me in places where I'm not so wanted.

The term "person of color" is also deeply problematic. As Elizabeth pointed out:

Saying that a minority is necessarily a person of color, and all those terms, I mean who doesn't have a color? If you're pink, you're pink, and that's a color. If you're beige, you're beige, and that's a color. If you're brown, if you're whatever. So, I am not extremely brown for being a Mexican but my mom and my dad are Mexicans. So I am Mexican, but I'm a White Mexican. That's why some people don't think I'm Mexican. So I can change my minority status back and forth, but I am Mexican.

### **Cultural Production**

We spoke about the many ways that racism is reinforced through various forms of media. Elizabeth was disgusted by media portrayals of minorities saying:

[It] is just so obvious, just turn on the TV, see who your criminals are, who's on the floor with their hands being cuffed. It's just everywhere. And they are trying slowly to have minorities portrayed as good people, not criminals, but if you were to compare just numbers, minorities are suffering more. Some minorities are seen as criminal, some minorities are just invisible—like Asian-Americans, you barely see an Asian-American anywhere.

This pervasive White world view of minorities also affects the production of children's books.

Elizabeth asks:

[W]ho has the power in this country? Clearly many of the White, established families! And they are the ones who happen to be in power and they are the ones who perpetuate images. They don't even really plan it, it's just the way it is. You know, people in power keep the power. People without power don't have the power. I hope it's changing, but I feel it everywhere. If more people who were multicultural would have more power, more different images would be out there, [by that] I mean, economical power, political power, social power, that kind of power."

Consequently, those in positions of power relegate books with minority characters, such as those from Children's Book Press (CBP), to the back of the store in the "multicultural" or "folktale" section instead of in the front or the main section. As Elizabeth says: "Every cultural

thing we do mirrors... [the dominant world view]. And some of us are trying to go against the grain [in opposition to this world view], but it's very hard to do."

I asked Elizabeth if she ever felt censored and she told me that when any of her images have to "go away," such as a character she creates for a second visual story, she feels "a sense of being censored." However, she told me she had never felt censored by Children's Book Press for anything that was truly important to her, such as her values depicting issues like race, environmentalism, politics, or feminism: "things that are really close to my heart... they [never] tell me that they have to go because they are not proper for the mainstream—I have never encountered that."

However, even with Children's Book Press, Elizabeth felt constrained with her book *A Movie in My Pillow*, written by El Salvadorean poet Jorge Argueta. Jorge's story deals with war, hunger, immigration, and loss, and Elizabeth immersed herself deeply in the story. Because of the subject matter, this was very difficult emotionally for her. Harriet Rohmer (the founder, former publisher/editor of Children's Book Press) kept telling her that her colors were too dark. But it was hard for Elizabeth to lighten her palette, "because, after all, this is a book about a kid who loses everything in a war. And it was hard for me to come out of that place." In Elizabeth's research on the El Salvadorean war she found many war images and stories: "children dead, parents [who] have lost their children and their loved ones, and displaced families—all human tragedies.... So it was hard for me to make it light and not dark."

Apart from these instances, Elizabeth noted that CBP is a very "artistic and liberal press in San Francisco" where she had "mostly had very good experiences" stating that "it doesn't get [any] better than that in many ways." Even so, she is frustrated by being relegated to the peripheries of children's book publishing as a "minority" artist doing "multicultural" books:

[T]his is a problem for most minority people who do arts, writing or painting, it's hard, very hard, to be seen as an artist without the Latino, Asian, or whatever else goes before the artist. You are given opportunities to show in Latino galleries with Latino curators. It's very nice because it gives us a house to begin with, but it's hard to leave that area... but I think there should be a broader interest for what we all do than just our own group of people.

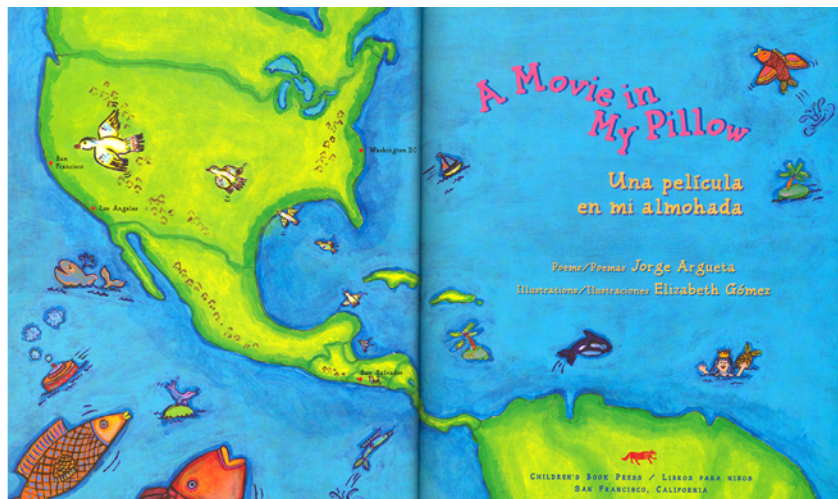
Elizabeth describes herself as a "visual storyteller," a quality that is essential for a children's

book artist. When I asked her about the differences between her children's book art and her personal art, she told me she gives herself "more permission with children's illustrations to be softer, sweeter, you know, more nurturing. In my work for adults I do more or less the same... but with some kind of problem that needs to be solved." These problems can include death, or deforestation, and other things "that are important to me as a woman and a person" that can be seen as "more difficult and challenging." Despite this differentiation, most children's books also have a central problem, particularly in books such as *A Movie in My Pillow's* where difficult problems of war, hunger, loss, and immigration are addressed.

Jorge's story describes in beautiful language how he and his father fled El Salvador early in the morning leaving behind Jorge's mother and brothers. Jorge was unable to say goodbye to his friends, his grandmother, or his pet parakeet and dog, and this sadness pervades his story.

Told in a series of bilingual poems the book begins with Elizabeth's title page painting of a huge imaginative map tracking the migratory route of a flock of birds from El Salvador to San Francisco where Jorge and his father come to the Mission District. Mirroring the dreamlike quality of Jorge's writing she has also painted flying fish, dancing seals, and a laughing mermaid in the water.

about Jorge's  
his mother  
to eat her  
*pupusas*, (a  
Salvordan  
depicts a  
outline of  
woman  
*pupusa* while



From *A Movie in My Pillow* (2000). Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez.

In a painting  
memory of  
calling him  
delicious  
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pie), she  
mirage-like  
a beautiful  
making a  
rising out

from the steam of a "real" *pupusa*. In a powerful double-spread about the poverty and hunger that precipitated the war and the horrors during the war, Elizabeth contrasts the pre-war image of two boys playing on the roof with the stars providing them an imagined bowl of soup for their hunger. The opposite page shows the war with the window and door of the house covered with metal. The house is now part of a volcano and the once vibrant tree outside is dead. There



is what might be a shot bird falling, and in the night sky a ghostly face screams, reminiscent of Munch's famous painting "The Scream."

The illustrations in *A Movie in My Pillow* show both the rural life of El Salvador and the urban life of San Francisco. There are cats, dogs, and ants in the city, (as well as Jorge's nightmarish snakes in the cracks of the pavement). Elizabeth shows headless chickens in a Mission District store contrasted with a scared and shocked looking chicken from Jorge's El Salvadorean childhood where the chickens

slept with him. She paints the many multicolored tropical birds of El Salvador, and in scenes with Jorge's grandmother she shows a beautiful white bird with stars on its wings. Elizabeth told me about a KPFA radio interview with Jorge following their winning of the Américas award for this book. Jorge asked her on air about the bird with his grandmother and she told him:

I needed... an animal, [a] spiritual shape... like an animal spirit to guard you....

[B]ecause to me it is clear that in this book that spirit comes from your grandma. So she is with you all the time.

At this point in the interview Jorge broke down and couldn't stop crying, so they had to stop the interview. Finally he was able to tell Elizabeth, that being a Pipil Indian, he had joined the Native-American Church where he participated in a sweatlodge (or spiritual cleansing). Because he was really hot and missing his grandmother he came out of the sweatlodge and looked at the sky and the clouds. Seeing what looked like a white bird with stars on the wings, he thought, "Grandma, you're with me." This experience was both very intense and very liberating for Elizabeth: "because of that, now I... let myself go more often with images that are not spelled [out] in the book because maybe there's something that I'm tapping that I don't know about."

In one of the pages about Jorge's grandmother speaking their indigenous Náhuatl

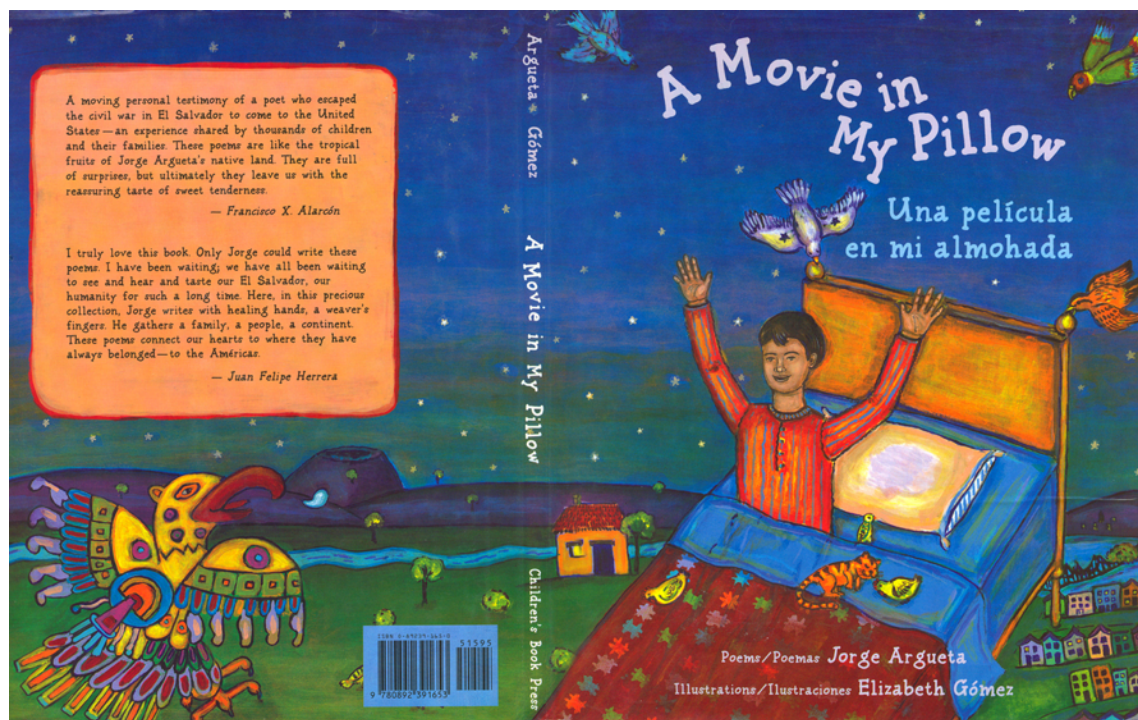


From *A Movie in My Pillow* (2000). Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez.

language, Elizabeth transformed many of the birds into Aztec birds. She related that she took some freedom here to make this symbolic connection but did so because the "Aztecs spoke Náhuatl and this was a kind of style they used for [their] art." Elizabeth told how the Aztecs, in fact, conquered El Salvador:

that's why indigenous people from El Salvador speak Náhuatl. Just like the Aztecs in Mexico. So in that way I found a bridge [where] I could gap the two cultures, my own culture as a Mexican and his culture as a Salvadorean [who] speaks Náhuatl. And, so, she's talking about the first birds of earth, or something like that and... the first birds on this earth would be the Aztec looking birds.

Symbolism abounds in *A Movie in my Pillow* such as the cover image, which shows Jorge in his bed born aloft by flying birds. The bed refers to the title of the book where Jorge's memories and dreams are like "movies in my pillow." On one side of the bed is San Francisco and the Bay Bridge, while the other side shows Jorge's home in El Salvador wrapping around the back to show a purple volcano and a lush green landscape with an Aztec bird. There is a



river that meanders through the landscape bringing the viewer back around to the front where it feeds into the San Francisco Bay. The images are metaphoric and non-literal—there is no river

connecting El Salvador and San Francisco, but there is in Jorge's experience and Elizabeth's imagination.

There are many opportunities for multiple interpretations in the art of *A Movie in My Pillow* such as the cover illustration and the store with the headless chickens described earlier. Behind the chickens are rows upon rows of canned mangoes. Is this simply a reflection of the text contrasting the mangoes on the trees of El Salvador versus the mangoes in cans in San Francisco, or is it a comment on consumerism, disconnection from nature, or even Andy Warhol's soup cans?

### **Researching and Feeling the Images**

We spoke about the research process in making children's book art. Elizabeth told me she begins by asking herself what she knows about the subject so she can identify what she doesn't know. She then downloads as many related images from the web as she can find, and reads about her subject. For example, for *A Movie in My Pillow*, Elizabeth did a lot of research to make it authentic.

[B]ecause I have never been there.... I opened as many sites of El Salvador as I could. So for example, I learned that it is a country with a lot of volcanoes, so like right here, you have a volcano. I saw a lot of pictures of towns, because when I think of a little Latin-American town, I think of a Mexican town. But you know, this is El Salvador, so I had to feel their images. And some are similar, some are not.... I [decided] to include birds, you may not notice that, but these birds are Salvadorean birds. So, I went and opened biological pages on birds in Latin America, and then I found that page from El Salvador. And of course, they are cartoon like, but it makes it interesting for me.

Elizabeth describes her two jobs as an artist and as a children's book illustrator:

I paint paintings for myself, or for the public, and then I do the books, and I love the two jobs. Doing the books is a bit harder because I have... a story that I have to follow and sometimes I feel I do not belong in the story when I begin, and slowly, with a lot of work the story becomes mine. So, I always try to look for a parallel story that would be more interesting for me as an artist.

She told me that she respects the author's original story but that creating a second visual story, both separate from yet still connected to the author's story, deepens the experience for her.

Because of Elizabeth's love for the environment and living beings, this usually involves animals:

Sometimes I get away with it, sometimes I don't, because of course, you have to work with editors and publishers. Sometimes they like the parallel story, sometimes they don't, but I always try to push my [environmental] agenda.

### **Commitment to Environment**



From *Moony Luna*. (2005).  
Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez

Elizabeth spoke at length about her connections to place and environmentalism. Coming from Mexico City, she is very aware of the devastation that pollution and overcrowding can cause: "As soon as you leave Mexico City you realize what a devastated city it is. How polluted it is, how inhuman in many ways it is for all the citizens. When I was there I didn't even notice it." She commented that: "[J]ust the idea of going to this chaotic city [Mexico City], makes me feel that some change has to happen to the city, to the country and to the world." She spoke about living as ecologically soundly as she can with her family by doing things "like recycling or reusing instead of buying stuff." Elizabeth's identification as an environmental artist is based on her love and caring for animals, nature, and the environment. She told me this "deep love of nature" came from her grandfather who had a farm north of Mexico City. Although he was not formally educated, his knowledge and love of nature was vast. On his farm he would say: "'the cows will give birth when this plant blooms,' I mean, he had this whole knowledge of the cycles of his environment." The experience of visiting her grandfather every summer provoked a

lifelong love of the natural world that manifests in both her personal art and her children's books. She explained:

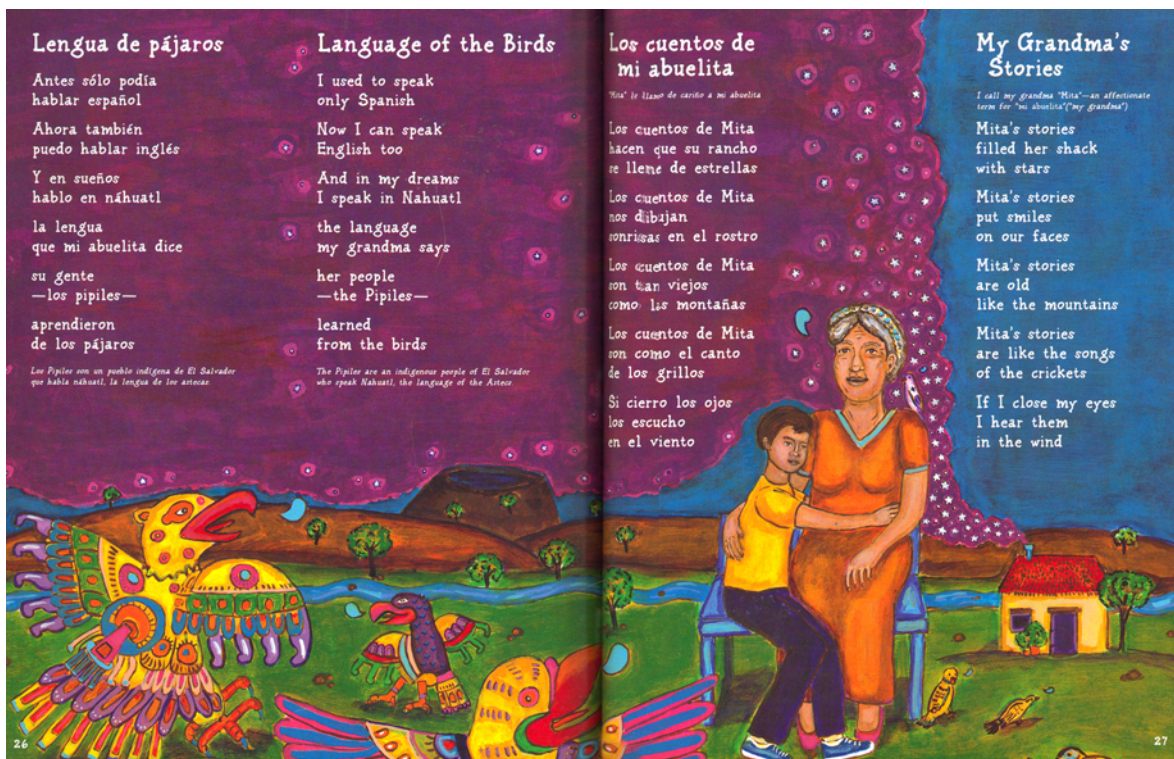
I always want to show that human families can coexist within nature, and that's what I try to do in my life.... I... feel that a happy family has a lot to do with closeness to nature, so... in my books I have plants and animals and pets all over the place, to [show] where the family has a tender home that is surrounded by a tender world.

It is no coincidence that this is exactly how Elizabeth's home looks with its beautiful garden, plants, children, pets, and artwork filled with images from the natural world.

### Spirituality in Elizabeth's Children's Books

While Elizabeth is "not a religious person per se" she describes herself as religious in other ways saying:

I believe harmony is often obtainable in the world as it is, the material world, and so that is my religion. I try to find spiritual places where... you feel safe, where you feel you are attached to everything else, small and big, the sky, the flowers, that kind of thing. So I'm very spiritual that way. I believe in the equilibrium of the world as it is, and I am always



From *A Movie in My Pillow* (2000). Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez.

looking for it.

Elizabeth showed me an example of how her spiritual beliefs manifest in her books in *A Movie in My Pillow*.

This is a page about the grandmother and the boy, but they are not too big, because the landscape is around them. So she tells stories and the stories come out of the house, and they become stars in the universe. You see the stars are coming from the chimney of her house, and the birds are listening to her—little birds and big birds, just normal birds and mythical birds, so I like that kind of world where everything is linked to everything, you know, past, present, future—the world that we see, the plants, the animals, in a kind of magical way.

This image shows Elizabeth's deep interconnections between time and place, people and the natural world, and the porous veil between physical and spiritual realities.

### **Visual Culture**

While Elizabeth's illustrations reflect her own deeply felt values she is also aware of trends and marketing in children's book publishing. While this awareness doesn't drive her work, she does take notice of what is popular in the fields of children's picture books and children's popular visual culture. Take for example Japanese animé, which is currently very popular in visual culture. In Elizabeth's most recent book *Moony Luna* she incorporated the more limited palette of Japanese animé and abstained from her usual love of excess and detail to create a simpler look to go with a simpler story. Elizabeth was able to lighten her palette to go with the lightness of the story. She told me she wanted to create a more hip look with this book and gave the book a comic strip look similar to that found in Japanese animé comics.

[A]s you can see, Lunita has a bigger, rounder face and she is more like a comic strip. In comic strips you have less detail altogether, more like the two colors and then characters or what the character does, and that's more typical of this book. So I do pay attention.

And while Elizabeth pays attention to certain trends in children's popular visual culture, she also pays attention to subtle visual ways that she can get her environmental message across. She does this by creating visual metaphors and symbols such as the street sign in *Moony Luna*. She often includes animals and birds as visual metaphors to promote awareness of the presence of the nonhuman world and the importance of developing environmental

consciousness to live in harmony with nonhuman beings.

*Moony Luna* is a sweet story about a young Latina girl's fears of going to school for the first time. And while it has little multicultural content beyond a few superficial signifiers, such as a Latino-looking family, bilingual texts, and some Mexican-style painted planters, to demarcate



From *Moony Luna* (2005). Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez.

it from an Anglo family, the goal of the book was to show that Latinos can also have loving, well-adjusted, middle-class families.

Elizabeth told me that the protagonist, Luna, lives in an: "environment with her parents [that] shows how much they love her, and how happy she is. And even this little image [of a happy Latino family]... makes a difference." She explained that the usual stereotypes of minorities consist of fathers in jail, drug dealers, unhappy families, so "even a little image like this, of a happy Latino family, for me

already has an environmental and social connotation of alternatives to stereotypes."

### **Comparing *Moony Luna* and *A Movie in My Pillow***

Contrasting the two books, Elizabeth commented:

It's a difficult world, because on the one hand you want to protect your culture and your soul, and [*A Movie in My Pillow*] is clearly much... [deeper] with the El Salvadorian culture and immigration, and what it feels like to be an immigrant.... It hurts a little bit. It's that kind of book, you know the kid has to leave his family to come here. And in that way, this book is very deep. On the other hand, all of us have the problem of being seen as different, as "others," so [*Moony Luna*], even though it's maybe more shallow, because

you don't see much of the culture, you don't see much of the life of the Latino family, the strength of this simple, simple book is to say, "You know what? We are just like you. You and I have different traditions but we are the same kind of people. We are afraid when we go to school in the same way, there is no reason why you cannot understand me," you know? So I see the value from both books. I really enjoy the depth this one gives, but I also strive for that place where we are not seen as the "other."

The two books, taken together, form parallel stories to Elizabeth's own story. *A Movie in My Pillow* evokes Elizabeth's story of coming to the United States as an immigrant, leaving behind her parents and siblings. And although Elizabeth's personal story does not involve hunger, war and intense poverty, she did, and continues to, experience the pain of loss and separation that every immigrant endures in starting a new life in a foreign country. *Moony Luna* on the other hand portrays Elizabeth's current reality as a middle-class mom in a loving family with husband, children, pets, plants and books who takes *her* children to school allaying their fears whenever needed.

### **Vision for Education**

Elizabeth's personal experiences along with what she has learned about race politics in the United States have sensitized her to the importance of empowering minority children by helping them have pride in who they are and where they come from. She told me of her "other job" going into schools as an artist/teacher and showing Latino children that they "can have a beautiful life," something that is rarely reflected in their everyday media. She told me that mothers often cry when they meet her, telling her they never saw a book like hers when they were children, "because there weren't books for Latino kids." Elizabeth continued:

I feel like a community worker because I help to bridge a gap between the world of books, the world of culture, the schooled culture of universities and a professional life with these kids that are having a hard time staying in school because they are poor, because of all [sorts of] reasons. And I feel like I have the privilege to be a role model for them....I try to be as special as I can for the kids, so that they see a future in growing up Latino in the United States.

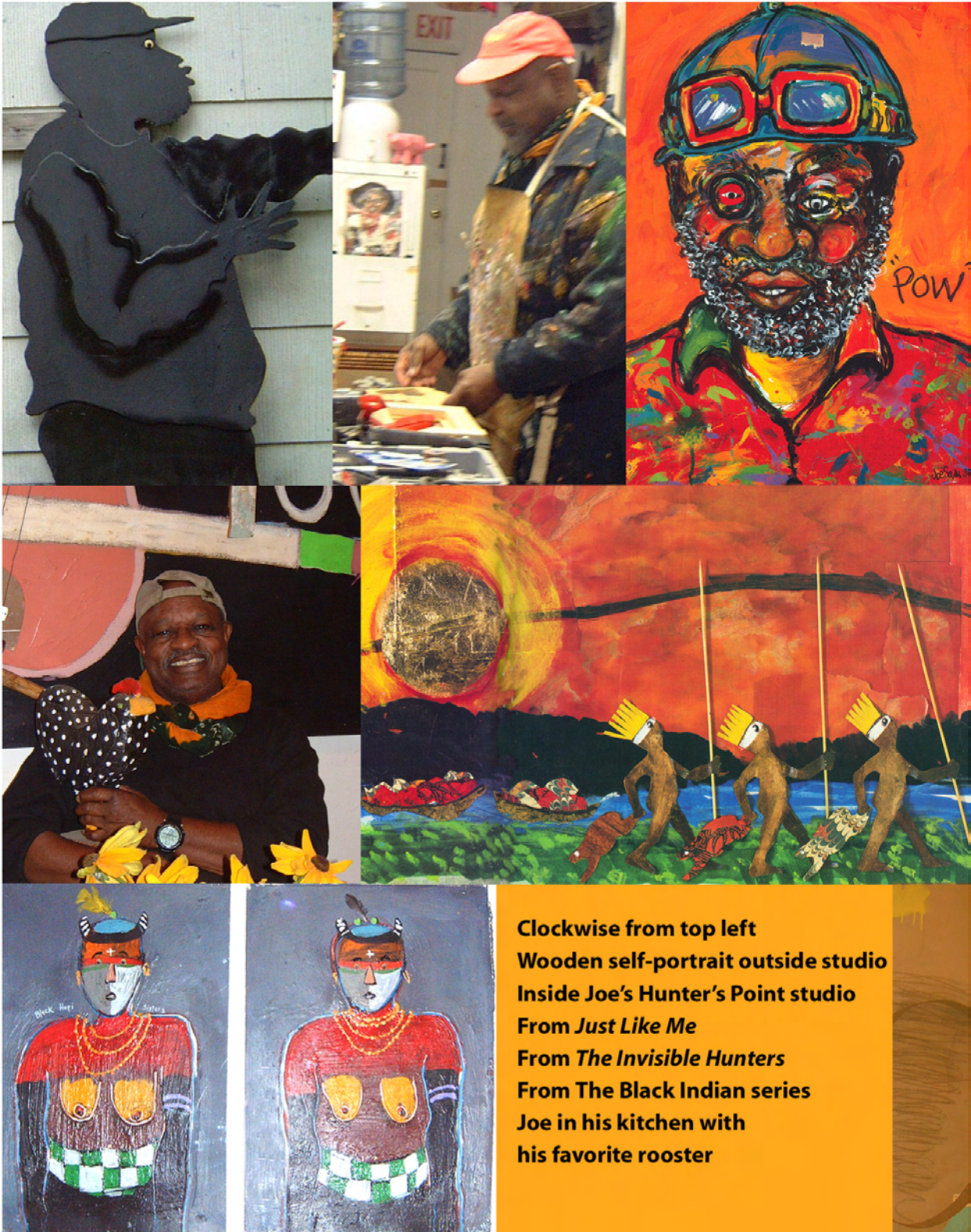
Elizabeth told me that she deeply appreciated attending an unusually progressive, bilingual school in Mexico where she learned both English and Spanish. The school had



beautifully illustrated textbooks in English as well as in Spanish that were great motivators for learning, as well as a pedagogy that emphasized fun, play, and creativity. When I asked Elizabeth what her ideal school might be like she described a school that was bilingual and that also promoted fun and engaged learning. The school itself would be a form of pedagogy with recycled materials and solar energy and learning gardens that recycled water and fed the community. It would be a place where students could have a farmer's market to raise money and a multicultural curriculum to teach students about global citizenship. Pleasure, creativity, community, and responsibility were powerful themes in Elizabeth's vision of an ideal school. She seemed a little embarrassed by the sheer ambitiousness of her vision, but it pleased me no end to point out that as artists our job is to imagine as the first step in the act of creation. I also loved the way that Elizabeth's vision for education foregrounded social justice and environmental stewardship through play and pleasure, as this is exactly what she does through her books. For it is primarily the images in children's picture books that make them so pleasurable to read, and it is through pleasure and play in Elizabeth's art that she is able to promote her healing and loving agenda.



Joe Sam



**Clockwise from top left**  
**Wooden self-portrait outside studio**  
**Inside Joe's Hunter's Point studio**  
**From *Just Like Me***  
**From *The Invisible Hunters***  
**From *The Black Indian* series**  
**Joe in his kitchen with**  
**his favorite rooster**

Joe Sam's studio is located out at Hunter's Point Shipyard in San Francisco, in a former Naval Base now listed as an EPA Superfund toxic clean-up site. Situated in an historically African-American neighborhood, the outside of the studio boasts several of Joe's playful sculptures while the inside hosts a chaotic jumble of "works in progress" and completed projects, the contents of which address themes of environmentalism, race, culture, and community in passionate and exuberant ways. This cacophony of paintings, sculptures, art supplies, and building tools fills the space along with a great feeling of emotional warmth in the physically cold environment, no doubt enhanced by the abundance of wild and intense colors. Joe's home, on the other hand, is sophisticated and elegant with stylish wall colors complimenting his brilliantly colored art and sculptures. Everything is ordered and in its place and yet it too is a playful wonderland. Joe plays music wherever he is, ranging from classical to jazz and blues and this too is an important part of his personal environment. In many ways these two environments represent some of the many facets of Joe Sam.

In our interviews Joe told me a little about his background growing up in Harlem, New York, in the 1940s. Unfortunately some of his background is confusing, shrouded as it is with mystery and misinformation. He told me:

No one talks about my mother. I don't remember. She was very young, maybe fourteen, when my brother and I were born. She had five kids at different times, which means that she's one of those country girls that came in to New York to give birth. They used to have midwives deliver kids in the halls, [who were] supposed to report it to the department of health. [But] I have no birth certificate—never have. There's no record of my birth, so, I'm guessing when I was born.

Joe was raised by four West Indian women, who may or may not have been his aunts, while his own birthday and that of his twin brother were written down for school as separate days in the same month. Further confusing the issue, Joe's sister, whom he had never met, sent him childhood photos that showed that she was the one who looked exactly like Joe's twin brother, James, which has led Joe to believe that she rather than he may have been James's twin.

Joe's childhood was definitely on the wild and crazy side. His aunts were physically tough women who died violent deaths. Like most Black women of the time, they worked as



From *Honoring Our Ancestors*.(1999).  
Illustration by Joe Sam

maids in White people's homes, but when they weren't working they knew how to party. Joe told me that they brought the color and the warmth of the West Indies with them wherever they went in the multicolored and vividly patterned clothing that they wore.

Joe has explored his early childhood experiences in some of his children's book art. In *Honoring our Ancestors* Joe painted, wrote about, and honored the aunts who raised him. Even though these were clearly complex relationships, Joe obviously loved these women dearly, writing:

"Even in the dead of winter they would wear bright turbans or embellish their

hats with colorful scraps.... My aunts' bright clothing created a halo of light around them; that's why I show them against a background of deep, golden yellow" (p. 26). The image also shows a multitude of African styled fabrics and other high contrast patterns. The opposite page includes a photograph of the aunts framed in a fabric collage looking out forthrightly with expressions that range from curious to what could be read as "don't mess with me."

In another example of the influence of strong women in Joe's life, in *Just Like Me*, he paints a self-portrait with a huge black eye and writes about his relationship with a girl called Margaret. In the story Joe tells how, when he was about eight years old, he got into a fight with Margaret. He writes, "Before I could even make a fist, Margaret whacked me in the eye with her book bag! I saw lots of stars and colors, and to this day all my paintings have lots of color in them." The story continues that the next day they apologized to each other and became best friends. As in much of Joe's art, the image is strong and colorful, full of texture and pattern.

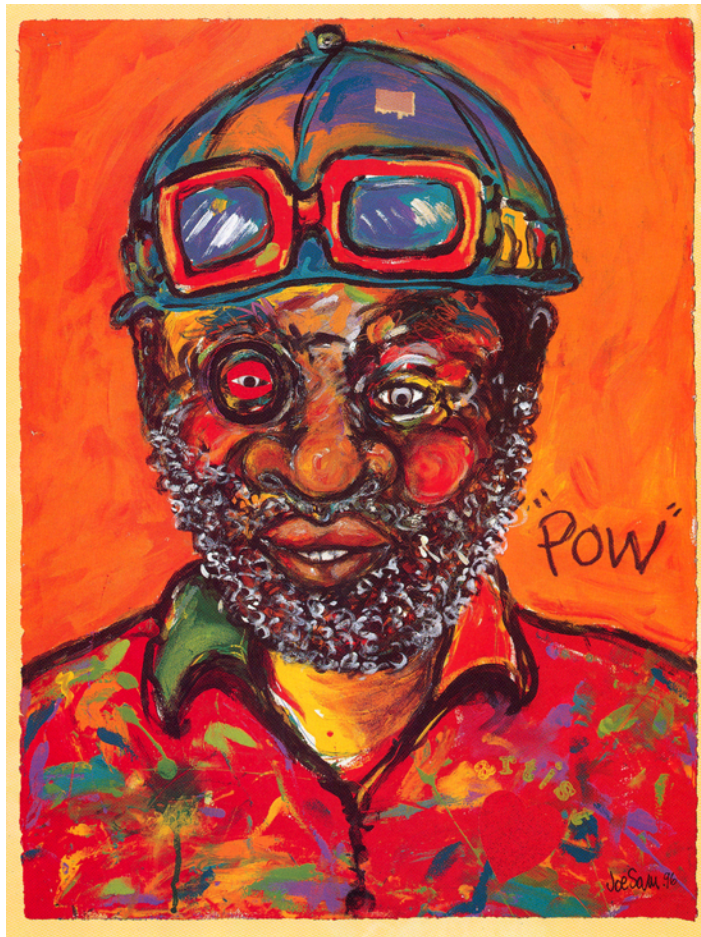
Joe's fight with Margaret was typical of the tough working-class culture of Harlem. As

a youth Joe was a gang member and a troublemaker. However, he always made art. Joe told me he'd been "running in the streets" since he was five years old. Fortunately in those days the gangs only used hand fighting and knives. "[We] were more like West Side Story gangs.... There was no physical use of guns, and if anyone had a gun, it was a 22. And that was considered a tank." Joe was lucky enough to have a smart elementary teacher who recognized his aptitude and love for art and used it to motivate him to attend school. Joe says:

I was lured into going to school everyday, because I was given the opportunity if I did attend... to do the borders around the classroom. And that was a tremendous impetus on the part of the teacher to get me to go to school, because I loved designing the borders over the blackboards in the classroom. And I really enjoyed doing that. So a lot of my creative stuff emanates from that.

He told me that because there wasn't any money for art supplies in the projects he was forced to be inventive. He used found paper to:

make physical figures of individuals and glue them together with flour and water because I didn't have any supplies for glue, so to this day, I love the concept of multiple colors [and collage].... I used to peel the paint off the walls in the hallway, which used to have about five or six or ten years worth of different coats put on so when you peel that stuff off, you had these incredible, multiple colors. However, I



From *Just Like Me*. (1997). Illustration by Joe Sam

wasn't sure that half of that stuff was lead-based, but who knew. I just put it in work at the time, when I was a young kid and [I] used to love doing it. Even today, I use billboard papers. When you pull it off these major billboards, you get these incredible patterns and layers of incredible kinds of papers... that last for a long time. So I like to do a lot of ripping up in my hands and applying them to canvas as well as paper.

### **Going to School**

Joe informed me of how he was able to go to college despite his background of extreme poverty:

Because of my activity in the gangs, I was fortunate to be placed in a foster home in a place called Westchester County, New York, and it was there that I got an opportunity to finish high school. I went along with my twin brother, James Samuels, [and] was fortunate to go to this academically oriented high school, which focused on college.

At the time, the education system was even more stratified than it is now with Blacks being "the lowest of the totem pole," but at Tuckahoe High School in Westchester County, Joe realized he wanted to go to college so he took preparation courses for that rather than the trade-oriented shop classes or the general courses that prepared students to be a bank teller or a civil servant.

Joe explained:

I didn't have [any]thing against those two lower rungs on the educational systems, but I just focused on a higher level of trying to go to college... that was important to me and I did it. I didn't have a dime, but between scholarships and sports scholarships, I managed to go.

Joe's remarked that his brother James

who was equally as smart, if not smarter than myself, decided he didn't want to go to college, but he wanted to go into the military and have the military pay his way. And unfortunately, he was killed in Vietnam. I detest... war, so I've done a lot of work around antiwar involvement. I'm working on a show now around the same thing—antiwar and the invasion of Iraq.

So while James went one direction into the military, Joe went another. He told me that after high school, he applied unsuccessfully to some art schools but after seeing how few African-Americans were there and how racially segregated it was he decided to "forget that and just



move on and get a degree in something else." He told me that he studied sociology, psychology, administration, and a little bit of law, and then went on to graduate work in social services at Howard University. Following Howard, Joe continued on to graduate school at Columbia, and then finally earned a PhD at Amherst, Massachusetts, working for 21 years in the fields of education and social services.

### **Childhood Books and Art**

Joe's ability to graduate from Amherst with a PhD was even more impressive given the fact that as a child he literally had no children's books: "We were very poor and in the projects, whatever books there were, I remember them being comic books." He remembers reading them to "the older hard heads in the gang on the rooftop, and 90% of them couldn't read." Joe would make the "*quack, quack*" of Donald Duck and the "*rah rah*" sounds of Porky the Pig to entertain the kids. Other than elementary school books, Joe only remembers reading comic books and listening to the radio:

We used to listen to [the] Lone Ranger and all that kind of foolishness... [As] I got older I realized that was a whole lot of crap, too.... I used to love the Tarzans, the Roy Rodgers, the Lone Ranger, and all these adventures books. I always had an imaginary mind-set. But... [even though] those books weren't very expensive, even at five cents, I wouldn't have been able to pay for it.

Instead Joe would just pull and tear shapes out of newspapers to make figures for his own stories.

Perhaps because of Joe's formative experiences with comic books he told me that he enjoys working in a series:

I like multiples. I like the continuity of doing something that's very similar. It's almost like I visualize... the African thing of a drumming pattern. It's like the underpinning or base that maintains the integrity of the sound and the rhythm, but then you start improvising on top of it.

Examples of Joe's multiples include the Black Indian series that show indigenous Black people from around the world differentiating between the Iroquois Blacks and the Brazilian Black Indians; the Black Bible series where Joe took 50 familiar scenarios from the Bible and had fun doing his Afrocentric version of them, and the Black West series that feature the unknown

stories of Black cowboys and pioneers.

In another series of work Joe listened to 40 CD's of Miles Davis's music for three months to create a large body of work. He explained the series in this way:

I named each one of my paintings based on the music that I heard, and I played it continuously noon, day, and night. So each [painting, like the] "My Funny Valentine" piece or "Someday My Prince Will Come", that I did is predicated on what I heard in his music.... I love Miles's music.

Music is of great importance in Joe's work and life. He told me: "For my intuitive work, it's predicated on sound. I cannot work in silence. I can't even think in silence. I can't create. I can't laugh.... Music is almost like intravenous fluid, like blood. It's like the heart beat of me. So if it doesn't happen, I can't paint."

### **Visual Culture and Minority Cultures**

Along with music, color is also sacrosanct to Joe. He explained the importance of color, not only in his own work but also in minority and multicultural communities, describing a very different and culturally specific approach to visual culture: "My work is [about] color, and it's about humor and people of color. In the art world's Eurocentric canon... you don't do art about color." Joe gave an example, that in Western films if someone dies there's always a rain scene where it's dark and grey. He asked me: "How many movies have you seen where someone's at a grave site, everybody's sitting solemnly and all that?" Joe continued:

Shit when people die in the West Indies and China, there's a big party. Colors. You go to Chinatown with somebody, you think you're in Mardi Gras.... And what that does, it shows that the people of color in the world have a vitality about living that matches the color of their skin, which is almost like the earth itself. It's organic. The earth is organic. So the IBM building... they're not going to put a great, big, multiple-colored sculpture of Joe Sams, they would rather have a Richard Serra steel monstrosity of what they perceive as power. A rusting, big, gray monster that has no color in it but just stares at you, and that's what[s] been bred in this country and around the world. The German model is the same thing, ironically enough... all these dark, Joseph Beuys. You know, you can go to [any major art] museum tomorrow and see more work from Germany than anywhere on the planet.... But you know, Kenya and the Mau Maus and their

insurrection [against the British Colonialists] was predicated on wearing bright colors. When they came to take on the White man in Kenya... [it was like] they were coming from the Mardi Gras to fight. It's amazing. And it happens in Tonga. It happens in Hawaii—everywhere. The people [in] India, my God, it's like looking into a kaleidoscope. Who's walking about in the pressed white uniforms with spots and run the country? The English. The British. Color scares [these] people.

Joe commented on the fact that colleges of art are finding it hard to recruit minority students saying:

They [minority students] don't think people are cognizant of their intuitive feeling about color and music in their art. That's why art schools have a hard time when young minority kids come in there and they focus too much on [Western attitudes to] color and the... [kids] get paranoid.

The art world is a difficult place for anyone, let alone anyone not belonging to the dominant culture. Joe told me:

If you do images of Blacks, you know, normally it has to be piggybacked through, what should I say, the cannon of expectations of aesthetics. Visualize Rembrandt and then make a black person. Or [there] is this incredible deconstruction of the Black Negro and you get Aunt Jemima paintings now, which I find appalling and crazy, but done by African-American artists, and they want to get their work shown. Kara Walkers, for example, who does these incredible silhouettes, a brilliant idea, brilliant work,... but I know one thing, [with] images like she has of the White man in that George Washington atonal kind of attire, you know screwing that slave woman, and porn, and derogatory images, she'[s] fine, but if she reversed that and had a black slave doing it to a White woman with ringlet curls, like *Gone With the Wind*, she wouldn't show none of that shit in the galleries.

For Joe these images are successful because they exist within the Eurocentric tradition of art making, doing nothing to challenge the normative view of African-Americans as victims or mummies. This frustrates Joe enormously.

Along with difficulties in what kinds of images are validated by the dominant culture, opportunities for minorities to exhibit are also limited, and this too frustrates Joe. He told me:

Northern California has all the things that I need in terms of life, multicultural people, music, cultural things that are happening.... I love this place because of the diversity of cultures... but at the same time there's still a lot of polarization in art in the Bay Area that I find distressing and limited in many ways.

Joe told me that he had given lectures and talks about this lack of minority representation and spoken about this issue to the board of directors at San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art. Recalling this meeting with the board provoked this response: "I was blown away that there weren't any people of minority [there]. And this is San Francisco, the most multicultural, multilingual place on the planet." Joe told me he had encountered a lot of racism in the art world but he thought a lot of it was class-based as well. He told me with anger:

It's just the fact that I know that I can go to any museum or any gallery in San Francisco and about 99% of them a) won't have any people of color images in any of them; b) you go in the library, and... [until recently, apart from] Romare Beardon and Jacob Lawrence, you'd never find a book on African-American artists, and that to me is crazy.... I'm always amazed how the stratification of the internal [raced] nepotism works in the art world that excludes Native-American Indians, Latinos, [and] Blacks. Asians are getting play now because of their power internationally in the economic sphere. But once again, African-Americans still have to fight to get their piece of the pie. There's not an African-American gallery in San Francisco.... It's very [much a] part of the larger picture.

Fortunately, despite these many obstacles, Joe has been able to get his work out into the world through his community artwork, his personal art, and his children's book art.

### **The Invisible Hunters**

While two of Joe's children's books draw directly from his life experiences where he honors some of the strong women from his childhood, in the only children's picture book that he has solely illustrated, and the book for which he is most well-known, there are no strong women. In fact, there are no women at all. Instead, *The Invisible Hunters*, which retells an indigenous Miskito Indian story from Nicaragua, tells the story of three Miskito brothers as a way of telling stories about colonialism, greed, and environmental destruction using Joe's signature bold colors, patterning and collaged work.

The book tells the story of three brothers from the Black Miskito tribe who manage as

hunters to acquire the magical gift of invisibility from a sacred vine known as the Dar. This gift is given on the condition that they don't use guns and give the meat from their killing away freely to their community. All goes well until a group of European traders come and slowly but surely seduce the hunters into first using guns and then withholding the meat from their community to sell to the traders instead. Too late the traders remember their promise to the Dar as they are rendered permanently invisible and ostracized from the village.



From *The Invisible Hunters* (1988). Illustrated by Joe Sam.

The images are highly complex and bear closer inspection. The first spread shows a multi-textured, multi-patterned and multi-layered image using collage, paint, and pen. Joe shows the three hunters in their environment— the *wari* (or wild pigs) feeding by a river full of colorful fish and a jungle of foliage in which the Dar lives. The next page shows the first hunter becoming invisible in a powerful combination of positive and negative shapes. The next page continues the use of positive and negative space as the brothers become visible and the Dar becomes invisible, while the following spread shows the brothers returning home, their canoes laden with *wari* for their community. Behind them the mountains are silhouetted in front of a lurid orange-yellow painterly sunset.

Joe has rendered both the hunters and the traders as white silhouette shapes representing an intangible form of absence or negative space. Initially in the case of the hunters this could be read as invisibility, but it's not that they are "see through" ghost shapes, but rather it is as if they have made absent the space they occupy.

The traders are also rendered in this way as if they too make the space they occupy missing, and to me this represents a lack of something such as soul, integrity, or being. Perhaps I read too much into this, but it is an interpretation that resonates for me. The images are done in Joe's loose collage style with vibrant colors including objects such as twigs and various kinds of papers.

Joe and I spoke about the many issues that the book addressed, particularly issues related to place and environment. He told me:

Place is very important because I like to focus on indigenous areas [and] inner cities. My books ironically enough... speak about my personal experiences in these situations. But the book on *The Invisible Hunters*, for the first time, dealt with something internationally. And what I liked about it, [was that] it dealt with third world people, people of color, [and] it was bilingual. I thought that was really important and very cool because most of the books done on, or for African-American children or anyone else in [an] ethnic group,



From *The Invisible Hunters* (1988). Illustrated by Joe Sam.

normally... focus on a parochial view that doesn't deal with the... view of other parts of the world in which they might or might not come from, especially for African-Americans. Even if the story is about something happening in Africa or something happening in the hood, this is an interesting book, *The Invisible Hunters*, because it closes that barrier. There are a lot of things going on there [such as] colonialism and it's a great indigenous story.

Joe told me that he approached the three main figures, the hunters, as sculptural figures without detail, using lots of color and pattern everywhere else making the book very visually exciting. When I asked him about his process in making a children's book and whether he did any research. Joe told me that it wasn't his way to make preliminary sketches, but rather he worked intuitively to capture the essence of what he is trying to communicate. Although working on *The Invisible Hunters* was very challenging, Harriet gave Joe a great deal of creative freedom being aware of his artistic process, and this creative freedom paid off. After the book's publication, Joe received hundreds of letters from children asking: "Joe, what happened to the characters [in *The Invisible Hunters*]? [Are] you going to do more with it?" He told me that receiving all those letters was one of the most exciting things because his other books have all been compilation books created with other artists.

### **Some Challenges in Making Critical Multicultural Children's Books**

Because of Joe's work with multiples and series, I was surprised when he told me that he feels he doesn't have "the constitution or the skill" to keep repeating the same character over and over. Nevertheless, despite his assertion that he doesn't think he has the constitution to repeat the same character over and over, he also told me that he'd like to do a children's book about Lerner, Chaney, and Turner, "the Mississippi Three," addressing the interrelationships of Blacks and Jews during the Civil Rights Movement. He also told me that he'd like to make a book from one of his own existing series as well as a book on the four Black girls killed in a Mississippi church bombing. However, Joe pointed out that this would be an extremely difficult thing to do, saying:

At some point I want to hunker down somewhere and re-read everything about it, [the Mississippi church bombings] and then do my visual interpretation of it. But once again I will want kids to be able to see it and feel comfortable with it. It's very hard to

do a colorful something that encourages people to look at it visually and at the same time get the message across of what you're trying to do. So I think children's books are a challenge to a lot of people who try to disseminate information about their own indigenous culture and how external forces have impacted their culture negatively. So sometimes it's much easier to refocus on the piñata hanging in the courtyard and barbecue. And that's important [too] because it reaffirms to your own kids and your own people that [your culture] has validity because it's in the book, it's in the painting.



From *The Invisible Hunters* (1988). Illustrated by Joe Sam.

### **Social Services Through Art**

Joe told me about an exhibition of art from *The Invisible Hunters*, which is traveling the United States, as well as a teacher's kit that was made about him and his work that is also traveling the United States providing resources for teachers to use. Joe loves that his work is a resource for educators as this connects on a soul level with his whole history of being a community worker providing social services.

I'm a human service person, all my life [I] have been. I trained for it. I've got degrees for it, and I've participated in it.... [M]y work is human service, I made a commitment to do that and provide service to people of color, low-income people, and poor people. That's what I wanted to do. I was too wild to be a priest. And I'm trying to be a Peace



Corps volunteer... I raise[d] my kids with the same [values]—in fact I'm very happy to say my son just won the Pulitzer last week for his work on network journalism. He's only 28 years old. Jason Samuel. He did a masterpiece on the police stopping people of color in the United States, and he was awarded the Pulitzer for network journalism.

Joe has clearly honored his commitment to provide service to people of color, low-income people, and poor people. He is most well known for his large-scale public works sculptures in community spaces such as housing projects and senior centers. For example, in one project Joe created the first public sculptures showing kids in wheelchairs playing hoops to celebrate different abilities. He said: "You know I think the kids in wheelchairs had never seen themselves in public art, or [in] a more colorful environment. Think about it. Have you ever seen a public sculpture of a person in a wheelchair?"

In a more recent public works project for a large senior citizens complex in Oakland, California, Joe told me that he made sculptures of "seniors going to party, and dancing, and flirting with each other [and] they love it!" Joe has done public works in Chinese, African-American, Latino, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian communities; for recreation centers; homeless shelters; community centers and schools. He told me of a project he did in Los Angeles with twelve schools and 25 after-school programs working "with the kids to come up with 75 structures based on their own images," noting that there were 80,000 people at the opening.

Joe has worked as a children's advocate for many decades. He has a degree in child psychology and ran a New York state training school for emotionally disturbed kids. He has also taught thousands of teachers through his graduate work at Teacher's College at Columbia, and at the University of Amherst, Massachusetts. He told me:

I feel very strongly that the chasm that exists between low-income and minority kids and [the] high-up world is very wide, so one of the things I have always advocated [for] is including children in the art process that I am involved in. One way I've done this is through my public art.... I used to go to the schools and tell them what I'm doing, how I want to do it and... work with them to help them create images of themselves. [These] public art sculptures would be made out of steel... somewhere [between] eight, nine and ten feet--some have been as big as 50 feet--of children in various forms of play, and

multiple colored patterns, because I think mutlicultures use a lot of color in their work... and the work really caught on with a lot of kids in the public sector on the United States. One could easily argue that much of Joe's personal artwork is also a form of social service in its aesthetically educative nature.

Alongside Joe's inclusive and celebratory public works projects, he also creates highly critical art addressing issues such as environmentalism, racism, colonialism, and greed. For example, Joe said:

I've done a lot of major paintings on the environment. Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House in Congress, has a huge painting [of mine] dealing with clean water and how that's being disrupted by a lot of crap that's happening. And then, I've [done work on] the atmosphere and... about four or five major works on water. And I was very concerned with [how] the Japanese were dealing with whales.

In addition, Joe told me about going to Russia for two to three months as part of an artist exchange addressing issues related to the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl with a well-known environmentalist from U.C.Berkeley, saying:

Bower took about 20 noted artists to Russia to deal with [issues related to] Chernobyl.... We did murals, and I did a children's hospital in Leningrad. I was blown away by the physicality of the place. The operating room still had louvered shutters and no lights. It was mind blowing how inadequate it was. It was like in the 1600s, they still use leeches. I told them I wanted to do a mural in the triage room and then the operating room and in the recovery room. And they were so excited that I wanted to do it. I lived with a Russian family... [a] physicist and [a] doctor, and they had literally nothing. They used to get up at five in the morning and stand in line and get [food].

Joe is very cognizant about the relationships between people and places and environmental racism in particular. He was rightfully very angry when he explained that the majority of poor and minority people live near public transportation such as major roads, highways, and trains, constantly exposed to the pollution that accompanies those sites.

Environmental racism deals with the fact that [poor minority] kids have TB, high rates of asthma [etc. from] living in environmental situations that are not conducive for clean air. [It's] polluted where [many minority and poor] people have to live.

In addition, poor minority people have few choices but to work in environmentally compromising places such as shipyards and factories further impacting their health.

Because of Joe's commitment to working with low-income and minority people, his work specifically addresses themes that are pertinent to their lives such as environmental issues and the literal "whiting-out" of Black people's histories. It is easy for Joe to make the connections between racism and poverty including how this is reified through education.

### **Vision for Education**

When I asked Joe what he thought about the current system of education he expressed great reservations about how poorly served low-income people presently are. He told me strongly that we should bring back vocational education for kids who want it rather than channeling everyone toward college degrees where those that don't make it to college are thrown out into the world with no preparation for making a decent living. Joe spoke about the Conservation Corps, which could provide training in areas like forest fire fighting, or wilderness care for low-income and homeless people who want it. He also spoke about the older system of education that he grew up with, which had three strands or tracks. One had general courses that enabled a person to become a bank teller, a civil servant, or perhaps an air traffic controller. The second stream was a trade school approach in high school where people learned to be cooks and chef's assistants, or learned blue collar trades to become a plumber, electrician or auto mechanic, while the last stream prepared students for college. The best trade schools were in large urban areas, but they're all closed now:

You could literally go in your junior year—from 10<sup>th</sup>, 11, 12<sup>th</sup> [grades] and become a seamstress.... You [could] learn how to become a tailor. You [could] learn how to become a cleaner.... Or you could be certified as an auto mechanic in high school, [and] skip college. No question about it, the vocational training should come back.

Although these trades don't have the status of high tech or college work they provide decent and needed livelihoods. Joe was disgusted when he said:

I think it's absolutely insane. [All the] kids that used to go to auto mechanics, shop, plumbing, painters, and all that stuff at vocational school, are now going in the goddamn military.... And they wind up... in places like Iraq, not particularly trained for that. It's not a volunteer system, as they say.

## **The Power of Art**

Joe is a very passionate man whose life experiences have informed both his world views and his art, both of which are indelibly linked together. Because of these experiences, Joe's art is deep and rich, full of insights that are helpful for the field of education. For example, Joe makes visible the invisible history of African-Americans through his personal stories in *Honoring Our Ancestors* and *Just Like Me*. Concurrently, his more political work deals with issues of invisibility for Black Indians and Black cowboys, and the unequal effects of environmental racism on minority communities. Joe's more celebratory work validates and joyfully marks the experiences of those normally excluded from mainstream images of what is considered attractive or worth celebrating, such as the elderly, special needs populations, and members of diverse communities.

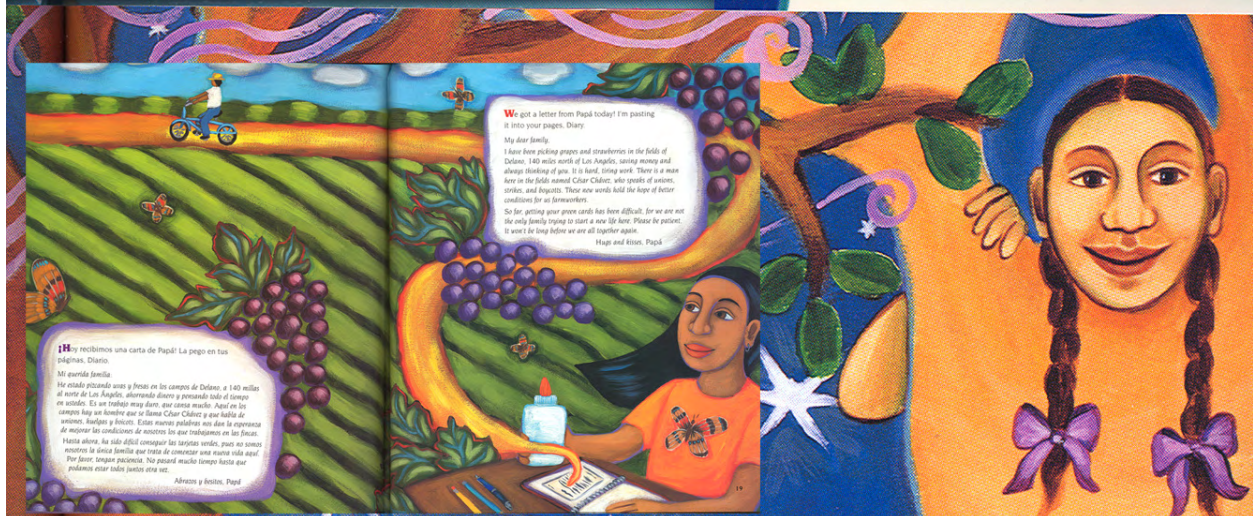
It is clear that art has been a powerful (and possibly life-saving) force for transformation in Joe's life. He told me:

My soul is [in art] because one of the things I'm most proud of is that [from] being involved in gangs and being a leader of a gang I made a transition to being compassionate... you know—art was my soul, I really loved it. None of my peers, my family, anybody had a clue what art was about, so therefore, it had to be some intuitive, innate thing in me to create it, because I loved doing it... I wasn't in an environment with friends, family, or anybody who knew anything or gave a shit about it.... It just didn't register. But I love it.

Joe Sam is an extraordinary artist and human being. He is a force for good in the world through his art and his personal relationships, which include mentoring Black youth and young African-American artists, and providing both positive and critically thought provoking images for children and adults alike. It is unlikely that Joe would be the man he is today if he hadn't had art in his life and the support of teachers such as his insightful elementary school teacher and the teachers at Tuckahoe High School. In many ways, Joe, through his own talent and perseverance, also serves as an exemplar for why art can be such a powerful force for transformation and good, and how important it is for educators to provide artful opportunities for their students.



Maya Gonzalez



Top left art from My Diary from Here to There, Background with tree girl art From the Bellybutton of the Moon, small inset from Preitita and the Ghost Woman, bottom right fuzzy Maya on her bed below her painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe with a sacred bunny?, bottom left Maya looking serious, center "Sucking on the Kitty."



Maya Gonzalez lives in a funky old Victorian flat on the borderlands of the Mission. This geographic location is highly symbolic to Maya's identity in that to the left of Maya's apartment is the Mission (the Latino part of San Francisco), and to the right is the Castro (a gay mecca). Maya's home is rich with colors, textures, and ornamentation. There are juxtapositions of kitsch, Mexican pop cultural icons, and religious art, along with her paintings and drawings, combined in a profusion of deep, magnificent colors. One of the major images in her bedroom is her own totemic icon "Hello Kitty," whom Maya describes as a personal reincarnation of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Maya herself is a tiny lesbian Latina with delicate dotted tattoos on her face and a series of bolder symbolic bands and animals tattooed on her right arm. She is very ill with heavy metal poisoning, the result of contact with the chemicals involved in silk-screening many years ago.

Maya's illness informs much of her recent personal artwork, and she spoke at length of using her art as healing in her personal artwork, her children's books, and her school visits. This healing refers not only to her current illness but also to the racism she experienced as a child and adult, the intense homophobia she has encountered, and the pain of a dysfunctional world.

I found Maya's story deeply moving and inspirational. Although it is difficult to edit this story to a short portrait, the following excerpt hopefully shows the connections between her life, ideas, and art, and how they relate to education. Indeed the theme of healing through connection is dominant in all aspects of her life.

Maya grew up in Lancaster, a small town with a very diverse population in the Mojave Desert. She remembers a vast "beigeness" with breathtaking orange and fuschia sunrises and sunsets. Maya's mother is White while her father is from Mexico, having immigrated to the United States as a child. Maya never considered herself an "official person of color" until the age of thirteen when her family moved to an "extremely White" town in Oregon where Maya first encountered racism: "It was shocking. I got called names I had never heard of before."

Prior to moving to Oregon and participating in a study on biracial children, Maya hadn't really "got it" that she was biracial because despite her dark eyes and Hispanic features, she had inherited her mother's White skin. The study asked lots of questions about being biracial; however, back then they didn't call it biracial they called it "mulatto." Maya said:

I had no idea what mulatto meant. It became this odd tag for me, this idea of not being



a horse, not being a donkey [but] being a mule and coming to find out that mules can't reproduce because of the combining, that there is a stunting that occurs. I noticed that I started to shift [my] perceptions.... I started seeing myself... as "other"... that when I moved around in the world on a bigger scale... other people [saw me as] something [different] than what I anticipated and I got called a lot of things. It used to piss me [off] a lot when I was a kid because I felt really invisible.... I had to constantly be exposed [to] not fitting in. I think that the literature that I was exposed to as a child definitely [re-]inforced that.

Maya describes having a "complicated relationship with race" from her experiences including her experiences within her family. She told me how her father's early experience learning English created a split in him where the public part of him was in English and the personal part was in Spanish. By the time Maya was born, the cultural zeitgeist emphasized assimilation and consequently she didn't learn Spanish. She would go to family events having "no idea what anyone else was saying but still grasping enough to be very comfortable in this interesting nonverbal way." So when Maya began illustrating bilingual multicultural books for Children's Book Press it was a "coming together of my father's experience and my experience." It is symbolic that by creating pictures for books that are in both English and Spanish she is "still in that position of contributing my nonverbal piece like I belong to both places and the languages are markers for the two pieces [that] I'm holding at the same time."

### **Nonverbal Pieces and Embedded Stories**

This nonverbal voice appears in all of Maya's art in ways that are not always obvious. For example, in *My Diary from Here to There*—Amada Irma Perez's autobiographical story of immigrating from Juárez, Mexico to El Monte, east of Los Angeles—both Maya and the author embedded visual and written narratives about the immigrant's hopes for a better life, the closeness of the extended Latino family, the difficulties of immigration, the pain of separation, and the finding of one's place in the world no matter where you are. Maya honors her estranged father by painting him as a character on a bicycle at the edge of a field. She spoke of connecting with him "almost somatically":

[He had] this hilarious bicycle that he always rode with these huge gooseneck handlebars and he was so shameless just out there riding this huge geeky bike, and I

just loved that about my dad, and I would get out on my geeky bike right behind him. While there is no mention of a man on a bicycle in the text, this is just one example where Maya brings her own visual voice and experience into her books.

Another example of Maya's own voice occurs in Gloria Anzaldua's version of the La Llorona (ghost woman) story, where Gloria revisits the traditional cautionary tale of La Llorona as a tragic and frightening figure who kidnaps unwary children. She returned to the earliest roots of the story to retell it from an indigenous and female perspective writing in the "about the author" section that she discovered, "a powerful positive side, a side that represents the Indian part and the female part of us. I discovered, like Prietita, that things are not always what they seem."

In Anzaldua's version, Prietita is a young girl whose mother is very ill. She visits Doña



From *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* 1996. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez.

Lola, the local curandera (healer) who is teaching Prietita the healing arts. Doña Lola needs the leaves of the rue plant for a recipe to heal Prietita's mother, leaves that are in the woods of King Ranch where "they shoot trespassers." Nevertheless, she draws the plant for Prietita to find so she can save her mother. Prietita climbs beneath the barbed wire of King Ranch and soon becomes lost and unable to find the plant. She is scared thinking about the La Llorona legend until she meets a series of animals that guide her to La Llorona. La Llorona helps

her find the rue plant and leads her back to the barbed wire fence where she first entered King Ranch. Prietita's family and community are there with flashlights, worried about her. When she tells them about La Llorona helping her, Prietita's cousin Teté says: "But everyone knows she takes children away. She doesn't bring them back." Doña Lola answers that: "perhaps she is not what others think she is." Anzaldúa writes: "I want children to look beneath the surface of what things seem to be in order to discover the truths that may be hidden." In this case these truths include colonialism, issues of property ownership, and the importance of respecting nature and traditional ways of knowing.

### **Hidden Truths and Colonization**

Maya also has her ways of showing hidden truths in the images. She told me she painted both La Llorona and Prietita with wild flowing hair to show their untamed resistance to colonization, and the "yellow scrolly things" to represent the guiding spirits on Prietita's journey "just moving through this windy ghost woman and this young girl's courage."

Because of Anzaldúa's radical Chicana lesbian politics, Maya described having the opportunity to work with her as incredible. "Being a lesbian and a Chicana, [it] was just like this wet dream." Maya expressed great empathy and belief in the story and was particularly impressed with how Anzaldúa addressed colonialism:

King Ranch... is like the whole landowner taking over everything and making lots of money and leaving the indigenous people with nothing. So... [Anzaldúa is] really smart when she pulls the story through. The little girl is not only going through a spiritual quest but she's entering into this kind of forbidden land where she's... not... allowed and she's not only following her desire to heal her mother but [there's] also this idea of her courage going out.

Countering colonial representations, which either privilege European aesthetics, or stereotype or deny minority images—Maya employs bold vibrant colors to represent the life force and beauty of Latino culture. She uses the bright colors of her Mexican heritage and patterns from nature such as swirling whorls and leaf shapes. Interestingly, each of the characters in the book bears some resemblance to Maya, especially the younger sister who resembles Maya before she got sick, while now that her face has lost much of its roundness from illness, it is Prietita who most resembles Maya (or is it vice versa?).

Maya depicts the live oaks, prickly pears, and wild grasses of King Ranch with loving tenderness. Everything about the book has a lushness and vibrancy of color and spirit. The dominant color is purple, which was historically the province of royalty as it was a rare and precious pigment derived from the wings of female Central and South American cochineal beetles. Maya portrays a reverence and valuing of all life—Doña Lola with all her wrinkles is beautiful as is the ghostly La Llorona.

Maya Gonzalez is a complex and intriguing individual actively involved in contesting the repressive effects of colonization. She is so fully her own being and yet also at the same time aware of the ways that she is shaped and molded by her surroundings and the various cultures she comes from and lives in. When I asked her in what ways were imagination or sensuality valued or devalued in her home culture compared to the dominant culture, she spoke at first about where she grew up and the ways that living surrounded by White culture were restrictive. However, then she switched to talk about the home culture she has created for herself in her adult life:

When I think of that, I'm a children's book illustrator artist coming from a queer-freak, spiritually-focused culture. I have an externally alternative family where imagination and sensuality are foundational and it's based on the fact that I come from a family of artists at this point. So we have basically taken [for] all of our spiritual perspectives the fact that we're all creative people.... Intuitively and organically [we've] create[d] our home base. It's still in flex and the point is I think it will always be in flex because we're all at least somewhat conscious and engaged in the creative process as a way of living. In some ways I feel that my home now reflects a lot of what I believe and perpetuate [in] my books.... I'm not alone in this and there are other people that are doing the same things as me and I come into contact with them and you go to events [where] children come into contact with each other. [There] is a movement of consciousness that is going on... and I don't think it is exclusive to artists but I think that artists... have been forced to reckon with the creative process and how to let things move in that way. I would say that the dominant culture has absolutely no idea what to do with somebody like me at this point because I feel like I'm finally in that place where I'm in line with my beliefs and

From My Diary From Here to There. (2002).  
Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez.

completely out of line with the beliefs of the dominant culture. But again, I still fulfill the position as other. I have the firm belief that consciousness has the ability to move in its most valued fulfilling path and... that there is a change going on. It is going on exactly as it should.

### **Spirituality, Nature, and Healing**

Maya's life and work contains a deep commitment to her own spirituality. She described how spirituality manifests in her work in an example from *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*.

What I did was something very simple, I had these... little yellow swirly things [that] follow [Prietita] throughout her journey [providing a] sense of the wind, [a] sense of other energies, [a] sense of this golden spirit... I wanted the spirit in her and the environment... to be visually connected.

Maya describes her spirituality as:

basically an engagement with nature. That there is something that permeates all things... alive. This is tricky to show when you're just literally showing the physicality of things. The way things are shaped, the way things are painted, and the way colors are used. A lot of the time I'll get into layering things... [with] the paint [giving] a sense that reality is layered, here is the purple underneath the snow. It's like the spirit that is under there and having that be present.

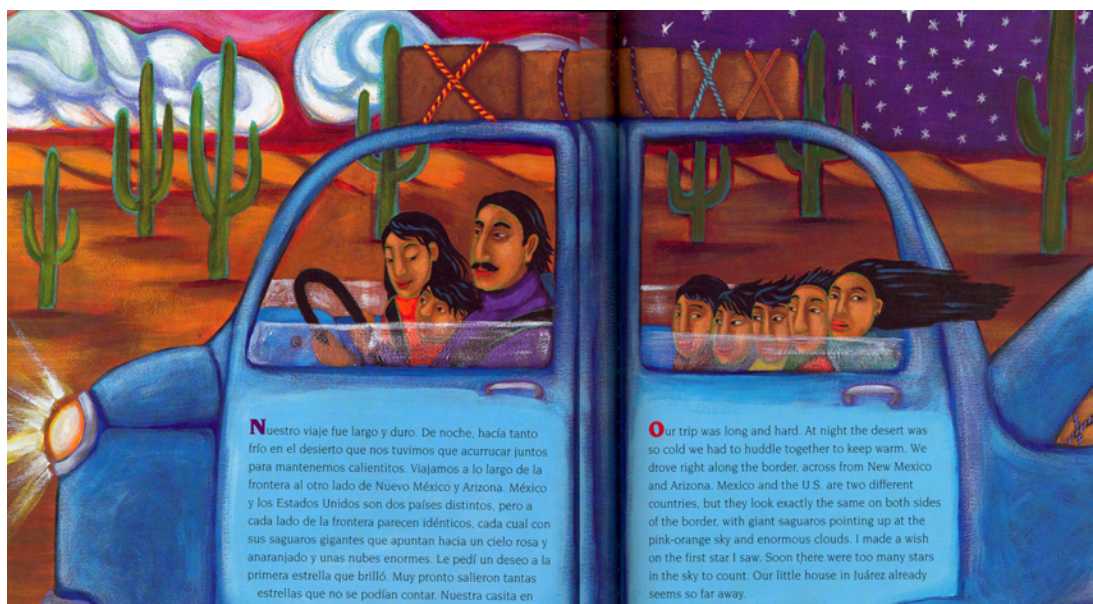
Maya also uses her art to draw connections between contemporary children's literature and Mezo-American culture, such as in *From the Belly Button of the Moon and other seasonal poems* (Alarcón, 1998) where she uses glyphs (iconic symbols from the Mezo-American Aztec codices) to visually connect time, history, place, and culture. Maya sees her own healing as part of a larger picture of spiritual healing from ancient woundings such as Aztec sacrificing, where Mexicans need to learn to "unsacrifice" - including themselves, the earth and the animals. She describes praying into the paintings as she does them saying, "The intention is that I'm healing, and then my fantasy is that when others view my work they also get to experience that healing energy."

When Maya speaks of healing, it is not only connected to her own illness but also to the physical, spiritual, and emotional illnesses affecting the world. She does so by trying to foreground the interrelationship of all things. Maya made clear the spiritual connection she

feels with animals telling me how images of deer and rabbits and Mezo-American jaguars were important childhood guides and continue to be important in her current healing as well. She spoke about how what can be seen as inconsequential childhood characters such as Bambi or Hello Kitty may in fact be powerful totemic archetypes acting as survival guides for children giving them strength and courage in difficult times. Indeed this is the case in Anzaldúa's story where the animals that guide Prietita are painted to show their intelligence and soulfulness. A small salamander looks up alertly at Prietita, the deer's head is angled, ears perked upright as she beckons Prietita to follow her, while the jaguarandi looks straight out of the page at us with an expression of understanding and compassion on his face.

### Stories About Place

Maya tells many visual stories about place, where the environment is represented with the same reverence as the characters in the book. In *My Diary from Here to There* the stories play out in the spaces where land and sky meet, traveling together across different terrains such as the park overlooking the town of Juárez where Amada/Maya braids her best friend Michi's hair. We see the Mexicali desert full of Saguaro cacti, where as Amada and her family drive through it, the purple night sky shifts to a fuschia and orange sunrise with the passage of time and space. In an image depicting the United States/Mexican border, we see a host of warm-skin-colored people who dispel the visual culture stereotypes of Latinos as either drab/invisible or only dressed in traditional garb. These people show place south of the border



From *My Diary From Here to There*. (2002).  
Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez.

in contemporary ways. There's the bleach blonde Latino punk, the eccentric lady with the blue beehive hat, the mama with an orange beret, and a range of other characters showing the cultural diversity of Latinos south of the border that mainstream children's book images consistently ignore. In the final spread of *My Diary from Here to There*, Amada/Maya sits under an avacado tree looking out at the fuschia sunset with the city of Los Angeles below. An orange butterfly hovers in the center of the spread as she writes in her diary. Maya painted the butterflies as symbols of transformation weaving their way throughout each page of the book, following and caressing the young girl on her journey of transformation.

### Sensuality

Everything about *My Diary from Here to There* is sensual. In the scene where Maya painted Amada plaiting Michi's hair, Michi is shown as a plump, bespectacled, and beautiful girl.

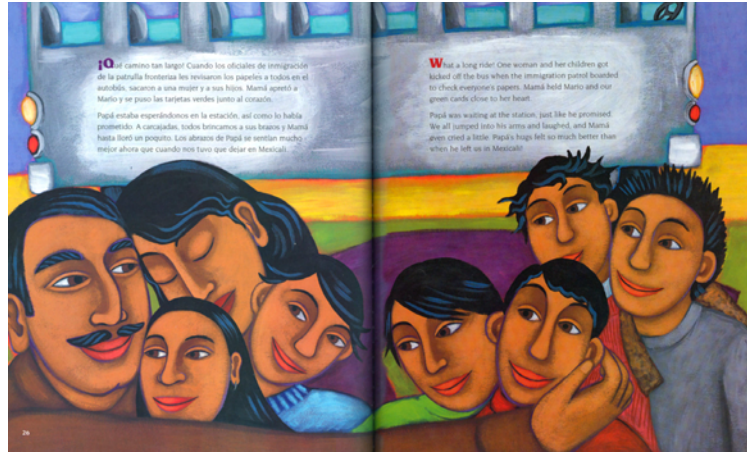


From *My Diary From Here to There*. (2002).  
Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez.

Their interaction is tender and sensual in the way that young girls frequently are with each other. At the same time, the many food scenes throughout the book are almost aromatic, while the painted fabrics and surfaces feel/seem tactile—that if I touched them they would feel the way they look. Maya told me:

I work with colors as a way to express different levels of feelings and energy, [and] how things are moving through an environment, through a person, through an experience. I think that naturally extends out to being sensual.... I want to give a sense that it is very

good to be here, being full of your body,... completely taking up your space. I want my characters to look like their environment. In *My Diary From Here to There*, there's an image of a family hugging at a bus station and I wanted them to look basically like a mountain range. I wanted the



From *My Diary From Here to There*. (2002).  
Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez.

skin tones and colors of the people to be the same as the environment they're in, you can see the desert in there, in their skin, the sky in their clothes.

The sensuality in Maya's books is palpable with kids shimmying up trees to breathe in the beautiful fresh summer air. Maya pointed out:

In the spread of blue and green grass [*From The Bellybutton of the Moon and other Seasonal Poems*, [the] kids are completely in their bodies with their shoes off,... singing out,... [and] dancing, they seem very sensual to me. In fact, *Bellybutton* seems like a very sensual book to me. In my personal artworks, sensuality is a constant theme that I'm navigating explicitly [in terms of] sexuality and sensuality. It's not surprising that it's... expressed in my children's books.

### **Cultural Production**

Maya's insistence on including sensuality and cultural variety in her work reflects her feelings about their absence in the dominant culture of her youth. She told me that what she saw in her children's books, growing up in the 60s and 70s, was, "basically a lot of propaganda... for [the] dominant culture." She knew this because no-one resembled her, her family, her culture, or her reality. Having become a children's book illustrator Maya sees that "there is still a lot of repression—of truth, of levels of reality that... are related to children's books... [which] assum[e that] children are not as complex as they are, not as deep as they are." Maya continued, "We're still manipulating children through the literature that we give them. I feel that the books that I produce [provide] a way of letting creativity flow, which gives us more



options about how to move forward in the world on... different levels." Even though Maya is still working within externally imposed structures when she does children's books, particularly the tightly structured work she sometimes does for school text book companies, she is grateful for the opportunity that making books gives her to reach children who may not otherwise ever see themselves in books.

I asked Maya if she herself had ever felt constrained or censored in her work and she told me that, although she had mostly experienced a great deal of creative freedom (apart from her text book work), she had experienced two instances with Children's Book Press where she felt constrained:

The first one was in the first book that I did, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. It was... in [a] chair... [where Prietita] had her legs spread and she had a seam on her pant between her legs and I was asked to take it out. I was obedient and bummed... I think that if we don't acknowledge that we're sexual beings from the beginning then we leave ourselves open to being sexually unconscious which can in my experience lead to being vulnerable. It was that simple, but [it] was too suggestive... of a vagina. It was in the same place, like her slit. That was difficult for me and the next time, interesting enough, it was around the books [a series of four seasonal poetry books] that I did with Francisco [Alarcón]. Francisco is a fluffy man, he's a big guy and I liked that and that is how [some] kids are. My brother was a fluffy guy and... before I had lead poisoning, I was a fluffy gal... I like kids who are big to also see themselves portrayed. [In] *Belly Button of the Moon*... [Francisco was] fluffier in that one, and I guess it was a little hard for Harriet. She had some of her own projections around that and I stood [my ground] and I did not change that, I felt really strongly that it was important that there would be at least some slight body variations and so again,... [there] was [some] dictating [about] what was appropriate [for children] to look like.... But you know me, [if I could] every other child would be a homo, fat, [and with] green hair.

Apart from these two incidents Maya told me that she felt very fortunate to have worked with Children's Book Press.

From personal experience I know very well that the process of making a children's book is far from simple, particularly from the illustrator's point of view, so I asked Maya about her

research process. She related how she combines both internal and external sources:

Well, I just did a spread for Harriet Rohmer's new press that she is starting for environmental work for kids and it was awesome because I had to go in and do a lot of research for it and I had to research all of the animals, [and] the river that was being painted [had] a lot of political stuff around it. What [was] interesting was to let that information sift in and... then let the information rise back up as I need[ed] it. It was somewhat similar with *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* because I wanted... the animals to feel very real. I wanted them to look similar to how they look. What I did with them was I didn't research them as much. I just kind of remembered as much as I could. A lot of times it's a contrast between allowing something to rise that is completely original or is completely colored by my experiences which means it could be wrong, technically [while] allowing something that is physically rooted to stay attached. I tend to paint what I see inside more than what I see outside. So a lot of times, I'll expose myself to [what's] outside [but] only paint from the inside,... allow[ing] a whole back and forth [process].

Maya spoke about the difference in the research she does for her personal work compared with her children's book work:

I often call [myself] an art nun or an art shaman where art is my tool of devotion and [a] tool of self-study. It's like a meditation practice.... There's a conversation going on with me and my soul and my body is translating it as I go. With my children's books, it's the same exact thing except who I'm communicat[ing] to is sort of like an essence of the children that I come in contact with when I teach, because I was that child. I often work with what I refer to as stressed out children [in an] under served population... I didn't have some of the same physical stress[es] as some of the[se] children... but because of my personal experiences, I was one of those stressed out kids. [In] my children's books, I'm trying to hold my experiences as a compass, almost a thermometer while attending to what I know the story is about and the audiences of who those children are and what they really need. It's difficult for me to say that this vein is my experience, and this vein is the children's experiences, and this is the story and they all become one. When I did books like *Laughing Tomatoes*, I often created characters so I'm actually in the book with the author, with other kids, so it allows my creative consciousness to actually see all of

us together in what I'm doing. My creative process is very fluid [and] expanding. I have a sense of bubbles growing, it's like that kind of energy. You see it in my imagery a lot, it keeps bubbling out, expanding out, and a lot of times as I go into that kind of space, I'll get a sense of how things move, energetically.... that same feeling that is organically moving or organically growing or developing.... I'd say my creative process enters the story and I allow myself to look around to see... how it is already moving and how I want it to move.

### **Working with Children**

As Maya's art shows, one of the most important aspects of being a good artist, or a good storyteller entails learning how to really pay attention. This involves being sensitive to the many nuances of experience and being, including paying attention to what is occurring on multiple levels such as in aesthetic, sensual, emotive, and political realms.

When Maya works with children she related how important it was to her to "really pay attention to the full range of emotions that come through... to really honor and attend to that whole child." She remembered how important the images in books were to her as a child, telling me: "They meant so much to me and yet I could never completely hold them 'cause I never found myself in them, so it was a tense relationship in a way. I don't want these kids to feel that way, when they open up to a book I want them to feel the book open up to them."

Because Maya was never represented in the all-White books of the time she drew her own beautiful, round, brown face into the blank back pages of her books. Now when she does school visits, or teaches children, she tells them this story, stressing that now she has managed to make it into the main pages. She empowers children by telling them that if they don't see their own faces in their books they should claim their space and draw them into the blank end-pages as well. For Maya just being seen and heard is a political act, particularly as a lesbian and a woman of color: "even if it is in the most rudimentary sense of letting other children who are disenfranchised see someone standing up and claiming who they are."

Both Maya's work and her very being challenge the dominant paradigm. She told me that she mostly illustrates children of color, while her school work is also predominantly with minority kids. To her it's a balancing act, because most children's books and resources are for White children. And while Maya is half-White herself and loves all children, she is trying to

contribute to some kind of balance that not only addresses issues of representation but also issues of empowerment.

Maya tries to empower children in many ways. For example, she brings her caring values with her into schools saying:

The one thing that I feel I personally bring in to the classroom is [the idea] that art can heal us and that art is a tool when we don't have a voice.... [M]y three precepts [are]—that art is always an act of courage, that everyone is an artist and that there is never a right or a wrong way to make art.

She told me about working with fifth and sixth graders who at that stage have learned that "[only] artists make art" so their work is inadequate. However, by coming in with her three precepts and working with emotions such as fear and courage, she has seen them go through tremendous shifts. She told me they begin by saying things like: "I can't, I can't, this sucks, [and] ripping it up, to I'm brave, wow, I am creative, I can make this!" Continuing with this story, Maya said:

That emotional shift is the reason why I make these books, to go into the classrooms. The books are almost an excuse sometimes, to be able to see that.... It breaks out of the whole concept of the system of our education. Our education is to make proletarians to be slaves and push things around which is why it pisses me off.... I think that our schools and our general way of raising children and our ways of keeping people in line, [center] around consumerism and... production in this culture... [W]e [have] all chosen to participate in [this] particular experiment for a period of time and I think we're starting to understand the limitations of that.

Having visited many, many schools, Maya is disheartened with the culture of education. While she respects and admires the hard work of teachers, she disagrees with the fundamental paradigm of schooling where "there is so much structural repression of children.... [It is] difficult to even come in as an artist for a day—[where] everything feels so militaristic... and not organic."

Maya believes that the current system does not support children. Her fantasy is "that the entire public school system would basically be eradicated and we would start over completely." She doesn't profess to be an expert, but from her own experience "having something that attends to the whole person," that connects the child with themselves and others, with their

culture, their environment and the larger world in a holistic manner, provides both a healthier individual and a healthier culture.

### **Reflecting on the Research**

Maya's time of dealing with heavy metal poisoning has provided her with the space to reflect deeply on many of the issues we discussed in this research. She told me that participating in the research had enabled her to tap into her excitement and enthusiasm about children's literature in the curriculum while providing "a continuing feeling that there is something changing in the world, a contribution that is being made, and I'm certainly not alone in it and never have been and that feels good." I was grateful to Maya for participating because I value her ideas and art so much. I also knew that participating in this project took great effort in her time of illness, and that she participated both for me as a friend and in the hopes that sharing her experiences with educators might encourage them to pay attention not only to the academic requirements of education, but also to "fully attend" to their students as emotional, creative, and physical beings so that no child ever has to feel unseen, unheard, or "other" again.



From *From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Seasonal Poems*. (1998).  
Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez

Maya does an amazing job of incorporating her life experiences to connect the spiritual, physical, and emotional aspects of humanity while exploring issues of class, race, gender, history, place and creativity in ways that effect transformation, recognition and healing, both for Maya and for the children (and adults) who read her books and see her art.



Carl Angel



Left insert from *Honoring Our Ancestors*, top two panels from *Lakas and the Manila Town Fish*, bottom left from *Xochitl and the Flowers*, bottom right Carl in his garden.



I met with Carl at Children's Book Press's colorful office in the Mission District before driving to his home in Hayward, about 20 miles East of San Francisco. Carl's home is sophisticated and elegant, painted in muted moss greens and sand colors, with a vibrant, deep red wall in the living room. Carl himself is a handsome young Filipino-American with soulful brown eyes. At the time of the interview, he and his wife had recently moved into their house so none of Carl's work was hanging on the walls yet. Indeed, as Carl told me about his childhood and adult experiences with life, art, books, and education, issues about place and movement became dominant themes.

Both of Carl's parents are Filipinos who emigrated from the Philippines over thirty years ago. Because Carl's father was in the military, the family frequently moved before finally settling down in Oahu, Hawaii. Carl describes the island of Oahu as "a laid back community":

We had neighbors that would go fishing and they would come by and bring us fish... sometimes we had papayas growing in the back garden that everybody would just kinda trade. But, in being part of a military family, there was [also] a mixing of a military style of living.

People helped each other and also teased each other constantly. So even though Carl described it as a "laid back community," a more accurate description might be of an interconnected community. Carl took pains to tell me that, although some of the teasing he experienced had racial overtones, it wasn't mean spirited: "Everybody certainly made fun of each other, you know.... if you weren't made fun of, then you weren't included."

As a child, the only Asian figures Carl saw in books were *The Crow Boy*, and *The Five Chinese Brothers*. These were not positive representations. Instead, his positive childhood memories of books centered around magical and fantastically imagined literature such as Dr. Seuss books and comics. Like Maya, Carl drew on the blank back pages of his books. However, unlike Maya, Carl didn't include his own face. Instead he extended the narrative through a kind of collaboration with the authors and artists in which he used the book's original style but created his own endings.

Apart from the occasional Dr. Seuss book, Carl's book reading of choice consisted of books on mythology or comics. This is where he learned to draw. He liked the iconic nature of these characters and, by using his sister's tracing paper to trace over the figures, Carl learned

how shapes worked together to form different features. Drawing people connected Carl with the creation myths he was so fascinated by. "I was reading mythology, those peopling of the earth myths and stuff like that... and then you are doing the same thing. You know there's this god doing... some cosmic act, and here you are creating it." For a powerless kid being moved from place to place this was heady stuff. "You could do anything, whatever you wanted. And, I don't know if it has anything to do with my traveling from place to place,... but I think it ... always grounded me and set me free at the same time."

Throughout his youth, Carl only drew Anglo-Saxon characters, the type of figures mentioned above, internalizing the lack of positive representation. He told me: I would say that [it] affected me.... I wasn't even aware of it. Which I hope changes with other generations of artists where they see more of themselves in these stories... I just didn't see any multicultural children's books around me at the time. You know there really weren't any... around."

This lack of Asian representation, combined with the glorification of an Aryan aesthetic, meant that being Asian signified being unattractive to Carl, and, even more importantly at the time, to the girls who were more interested in the *hao/le* [White] boys.

I mean I had all the strikes against me. Besides being not really social... I didn't have those kind of looks, those piercing blue eyes [that] you saw glorified in images. I hate to admit this on tape... but I did wish... maybe if my nose is just a little bit smaller, or maybe if I just suck my cheeks in for four hours a day, then I would get those gaunt looks.... I wanted to identify with those kind of heroic figures, [but] all the ones... I saw, with the exception of Bruce Lee, were all White.

Because Carl's family moved frequently during his early childhood, he was unable to develop close school relationships. He related, "I just remember elementary school [as] being something to pass the time away until I [could] get back home and watch cartoons or read comic books and draw." Carl didn't like school because it was so disconnected from his life. The only time he felt truly engaged was when art was involved:

[T]o be put in a group against my will and have to do all these things that I had no input on or say, I think it just didn't sit well with me. I remember more wanting to get out, than wanting to get in. I'm sure I didn't harbor any real bad resentment. But I know that I was

always waiting to go home. And I was never waiting to go to school.

When Carl was eighteen he moved to the mainland to go to college, and it was on the mainland that he first encountered the kind of vicious racism that "want[s] to hurt you." Consequently creating counter-narratives to those that support the marginalization and oppression of minorities became a motivating force for Carl. He began researching and creating art about his own Filipino heritage.

In one of his personal paintings from a series about the Filipino/American war, a warship is seen floating in the sky that is also the ocean. Huge tentacle-like mosquito legs extend from the ship into the Filipino earth, sucking the resources and life from the soil. There are burning buildings, churches and huts, while General Aguinaldo stands in the center as a symbol of Filipino resistance.

### Carl's Books

Carl's book art also frequently connects him with his Filipino heritage such as in *Honoring Our Ancestors* where Carl was able to honor his parents in a beautiful painting

incorporating the different aspects of their personalities with aspects of Filipino folklore. A much more playful connection occurs in *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish*, which tells a cartoon-like story of chasing a runaway fish through the streets of the old San Francisco. In this book Carl captures a wild narrative that begins with a dream and ends with Lakas in his bathtub playing with a talking fish. The fish may be Lakas's alter ego or twin, having a mirror-like image mole on his chin (and like Carl Angel himself). In Lakas's dream he meets an old *manong*



From *Honoring Our Ancestors*. (1999).  
Illustrated by Carl Angel.

different aspects of aspects of Filipino playful connection *the Manilatown Fish*, cartoon-like story of chasing a runaway streets of the old Francisco. In this the riotous energy of begins with a dream a bathtub playing with fish may or may not twin, having a mirror like Lakas (and like In Lakas's dream he (an elderly Filipino

man) who tells him about a talking fish. When Lakas wakes up he gets his father to buy him a fish at The Happy Fish Market. The fish jumps up and kisses the Happy Fish man before taking off and jumping on a bus headed for Manilatown. Lakas, his dad, and the Happy Fish man take after the fish, who kisses the bus driver (who looks like Carl's wife, Holly).



From *Lakas and The Manilatown Fish*. (1999). Illustrated by Carl Angel.

Everyone the fish kisses "falls dizzy in love." Next, the fish gets off the bus and kisses an old manong taking off his hat, shirt, pants, and teeth (leaving him in his fish-patterned underwear) and puts the old *manong's* clothes on himself. The fish is like a pied piper leading the characters through old Manilatown, eventually luring them into the water of the San Francisco Bay. After pulling them all out of the water and helping them dry off, they end up going to eat rice and tomatoes and chili, before concluding with Lakas in the bathtub with his fish.

There are many postmodern turns in the book in the form of multiple meanings and possibilities. On the first full two-sided page (double-spread) Carl has painted the edge of the page turning, showing us that this is just a painting—an image of an image, but we see there is a page, or a painted page underneath, indicating a layering of surfaces with questions about what is revealed and what isn't, or what may yet be revealed. We wonder if the old man losing his clothes and then getting them back might represent the loss and regaining of cultural memory and the memory of place? And what of the characters all being immersed in the bay? Could this represent the unconscious and the world of dreams as sites of inspiration and reclamation? Is the story just a playful surrealist romp, or are there deeper meanings beneath the surface layer?

Some of these deeper meanings are explored within the collaged images of the old Manilatown buildings that show the former residents and members of the Filipino community protesting the destruction of their community. *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* has an introduction page and an "about the book" closing page that provide opportunities for deeper discussions about race, place, and community. These pages tell about the destruction of the International Hotel (the I Hotel), the heart of Manilatown, and the history of the Filipino community who for many years were not allowed to own property or live elsewhere in San Francisco. The "about the book" page also tells how in 1977, 3,000 demonstrators formed a human barricade around the I Hotel to prevent the demolition of the hotel and the eviction of its elderly residents at the hands of developers. It was to no avail, and the destruction of the hotel along with its role in the community signaled the end of Manilatown itself. With the passage of time and changes in the law, Filipinos moved into other areas and now Manilatown only exists in memory and old photographs. Carl used these photographs to portray the buildings and culture that no longer exist. By collaging in old photographs of the residents and protestors into the building shapes, he has created hyperreal representations that are both real and ghostly at the same time. These are moving and exquisitely rendered images that carry a distinct ideological message.



From *Lakas and The Manilatown Fish*.  
(1999). Illustrated by Carl Angel.

There are few Filipino-American books, and in 2003 this was the first bilingual, English/Tagalog book set in the United States ever published. The story's images are slightly surreal and brightly colored with modeled dimensional surfaces, while the collaged historical elements are in more muted colors with loose transparent brushwork. The painted storybook characters are old and young, and very much alive. For a culture with so few media representations of themselves, this book makes up for lost time. It depicts the brown skins and varied Filipino features, the straight hair with blue highlights, the past and the present of people, place and community in a complex and satisfying way.

*Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* is able to operate on several levels for both older and younger children.

For older students, this occurs in Carl's second wordless story, told through the collaged photographs in the buildings. It also occurs through the opening and closing comments of the author, Tony Robles, who describes the *manongs* coming to America for a better life, and their subsequent displacement from the International Hotel despite massive resistance. This combination of more critical insights enables deeper discussions for older children. On the other hand, a more surface reading allows for some engaging inclusive entertainment for younger children, such

as the comedic  
resemblance  
between Lakas  
and the fish..

When I  
*his* resemblance  
the fish he laughed

I wouldn't  
conscious  
objective  
the writer's  
you're  
character  
that kid  
you and



From *Lakas and The Manilatown Fish*. (1999).  
Illustrated by Carl Angel.

as the comedic  
between Lakas

asked Carl about  
to both Lakas and  
telling me:

say I do it on a  
level. My first  
is to just serve  
story. I know  
looking at the  
and you think  
looks exactly like

in... this one I

guess I sort of did. This whole mole thing has gotten me into so much [trouble]. It isn't exactly Tony's kid [the author] but what happened is—I thought it would be a cute thing if the fish and Lakas, looking at each other, had some sort of similar trait, so I put a mole on both of them (Carl also has a mole on his chin) and that's it. Everybody's pegged me as him ever since. To me he's Marilyn Monroe or something. But in terms of my experiences I think that's usually subconscious. It's nothing [where I] would say "I have this experience I'll try and portray in the story".... And then other parts... find their way in there. And well I'm just a proto-typical Filipino male so all those elements find their way, especially the nose and the mole. After that, then it's just me.

In many ways all art is a form of portrait, and the images in these books include not only self-portraits, and portraits of other people, but also portraits of place. A good example is in *Xochtil and the Flowers*. Loosely-based on a true story, *Xochtil and the Flowers* as written by Jorge Argueta tells the story of Xochtil and her family who move to the Mission District from El Salvador and open a flower store in their backyard. When their landlord finds out he tries to evict them, but the neighborhood community rallies to find a way to help them stay.

Carl paints a portrait of place by using the visual culture of the local environment. For example, in *Xochtil and the Flowers*, Carl uses the Mission District visual landscape to extend the story far beyond the text. By incorporating the murals for which the Mission District is famous, Carl tells a second visual story about Xochtil and her family's life in El Salvador before coming to the United States. By doing so, Carl is able to deepen our understanding not only of Xochtil and her family's story, but also show the intrinsic links between culture and place. As Carl said:

[T]he environment is... a character just like... any of the other characters. Because everything is a balancing of elements and their relationships to each other... in any type of story. Relationship to what's going on, relationship to the environment, relationships to people. And so I think that creating a sense of place provides the context to what's going on.

Place can be literal like the backyard flower shop in *Xochtil and the Flowers*, which looks exactly like it does in the Mission, or it can be allegorical or metaphorical, like the life-sucking, mosquito-legged warships in Carl's painting "The War," or the collaged protestors in *Lakas*

*and the Manila Town Fish*. Carl told me: "If it's a good story, it's a story about people relating to their environment." *Xochtil and the Flowers* is not only about Xochtil and her family, but also about the Mission District. Likewise, *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* is not only about Lakas's adventures, but also about the physical, cultural, and spiritual history of place. As Carl says:

Those places have spirits and ghosts in their buildings. It's history, and history is about people, but those people have passed.... [W]hat is still there are the buildings, the surroundings, and how other people now traverse those streets, and what kind of story they are going to create. If you just left out the place and just had people walking around, you don't have as much, that's for sure. It provides more of a concrete experience when you have people in relations to the surroundings... [where] the depiction of the character of certain buildings [are] also depictions of culture.



From *Xochtil and the Flowers*. (2003).  
Illustrated by Carl Angel

### **Researching Books and the Creative Process/Drawing from Visual Culture**

To depict the places, people, and events in a children's book, a children's book artist can take either a purely intuitive approach, which frequently produces highly stylized images, or an approach that involves a great deal of specific research for a much more literal and realistic representation, or a combination of both. Carl's approach is the latter. He told me that in his research process he views his relationship with the author's text as a form of collaboration. Initially he just tries to, "come up with pictures straight out of my own imagination." He then looks at reference images that relate to the place and the time, primarily on the Internet and



also in books. Carl's next step is to look at books and other sources that inspire him such as Rembrandt, Chagall, or Disney:

Sometimes [the] spirit of the story... will remind me of some other book that I had read or a movie that I'd seen. I'm a big movie watcher. A lot of times it will be like "oh, this sort of seems like something that will call for some kind of composition that maybe a [film by Japanese filmmaker] Kurosawa may [have].... It starts kind of pouring forth once I distill the spirit of the story visually.

For example, in the case of *Xochtil and the Flowers*, Carl looked at reference images of El Salvador, where the book is partially set, and took lots of photographs of the Mission district of San Francisco. He told me: "I would find an element here and an element there and then compose those elements together to put forth the spirit of the image that I wanted collage[d] in the story." Carl also took pictures of real named characters in the book; For example, in *Xochtil and the Flowers* he based the father figure on the author Jorge Argueta and the daughter on Jorge's daughter. Carl noted that this was really for inspiration and that if in the process of developing the character they took on their own *look*, then that too was OK. As he said: "I didn't feel like I had to adhere to my reference, I would just use that as a jumping off point."

However, unlike *Xochtil and the Flowers*, researching *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* was a much more difficult process because Manilatown no longer exists. Carl began by looking for visual references of how the neighborhood looked to reconstruct it geographically; however, because the only images he could find were around the time of the I Hotel protests, it was difficult to see the buildings because of all the protesters in front. This was a dilemma for Carl until he went for a walk through the area that was once Manilatown with Tony Robles and his uncle, the poet and activist Al Robles. Carl said:

As I started photographing the areas I just thought that I've got all these pictures of what was going on there why not collage those images into the buildings? And then that got to be an even better solution. At first it was out of necessity in terms of deadlines; because I had to come up with something, but I found it to be a better solution because when you looked at the buildings you're seeing the faces of all those people that were active during that period. I found that to be smarter and ultimately more truthful than if I were to just draw the buildings again.... For instance the way the street is laid out is actually the

way North Beach in San Francisco is laid out. Where Kearny street and Old Manilatown is, this is the actual geographic way that it is laid out. And these are the shapes of the buildings as they are today. [By] collaging the images of the protests and of some of the Manongs that lived in the buildings, I think it imbued the spirit of Manilatown while using the current geography of North Beach as it is today, add[ing] another layer to the story, a more serious layer actually, but nothing that would hit you over the head.

Music is also an important part of Carl's research and art-making process. He related that he listened to music, and movie soundtracks in particular, whose tone or emotion matched what he was trying to achieve in the pictures. Carl pointed out:

It has to do with music that's specific for story telling. I just listened to the soundtrack to *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* [and] *Paris, Texas*. I mean it's very diverse but very atmospheric... and somehow [it] speaks to me in abstract ways about creating a story.... I'm using visual notes and hopefully being as articulate as I can.

This train of thought led into a conversation about the role of intuition and the unconscious in art making. Carl told me:

If you're trying to get involved in the spirit of the story there's some sort of deeper engagement that has to come from you. And so that comes from your life experiences. Any artist or illustrator who starts drawing, we all have the same tools but you put your pen to paper and then what [each] person comes up with is completely different but you're using the same tool. There's something inside that motivates you to move your hand this way or that way. I don't see how there couldn't be any kind of unconscious or deeper engagement when you're trying to create something, unless it's just [a] technical illustration.

Because of Carl's awareness of the role of the unconscious and intuition in art I was curious to hear his thoughts on sensuality and emotion. He told me that he didn't see his work as very sensual except on a process level of making the characters come alive and resonate with the text, which he described in a musical context:

[I'm] listening on certain notes like I do when I'm listening to music. [Seeing] whether [the art] is hitting the same note as the writer and then I know "okay I think they work well together." If I'm behind [the note] then I can kind of sense that. But that's the only way

that I would think of... this work... as sensual.

Carl describes himself as often being "under the gun" in finishing a book, so he admitted that because of these constraints, it is hard for him to appreciate the sensual and aesthetic elements of book production. However he did acknowledge that his work was emotional noting that "in terms of color, I usually think emotionally first... before the visual aspect. I think emotionally what it will communicate before I think, oh I want to use green, you know." Carl's love of telling stories that communicate emotionally also extends into his practice as an art teacher.

### **Carl as Teacher**

He told me that the most important things for him to share as an art educator were his excitement for storytelling as well introducing students to the "craft of drawing or painting." Carl said:

[I want] to get kids as excited as I am about stories.... My dad was a great storyteller, he would always tell me stories about his old days in the Philippines.... That's what life is, a story, it's a sequence of events that affect you in a way or affect you in another way. It's all a whole bunch of interactive stories. But I wouldn't want to really say in terms of trying to reduce it to something, stories are life to me.

An example of this is in an after-school program, where Carl created an art lesson connected to *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish*. He used the idea of home as a jumping off point for kids to emotionally communicate their experience of place. Some kids drew themselves holding their arms around their house and others drew their home where their heart is. Although these weren't literal images of their houses, they were a way for the children to visually tell stories about how they felt about their home. In this way Carl is able to create teaching events that draw connections between place, culture, art, and emotion.

Carl made explicit connections between emotion and excitement in education stating: I think you've got to be excited to learn.... At least coming from my own personal point of view. People who can just memorize dates and names and stuff [are] able to be remote from learning, but I couldn't see not getting emotional about really learning something, because it's something that catches fire inside you and then that fire does elicit some kind of emotion of excitement and enthusiasm... even if it's repulsive. I think all real

learning involve[s] emotion, because that's what propels you to learn more.

However, Carl told me that, while he sees teachers coming from a more connected and emotional place on an individual level, he is disappointed with the current institution of education:

It seems more test oriented than it does emotionally oriented. It's geared towards memorizing dates and names and not geared towards practical or spiritual use. I think it will change, but I think we're more in need of it now than ever, at least judging public school systems as they are today and the funding situations that they're under. It's unfortunate, because as cliché as it sounds, the one's who ultimately suffer are the kids.

### **Carl's Vision for Education**

When I asked Carl about where he would like to see education go, like Maya and Elizabeth, he, too, spoke of a more integrated and holistic approach where students learn contextually in ways that promote meaning and sense making rather than learning isolated units of information. He spoke of education as inspiring children saying: "This is the garden where everything should start being cultivated." Carl expressed awe and admiration for teachers who can endure the grueling fragmented workday, but he worried that limited resources result in teachers who "start off being inspired [but]... then after awhile they just have to make it through the day." In Carl's ideal of education people who have excelled in their field would visit schools to inspire children. Teachers would work together in planning curriculum and coordinating goals: "An art teacher would talk with the math teacher and [the] English teacher to see how each one relates to the other. And if you got... kids thinking in that inclusive holistic way, I think they would just take off." Carl wanted a more organic system that showed how things were interconnected and inter-related, "how things... relate to their art class and their math class.... And why they're even there in the first place... [It would] make it come alive. Oh man. You would have a whole renaissance."

### **Role of the Artist**

When I asked Carl about "the role of the artist" he said he could only speak for himself: "For me it would be to inspire [and to] inspire myself also. To kind of communicate the experience of—God, this is going to sound so pretentious—just the experience of being alive and communicate that visually [and] emotionally." He expressed wanting to "have some kind

of positive effect where you inspire people." At the same time he noted that: "sometimes it does involve being a social mirror and having to reflect what is going on. But it's [also] about cultivating that kind of spirituality... trying to remind people of who we are, who we could be." In other words, "just communicating that experience of being alive."

Carl's work truly communicates this experience of being visually and emotionally alive. In *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* he portrays the joyful delight of a young boy's exuberant adventure, while at the same time portraying images of sadness, and angry resistance to, and sadness about, racist displacement in the collaged archival photographs embedded in the

buildings. These dual portrayals mirror some of Carl's own experiences as both the playful and more serious child whose dreams guide him, and the much more serious artist/activist whose work seeks to provide a "social mirror" while reminding people of both "who we are and who we can be." There are also ways that Carl portrays his own personal place (perhaps unconsciously) in the background murals of *Xochtil and the Flowers*.



From *Xochtil and the Flowers*. (2003). Illustrated by Carl Angel.

murals provide a means of telling a second story about Xochtil's life in El Salvador, the huge flowers Carl paints are also the flowers of his native Hawaii whose tropical lush plant life shares much in common with El Salvador.

In *Honoring our Ancestors*, Carl painted his father's masculine energy in the face of the sun, with his father's military history shown as warplanes and battleships in the background. His dreamy mother is painted in the face of the moon surrounded by a star-filled sky full of Filipino superstition quotes. Straddling these two worlds, Carl has painted himself as a child steering

a flying fish. This image shows Carl as the product of both his parents, and yet something altogether different and uniquely his own as well. Carl joked about this book, *Honoring our Ancestors*, which most of the participants in this study are in, saying: "That book should be called "I'm so honored to be in this book." Needless to say, this is exactly how I feel about this study.



George Littlechild





Left horse from *What's the most beautiful thing you know about horses?* "Never Again" artwork about the forced relocation of First Nation's children. Below right multiple identities from *Just Like Me*, bottom right George at home, bottom left from *This Land is My Land* - "Columbus First Saw."



Not too long ago, my husband Guy and I visited George at his home on Vancouver Island, Canada. Everywhere we looked was a feast for the eyes, from the stunning views of ocean and mountains to George's large-scale, color-saturated artwork. This memory of place persisted when it came time to conduct the telephone interviews for this project. It was easy for me to picture us together as we spoke about a range of topics pertaining to his life, art, books, and education.

George's early life was very difficult. As has frequently been the case for Native Americans (or as George prefers, First Nations' people), alcoholism took its toll on George's family. His mother was Plains Cree while his father was a mix of mostly Caucasian and some Micmac Indian. They took "the path less traveled," as George describes it, and ended up on Skid Row, suffering early alcohol-related deaths. At a young age George and his siblings were split up and placed in various foster homes. He was in four different foster homes before the age of four, finally ending up in a fifth home up with a Dutch Canadian family in a predominantly Dutch community in Alberta, Canada.

George related how he stood out with his straight black hair and dark skin among the blue-eyed, blonde children of Edmonton who teased, baited, and harassed him about his race:

Different kids in my school would say things like, "Oh, you're the little Indian that's being raised" or "you're the Indian boy that so-and-so keeps" or whenever I would meet their parents, there was always this label put on me. Right away I was the Indian. I didn't know I had a White father until I was seventeen. I just thought that I was Indian. I had no understanding really of what an Indian even was.

He told me that the first time he learned about First Nations' people in the school curriculum was in junior high; prior to that the only information available was on television, which he described as "Hollywood cowboys and Indians and all those negative stereotypes." This was George's main connection to his heritage other than going on the bus through downtown Edmonton where he grew up and seeing Skid Row where the down-and-out First Nations' people hung out. Apart from this, George's only other identification was with the one other First Nations' boy at his school. But he and George didn't get on. George describes their relationship as "an instant hate the moment we met, because he was raised in a Dutch family as well, so any contact that I had with my true identity was mirrored through this other boy and we did not like each other...

because of the racism that was projected on to both of us."

George describes growing up with a "lot of self-hate, a lot of—[I] didn't like the color of my skin." In the summer he would get "extra brown," so that sitting in church with his hands on the pew George could see the difference between his dark hands and everybody else's white ones. "I didn't see myself in any way, shape, or form as attractive." George describes his "self-hate and loathing" as coming from an environment that constantly let him know he was different and "less than." "I would hear negative things about who I was as a person—somewhat from my foster family, but very much from the kids that I went to the Dutch school with and in the Dutch community."

George told me that where he was raised, people were extremely concerned with appearances: "They didn't care about your spirit, your soul. They just cared about how you presented yourself. To be different meant "there was a defect or something wrong with you." Conformity was a key characteristic of this environment. George described the community as one "full of judgment, one full of—'if you ain't Dutch, you aren't much' kind of thing." George described the predominantly Dutch school that he attended as an essentially hostile place where being a dark-skinned and an overweight child made him a target: "[I]t was... not a positive experience. I hated school in fact. But what I did have and what the other children didn't have in [the] school I went to, was my ability in art."

He described his childhood as having "a lot of good things.... [And] a lot of not-so-good things." One of the things he is most grateful for is the kindness and generosity of his foster mother Winnie Olthius. She both loved and believed in him, nurturing his talent as an artist and encouraging him to pursue his gifts: "If it weren't for her, I wouldn't be the person that I am today. She's a really wonderful person.... [And] a real example of what a true Christian is."

Although George's foster mother was very generous, books were not a major priority in his family apart from the books he receives as gifts for Christmas and birthday presents. However none of these books, or any other books at the time, held any positive images of First Nations' people, which reinforced his internalized racism. First Nations' people were either not represented or misrepresented:

If there were books about Native Americans or First Nations' people, it would all be

stereotypes anyway, and what would I be doing wearing a headdress anyway? Why would I be running around with a tomahawk in my hand? That wasn't my reality.... [Or] my relatives on the reserve [either].

The books George remembers most strongly enjoying from his childhood had strong elements of fantasy and imagination, like *The Tales of Narnia*, by C.L. Lewis:

[T]hrough reading those books, I really felt that I could almost go there. There's a word in art called "phenesthesia".... It involves the smell, taste, and all encompassing value of becoming part of an art piece or... experience. When I'm in the forest sometimes I feel that, or when I'm in the water I feel that. I feel we go beyond the dimension, that's why sometimes as artists, being sensitive is really a wonderful and powerful thing... [and sometimes] it's too much.

Fortunately, in George's childhood this heightened sensitivity to both the realm of the senses and the often mean-spirited world around him had a positive place to go in his art. He told me that he sees his childhood experiences of racism and discrimination as having a direct influence on his commitment to standing up for others who are marginalized or disenfranchised. This manifests in the art he does both personally and in his books, as well as in other ways—such as doing school visits and workshops that empower both children and adults to connect with their heritage and spirituality, working in a youth center, and participating in research projects such as this.

Another way this activism manifests is in his children's books. An excellent example of this is in his book *This Land is My Land*, which begins with the following dedication: "For my ancestors: I thank you for surviving when so many did not. You make me proud to be who I am because of who you were." The page features twelve sepia photographs beginning with George and ending with his great-great-grandmother. Most of the faces look straight at us and into us. They are beautiful and powerful images that wordlessly speak volumes. The facing page holds the title information and a vignette image of a First Nations' chief looking at and being looked at by a Canadian Mountie. George has painted a First Nations' teepee and a European house separated by a striped bar behind the two figures. From the very first pages the viewer is alerted that this book's is about race, place, and art.

In paintings like "What Columbus Saw" George shows a surprised and thoughtful looking

First Nations' man and inward at the notes in the text how was a misnomer by en route to India at his "discovery." He in school how have discovered people were already goes on to describe of colonialism in the loss of native lands, and the suffering his people have endured. In "The Mountie and the Chief" painting, George writes:



From *This Land is My Land* (1993).  
Written and Illustrated by George Littlechild.

looking both outward same time. George the name "Indian" Columbus who was the time he made describes wondering Columbus could America when his there. George then some of the effects

This picture brings you face to face with two different cultures. The Mountie is a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman sent to enforce the law of the Europeans. The Chief is a leader of the Plains Cree. He is protecting our people and our way of life.

George describes how the White men took more and more of the land, forcing First Nations' reservations couldn't come the European's He writes: "My have cried much prisoners on In "Four Buffalo image and the devastation White man decimated the to the point of extinction, creating great desolation and privations among First Nations' people whose lives depended on the buffalo.



From *This Land is My Land* (1993).  
Written and Illustrated by George Littlechild.

people onto where they or go without permission. ancestors must as they became their own land." "Spirits" George's words describe caused by the whose greed buffalo almost

There are many elements of importance within the painting. George describes the significance of the number four as sacred both in representing the millions who have died and also in symbolizing the spiritual healing aspects of this number. "There are four directions, four elements, and four kinds of animals (those who walk, those who fly, those who swim and those who crawl)." Another symbolic element that appears in the painting are the three red stars on three European style houses.

George writes about this symbolic use of stars in another painting, stating: "My teachers would grade us by using stars. The gold ones were for the best students. The lowest stars were red, which meant failure. Those are the stars I remember getting most." This text is part of George's description of the "Red Horse Boarding School" painting, where he describes how up until the 1960s (and the 1970s in the United States) First Nations' children were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to boarding schools where they were forced to learn English, become Christians, and deny their own culture. Parents who resisted were jailed. George writes that his grandparents, his mother, and all her brothers and sisters were sent to these boarding schools: "They grew up without their families and never learned how to raise children of their own. Many boarding school survivors died on Skid Row of alcoholism, including my mother." The red horse is cut in two to symbolize this tearing away of the First Nations' children from "their culture, their language, their traditional ways, and their families."

In one of George's contemporary paintings, "Urban Pain Dance," he painted his brother Raymond with "magical eyes," writing, "they're like husky dog's eyes. My brother is mixed blood, and so am I.... We come from the spirit of two peoples." George explains that the title of the painting relates to the many First Nations' people who left the reservations after World War Two to look for work in the cities but found there were no jobs. Some were caught up in drugs, alcohol, and prostitution, and like George's parents died early violent deaths on Skid Row. Consequently George and his brothers and sisters grew up in foster homes. He writes: "Living in the cities was like being in prison because we had lost control of our lives. That's why I put bars on the background of this picture."

George has honored his brother in the painting and story describing how he overcame great hardships and succeeded against the odds to go on to university and become successful in business management. Raymond now helps the next generation have the "opportunities he

never had." George continues in his narrative that for himself "working as an artist is my way of healing the pain of helping the next Nations'] people." features many stars star on Raymond's one on a horse bars. The horse is animal and was of to the Plains colors and shapes pinks, muted teals, and the patterns of dots, create a lively and that is also very the painting both and disturbing at George's paintings of intense color, shape. He collages in archival photographs in some of them and uses his handwritten text in others.



From *This Land is My Land* (1993).  
Written and Illustrated by George Littlechild.

the past and [also] generation of [First Nations] people." The painting including a silver head and a red running behind the George's totemic great importance Cree tribe. The including salmon-greens, and vibrant recurring abstracted bars and chevrons vibrant composition harmonious, making extremely beautiful the same time. are a masterful mix pattern, texture, and

Much of George's work is either overtly sociopolitical and/or spiritually-based with the two constructs usually overlapping. He told me of finding out about his blood relatives as an adult and connecting to a heritage of chiefs, healers, and leaders, who "had great responsibilities within the communities [where] they lived." George went on to study with First Nations' elders, as he says: "how to become more connected to the land, to my own spirituality, to my Mother Earth," telling me that these were the teachings he needed to follow and which he is still learning.

A sense of the sacredness of life came through strongly as George described being an

artist as not a choice, but as something chosen by the Creator: "I believe that in First Nations' culture that you are born, [and] your gift [is] given by the Creator. It wasn't something that I decided to do. It's just... this is what I'm supposed to be doing while I'm here on this planet."

### **Informal Research Practice as Sacred Process**

I asked George about his process in creating a picture book and he described how he works from a very intuitive and unconscious place, forgoing any formal research, preparing himself and his studio instead to be "part of the vehicle.... Just relying on being in the moment when I paint or create art.... That's why I say it's sacred. Creating art is sacred." A case in point are his illustrations for Richard Van Camp's story *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?*, a story about contemporary First Nations' life that asks this central question to explore different cultural values and interpersonal relationships. Regarding the illustrations for this book, George told me:

Because I've been painting horses for years, I just sort of fell into what I knew about my own culture and tried to be respectful of Richard's culture.... I was very cognitive of that when I was creating Richard's work. To not go against his teachings [from] his elders or the Dine culture, [while] keeping in mind my own Cree identity at the same time. I can't add to the story. I can only add images that add to the book as a whole.

George told me that because he wasn't trained as an illustrator he tends to "kind of go at it naively" saying:

I don't go with too many preconceived ideas.... And in hindsight I look back and think—could I have changed it? How could I have changed it or made it better? Could I have made some storybooks for kids where its super realism and everything looks ideal? [But] that's not me. I don't do that. Nor would I want to do that. I think I went at it the best I could. I try to create a bit of magic. That's basically the basis of the work, [to] try to keep in mind the spiritual side.

### **Cultural Production**

While George approaches his art from his intuitive and spiritual side, he is sometimes constrained by external cultural production issues. For example, George told me that in *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* one of the Caucasian characters had a wrinkle/bulge in his pants from getting off his horse. CBP insisted that this wrinkle/bulge be



removed, yet in another Richard's biracial split and the other an Indian, cowboy hand cocked in he accidentally included the press didn't notice: on the hand and nobody oh my God, there's six. Meanwhile, they were about the bulge in the constraint that annoyed change Richard's face. He remarked:



From *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* (1998).  
Illustrated by George Littlechild.

Well, I know like.... And here

so I had to redo his face to make him cuter. I didn't really care for things like that. But for the most I... really liked that book. I think it worked well. I think it was well written. I hopefully illustrated it [well] enough to make it an exciting book.

Nevertheless, George's greatest frustration in working with Children's Book Press was not with the illustration but with the term "Indian" used in *This Land is My Land*. The editors, Harriet Rohmer and her husband and co-editor David Schecter, selected images from George's paintings and then interviewed him to help write the text. However, George regrets that they used the term "Indian" for CBP's primary audience, located in the United States, instead of George's preferred term "First Nations." He told me:

It had to be marketable. So the idea of First Nation wasn't used. I get people in Canada... [saying:] "Don't you know?" Of course I know we don't call ourselves Indians anymore. Do you really think I'm stupid? "Well it's in the book. It's published in this book." So I've got to explain this whole thing to people. Yes, the publisher used what they wanted to use. We don't call ourselves Indian. I said, I know that—it was up to the publisher.

image, showing with one side a cowboy George painted the the shape of a gun but six fingers. This detail "There are six fingers caught that. I thought, fingers on his hand. more concerned cowboy." Another George was having to and make him "cuter."

what Richard looks he wasn't cute enough,

We spoke at length about issues of terminology and when I asked him what he thought about the term "minority" he said:

I hate it. It's just another categorization for these groups of people that get thrown into these categories. If someone were to ask me are you a minority. I would answer, yes, I am. I'm conditioned to think that now. I've obviously accepted this box that we get put into as a minority. It's limiting. It also creates identity in contemporary times in order to fit into a hole.

Questioning George about the term " person of color" also brought a similar response:

"That's another categorization. It's another way of saying something safely. It's another way of putting a whole group of people together who aren't Caucasian." George told me that at the same time, it also creates community:

For all the bad that it does, there is also good. When I'm in a group or a conference and there are other people of color, I find myself edging towards them. Or when we speak, I find that what I'm saying is more aligned to what they're saying than the Caucasians. I feel that I guard community within the environment that I'm in. I think as you get older the color barrier starts to fade because you're growing and developing as a human being. And age is a wonderful thing because it helps you to be more tolerant and less judgmental.... So that idea of color, it creates community, but it also divides.

### **Contemporary Representations**

George's stories and pictures address issues of community, as well as colonialism, alcoholism, spirituality, his pride in his ancestors and those who have managed to survive and thrive from his culture, while also providing a glimpse into this particular First Nation artist's life. He does so with brilliantly colored and patterned images that dance across the page with humor or pathos. In addition, his books and art also show depictions of contemporary First Nations' life, something rarely seen in children's picture books even to this day.

In addition to being able to present First Nations' culture to a wide audience, George finds that making children's picture books can also bring respectability and prestige that being a practicing artist often lacks. He told me about the different responses he has received as a fine artist and a children's book artist:

[Being a children's book artist has] been really positive. When you tell people what you

do, when you say you're an artist—and then you say that you illustrate books—for some reason there's some legitimacy. People seem to think, "Oh, then... you're legitimate." Whereas when you say you're an artist it's like, "Oh, well, [how are] you gonna make a living as that?".... [B]ut I think what the bottom line is, or what's amazing, is how [the books] affect the youth and how the children respond to them. To me that's really exciting and amazing. And that is part of a legacy you are leaving [behind] part of your culture.

George reflected that one of the essential things that artists, writers, and children's book illustrators do is: "to convey a message," with art being "a really powerful vehicle" to do this. He sees himself as a "cultural worker" involved with transformation and change through his art and community work stating:

[In] the workshops that I do, I see myself as a catalyst.... And that's why I really feel... that each artist has a powerful voice, [and] a powerful message. And what needs to be done in order for those messages to be put out there is that publishers [and] editors need to start taking people more seriously, as far as not diluting the voice, diluting the image, diluting the message. Because once you start doing that, you make some pretty safe children's book art. And the messages artists [have] are powerful and that power needs to be put out there.

### **Spirituality and Place**

George's images come to him in a highly intuitive way that feel very spiritual and sacred while also being firmly grounded in time and place—ranging from the Plains of Canada, to New York City, to the Indian Boarding School where his relatives were forcibly relocated. I remembered George's strong sense of place from Guy's and my visit last summer where George delighted in taking us to many different and spectacularly beautiful places. When I mentioned this connection to diverse landscapes, he told me how he felt connected to different environments through both his own childhood and his nomadic ancestors: "My ancestors would walk and walk, and they would go great distances, so that is very much part of who I am."

### **Vision for Education**

This sense of spatiality and continuity came through when George described his ideal school, which like much of First Nations' culture is based on a circular model. Instead of children only being only able to see the back of the head of the student in front and the teacher, the

students and teacher would all be interacting together. There would be "way less structure" and the environment would be "more organic, more holistic, more to the approach that the child learns within the environment rather than being dictated to where they sit in little rows and desks." George advocated bringing First Nations' elders in to share their teachings with children using a

First Nations' spiritual approach... where an elder would actually sit down with the youth and talk to them and counsel them rather than dictate... what to do and what not to do and test them to decide if they're smart or not.... You'd be a society... [where] everyone's important.

George described a natural learning environment: "around a river, or... an area [that's] not right in the middle, plump, dump with cement." He spoke about experiencing schools as very "male-dominant energy" with a lack of emphasis on natural environments and dominance of asphalt playgrounds for baseball and such instead. While aspects of George's vision for education are being used in some schools, his ideal school is not yet a reality. However, George did take pains to point out that education in Canada is highly valued. "So you'll see that they do have art supplies. They do have enough materials, equipment, [and are] willing to buy more for the different workshops." He also noted that while there were still many curriculum and pedagogical changes needed, the Canadian government was really trying: "They have children's books like yours and mine in school that they never had when we were kids. So there is a definite change. It certainly has grown over the years."

George saw much greater sensitivity towards the different ethnicities and the different languages spoken in Canada, as well as a greater sensitivity to First Nations' people such as employing people who are "First Nations themselves [to] work with the First Nations' youth within the school districts. And that's really wonderful." In fact, George has created a series of culturally responsive and anti-racist workshops that he presents in schools working with children and youth in schools combining student-generated images and texts. Speaking about the anti-racist workshop he said: "The work is very magical. I'm always amazed.... It's really powerful. The process [of art as transformation] is probably at its truest form."

### **Personal Stories as Political Activism**

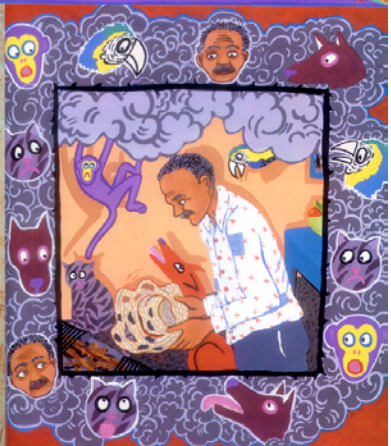
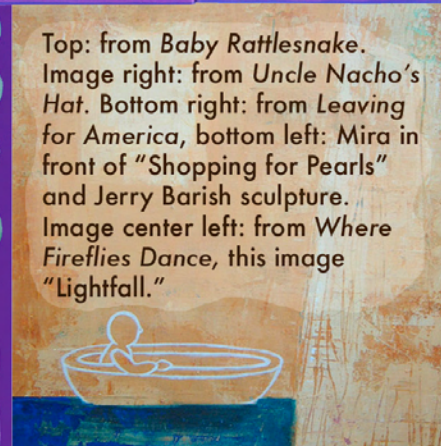
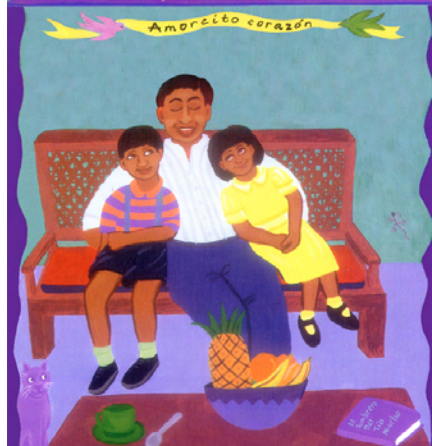
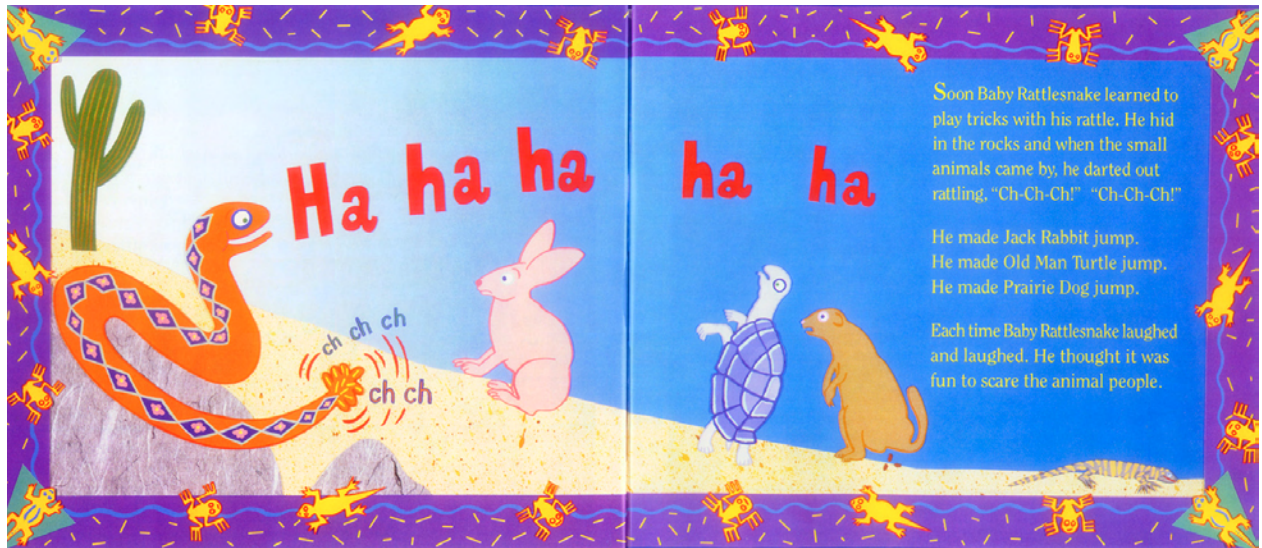
This process of "art as transformation" is obvious in George's art. One of the many

impressive things about George is the soulful way that he weaves his own personal stories as political activism into his children's books. These beautiful images include overt representations such as George's self-portraits in *Just Like Me* and *This Land is My Land*. These self-portraits, depicting a contemporary First Nations' artist, are in themselves radical images contesting the normative representations of First Nations' people as "long gone," "villains or victims," or "spiritual guides for White folks" usually found in children's books. George's own story also appears in his portraits of other First Nations' people in *This Land is My Land* where his research interests coincide with his personal history. For example, in the painting "Giving Thanks to the Grandmothers," we learn about First Nations' traditions while meeting the grandmother whom George himself was never able to meet. "Red Horse Boarding School" tells of the displacement of First Nations' children sent to Christian boarding schools, robbed of their own families and traditions. This story in many ways mirrors George's own experiences of displacement from his birth parents and birthplace to live with a White Christian family. However, George was fortunate enough to have a loving foster mother who nurtured his creative spirit enabling him to survive and thrive despite a difficult childhood. Likewise, in *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Animals*, George depicts a contemporary First Nations' lifestyle that resembles his own life with its intense curiosity about his people's ways and even the colorful interior of his home with paintings hanging on the brightly colored walls.

In weaving together these visual stories, connecting the personal with the political, George, like most of the participants, has created a means of processing and transforming his own and his people's history to enact healing and transformation. This healing and transformation, or decolonization and reinhabitation, has not only benefited George but also the thousands of children (and adults) who have seen his work, learning through George's humor, beauty, and pain about the interconnections between race, place, and art.



M i r a R e i s b e r g



Top: from *Baby Rattlesnake*. Image right: from *Uncle Nacho's Hat*. Bottom right: from *Leaving for America*, bottom left: Mira in front of "Shopping for Pearls" and Jerry Barish sculpture. Image center left: from *Where Fireflies Dance*, this image "Lightfall."





In writing my self-portrait as the final portrait, I find myself as I did in the beginning of this dissertation, feeling awkward, and somewhat stumped. Should I start with who I am as a researcher and my process in both conducting this research project and constructing this self-portrait? Should I write about the interview process with my chair and mentor, David Gruenewald, who conducted both my interviews? Or should I start as I did with the others—situating myself in context, putting myself in place, and go from there? As always there are multiple possibilities influencing which direction something like this can go... so I simply dive-in, trusting in some sort of unconscious force to guide me.

The home I share with my husband Guy and our two cats, Guido and Possum, is full of light, color, art, and books. There are paintings on all the walls including Guy's and mine and many of our friends as well. Guy has created dioramas on the glass shelves of the big living room window from an assortment of "tchochkes" (ornaments and plastic toys) that he has combined to tell short stories. The kitchen is a deep egg-yolk yellow while the living room features a dramatic salmon/Pepto-Bismol pink wall hung gallery style with an assortment of small art pieces such as one from Melbourne, Australia's "Museum of Oddities," Hugh D'Andrade's alien boy on a bicycle, and one of children's book artist Elisa Kleven's exquisite miniatures.

### **Spirituality, Addiction, Early Racism and The Gift of Art**

David asked me to talk about one of my paintings so I showed him my current favorite, a piece called "Shopping for Pearls," which is about trying to find God or spirituality through consumerism. I'm interested in how it's easy to make spiritual connections through intense beauty or heartfelt connections with nature or love, but sometimes we get our wires crossed and we try and fill the "spiritual hole," or comfort ourselves, through things like rampant shopping/consumerism or other forms of addiction.

My interest/awareness of the need for spiritual connection came later in life, held under as it was by the hostile Christian tradition I was surrounded by as a child and the by staggering weight of my family's Holocaust experiences. As the only Jewish family in a predominantly Anglo neighborhood, we were hated for our difference. The other children learned that the Jews killed Jesus and, as we were the only Jews, that meant my family was responsible. Consequently I was beaten up several times for this "crime." My parents were holocaust survivors who

immigrated to Australia as a source of cheap labor. Being in another hostile country, while also lacking the ability to deal with the trauma of their lost families in Europe was very difficult for them, and they died relatively young. However, even though our home was fairly dysfunctional, full of anger and grief, it was also one that valued learning, and culture, and humor. I remember my mother giving me art supplies, which for a poor working-class family were a luxury, and saying: "I can't give you a beautiful world but you can make one for yourself." Throughout my childhood I used art to either make sense of my life or escape it by painting mermaids or other fantasies. This gift of art has sustained me throughout my life providing comfort, understanding, sensual joy, and ultimately transformation.

The books of my childhood were also luxuries, but even though I loved many of them they did not reflect me in any way. The books I remember were the British books favored in the colonies at the time, such as Enid Blyton's *Noddy* books, A.A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, Charles Kingsley's *The Waterbabies*, (which interestingly, was an early forerunner for environmental education) and Arthur Rackham's exquisite fairy tales. Although some of these books had subversive elements in them such as Noddy's lack of reverence for Inspector Plod, *Noddy* also had racist elements too such as the bad black Gollywog character Mr. Golly. Most of the characters in these books had the fair skins and upturned noses of Aryan Europeans. In fact, the only people who looked like me in children's books were generally one of these three: the wicked witch, the evil stepmother, or one of the horrible stepsisters. These were not people I wanted to resemble.

### **Coming to America**

My East Preston education was definitely a hostile environment, less because of my ethnicity and more because of my spirit. School was all about controlling rather than engaging the child, and in elementary school I was the only girl to receive corporal punishment. In Australia I was known as a tall poppy, which means that when there's a field of poppies and one stands out—it needs to be cut down. Following the advice of a palm reader I came to the United States in the early 1980s where I landed and stayed for many years in San Francisco, a city full of artists, misfits, multiculturalism, and other Jews.

I remember, prior to coming to San Francisco, hating being Jewish, dark, and different. As a kid I was constantly pushing my nose up, trying to get rid of its Semitic shape. If anyone

would ask what ethnicity I was I'd answer "European descent" in a voice that did not invite further questioning. It wasn't until I met other Jews who were like me, and began doing the kid's books, that I started becoming comfortable with my ethnicity. However, throughout most of my life I wouldn't talk about the past, about my parents and the holocaust. People don't always "get it" that asking probing questions of someone whose personal history involves trauma like the holocaust, or growing up poor and Black in America, is a bit like asking: "Oh, and how did it feel getting raped?" There's a lot of pain with these stories, and although they are important stories that need to be told, they come at a cost to the teller. Whenever I go into my own story, it's very painful, so I tend to avoid it. Holocaust. Parents died young. Getting beaten up. Being alienated. Going hungry at times. Drug addiction. It's a great story of survival and resilience. I credit art and I credit my Jewish heritage for surviving and doing well in moving beyond this history. Jews really value learning, so despite growing up in a place where the few options other than motherhood, available to girls were to work in a factory, be a secretary, or for the really, really ambitious, become a teacher, I now find myself joining the middle-class world of academia. My family embraced this Jewish reverence for learning, raising me with a strong sense of pride and confidence in my own intelligence and abilities, and here I am—an artist, a researcher, *and* a teacher.

Art and aesthetics have also helped me find solace and beauty in nature. Growing up in an ugly industrial neighborhood, nature was alien to me. As a young child my one real experience of nature was going to the "Lord Mayor's Camp for Poor Kids" where any walks in nature were filled with fear. When the leaders saw a snake they beat it to death in front of us, warning us about how many things in nature can kill you. It wasn't until I was a young adult that I was able to develop an appreciation of place through experiencing the wildness and beauty of the Australian bush with more enlightened adults. This love of nature has remained with me as a transformative force and was instrumental in my decision to move to Pullman, where when I first came to visit, I fell in love with not only the spirit of the educational program but also the incredible beauty of the landscape.

David and I spoke about the ways the kind of alienation from nature that I experienced in my childhood is re-inscribed through children's books. We spoke about Leonard Schlain's book *The Goddess and the Alphabet*, where he writes about the invention of the alphabet alienating

human beings from images that describe the natural world. This led into the privileging of text over image and the ways that the physical world has been rendered abstract and removed, described in kid's books as "background" rather than as core to the character's being. However, images have always been paramount for me, and this love of the visual and beauty has nurtured my soul, and like George, provided transformative experiences, particularly through color and nature.

The process of making children's books and doing my personal art has also been very healing for me. I was able to do that "it's never too late to have a happy childhood thing" where I had the opportunity to create the kinds of books that I wanted to have as a kid. I'm able to work with children and really validate them, their culture, and their communities, teaching them skills that will help them, and sharing parts from my own life that they can identify with and in which they can see hope. Making children's books that celebrate many kinds of beauty and ways of being has provided me with the opportunity to help make a better world and in the process make peace with many of my own issues around ethnicity, class, and place.

### **The Artist's Narrative**

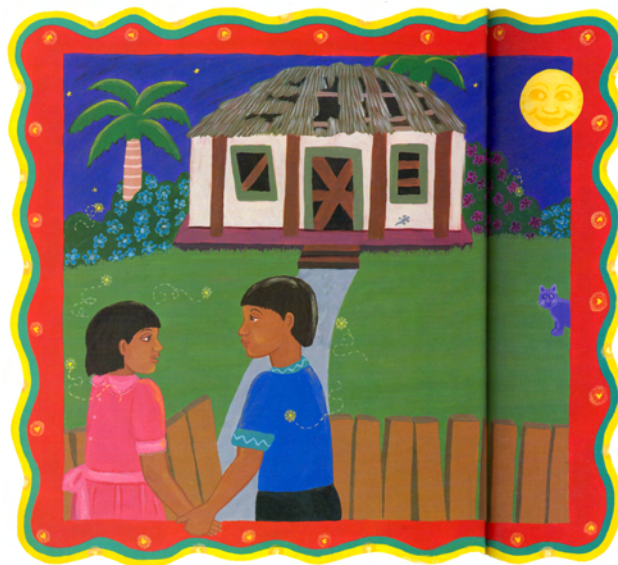
When we began talking about the children's books, David asked me, "Well, where does the artist's narrative in children's books come from? It seems like in most of the books that I read, there's an author who writes the text, who has the story, and then there's an artist who draws the pictures, paints the pictures." I informed him that we embed our own narratives within the images and gave him an example from a book called *Just Like Home/Como en mi tierra*, which is about a Mexican girl who comes to the States and the things that are similar and the things that are different.

I told him I painted a little hummingbird on the girl's t-shirt because hummingbirds are a symbol of the miraculous, as well as being native to both Mexico and the United States. It's a small, tiny thing that travels and beats its wings at a phenomenal rate and is fragile and tough at the same time. They survive even though they are so tiny. And they are so exquisitely beautiful. Well, I'm a small tiny thing, both fragile and strong at the same time, so I have this little unspoken story of the hummingbird, barely on any kind of conscious radar. But it's there, and it's a way that I bring my own voice and my own story into the book.

Another example is in *Baby Rattlesnake*, which is my favorite of all my kid's books.

Because I had lived in the Southwest where the story takes place, researching and getting a feel for what I was doing was not difficult. It's a Native-American story retold by Lynn Moroney who is part Native-American, with the blessings of TeAta, the original native teller. The story is about a naughty baby rattlesnake who wants his rattle before he's ready for it, and how he drives everyone crazy until he gets it, and then uses it, misuses it, loses it, and learns a lesson. Subtexts in the story address issues related to community, governance, family, and responsibility, while the landscape and ecosystem also plays an important and unspoken role. However, it was the willfulness and naughtiness of Baby Rattlesnake that I identified with and embraced in the story. So I created a second story with a Gila monster weaving through each page because I think they look really cool and they're ancient. Gila monsters are endangered and protected animals, and, even though they are venomous, it is only as a protective response. My Gila monsters are fun-loving guys and provide yet another layer of personal identification.

In *Where Fireflies Dance*, written by Lucha Corpi, I included a purple cat that comes to play. I have two cats that I adore, and they try and get in my books and my art whenever they can. I identify of their sensuality love to snuggle. And color purple. When I and cigarettes, I I would be straight for a whole year I It was a way of going to be straight. be a transgressive going to follow my conventional. And I



From *Where Fireflies Dance* (1997).  
Illustrated by Mira Reisberg.

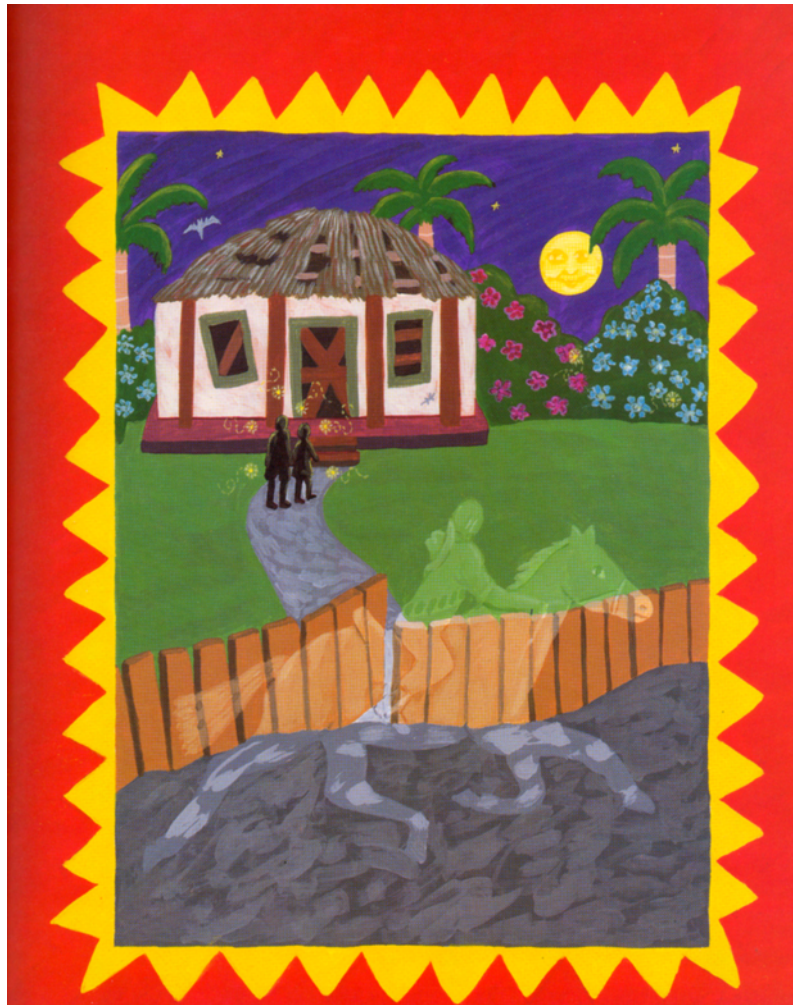
with cats because and the way they I identify with the quit drugs, alcohol, was really worried and boring. And so dyed my hair purple. saying "No, I'm not I'm always going to wildcard. I'm always own path and not be hope that I always

stay that way." In other ways the purple cat's appearances and disappearances throughout the book symbolizes the mystery and unpredictability of life.

*Where Fireflies Dance* is another favorite book, although I do regret not having painted a wider range of skin colors than the dark skin colors of my near neighbors in the Mission. The

author, Lucha Corpi, wrote a beautiful autobiographical story about her childhood in Jáltipan, Mexico, which she ultimately leaves to find her "destiny" in the United States. Within the story are narratives about place and the natural world to which Jáltipan is so clearly connected. The book also shows the closeness of family, and elders as storytellers and keepers of local history. Another layer of the book includes a ghost-story subplot about Juan Sebastián who went

to fight for freedom in Mexico with General Zapata and never returned. This combination of history, place, family, and community created a powerful formative experience for young Lucha, and a rich story for the reader. In addition, the poetic text evokes the tradition of "magic realism," which mixes up dreams and reality, and the liminal memories and documented histories to create an aesthetic mix of "poetic license," hence the



From *Where Fireflies Dance* (1997). Illustrated by Mira Reisberg.

freedom in Mexico with General Zapata and never returned. This combination of history, place, family, and community created a powerful formative experience for young Lucha, and a rich story for the reader. In addition, the poetic text evokes the tradition of "magic realism," which mixes up dreams and the liminal memories and documented histories to create an aesthetic license," hence the

A final example I'd like to give about bringing my own narratives into the books I illustrate is from *Leaving for America* where I incorporated photographs from both the authors and my families as well as a photograph of one of the main characters shortly before she was killed by the Nazis. Many of the artifacts, such as the family's Sabbath candles, are based on those from my home, and the sunflowers throughout the book are based on those my father

grew in our backyard.

Set shortly before the holocaust, *Leaving for America* is the author Roslyn Bresnick-Perry's story of leaving her "shtetl" on the Russian-Polish border with her mother to join her father in America. They were leaving to escape the rampant anti-Semitism and grinding poverty of shtetl life with hopes of a better life in America. The book tells of Roslyn's childhood adventures with her cousin Zisl in Wysokie-Litewskie and the struggles she and her mother faced in learning English. But most of all it tells of her close bond with her grandfather who helped her learn her "alef beys" (ABC's): "He said that I must learn my letters so that I could read the Holy Books and the history of our people and grow up knowing what is right and who I am."

This message of cultural identity is reinforced as Roslyn and her mother are leaving, when grandfather says: "And you my grandchild, will you remain a true Jewish daughter of your people?" The final double spread shows Roslyn and her mother sitting on a steamer trunk with collaged images of Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and New York City, while the text has Roslyn, as a grandmother, now reflecting that she has not forgotten her old home and the people of her childhood, nor has she forgotten her grandfather's question. In the author notes, Roslyn writes about her life as a storyteller and how she often tells stories about Zisl:

When people ask me if I still see Zisl, I sadly must tell them that Zisl died in the holocaust, when six million Jews were murdered in World War II. Then all of a sudden, my audience becomes very quiet, because this thing that happened is not just "six million Jews," it's Zisl.

Roslyn writes about how her extended family all perished in the war and of struggling to overcome "her family tragedy, culture shock, a language barrier, and dyslexia." On the same page, the section about the illustrator gives biographical details including how being the daughter of holocaust survivors I felt a strong personal connection with the story. But it doesn't mention the ghosts and nightmares I had to battle with in doing the book or the overwhelming sense of responsibility in representing murdered people who could not represent themselves. Some of the reference photographs included comments such as "last photograph of Zisl before she was killed."

## Visual Culture Borders

Another aesthetic and practical choice in *Leaving for America* was to use borders as a means of subtext where the main image tells one story while the borders either extend or compliment that story. For example, when people are giving Roslyn and her mother advice about American life, the border shows collaged visual culture images of early Jewish-American life such as a kosher bottle of Pepsi Cola and pictures of New York's Lower East Side.

On the page where Roslyn and her mother are leaving, her grandmother runs inside and quickly makes and brings her a chopped liver sandwich. The text reads: "Now darling, eat a little chopped liver so you'll feel better." After all you get while eating chopped liver crying emotion. Both image and text show the importance of food in Jewish culture,



From *Leaving for America* (1997).  
Illustrated by Mira Reisberg.

is used as a source of emotional comfort. In another scene, Roslyn's grandfather is lifting her into the carriage asking her if she will remain "a true Jewish daughter" of her people. The border is full of symbols of Jewish religious and secular life such as the Hebrew words for peace and life (shalom and Hai), a yamulke, more chicken noodle soup and challah, a dove of peace, a dreidel, and so forth.

As an artist I have the freedom to represent the text in whatever way inspires me, so I painted the main protagonist to resemble my mother as a child and found a young girl who resembled her to be my model. I also used friends as models who dressed and posed in clothing of the period. In an image about the author and her mother saying goodbye to

and her mother grandmother runs makes and brings sandwich. The text eat a little chopped better.' I ate my with much less how emotional can chopped liver?" The with chicken noodle balls, while floating variety of traditional the text and the importance of food which in this context



everyone, I filled the border with portraits of all the Jews I knew, including my twin sister and me, my older sister and her family, my therapist, various friends, the author and her family, and the publisher Harriet Rohmer and her husband.

### **Visual Culture and Cultural Production**

I tried to show a range of Jews from blue-eyed blondes and redheads, to the more commonly known dark haired, dark-eyed Jews. Interestingly the author on seeing the incomplete dummy (mock up) of the book complained that most of the noses were too big.

This was ironic to real Jews for models a sizeable nose. Harriet about this that perhaps Roslyn internalized anti-Michael Jackson's of himself in a of Whiteness, and in keeping my Jewish Unfortunately, I have illustrated, is the only book that culture and ironically that is out of print.



From *Leaving for America* (1997).  
Illustrated by Mira Reisberg.

me as I had used and she herself has When I spoke with issue I mentioned might have some Semitism, similar to reconstruction bastardized image Harriet supported me noses. of the eight books *Leaving for America* represents my own it is the only one While both of the anthologies include aspects of my Jewishness, *Leaving for America* is the only fully Jewish book that I, or CBP, have produced and despite it being featured in the Holocaust Museum, receiving excellent reviews including being highlighted as a best book of 1992 in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, it fell beneath the cracks of CBP's niche market of Latin-American, African-American, Native-American, and Asian-American books.

Another irony for me as an artist is that my least favorite and the least soulful of my children's books, *Just Like Home*, has received the best reviews on Amazon.com. It's the only book I've done for anyone other than CBP, and one that I describe as "death by committee,"

where the book switched editors and the story went from being a "story" book to a "concept" book.

In Elizabeth Miller's story the family comes from Mexico to start a new life in the United States. The book contrasts what is different with what is the same—foods, landscapes, weather, etc. As the book metamorphosed into a concept book I was required to put five different things on each page that were then listed in the Spanish-English dictionary that concludes the book with a "find the object" activity for the reader. None of the characters had names other than mama and papa, further making the book more "generalizable." I experienced many limitations in making the images and felt like an "art plumber" where I had a do to job, and I went in and did it. The book is completely depoliticized in a completely "politically correct" way. There is no reason given why they've come to the United States, they've just come. In the opening airport scene I had to add an Indian woman and an Asian family; I wasn't able to show an interracial couple. The original interracial couple had bare feet, the boy had blonde dreadlocks, and the African-American girl had a nose ring and exposed belly button, all of which had to go. Instead the couple changed to a Black father and daughter. Another controlled incident was a classroom scene where the editor asked me to put homophobic words on the blackboard and I had to change which/witch to something else. Clearly fears of the Christian far right were at work here.

While there are things that are helpful in the book, such as bringing attention to the difficulties for immigrant kids in making a new life in the United States and showing that there are middle-class Latinos, there is nothing that challenges the reader/viewer to think beyond these less threatening concerns. So it's not too surprising that mainstream America likes this book.

The process of doing this book showed the ways that I had been spoiled by CBP although there were incidents there, too. With *Baby Rattlesnake*, I was asked if I could make him less phallic looking, to which I of course laughed and then controlled myself and said, "Of course, I'll try." And in *Where Fireflies Dance* there is a cantina scene (a bar) where I couldn't show alcohol or cigarettes and was asked to make the all male patrons look "less gay." Now this was a challenge, and I do have to admit that my bar scene does look a little like something out of the Castro District. Apart from these examples, changes requested have mostly been about maintaining consistency of character. However, I did manage to sneak something by in a spread

from *Baby Rattlesnake* where Baby Rattlesnake runs around scaring all the desert animals after he gets his rattle, and where I showed Prairie Dog pooping in fear. When Harriet saw this spread she just laughed knowing that it might impact some sales, but it was too late and she enjoyed the cheekiness of it.

I do a lot of research in all my books, partly because I love doing research and partly because for most of my books I've been an outsider and have had to work extra hard to try and get it right. This research includes reading books and collecting images both from books and

the Internet, related running my by insiders. whenever the author drawings be accurate pulling teeth produces surprisingly drawings). I other artists' Frida Kahlo Chagall, both inspire me. I honor them in *Ancestors*, them as



From *Leaving for America* (1992). Illustrated by Mira Reisberg.

watching movies, and sketches In addition, possible I ask to make to help me (this is like and often some delightful also draw on work such as and Marc of whom was able to *Honoring Our* adopting part of my

"Ancestral Wall of Wonderful Relatives," my blood ancestors' histories and memories being lost in the ashes of the holocaust and my parents' early deaths. Apart from my missing history, I made the ancestral wall of real and imagined relatives to show children that we are formed by more than blood relatives, and those of us that come from difficult or missing families can claim

our own kin in addition to or instead of those we inherit by birth. Besides honoring Chagall in this painting, I was also able to honor him in a painting in *Leaving for America* where I did an "homage á Chagall" page tweaking one of his images to include characters and events from Roslyn's story.

My process in making the images usually involves reading and reflecting on the text, trying to imagine which images might go where. I then make tiny "thought" sketches, known as thumbnails, before choosing my favorites and enlarging them. I then find people who resemble my drawings, take photographs of them, and rework my sketches to be a mix of inside and outside sources. I then engage in a back and forth process similar to what Maya described, drawing from both real and imagined sources. Along the way there are many changes such as those described earlier, as well changes that I make to produce more dynamic images. I like to challenge myself, so I often use new or different media to do the final colored art.

### **Working in Schools**

With the success of my children's books, I began to be invited to work in schools in various capacities as an art educator through different programs. It's been truly amazing for me working in schools to see the contrast in resources available to different schools that are inevitably racially demarcated. It seems highly unjust. It is easy for me to indulge in conspiracy theories having read texts such as Elaine Garan's *In Defense of Our Children: When Politics, Profit and Education Collide* and Stan Karp's articles in *Rethinking Schools* who link No Child Left Behind with a right wing political agenda to privatize education and benefit corporate text book companies and testing industries. This legislation and the accompanying emphasis on testing and rote learning means that the kids most in need of culturally responsive and meaningful technologies, such as the arts, are the ones least likely to get them. It is easy for me to further indulge in conspiracy narratives such as that by emphasizing rote learning at the expense of creativity and critical thinking skills, the "powers that be" don't want poor, working-class, and minority children to have these skills that might challenge the normative project of "winners and losers" with the losers (think poor and minority) servicing the winners by being the drudge workers, renters, and credit card debtors. Like Maya, I see how regimented everything is in the factory model of education where children and teachers are held hostage to the clock and to policy makers who are nowhere near the front lines of teaching. It makes me think of

Foucault's panopticon, where teachers are constantly under scrutiny, and we, in turn, scrutinize our students. I marvel in dystopian horror at how efficient this is as a disciplining technology in controlling teachers, students, education, and society in general.

When I think about my own vision for education, I realize that it is just as extreme as the one described above. My vision is completely utopian in contrast to the cynical dystopian, conspiracy narrative I have just described. But, I believe utopian fantasies are important. As I said to Elizabeth, our job as artists is to imagine, because imagining is the first step in creating. So then what is my vision for education? At this point, my vision for education draws from each of my participants as well as what I've learned from my personal experiences, and what I've learned in graduate school. Front and center would be a complete change in attitude going from our present patriarchal, authoritarian, worker-producing, fragmented model to one based on a well-valued, well-resourced, well-respected, well-paid, and most importantly, loving model where schools are not places to send kids off to but an integral part of the community.

In opposition to the punishment principle that much of schooling and society has been based on for an awfully long time, my vision incorporates pleasure, where students learn because they love doing so. My ideal would utilize place-based education and critical multicultural education practices and principles through a common assumption that *all* kids are creative, intelligent, and worthwhile; meanwhile, teacher education colleges would ensure that *all* teachers are artists, able to utilize their creativity and knowledge in helping students develop their full potential through integrated curricula taught in intimate classrooms that are beautiful and comfortable learning environments. These environments would connect to nature through windows, French doors, learning gardens, working organic farms, and either natural or human made landscapes that invite local wildlife. Teachers and community would work together in guiding children into adulthood as active democratic participants in both the places where they live and the larger world around them.

As advocated by Joe Sam, students would be able to pursue their interests in well-equipped shops such as: welding, automotive, painting, carpentry, technology, animation, ceramics, video, music, instrument repair. These shops would not be differentiated in terms of status, and would be equally well-equipped allowing students to explore and develop skills that interest them. They would select projects with their classmates that have real world value

benefiting their communities while developing an ethic of care toward themselves, each other, their community, and the environment.

The realm of the emotions and the sensual joys of connecting with nature would also be explored through art and all areas of the curriculum, while the whole notion of how and why we educate children would change into one based on loving, playful, creative, and emotive engagement with real-world issues to promote physically, and emotionally healthy, world-conserving citizens.

While this may sound utopian, I also know that enormous amounts of money go into supporting corporate businesses, space travel, war, the industrial prison industry, government, etc.. While valuing children as much as we do business, and punishment, would require a huge paradigm shift, it's what is needed if we are going to adopt the changes and values needed to survive the consequences of our current priorities that are threatening both human and non-human life.

When I think back on my childhood education, it really was something I survived. While it taught me the basics I needed to get by in the world, such as reading, writing, and basic math, it gave me no means of navigating the inner turmoil of coming from a traumatized and dysfunctional home, and of living in a desperate, disconnected, and often hateful world. As a sensitive and emotional being, I would have been completely lost if I hadn't been fortunate enough to have parents who encouraged me in my art, some individual caring teachers, and other individuals who cared for me when I could not. I'm one of the many that can attest to the fact that art saves lives. Even though I was lost for many years through addictions that numbed the pain of my life so it was survivable, I never stopped making art as a place for understanding and transformation. Hence the great passion that I bring to the work I do here.

### **Reflecting on the Research Journey**

In writing my thoughts, and particularly my vision for education, I see how far I've traveled since beginning this research and how much I have both learned from and been influenced by my participants, my students, and my own art making and research process. Who I was when I began this research is different than who I am now, although many of my values remain the same. How I see my values and the range of possibilities that exist within them has expanded, and no doubt will continue to expand as I travel further on this journey.

I realize that as an artist, and in particular as a children's book artist, I have been able to communicate some of my experiences in ways that touch others while providing alternate representations to those that excluded or marginalized ethnic minorities. And while I don't regret doing any of these books, I now question the appropriateness of my continuing to illustrate books from cultures other than my own as I wrote about earlier in this dissertation. In addition, I also see how my art has enabled me to foreground connections between place and culture, which with the ongoing degradation of our environment are increasingly important connections to make explicit. None of this has been a conscious process where I've sat down and said: "I will now find a way to illustrate multicultural children's books so that I can heal my own woundings from racism." Or, "Hmm, I want to foreground the relationships between place and culture, why don't I paint about that?" While some artists do work that way, my process, like that described by several other participants, is extremely intuitive and unconscious "falling" into things and understanding them later.

As a researcher, my process begins in the exact opposite way, where I begin consciously with a question or interest and proceed to explore from there. And while both of these processes begin in very different ways, they end in very similar ways, particularly in the writing part, struggling to make meaning or understanding from what I've discovered along the way.

Finally, as a teacher I try to integrate both these areas of art and graphy, along with what I've learned as an artist, researcher, and teacher into my teaching practice. I do this to share with my students what I have learned while continuing the process of inquiry with all the new questions that inevitably arise.

In this next chapter I will share some of the understandings I have found in the process of doing this research along with some of the many questions that remain.





# chapter six

Concluding/Meaning-Making/Understanding/Reflecting:  
Developing a Place-Based Pedagogy of Pleasure



### **Pulling It All Together**

Before sharing some of the understandings that I have found in the process of doing this a/r/tographic research along with some of the questions that remain, I have some more immediate concerns, which I need to address. This chapter, which is essentially my final chapter, is where the meaning making is supposed to occur, but I wonder if this is where I want to go with this. Do I want to try and represent finite findings and closed conclusions that say: "I found this here, so that means this there?" I'm not sure that this all is as concrete as that. Should I seek open understandings rather than fixed meanings as a/r/tography proposes? How abstract and mutable do I want to be/can I be? Conversely, how rational, logical, and hierarchical can I/do I want to be? Please note the change in type from the portraits, the academic writing, and my personal reflections as I attempt to weave these many voices and ideas together.

### **This One or That One, Or This One *And* That One?**

I have a problem. There is a divide between the two systems of intellectual inquiry that I've been pursuing within this dissertation. On entering the academy I was immersed in learning academic research and scholarly writing techniques founded on the logical, deductive, analytical systems of thought within the social sciences. These involved making and supporting claims with warrants and backing that are linear, reasonable, and provable. A/r/tography however, is a whole other "kettle of fish" as we say in Australia. A/r/tography floats on different processes founded in the arts—the intuitive, the emotive, the unconscious, and the liminal as well as the logical and analytical processes of the social sciences. Making art is not the same as writing academic literature, although when well-done academic writing can be artful, emotive, and poetic, drawing on liminal and dream-like states, while making art can be analytical, linear and reasonable. And here I am trying to pull it all together, trying to access and respond to these different parts—right brain, left brain, that at times are in direct opposition to each other—concrete, abstract, conscious, liminal, logical, poetic. My a/r/tographic mentor Rita Irwin opens this up for me, pointing out: "A/r/tography is not either/or; it's *and and and and and* " (Irwin, 2006, personal

communication). So then this chapter of Concluding/Meaning Making/Understanding and Reflecting will be logical, reasonable, dreamlike, conscious, liminal, poetic, intellectual, emotive and more, framed within the beautiful theoretical lenses that I began this journey with and extending them both inward and outward.

### **Conflicting Desires**

Just as our work as children's book artists is given less credence, with frequently only the author being credited, so are the embedded stories within our images left unattended and unexplored. Teachers and students are often unschooled and uncomfortable in how to look at images to explore possible meanings or understandings and, interestingly, any understanding that might occur beyond the obvious, is usually on liminal and unconscious levels. Shlain (1998) sees this privileging of the abstract word over the ideogrammatic image as an integral part of the transition from matriarchal to patriarchal cultures, contributing to the disconnection between the heart, body, and mind, the spiritual, emotional, and physical, the earth, and its people. My participants and I all speak, and paint, and draw about making connections. And now I find myself torn between conflicting desires. How do I unite my institutionalized desire, the desire I've learned in the institution of academia to create concrete, literal, definable, sense-making texts, and my less institutionalized desire for poetic, artistic, whimsical, and dreamy reflection, while satisfying the needs of the academy? How do I forge these connections in this dissertation in fluid and elegant ways?

### ***Rhizomes***

As both fine and children's book artists, we are constantly navigating the worlds of childhood and adulthood, seeing where they frequently overlap, slipping between these worlds to see what lies beneath and between. In many ways this has also been the task of this dissertation in trying to unite diverse epistemologies.

There are so many parts to pull together, which I imagine are integrated somewhere, perhaps buried between the left and right brains in some sort of über or meta brain? Or perhaps there is no neat packaging or tying together of these many pages of sleepless

nights and years of inquiry. Rita suggests employing the metaphor of the rhizome, and indeed this dissertation is rife with metaphors from divers, and pirates, and centaurs, and roosters to the many metaphors embedded in my participants' art and this dissertation's pages. She sends me "The Rhizomatic Relations of A/r/tography" (Irwin, Grauer, Beer, Xiong, Bickel, & Springgay, 2006). I look up rhizome on the web. Wikipedia.org describes the rhizome as: "a usually-underground, horizontal stem of a plant that often sends out roots and shoots from its nodes. They are also referred to as creeping rootstalks or rootstocks" (Wikipedia, 2006). And, like a rhizome itself, Wikipedia shoots me off to another definition of: "Rhizome [as] metaphor, based on the botanical term "rhizome." They quote Carl Jung and describe French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's use of the term "rhizome" to:

describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. In *A Thousand Plateaus*,... [Deleuze and Guattari] opposed it to an arborescent conception of knowledge, which worked with dualist categories and binary choices. A rhizome works with horizontal and trans-species connections, while an arborescent model works with vertical and linear connections. Their use of the "orchid and the wasp" was taken from the biological concept of mutualism, in which two different species interact together to form a multiplicity (i.e. a unity that is multiple in itself). (Wikipedia, 2006)

I have an "Aha!" moment realizing that a/r/tography itself is a form of mutualism with these two epistemologies—arts-based educational research (the humanities) and the social sciences working—together to form an a/r/tographic multiplicity. Irwin, Grauer, Beer, *et al.* (2006) write: "Rhizomatic relations do not seek conclusions." Instead the authors propose "explor[ing] a/r/tographical situations as methodological in-between spaces for furthering living inquiry" (n.p.). The authors further state: "Rhizomes resist taxonomies and create interconnected networks with multiple entry points." Thus, a rhizome has no beginning or end, but instead exists in a multilayered, tangled, inter-relational web of interdependency. This proves to be an excellent metaphor for me as I ask myself: "At what point do I conclude

this?" The artists continue to make art and books; I continue to research, teach and make art. We all continue to evolve, and change, asking questions leading to more questions, leading to more questions, such as "How does this "end"? Once again I find myself looking through my spyglass as a playful pirate, and once again I dive in.

### **The Beginning of the End (Of this Dissertation)**

I will begin by revisiting my theoretical lenses—a/r/tography, critical multicultural education and analysis, place-based education, visual culture studies, and cultural production—exploring how they provided a conceptual framework that helps us to understand or at least play with the data that emerged during the research process. In particular, these lenses have been instrumental in navigating the relationship between my participants' lives and work as well as between theory and practice, looking at how each informs the other within the fields of art and education. However, before I begin, I would like to make clear how permeable the borders are between these different perspectives, and that while I have positioned postcolonial theory in critical multicultural education and analysis, it could just as easily fit within place-based education. In addition, aspects of visual culture exist within cultural production and vice versa. Even though CMEA is already structured as a large umbrella of various interrelated perspectives, I will be adding cultural production and visual culture to the mix for reasons, which while perhaps not apparent now, will become apparent later on within that section.

Following this theoretical exploration of the data, I would like to conclude chapter six by expanding on the ways that theory and practice can further inform each other through praxis in the development of a new perspective. I call this pedagogy “a place-based pedagogy of pleasure.”

A place-based pedagogy of pleasure utilizes and synthesizes aspects of the many traditions and experiences discussed in this dissertation while also adding elements not explicitly found within these existing theories and practices. Thus, a place-based pedagogy of pleasure is also a form of “multiplicity,” derived from the many theoretical lenses and experiences embedded in this study. Although this pedagogy is still very much in its

formative stages, because I believe it holds great potential within the field of education, I will be discussing it in greater detail further on in this dissertation, focusing more immediately on my various theoretical understandings.

### **A/r/tographic Understandings**

My a/r/tographic lens encouraged me to delve into what is and is not represented in the images and texts of my participants' lives and works. It led me to not only write and make art, but to utilize a/r/tography's six renderings to assist the inquiry/meaning-making/reflecting and understanding process. I have made some of these renderings explicit and others implicit throughout this dissertation, but I would now like to speak directly to these renderings of excess, metaphor, contiguity, living inquiry, openings, and reverberations as they have appeared in my study.

I'll begin with **EXCESS** and then, as the jazz musicians say, "riff from there." A question that arises in looking at not only excessive detail and ornamentation, but also excess as in—what's left over in my participants' children's picture books—might be: "What remains if the author's text is removed?" Is it solely the artist's interpretation of the author's text? What of the second story narratives and the artists' own unspoken and unwritten histories such as Maya's drawing her face in her books, her homage to her estranged father on his bicycle, or Elizabeth's environmentalist agenda? Other extra-textual encounters include hummingbirds, lizards, birds, horses, and other animals as **METAPHORIC** symbols, or stand-ins, for either our own experience or something else more ephemeral connected to the "more than human world" for when we wish to convey, evoke, or allude to qualities such as strength, courage, or the miraculous. These parallel or second story narratives occur when we, as artists, include in subtle ways, ourselves, or our political, or spiritual, agendas into the images. This occurs in innumerable ways. Carl paints himself into the picture with his mole on Lakas and the Manilatown fish's faces. He demonstrates his interest in the relationship between people and places by including the former residents of Manilatown in the now defunct Manilatown buildings. He paints the people and places of El Salvador in the San Francisco Mission District murals showing the

connections between past and present histories and immigration. Elizabeth and Maya do similar things with their juxtapositions of pre-Columbian and contemporary Latino art and their foregrounding of nature-based spirituality. George's deep commitment to First Nations' spirituality manifests throughout his images, particularly through the use of color. Similarly, Joe draws on his childhood experiences of tearing papers to create images for *The Invisible Hunters* (Rohmer, Chow and Vidaure, 1987) where he is also able to illustrate his concerns around environmental and indigenous exploitation. Meanwhile, the absence of color in Joe's invisible hunters and in the colonizing traders provide openings for exploration or multiple interpretations. For me this absence of color and form signifies a "lack of," such as a lack of soul, being, or integrity. For others it could represent something entirely different. And that is both the beauty and the difficulty of art.

These **OPENINGS** occurred in innumerable ways throughout the research process where a comment, an image, or an idea, would open the door leading me down yet another path of inquiry, yet another way of seeing, yet another series of questions leading to further openings. Examples of these openings include Joe's ideas on vocational education, Rita's metaphor of the rhizome, David's suggestion to revisit Freire's praxis, the image of a butterfly weaving its way throughout a book, a journey, a life. Maya talks about being comfortable in a non-verbal way, and I wonder, Isn't this what we do as artists—find comfort in that non-verbal piece of being, which perhaps does or does not lead to meaning making or understanding? And so our non-verbal piece in picture books, which often becomes one of those "taken for granted" invisibles (another form of excess), lies **CONTIGUOUSLY** with the verbal piece in creating this multi-vocal narrative.

Once again I return to the beginning, in as much as there is a beginning. I began with a desire to explore the interconnections between race, place, and art in the lives and work of my participants. I began with the metaphor of diving. I was diving into a series of questions wondering which voice to use and I continue wondering and playing with these voices. I began with certain assumptions. I was now an academic and knew "theory," so perhaps I knew more than them. I was shocked at how much they knew of everything

I'd sweated, and studied, and learned. Although they may not have known the term "postcolonial theory," they knew exactly what it meant. Although they had never read about Dewey, or place-based education, they knew about these and other transformative education ideas from their own experiences and intuitive reasoning.

For example, Elizabeth spoke about using a multicultural curriculum to teach students about global citizenship, where the school itself was a form of pedagogy with recycled materials, solar energy, learning gardens that recycled water and fed the community, and a farmer's market to raise money. George spoke about using a First Nations' spiritual approach connecting local elders with students in a natural environment. Carl spoke of having a more organic and holistic approach that showed the interconnections between content areas saying: if you showed "how things... relate to their art class and their math class.... And why they're even there in the first place... [It would] make it come alive." Both Maya and Joe spoke about what they perceived as some of the political functions of schooling. Maya described it as a way of keeping people in line to participate in consumerism and being proletarians, while Joe noted that with the dismantling of vocational education, there are now few options available to non-academically oriented poor and minority youth, who instead provide a readily available work force to fight wars.

Hearing my participants' ideas, I was humbled by my assumptions and thrilled by their brilliance. Instead of confirming what I already knew or providing me with an opportunity to tell them about what I "knew," we opened to each other, creating spaces of questioning, inquiry, and opportunities for new understandings to emerge together. Consequently, my own ideas about education, art, and being have broadened, as have my understandings about race, place, culture, and art.

The research has taken me deeper than I ever expected to go. It has taken me places I never expected, to the point that I am not the person I was when I began. Although the experience has been less profound for my participants (being one small part of their lives rather than the all-consuming force it's been in my life) each of us has learned from the other and grown. In addition, creating art both for this dissertation as well as for my



participants, has been a labor of love, deepening my process of **LIVING INQUIRY**, and helping me become a better artist, researcher, and art teacher. Employing the metaphor of the rhizome, I'd like to gently untangle some more of these threads to see some of the commonalities and differences that emerged between and in-between my participants, the theoretical perspectives I used, and my own process of living inquiry. This inquiry has been situated in, through, and within my own processes of art making; in teaching and learning about, with, and from my participants, my students, and mentors; and in the co-tangled process of researching within these fields.

For example, in assisting my students with their class handouts and presentations, I shared the data from this study with them and they in turn shared their own discoveries about the participants and our books with the rest of the class (some of which are included in the appendices). Furthermore, my art making process caused me to rethink what I was writing about as is evidenced in my personal reflections on many of the introductory chapter images. Also, learning about my participants' processes in creating art such as George's technique of "going at it naively" and Maya's "moving back and forth" between internal and external sources, validated my own remarkably similar process as an artist and now as a researcher in creating this dissertation. In addition, as a researcher, the texts and images of other academics and artists who have come before have all created various forms of harmonic or dissonant **REVERBERATIONS**, which combined, ultimately constitute the form and content of this dissertation. These reverberations and echoings have further strengthened my relationships with the participants as well as my awareness of the deeply relational qualities of all things. Exploring these intersections and reverberations between my theoretical perspectives and the co-laboring between people and ideas has led me into a liminal space. This space incorporates the many theoretical perspectives discussed in this dissertation, while simultaneously existing outside of these perspective's individual boundaries, resulting in my beginning to develop a new hybrid pedagogy. However, before I embark on further untangling my rhizomatic threads, I would like to briefly discuss the liminal currere as a staging ground for what is to follow.

### **The Liminal Currere**

Sameshima and Irwin (2006), drawing on the work of Pinar and Grumet (1976), describe the liminal currere as the active form of curriculum, with “curriculum” changing from a noun or document to a verb or action. They explore the ways that the liminal currere exists between the concerns of the official curriculum and that which exists contiguously to and with this curriculum. Thus because my participants’ book images serve as educative forces outside of the normal curriculum—presenting as part of children’s educative experiences in mostly unspoken, unattended, and unacknowledged ways—these images exist as possibilities within this liminal space to activate processes of inquiry relating to place, race, art and culture. In fact, most aspects of visual culture exist within the liminal currere, functioning in the never-ending stream of images surrounding and informing children’s lives. These images are culturally prescribed and proscribed to affect various stances. In the case of my participants these stances include critical multicultural education and environmental stewardship agendas, which will be explored in the following section.

### **Critical Multicultural Education and Analysis, Cultural Production, and Visual Culture Understandings**

Using critical multicultural education and analysis theories, I looked specifically at issues of race, class, and gender. These issues were prevalent in both the participants’ interviews, as well as their art in different degrees. However, I also found that Bourdieu’s ideas on cultural production were useful in exploring how these particular children’s book artists are both enabled and constrained by the fields of “publishing” and “education” within the narrow field known as “multicultural children’s books.” It became clear that the cultural authority of the White dominant class, which largely controls publishing and education, is deeply impacted by issues that theoretical lenses in CMEA such as postcolonial theory and critical race theory address.

#### ***Cultural Production***

Looking through postcolonial and cultural production lenses the deep interrelationships between the two perspectives became clear. Together, these two lenses

show the more subtle ways that colonization is currently enacted by White mainstream publishers of children's books who privilege certain images as aesthetic and desirable, and bookstore proprietors who marginalize our books by marketing them in the "multicultural" or "folktale" sections of bookstores. As Elizabeth said,

[W]ho has the power in this country? Clearly many of the White, established families! And they are the ones who happen to be in power and they are the ones who perpetuate images. They don't even really plan it, it's just the way it is... people in power keep the power.... [meaning political, economic and social power]. If more people who were multicultural would have more power, more different images would be out there.

In addition, looking through a cultural production lens, it is easy to see how market concerns compromise even the bravest editor/publisher. Harriet Rohmer clearly felt constrained as publisher/editor/art director at Children's Book Press to make the books as widely marketable as possible by de-sexualizing our art, i.e., Maya's seam/slit in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* (Anzaldúa, 1996), George's bulge/crotch in *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* (Van Camp, 1994), my phallic snakes in *Baby Rattlesnake* (Moroney, 1990/2004), and the gay looking cantina patrons in *Where Fireflies Dance* (Corpi, 1997). While her decision to use the word "Indian" instead of George's preferred term "First Nations" was a market-driven decision that may have helped sales and access to the book, it was a decision that hurt George. I wonder if Harriet were making that particular naming decision now if she would do it differently? I hope and imagine the answer would be yes.

All of us believe Harriet to be an extraordinary woman, who as a single welfare mother saw in the children's book sections of bookstores and the Headstart school her kids attended, the complete absence of children's literature about, or for, minority children. So, close to thirty years ago she started Children's Book Press, the first multicultural children's book press with books created primarily by minority authors and artists for their own communities. And yet even in the powerful position of publisher, she too, was constrained by the field of cultural production, having to ask herself: "Will librarian's in Kansas buy this

book? Will reviewers condemn the book if there are sexual looking elements?”

While all of us are aware of the limitations of our books, we struggle with issues of revolutionary representation. Children’s books need to be poetic or playful, and this can be a difficult combination to create when the subject matter deals with the realities of racist or class hatred, where often there is no happy ending. As Joe so astutely pointed out:

It’s very hard to do a colorful something that encourages people to look at it visually and at the same time get the message across of what you’re trying to do. So I think children’s books are a challenge to a lot of people who try to disseminate information about their own indigenous culture and how external forces have impacted their culture negatively. So sometimes it’s much easier to refocus on the piñata hanging in the courtyard and barbecue. And that’s important [too] because it reaffirms to your own kids and your own people that [your culture] has validity because it’s in the book, it’s in the painting.

As children’s book artists with critical agendas this is a constant and messy struggle. What’s too light and fluffy? What’s too heavy and dark? How can we get critical messages under the radar in subtle, non-didactic, and aesthetic ways?

In addition, the field of publishing limits what we can do by privileging which narratives are heard and seen. A case in point are the words witch/which, that I had to change to something that wouldn’t offend witch haters, along with the requirement that I change the punk interracial couple in *Just Like Home* (Miller, 1999) into a conventional same race African-American couple. While I protested, I also knew that my only other option was to return my advance and walk away from the project. This leads to the question—How revolutionary can you be when you need to pay the rent and put food on the table? I imagine I was labeled a “trouble-maker” by this press (the only press I have worked for apart from CBP) as I was never asked to illustrate for them again.

While Children’s Book Press has one of the most radically transformative agendas of any children’s book publishing house, they, and we, are still complicit in acquiescing to the harnessing effects of cultural production as evidenced in the sexual neutering of some

of George's and Maya's and my images. However, it is to CBP's credit that they allowed Maya to keep Francisco's "fluffiness" in *Angels Ride Bikes* (1999), and my Jewish noses in *Leaving for America* (Bresnick-Perry, 1992). Nevertheless this is, and continues to be, a place of compassionate struggle for many of us.

### **Visual Culture**

My participants' books are visual culture products that embrace culturally specific aesthetics and ideologies, which are both enabled and constrained by the field of cultural production. As such, they also provide alternative representations to those in the dominant media. One of the most important manifestations of the interconnections between cultural production and visual culture within this study included examining the visual culture representations of minorities in popular culture, specifically in children's literature. As children, none of us saw anyone who looked like us in our children's books; if there was anyone who shared our skin color or facial features, these representations were either inaccurate, at best, or derogatory, at worst. While derogatory representations are less prevalent in children's books today, lack of representation or misrepresentation is still endemic. Currently, derogatory images of minorities are all-pervading and unavoidable in popular culture sources such as television, films, advertising, and new media, all which constitute part of the liminal currere.

When I look at the co-tangled thread of visual culture, my participants brought to light experiences of a visual cultural sensibility that differed not only from the dominant culture's privileging of neutrals and power colors, but also in the different value afforded to the importance of aesthetics and of artists themselves. Elizabeth spoke of Mexican culture as one in which art is integrated everywhere and where the vast majority of people are conscious of, and participate in, the aesthetics of where they live. Artists are valued as people who "know something," and the art and gallery going experience is not just limited to artists, intellectuals, and collectors but also to the broader population.

Both Elizabeth and Joe spoke about the different aesthetic values or different approaches to visual culture where color, pattern, and ornamentation are greatly valued

compared to Western cultures' preference for a less intense, more neutral, and more minimal approach. While these are generalizations there is also some truth to this differentiation in visual culture approaches. Joe connects these preferences to issues of power by asking which sculpture will IBM buy to represent its corporate philosophy and image—the sleek monolithic cold steel of Richard Serra or Joe's more colorful and exuberant work? Joe provided vivid descriptions of the ways indigenous cultures respond to life through color compared to the institutionalizing uses of somber or neutral colors in Western culture. As an artist I have always been sensitive to color both in my own work and others. I had also noticed the institutional uses of color in buildings such as schools and hospitals and offices—the very same colors that Joe spoke about—but I hadn't consciously made that next logical step putting these color choices together with issues of power and control.

I have also wondered why our books as visual culture products have less status than fine art and yet our identities as children's book artists are infinitely more respectable than as fine artists. Are we seen as less inspired because of the constraints of working within an author's text? Is our work as children's book artists seen as "less than" because of the constraints of making it appealing for children rather than appealing for adults? Are the visual areas of inquiry less sophisticated, or less valuable in children's picture books such as these than in traditional fine arts? Is this another oppositional binary related to the established fine art versus folk art, painting versus illustration, high art versus low art dichotomies that visual culturalists are leading the way in challenging?

### ***Race***

In this next section I would like to focus on the classic multicultural "trinity" of race, class, and gender as interweaving threads connecting our lived experiences with our children's books beginning with race.

Critical race theory holds that racism is so enmeshed in our society as to be invisible and "taken for granted." This is certainly the case in the field of multicultural children's book publishing where the majority of "multicultural" children's books are created by members of the dominant culture, supporting their own worldviews and biases in ways that few children

or parents notice unless educated to do so. Thus this dissertation, and the articles that will follow further in my career, serve as a call to “pay attention” to how representation is enacted and informed (or deformed) by experience.

One of the difficulties I encountered in conducting this study was the issue of terminology. The way language is currently constructed sets up an almost unavoidable hierarchy of naming conventions with Whiteness or European-Americans as central and normal and all other ethnicities as peripheral and “other.” Rarely are European-American artists referred to as such, but African-American or Native-American artists are inevitably labeled so. The term minority, which will soon be demographically inaccurate, infers subordination-less than status, and once again, “otherness” while the term “people of color” infers that Whites have no color. These very definitions are intensely problematic. Linda Hutcheon captures the essential conundrum of this issue with her question: “How do we construct a discourse which displaces the effects of the colonizing gaze while we are still under its influence?” (cited in Giroux, 1993, p. 185).

As a White woman, I am an outsider to these classifications, falling well within the White European default but with a slight caveat as a Jew. And while I have experienced feelings of belonging in both the world of Whiteness and the world of multiculturalism, I also feel not quite White, and not really multicultural either, falling somewhere in the middle in the world of Jewishness. So I asked my participants their thoughts about racially inscribed terminology. All of the participants were aware of the exclusionary nature of these terms, categories that define a “them” and an “us,” but they also pointed out that these terms work both ways to also create community and belonging. Joe Sam made me laugh when he said: “I don’t care what they call me, so long as they spell my name right.” Despite Joe’s humor, as he knows full well, terminology serves a very real function masking certain realities within discourses of power. Giroux (1995) describes how: “racism in its various forms is produced historically, semiotically, and institutionally, in various levels of dominant, white culture (p. 120). Clearly, the “ghettoizing” effects of terminology can also serve this reproductive function of keeping “others” in their place on the fringes of power and society.

In looking at the portraits together, it struck me that each of us as ethnic minorities directly experienced racism—with the more dominantly White the culture (or place) we were immersed in being, the more frequent and severe the racism. It also seems the younger we were when exposed to the racism, the more damaging the experience was. Knowing George, his description of growing up in a climate where “If you ain't Dutch, you ain't much” was painful to hear. I felt the same hurt with each of the participants’ stories. These experiences of racism occurred in specific places—Oregon, Alberta, East Preston, and California—intimating how place and culture are intertwined.

None of us (except Elizabeth who grew up in Mexico, or Joe who had no children’s books) saw ourselves reflected in the children’s literature of our time and this invisibility or negative representation, which combined with a hostile surrounding, was also damaging. This would support critical race theory’s premise that racism is so enmeshed in our society as to be a “taken for granted,” invisible force. It would also support postcolonial theory’s highlighting of the ways that art and other cultural forms have been used to justify or support colonialism either through gross stereotyping, misrepresentation, or lack of representation. This highlighting is clear in our experiences of childhood books that reinforced the relegated disempowering status of “inferior,” “unworthy,” “undeserving,” “unattractive,” etc. Those of us who had children’s books while growing up in a dominantly White culture responded to these images in different ways. Maya defiantly drew her own face in the back pages, while Carl and I retreated to the world of fantasy, Carl with his heroic mythological figures and me with my fantasy mermaids, both of which featured European-looking characters. Carl, George and I all spoke about experiencing ourselves as being ugly and “less-than” from never seeing positive reflections, and this negative imprinting has been difficult to overcome.

In looking at issues of race in our books, the only book that directly addressed racism is George Littlechild’s *This Land is My Land* (Littlechild, 1993). However, each of the books addressed race in less obvious ways such as in images like the European colonial traders in *Invisible Hunters* (Rohmer, Chow, & Vidaure, 1987) who exploit the local indigenous people,



or George's depictions of biraciality (a rarely discussed construct in multicultural children's literature) in both *This Land is My Land* (Littlechild, 1993) and *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* (Van Camp, 1994). Each of the books also includes front or back page texts, which often include the "back-story" behind the book addressing issues related to race or class more directly. Examples of this include the historical back-stories in *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* (Robles, 2003), *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* (Anzaldúa, 1996), and *Leaving for America* (Bresnick-Perry, 1992).

However, just the very existence of these books is an anti-racist act whether the authors directly address racism or simply provide counter-representations to the stereotyped, invisible, or homogenized representations normally presented. While Elizabeth expressed happiness that *Moony Luna* (Argueta, 2005) shows a happy, loving, middle-class Latino family with some of the same problems that everyone else has, other multiculturalists might raise concerns about essentializing Latinos as the "same as everyone else," when Latinos share very real and tangible problems that other groups do not. And yet, regardless of race or culture, we do share commonalities, including a young child's fears of going to school for the first time, and this was what Elizabeth was pointing out, along with the fact that there are many happy, loving, middle-class Latino families who are rarely seen depicted in children's picture books or other forms of media.

Because of CBP's philosophical orientation, each of us, except George, has made books dealing with immigration, and each of us apart from George's mother's family had some kind of recent immigrant history (George's father was part Scottish). Joe's aunts, who raised him, came from the West Indies; Carl's parents immigrated from the Phillipines; Maya's father came from Mexico; Elizabeth is an immigrant from Mexico; and I am also a recent immigrant from Australia where my parents were Polish-Jewish war refugees. Thus, each of us has first hand knowledge of the difficulties of immigration, or displacement, and for many of us, what it's like to come from a non-English speaking background.

Speaking about our work as multicultural children's book artists, we all spoke about doing our books as a kind of "mission" to contest negative absences or misrepresentations,

creating positive and empowering images for minority kids to see themselves reflected. Furthermore, we appreciate the fact that most of these books are bilingual, validating children's home languages and cultures while easing the difficult process of learning English. It was also very gratifying to hear Maya speak about how she literally tells children to draw themselves into their books if they don't see anyone who looks like them there. Thus, our books form intentional and powerful counter-narratives to the reifying images put forth in dominant media. These images not only address issues of race and ethnicity, but also class and gender.

### **Class**

Elizabeth Gomez, Joe Sam, Maya Gonzalez, and myself all originally came from working-class backgrounds, although Joe's background might be described as even more marginalized than working-class. Carl Angel and George Littlechild both came from more middle-class backgrounds, even though George's background prior to becoming a foster child was probably more on a par with Joe's experiences of poverty. However, regardless of our socio-economic and class backgrounds, each of us developed tremendous empathy, compassion, and a commitment to working both with, and for, poor and marginalized communities.

Class was not an issue that arose with much frequency during our interviews; nevertheless in many of the children's books, class appeared to be just as central as race. Examples include Joe's descriptions of his aunts working in wealthy White women's homes as maids and Carl's depiction of Xochitl and her family as decent hard-working people in *Xochitl and the Flowers* (Robles, 2003). Of interest in *Xochitl and the Flowers* is the fact that the mean landlord is also Latino, which shows a multidimensional approach to class within culture often found lacking in multicultural children's books. All of the books that show poor and working-class people do so with dignity. These people may be poor, but they are clean and attractive even if a bit shabbily dressed. *A Movie in My Pillow* (Argueta, 2000) addresses issues of poverty showing Jorge starving before and during the El Salvadoran war. The war in El Salvador was a class war between the majority poor people and the ruling oligarchy,

which left approximately 75,000 people dead (Wikipedia, 2006). After coming to the United States Jorge's father collected discarded cardboard for a living, which although not stated, I imagine enabled him to eventually bring Jorge's mother and brothers to the States to join them. In another approach to class issues, Elizabeth spoke about the conscious strategy in *Moony Luna* (Argueta, 2005) of depicting Latinos in counter-representations to the usual essentialized, unidimensional, poor, or criminal minority representations, by showing images of a nice middle-class family.

### ***Class and Agency***

Looking through a critical multicultural analysis lens at issues of class and agency, many of the books link the individual with the larger society to show that these are not just individual problems. Some of the books provide subtle references to political resistance, such as when Amada's father in *My Diary From Here to There* (Pérez, 2002), writes Amada about poor working conditions for migrant farm-workers and how a man called Cesar Chavez is organizing migrant workers to fight against these injustices. In *Where Fireflies Dance* (Corpi, 1997) Juan Sebastian takes his guitar and goes off to fight for land and liberty in Jaltípan linking his destiny with that of his country. In *Xochitl and the Flowers* (Argueta, 2003) the community rallies to help Xochitl's family overcome their landlord's eviction, appealing to the landlord's humanity in ways that are heart warming and support the importance of community, but that stop a little short by suggesting that the problem of eviction comes from a misguided individual property owner, rather than a system of power, privilege, and property ownership.

Other books also stop short of calling for revolutionary action beyond the individual the family, or the immediate community in solving the problem. For example, while the Spanish traders in *The Invisible Hunters* (Rohmer, Chow, & Vidaure, 1987) are depicted in the typical Spanish style attire of the time, no-where in the text does it mention that these traders were part of a larger project of colonization and exploitation. Likewise, Priteita in *Priteita and the Ghost Woman* (Anzaldúa, 1995) demonstrates her individual courage in contesting the landowner's right to property in the colonization of King Ranch when

she trespasses to save her mother. But while the author draws attention to issues of colonization and misrepresentations, the story ends with Prietita safely ensconced in her family's arms and King Ranch still enclosed with barbed-wire.

Having said all this, I have numerous questions, many of which I have already asked. How in-depth should a children's book go in addressing challenging issues? Is it enough to simply introduce or allude to these themes as the books do, hoping that the teacher has the knowledge or insight to engage her students in deeper discussions of the meanings embedded in the books' images and texts? At what point do we make explicit these connections, and how do we make the time to do this in ways that are not preachy or didactic? I know that the majority of my pre-service teachers do not intuitively pick up on these themes without my explicitly noting them. They have not yet been taught how to conduct close readings and viewings of books and I wonder if the books should come with a teaching kit or more direct information in the back pages. The books exist in a hybrid position as entertaining trade books that are also extensively used in the education system. If critical information were added to the back pages, would it push them too much into the text-book arena? Is it enough to create a charming children's book with positive images of minorities whose very presence contest mainstream media representations? As Joe said, showing the piñata or the barbecue that validates someone's culture is sometimes in and off itself enough. Or as Elizabeth pointed out, just seeing a loving middle-class Latino family has value. I dug deeply in doing these readings, but even without these analyses, these are wonderful books. Although they won't solve the world's problems or even necessarily incite revolutionary action, they do provide great springboards for discussions about race, place, class, gender, and art leading to awareness and activism. This leads to another important question for future research: How *do* we prepare future teachers to use books like these to lead discussions and generate activities, which promote place-based, critical, multiculturalism? Perhaps as I further develop my place-based pedagogy of pleasure, I will be able to more fully answer this question.

## **Gender**

Meanwhile, discussing the books in relation to gender issues, it is clear the books have a feminist agenda. Each of us has illustrated books with strong female characters: Joe honored his aunts in *Honoring Our Ancestors* (Rohmer, 1999), and his childhood friend, Margaret, in *Just Like Me* (Rohmer, 1997). Elizabeth painted Lunita in *Moony Luna* (Argueta, 2005) as a strong young female represented by the image of a moon. Maya presented Prietita as a courageous young woman who enters forbidden territory to help cure her sick mother in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* (Anzaldúa, 1996). George shows strong First Nations' women in the portrait of his grandmothers and an Indian Princess in *This Land is My Land* (Littlechild, 1993). Carl paints the beautiful woman bus driver, driving the wild streets of San Francisco, and I used an image of my strong mother as a child to serve as a model for the rebellious Roslyn in my book *Leaving for America*. These images are just some among many strong female representations.

Gender issues also impacted male representations such as in Maya's depictions of author Francisco Alarcón as a big "fluffy" man in their seasonal poetry books. While Maya had painted big or "fluffy" females in both *From the Belly of the Moon* and in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*, painting the main male protagonist as fleshy was not as acceptable. Fortunately, Maya was able to convince Harriet that big children also need to see themselves reflected. In addition, my all-male bar scene in *Where Fireflies Dance* was seen as "too gay" (read too effeminate), and I had to try and beef my guys up and add some cleft chins.

## **Place-Based Education Understandings**

In looking at "place" I was interested in examining our work and ideas as sites to explore Gruenewald's ideas of decolonization and reinhabitation, while investigating connections between race, place, and art. And finally, I was interested in looking at ways to extend place-based education into place-based art education to develop a pedagogy of pleasure that utilizes PBE principles while integrating other theoretical perspectives with a strong dose of the "pleasure principle."

Exploring the role of place was important to understanding not only our identities, but also our work in relation to influences and motivation such as the ways that race, place, and culture interconnect. This became evident in connecting childhood experiences of racism where the level of bigotry we were exposed to in our childhood environments contributed to the degree of primacy that issues of race now hold in our work.

Sharing our histories of where we came from, both as geographical and cultural landscapes that helped form who we are now, each of us made connections to the importance of place and environment in our work, and for most, to where and how we live now. Mary Bryson (2006, April) presenting a co-authored paper related to queer theory, spoke about “leaving and becoming” and indeed this is something each of us has done in order to become who we are now. Most of us, apart from George, and now me, live in the Bay Area of San Francisco. As Joe said, despite the polarization in the art world: “Northern California has all the things that I need in terms of life–multicultural people, music, cultural things that are happening.... I love this place because of the diversity of cultures.” I wonder if utilizing and acting upon place-based education’s ideas, and in particular Gruenewald’s notion of “decolonization and reinhabitation,” might have made it more possible for me to remain in East Preston and work toward making it a more hospitable and life affirming place? Could I and other like-minded people have made it more cultural and multi-culturally supportive? Could we have cleaned up the factory debris and created more liveable communities? I doubt if that could have been the case in the 1970s and 80s, but perhaps now? And this is what I seek to do in my role as an arts educator— to engender a sense of agency and hope for people by portraying places as geographical, ecological, and cultural landscapes that individuals and communities can actively work toward conserving *and* transforming.

In terms of the children’s books, some of the images and descriptions of place have an almost elegiac quality to them, such as Carl’s depictions of the now defunct Manilatown in *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* (Robles, 2003), George’s images of pre-colonial First Nations’ life in *This Land is My Land* (Littlechild, 1993), and my images of the no-longer

existing shtetl life of Eastern Europe in *Leaving for America* (Bresnick-Perry, 1992). These depictions create a means of honoring and memorializing place. Meanwhile, George's depiction of place in *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* (Van Camp, 1998) creates a visual record with mind-opening images of what contemporary First Nations' life looks like in that part of the world, resembling the places where George, or I, or many of us live—with a living room, a couch, pictures on the wall. In other books an allegorical postmodernist form of environmental hybridization appeared such as the combining of traditional Mexican art forms and pre-Columbian culture blended into contemporary settings in both Elizabeth and Maya's books. These, too, form a means of honoring and memorializing place while connecting it with culture and history.

Some of the participants also spoke about using their art to bring attention to environmental concerns such as in Elizabeth's acute awareness of the need to protect and conserve the environment demonstrated in all her books and personal paintings, Joe's spoke with pride about his environmental paintings and the environmental agenda in *The Invisible Hunters* (Rohmer, Chow, & Vidaure, 1987), and Maya's use of nature in her work as a means of personal and political healing. In a similar manner, George's First Nations' spiritual traditions connect him with nature in profound ways. For myself, the beauty and power of the natural world continues to be a source of energy and healing. While Carl did not speak of the natural world in terms of environmentalism, his books show a deep love and awareness of nature, particularly in his loving renderings of flowers and animals in *Xochitl and the Flowers* (Argueta, 2003). In fact all of our books celebrate the natural world in some way or another.

In looking through a place-based lens the following examples show the connections between my participants' life stories and/or ethnic identities and place or environment. Maya described the fuchsia sunsets of her early years in the Mojave Desert. Looking at *My Diary from Here to There* (Pérez, 2002) we see the sky turn from fuchsia to purple as the sun sets along the cactus filled Mexican/Arizona border. Maya subtly integrates her father's history as a migrant farm worker into the story. Carl paints his Filipino heritage in

images such as those in *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* (Robles, 2003) where he shows the connections between Filipino-American history, culture, and place in the Manilatown buildings. George's life experiences and ethnic identity are painted throughout *This Land is My Land* (Littlechild, 1993), epitomized in many ways by the introductory image of the Canadian mountie and the chief with their different types of homes behind them. This image could also serve as a metaphor for George's own birraciality, metaphorically coming from both the teepee and the house. Elizabeth's Mexican heritage is reflected in her intensely hued paintings and her Mexican sensibility of decoration, which she shows to great effect in all her books while highlighting the natural world as a form of environmental activism. In addition, the map in *A Movie in My Pillow* (Argueta, 2000), which tracks Jorge's journey from El Salvador to San Francisco, could just as easily track Elizabeth's own route from Mexico to the Bay Area. Finally, my own Jewish heritage connects to place in the shtetl scenes in *Leaving for America* (Bresnick-Perry, 1992) depicting my parent's former lives in Eastern Europe. In one page a glimpse of the new world of the Lower East Side of New York replete with signs and products conjures my own history of Jewish foods and my yiddish "mother-tongue." Thus our depictions of place also create another form of second-story, connecting our lived histories with place.

Recalling Lucy Lippard's (1997) framework for art governed by a "place-ethic" provides a rubric for me to both examine the participants' books and extend place-based education into the emerging field of place-based art education.

- SPECIFIC enough to engage people on the level of their own experiences, to say something about the place as it is or was or could be.
- COLLABORATIVE at least to the extent of seeking information, advice, and feedback from the community in which the work will be placed.
- GENEROUS AND OPEN-ENDED enough to be accessible to a wide variety of people from different classes and cultures, and to different interpretations and tastes.
- APPEALING enough either visually or emotionally to catch the eye and be memorable.
- SIMPLE AND FAMILIAR enough, at least on the surface, not to confuse or repel



potential viewer participants.

- LAYERED, COMPLEX, AND UNFAMILIAR enough to hold people's attention once they've been attracted, to make them wonder, and to offer ever deeper experiences and references to those who hang in.
- EVOCATIVE enough to make people recall related moments, places, and emotions in their own lives.
- PROVOCATIVE AND CRITICAL enough to make people think about issues beyond the scope of the work, to call into question superficial assumptions about the place, its history, and its use. (pp. 286-287)

Looking at my participants' books I could say that all of our books (apart from the two anthologies—*Honoring Our Ancestors* and *Just Like Me*) meet most of these requirements for art governed by a “place-ethic.” In looking at the books we learn about specific places with specific cultures, community reference sources are listed and thanked, and many children (and adults) respond profoundly to the images and stories. In addition, and of great importance here, through deeper readings, educators can lead children to engage in critical and loving reflections about the places and cultures of where students live in response to the books.

It is not surprising to me, that after leaving Children's Book Press Harriet has gone on to found Children's Environmental Publishing (CEP) whose mandate makes explicit the connections between race, place, class, and environment through the medium of beautiful children's books. In fact, many of the participants in this study will be creating art for CEP's first book, titled *Environmental Heroes*. These same themes of race, place, class, and environment are rhizomatic threads, which have been weaving their way throughout this dissertation framed within a/r/tographic, cultural production, visual culture, critical multicultural education and analysis, and place-based education lenses. The use of CMAE and PBE lenses enabled exploration of the intersecting contexts of place and culture, i.e., looking at where each of us comes from as sites of colonialist appropriation and resistance (including our bodies) and positions our books and lives as counter-narratives

to the ideologies that have and continue to oppress and marginalize us. Maya describes how her very being as a lesbian and a woman of color challenges the dominant paradigm, while George's, Joe's, Elizabeth's, Carl's and my own ability to thrive against the odds also challenges the dominant paradigm's notion of what ethnic minorities and people from poverty are capable of and where we should belong.

### **Revisiting The Liminal Currere (as Excess)**

My theoretical perspectives have covered a tremendous amount of critical territory allowing me to make connections and create understandings from my participants' life experiences and art. However, while these lenses have been extremely helpful in navigating within the main body's text of race, place, and art, other less noticed areas in education were left over, as excess, including messages, or the equally potent silences about emotion, intuition, sensuality, sexuality and spirituality. And yet these themes, which emerged during this study, also impact and educate children and thus participate in the liminal currere. Where do these fit within institutions of schooling or theory building? How can those of us who value these qualities weave them in with other pressing concerns such as critical multicultural education and environmental issues in both our theorizing and our practice?

### ***Sexuality and Eros***

Sexuality was a theme that arose in both my teaching and research outside of the comforting guides of my theoretical perspectives, and I must say it made me nervous. In the research, it came up around the cultural production issues of desexualizing our images—Maya's slit, my phallic snakes and gay looking cantina patrons, and George's cowboy/Indian with a bulge in his pants. These seemingly harmless images demonstrate the fears that our society holds regarding our sexual/animal natures and are vigorously curtailed within cultural production.

In my teaching, issues of sexuality arose around exploring Keith Haring's website and some of his overtly sexual images, leading to discussions on homosexuality and censorship. It placed me in a dilemma of if or where to include it as a theme in my dissertation, and yet as Maya says children are sexual beings. With Western society's entrenchment in Christian

constructs of sexuality and pleasure as sinful, this is a taboo topic. Now with either the rise in pedophilia, or the increase in awareness about pedophilia, anything connected with kids and sexuality, or sensuality, or eros, is even more taboo. This leaves me with no easy answers except to acknowledge that this is an issue that bears exploration.

In *Holistic Learning and Spiritual Education: Breaking New Ground*, Snowber (2005) writes of eros and education as a sensual process:

The act of teaching is an act of eros, an act of creation, an act of love. This act is embedded in the physicality of flesh—breath, tone, voice, and muscles are central to each breath we utter. Knowledge is released through every sinew and gesture, posture and glance, as we engage both heart and body. The nuances of smell, touch, sound, and sight shape and inform our lives; they are sensuous knowledge, not that different from the arbutus [a flowering tree or shrub]. Teaching is the art of word [or image] becoming flesh.... Love infuses teaching. Love is transformed into knowledge in the act of relationship. And knowledge is transformed into love. If we are open to an embodied way of knowing, we become partners in this dance. A dance infused with sacred intention. Student to teacher. Teacher to student. Love infuses the cells within the relationship of learning. (pp. 216-217)

Snowber (2005) describes how our “our deepest engagement with knowledge may be mystery” (p. 218) and that our teachers may come in many forms. She writes: “The land, stars, air, water, and wood all hold a holy place as teacher, if we can let ourselves be receptive to the eros of the everyday” (p. 218).

Snowber’s poetic writing engages with many of the ideas expressed by my participants—linking spiritual, sensory, and sensual engagement with nature. Elizabeth’s description of her grandfather’s profound connection to animals and the land also describes Elizabeth’s own spiritual connection with the natural world, which she infuses in all of her work. Maya spoke at length about the importance of animals and environment and how she connects them, through her art, into her own and others' healing. In fact, each of us spoke about our connections with the natural world, with most of us describing it as a form of

spiritual practice. This valuing of sensory and spiritual connection with nature is evident in all of our books.

Much like Snowber's descriptions of eros, when my participants spoke about spirituality and emotion, it evoked issues of caring for the soul similar to those that Thomas Moore (2005) writes so beautifully about in *Educating for the Soul*:

We live in a literal-minded, fact-loving society, and so it is difficult to appreciate the soul's language, and that's not surprising given the soul's tendency toward mystery and multiple levels of meaning. A dream is a perfect example of soul speech. It usually connects with the dreamer's daily life, it is full of obscure imagery, and it hints at far broader, collective, and eternal issues. It demands a poetic sensitivity if we are to take any insight from it. But these are directions of soul in everything it touches.

Soul-centered education would emphasize the many dimensions of poetic existence; poetry as such, literature and art, a poetic reading of science and nature (advocated and described by soul specialist Ralph Waldo Emerson), and a generally imagistic approach to all human interactions. We glimpse soul through insight rather than direct analysis. We see it in reflection—implied, distorted, obscured, camouflaged. Soul is like poetry as described by the American poet Wallace Stevens—  
"like a pheasant disappearing behind a bush." (pp. 10-11)

Moore describes education as "a highly sexual activity: Intimate, full of desire, involving a deeper tangle of souls than is usually admitted." He is interested in acknowledging the relationships of power and authority on both sides, which sometimes manifests in "somasochistic patterns, where the sexuality in the power struggle comes more into the foreground" (p. 13). And finally, like Maya, he writes: "Whether or not we invite eros into education, it will be there. Better to cultivate it than let it do its work outside any positive efforts on our part to address it" (p. 13). He then calls for an education that attends to the erotics contrasting the Western education "Saturnian" approach where: "we like order, hierarchies, grades, tests, a glorified past, control, deprivation, remoteness of various kinds,

and weighty seriousness” with a “Venusian” approach, which

might take place in lush gardens, where the body feels tended and pleased. Desire would be in the foreground. Beauty everywhere. Of course there would be venereal problems. Everything has its shadow. My point is to suggest a way to give eros some range.” (pp. 13-14)

Clearly sexuality is a complex and highly politicized issue. And while it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide any deep analysis of the ways that sexuality is and is not present in children’s lives and the field of education, it is an issue that appeared several times in this study and thus bears acknowledging.

### ***Emotion***

Because part of our job as children’s book artists is to convey the range of emotions our characters go through on their journey, the topic of emotions came up in the interviews. Elizabeth spoke about the emotional difficulties of researching the war in El Salvador and then being required to lighten her palette in *A Movie in My Pillow* (Argueta, 2000) despite the subject matter being so dark. I also experienced emotional difficulties in researching and creating the art for *Leaving for America*, (Bresnick-Perry, 1992) another book dealing with the subject of war. Maya spoke about working with the emotions of fear and courage in her teaching and how she has witnessed tremendous shifts of empowerment in acknowledging these emotions. She advocates for teachers to “pay attention to the full range of emotions that come through... honor[ing] and attend[ing] to that whole child.” Carl and Joe spoke about the emotional power of color, which Joe also linked to multiculturalism and issues of power, while Carl noted that, “all real learning involve[s] emotion, because that’s what propels you to learn more.” In addition, speaking for himself, Carl said that the role of the artist was to emotionally and visually communicate the experience of being alive.

### ***Healing***

While the qualities of constructs such as emotion and sensuality come so effortlessly in my personal art making, consciously working with these themes in my research and teaching are far more problematic. For instance, a lot of my art has been

about personal healing, but how do I bring this sensibility into my academic life without sounding too “Californian?” Parker Palmer deals with this issue in *The Courage to Teach* (1997), as do Jim Garrison and Daniel Liston (2004) in *Teaching, Learning, and Loving: Reclaiming Passion in Educational Practice*. Garrison and Liston (2004) write:

the construction of love and emotion in the western world is extraordinarily gender biased, even patriarchal. This bias comes in many guises, which act to suppress the public discussion of feeling, caring, nurturance, healing, and connecting. When such matters enter the public domain, there is a tendency to dismiss them, denigrate them, or praise them as women’s work. (p. 8)

Suzi Gablik (1991) writes about this problem in spiritual terms stating: “We live in a society that has drastically narrowed our sensitivity to moral and spiritual issues.” She asks “If there is a new agenda, a new vision now emerging within our society, how might one help put it into practice” (p. 4)?

And indeed this is the very same question that many of us working in the field of transformative education are asking. Gablik frames a solution to the woes plaguing our world within a feminist paradigm when she writes:

Healing requires bringing forth precisely those capacities of understanding, trust, respect and help that have been suppressed—choosing to feel compassion instead of detachment. Care and compassion do not belong to the false ‘objectivism’ of aestheticism, nor to the value-free art that is devoid of practical aims and goals. Care and compassion are the tools of the soul, but they are often ridiculed by our society, which has been weak in the empathic mode. Empathy welcomes back the full range of feminine values—feeling, relatedness and soul-consciousness—that have been virtually driven out of our culture by our patriarchal mentality” (p. 178).

Thus it appears that many of the authors, whose voices I have come to love and cite throughout this dissertation, call for an educational agenda based on caring and connection as forms of transformative or conservationist activism. David Gruenewald specifically calls this “decolonization and reinhabitation,” Suzi Gablik calls it “healing.”

George, Maya, and I all spoke explicitly of the transformative power of art as a force for healing in our lives. While Joe did not use the word healing in relation to art, he spoke of his pride in moving from being a gang member to being a compassionate and caring human being through the openings that art afforded him. I know for myself if I hadn't had art in my life chances are I would be dead of an overdose, institutionalized, or just a very unhappy person. I am grateful that art has been such a powerful, transformative and joyful force in my life as it has been for many of my participants, regardless of the difficulties they/we have encountered.

### ***Teachers As Artists***

Because I know well the importance of the arts, I believe that just as all teachers need to know math and literacy, all teachers need to be artists, or at the very least, intensely creative people. Claudia Cornett (2003) describes a visit to inspired teacher Ms. Lucas's class, where in response to a question asking whether she is an artist, she responded

Of course, aren't you? .... Would you say you aren't a reader, or can't do math or write?" she demanded.... Being an artist is a part of being human. To say that you aren't an artist—not a creative being with unique ways to understand and express thoughts and feeling—is to say that you are less than human. Teachers *must* be artists. Anything less than an artist-teacher is not good enough for my children, or your children or anyone's children.... To do less is to harm your own potential and the hope we can give our children—some of whom are in pretty hopeless circumstances. (p. 40)

This makes me think of Maya's three precepts in teaching: "that art is always an act of courage, that everyone is an artist, and that there is never a right or a wrong way to make art." All of these ideas have contributed to a place-based pedagogy of pleasure, which foregrounds the spiritual and physical pleasures of learning through and about the arts, and revels in the pleasures of learning through and about connection to place.

However, before I describe some of my formative ideas in developing a place-based

pedagogy of pleasure, I would like to conclude this section by summarizing some of the commonalities and differences between and amidst my participants that appeared in the data and how these understandings and awarenesses led me to begin formulating this new pedagogy.

### **The Portraits as Works of Art**

In re-reading the portraits as narrative representations, new insights emerged and old awarenesses deepened. I realized each of us has been on the receiving end of racism and feel gratified to create books that contest taken for granted notions of White supremacy. Our childhood books (apart from Elizabeth who grew up in Mexico and Joe who had no books as a child) were bereft of positive images of anyone who remotely resembled us, and those images that did exist were negative stereotypes. This absence or negative representation was damaging, contributing to a sense of self as unattractive and unworthy. This too has generated a strong motivation to create empowering images and books for marginalized communities.

Most of us have first generation experiences of immigration, which I imagine has also contributed to our sense of agency in creating bilingual books, many of which deal with immigration themes. In addition, most of us come from working-class backgrounds, some of which are similar to our books that also feature working-class families. Another common theme is the contesting of stereotypes in our books with images of strong and courageous female protagonists and a wide representation of male characters.

Each of us spoke of connecting to place for a variety of reasons including aesthetic, sensory, socio-political, cultural, and/or spiritual reasons. And this place-based awareness also appears in the images in our books, grounded as they are in the aesthetics of specific places at specific times. Many of us also spoke directly of holding a commitment to environmental activism manifesting in our art.

The realm of the senses is evident in all of our art, where color, movement, light, and pattern dance together in sensual joy. Some of our art stimulates other senses in its near tangibility, such as the smell of flowers, the taste of food, or the feel of a slippery fish.



The theme of sexuality arose in relation to cultural production issues where some of us felt censored or constrained, and others like Carl and Joe, did not. However, Carl, Elizabeth, and Joe also spoke of feeling limited by the kinds of opportunities available to them and their work within the fields of art and/or children's book production.

Both Joe and Elizabeth also spoke specifically about a multicultural visual culture aesthetic in the use of life-affirming bright colors. Joe took this one step further in describing how this sensitivity to color plays out in terms of power and Western culture's privileging of neutral colors.

Each of us has found pleasure, agency, empowerment, and for several of us, healing, through making art. For some of us this healing power of art has been truly transformative in very profound and possibly life-saving ways. As educators we share this sense of agency, empowerment, and pleasure through teaching art.

While all of us are highly critical of the institution of schooling, having worked in some truly depressing schools, we hold slightly different ideas as to what might constitute better ways of educating our youth. Most of us shared our ideals of multicultural, holistic, environmentally sustainable, aesthetic environments of integrated learning, which promote democratic participation and caring. In addition, Joe spoke of the reality of class issues, which are frequently overlooked, by advocating vocational training for blue-collar workers who want it, and George spoke of a spiritually-based form of education with local elders as teachers. Learning about each of my participants' visions for education contributed to my own vision for education leading to the place-based pedagogy of pleasure, which I am currently developing.

My participants are a group of unique individuals with unique experiences. We are passionate, strong-minded, creative humans with both the virtues and shortcomings that accompany these attributes. As individuals we have shared some of our experiences in our art, our children's books, and our teaching work with children in schools. As a group, we have now shared a wider range of these experiences in this dissertation in hopes that educators and academics can learn from our experiences of race, place, and art, to educate

for a more just and beautiful world.

### **A Place-Based Pedagogy of Pleasure**

When I spoke with David about how to conclude this dissertation, how to bring all the pieces together and tie up all the loose ends, particularly in relation to my theoretical perspectives, he suggested returning to Freire's ideas on praxis. It is in this spirit that I have come to position my participants and our work as exemplars for culturally responsive, place-based, critical multicultural, creative education. This positioning has come about from embracing my multiple identities as an artist, researcher, and teacher looking at the interconnections between these different roles and wanting to integrate them through a/r/t/ography.

I found in my teaching practice that learning about the artists (and other critical multicultural children's book artists) while doing close readings of their books and art provides a sophisticated and accessible way of jump-starting culturally responsive, place-based, multicultural arts education. Through learning about, from, and with my participants, my mentors, my students, and the various texts and images I have encountered on this research journey, a vision for education emerged that advocates for education to be experiential, holistic, creative, integrated, organic, and inspiring and, as Joe points out, meeting the needs and interests of different students to also include vocational training for those who want it. This vision combines the meaningful, and sometimes challenging, methods of connecting and learning with and from local communities and environments through place-based education, with the aesthetic, emotive, sensual, and pleasurable methods of critical multicultural arts education.

My participants and I have worked as art educators in some of the poorest all Black and all Hispanic schools with the least amount of funding, or resources, or hope. We know how truly rotten the current situation of education can be. We've worked with both heroic teachers and hopeless teachers and witnessed the gratitude in kids' faces when they see themselves reflected in children's books or experience the joys of art making that connects them with their own lives and dreams.

Consequently, I believe that place-based art education that begins with appropriate quality multicultural children's picture books has the potential to begin this process of transformative education, engaging students in culturally responsive, meaningful, and engaging educational practices of decolonization and reinhabitation. However, where "a place-based pedagogy of pleasure" differs from "a critical pedagogy of place" is that it highlights the importance of foregrounding pleasure in the educative process to address these critical issues of social justice and environmental stewardship through sensory, emotive, intuitive, empathetic and soulful ways.

My own experiences as a pre-service art educator have taught me that a place-based pedagogy of pleasure is highly effective in motivating students to truly engage in their learning. I have found that if students enjoy learning, if they feel connection with what they are doing, if their work is meaningful and does good for others, if their senses are engaged along with their hearts and minds and bodies, if they experience caring and community both inside the classroom and outside of it—they will invest their time and effort, and their heart and soul, into their learning, experiencing and giving deep pleasure to themselves and others. And, while not all life or learning can be about pleasure, too much of education for too long has been about pain (or at least boredom).

Although a place-based pedagogy of pleasure is very much in its formative stages, it is important to note that I am not proposing this pedagogy as a panacea for all of education's ills, nor is it appropriate in every situation. A place-based pedagogy of pleasure simply calls for bringing more pleasure into the teaching and learning process. It puts forward the idea of increasing the pleasure principle in learning by combining art with place-based, experiential learning, and appropriate quality multicultural children's literature to create integrated, connected, soulful, sensual, playful, emotive, and meaningful learning experiences. I believe this pedagogy holds the potential to combat the deadly boredom, alienation, and disconnection many students feel in the institution we call education, and the attendant lack of meaningful learning often that accompanies it.

Thomas Moore writes:

You educate for the soul by giving it the things in life it needs: love, beauty, spirit, pleasure. You teach a person how to focus on the soul, how to live poetically and aesthetically, how to step into eternity. In this kind of education, time and eternity always intersect; one doesn't dominate the other. You aim toward the fullness of life and its empty spaces, and you avoid the tendency to be overly busy and literally void. You create the conditions and allow the soul to manifest itself." (p. 15)

By harnessing the soulful, reflective, pleasurable, and sensual qualities of the arts, with the emotionally engaged and practical concerns of connecting to various local cultures, communities and environments, a place-based pedagogy of pleasure could provide emerging teachers opportunities to explore their soulful, poetic, place-based, pleasure-infused and interconnected teacher/artist selves with which they could then inspire and engage their own future students and communities.

David Gruenewald (2003a) writes:

People must be challenged to reflect on their own concrete situationality in a way that explores the complex interrelationships between cultural and ecological environments.... [A] critical pedagogy of place ultimately encourages teachers and students to reinhabit their places, that is, to pursue the kind of social action that improves the social and ecological life of places, near and far, now and in the future. (pp. 6-7)

Thus, by engaging in a place-based pedagogy of pleasure, students and teachers can work toward creating these important bonds between self and other, or me and you, and us and place. By working with community members researching what is going on in their communities and disseminating this research through beautiful art products placed in their communities, and by creating art that celebrates, revitalizes, and beautifies communities and environments on practical and soulful levels, students can learn through a place-based pedagogy of pleasure, centered on the emotions of caring and love.

Sobel (1996) writes about the importance of leading children to love their places before being asked to heal them, and this call to love is also essential in healing from

racism and all the other social and environmental injustice ills as well. This call to love is the basis of a place-based pedagogy of pleasure where links between the emotions, the senses, the intellect, the body, the soul, and heartfelt creativity are forged. These connections extend from individuals to communities, and communities to their environments, including the more than human world. A place-based pedagogy of pleasure calls for an ethic of care, connection, and delight through a methodology of pleasure.

### My Voice

Imagine a small Jewish-Australian woman, dressed in a pirate's costume, with a hybrid Australian-American accent, softly speaking these words, which have flowed throughout this dissertation existing as nouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives, and activities.

Art, experience, intuition, emotion, sensuality, sexuality, spirit, soul, embed, embody, place, displace, re-place, misplace, paint, photograph, film, theorize, practice, communicate, produce, product, commodity, cultural artifact, real, unreal, surreal, hyperreal, imagine, identity, representation, misrepresentation, the more than human world, animals as guides, mentors as guides, artists, activists, transformation, resistance, decolonization, reinhabitation, agency, touch, smell, see, taste hear, heal, play. I get the sense to be present, to present represent, to create and re-create, to mark and re-mark, to search and re-search, to do and re-do, to join and rejoin and on *and* on using the language of pictures and words to touch and be touched, crossing boundaries and borders, teaching, and learning, giving and receiving, filling up and emptying out, overflowing, overwhelming, in, and of, and through Elizabeth Gomez, Joe Sam, Maya Gonzalez, Carl Angel. George Littlechild, Mira Reisberg, David Gruenewald, Gail Furman, Mike Hayes, Rita Irwin, Karen Weathermon, my mentors and students, and co-creators including you the reader who have traveled along with me on this journey.

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## Explanation of Appendices

As an a/r/tographer who is constantly on the lookout for ways to complexify, deepen, expand, and open up to an excess of information in whatever I am working on, I wanted my dissertation to serve multiple functions. Firstly, I wanted to a/r/tographically explore the process of knowledge generation through artistic practices and further the body of literature on arts-based educational research and, in particular, a/r/tography. Secondly, as a researcher I wanted to generate and disseminate new knowledge about the lives and work of these particular multicultural children's book artists who, I believe I have shown, have valuable insights into the intersecting arenas of place, race, culture, education, and art. And thirdly, as a teacher I wanted to generate practical resources for educators to use as part of the knowledge generation process, hence these appendices. In addition my dissertation reflects not only on my participants lives, work and ideas, but also how I have integrated this study into my teaching, hence these appendices also provide useful data within the study and bear some explanation here.

- Appendix A is my interview guide which I used as a starting point, collapsing the questions during the actual interview to engage in conversation along with the questions.
- Appendix B contains a bibliography of my participants' books including an awards and honors list.
- Appendix C lists the required course packet readings and video list, which provided conceptual and theoretical texts to intellectually ground my students in what they were learning throughout the course.
- Appendix D includes the lesson plans related to the artists in the study.
- Appendix E consists of handouts written by groups of students and myself on the artists we studied throughout the semester. Students often dressed up as the artist or in some way tried to embody them during their presentations.
- Appendix F includes handouts written by groups of students and myself on the artists' books we studied throughout the semester.

Appendix G highlights some selected student book project texts based on my participants' children's books

## Appendix A

### Interview Guide

#### *Place Based Pedagogy*

Are there art pieces or artists whose work with, or images of, landscape or environment influenced or inspired you? In what ways did they influence you? Can you point to any examples in your work that show these influences?

What is the role of place or environment in your life and work?

How might your sense of identity connect with ideas of place?

Can you describe or show me any ways that where you choose to live now, or where you grew up appear in your books?

Can you show me how any of these ideas about landscape or environment appear in your books?

#### *Artography*

Are there or were there any artists who have influenced your artistic development? Who?

What kinds of research do you do as part of making a book?

In what ways do you weave your own life experiences into your art and books?

How does the process of making art impact your thinking about the stories you are representing?

How has being an artist affected you?

What are the most important themes and qualities for you to explore and experience in the process of making art?

Can you speak to the sensual and emotional qualities in your work?

Can you show me how and where this comes out in your art work?

Where do you think emotion fits in the realm of education?

How does spirit or spirituality make its way into your artwork? Can you show me some examples?

Has the process of participating in this research study led to any insights into your own artistic practice?

Has it shifted your thinking at all about future projects?

In what ways do you think your responses to this study might have been different if we weren't friends and colleagues?

### ***Post Colonial Theory***

Where does emotion fit in the culture you come from compared to the dominant culture?

In what ways are imagination or sensuality valued or devalued in your home culture compared to the dominant culture?

What are some of the ways that imperialism perpetuates itself in children's books?

Can you give me some details as to how you see your own books fitting within that paradigm?

How do your experiences of race manifest in your work?

Can you describe some of the ways your art and books challenge racism?

### ***Cultural Production***

Was there anything in your books that you had to take out of your pictures from CBP's point of view?

Was there anything you had to include that wasn't intrinsic to the story but was included to make the book more marketable?

Have you ever felt censored?

Do you feel at all limited in the kinds of books you have been offered?

What are the major differences between the work you do for yourself and your children's books?

What is your relationship with your audience?

In what ways do you attend to the different audiences that read your books (such as do you include things that kids might not get but that adults will, like certain kids films do?)

What role does entertainment play in the production of your books?

Do you pay attention to the children's book market when conceptualizing or producing your work?

Can you give me some examples of ways that your work as an artist is affected by the requirements of making your books or art marketable?

If you were to choose an object from your surroundings to represent you what would that be?

What is your favorite animal?

## Appendix B

### Artists Bibliographies and Selected Awards and Honors

#### ***Books Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez***

Argueta, J. (2000). *A movie in my pillow/Una pelicula en mi almohada*. Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Argueta, J. (2005). *Moony Luna/Luna, Lunita, Lunera*. Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Herrera, J., Felipe. (2000). *The upside down boy/El niño de cabeza*. Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez. Children's Book Press: San Francisco.

#### ***Selected awards and honors for Elizabeth Gomez***

2001–2002 Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List

2000 Smithsonian's Notable Books for Children

Américas Award for Latin American literature

Skipping Stones Honor Award for Multicultural Literature

IPPY Award for Multicultural Fiction for Juveniles

#### ***Books Illustrated by Joe Sam***

Rohmer, H., Chow, O., & Vidaure, M. (1987). *The invisible hunters/Los cazadores invisibles*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press

Rohmer, H. (1999). *Honoring our ancestors: Stories and pictures by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

#### ***Selected awards and honors for Joe Sam***

Coretta Scott King Honor Book

American Library Association Notable Book

Parent's Choice Approved Book

Cooperative Children's Book Center Choice

Recommended by the Elementary School Library Collection

2000 Skipping Stones Honor Award Winner

1999 Parent's Choice Silver Honor Winner

### ***Books Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez***

Alarcón, F., X. (1997). *Laughing tomatoes and other spring poems/Jitomates risuenos y otros poemas de primavera*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Alarcón, F., X. (1998). *From the bellybutton of the moon and other summer poems/Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas de verano*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Alarcón, F., X. (1999). *Angels ride bikes and other fall poems/Los Angeles andan en bicicleta y otros poemas de otono*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Alarcón, F., X. (2001). *Iguanas in the snow and other winter poems/Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Anzaldúa, G., E. (1996). *Prietita and the ghost woman/Prietita y la llorona*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Gerson, M.-J. (2003). *Fiesta feminina: Celebrating women in Mexican folktales*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. New York: Barefoot Books.

Pérez, A., Irma. (2000). *My very own room/Mi propio cuartito*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Pérez, A., Irma. (2002). *My diary from here to there/Mi diario de aqui hasta alla*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1999). *Honoring our ancestors: Stories and pictures by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

### ***Selected awards and honors for Maya Gonzalez***

1999 Skipping Stones Honor Award

1999 School Library Journal's Américas Award Commended List

1998 Cooperative Children's Book Center Choice

1998 Pura Belpré Honor Award from the American Library Association

National Parenting Publications Gold Medal Award

1996 Américas Honor Award

1996 Smithsonian Notable Book

***Books Illustrated by Carl Angel***

Argueta, J. (2003). *Xochitl and the flowers/Xochitl la niña de las flores*. Illustrated by Carl Angel. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Gilles, A., Astudilla. (2001). *Willie wins*. Illustrated by Carl Angel. New York: Lee and Low.

Lucas, A. (1995). *Mga Kuwentong Bayan: Folk stories from the Phillipines*. Illustrated by Carl Angel. San Francisco: San Francisco Study Center.

Robles, A., D. (2003). *Lakas and the Manilatown fish/Si Lakas at ang isdang Manilatown*. Illustrated by Carl Angel. Children's Book Press: San Francisco.

Rohmer, H. (1999). *Honoring our ancestors: Stories and pictures by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

***Selected awards and honors for Carl Angel***

2003 Américas Award Commended Title

2004 Independent Publisher Book Awards Finalist

2000 Skipping Stones Honor Award Winner

1999 Parent's Choice Silver Honor Winner

San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

***Books Illustrated by George Littlechild***

Littlechild, G. (1993). *This land is my land*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Ahenakew, F. (1988). *How the mouse got brown teeth: A Cree story for children*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. Saskatoon, CAN: Fifth House.

Ahenakew, F. (1988). *How the birch tree got its stripes: A Cree story for children*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. Saskatoon, CAN: Fifth House.

Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Van Camp, R. (1994). *A man called raven*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco:

Children's Book Press.

Van Camp, R. (1998). *What's the most beautiful thing you know about horses?* Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

***Selected awards and honors for George Littlechild***

Jane Addams Picture Book Award

National Parenting Publications Award

Parent's Choice Approved Book

Horn Book Magazine Fanfare List

Hungry Mind Review "Children's Books of Distinction" Finalist

Recommended by the Elementary School Library Collection

***Books Illustrated by Mira Reisberg***

Bresnick-Perry, R. (1992). *Leaving for America*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Corpi, L. (1997). *Where fireflies dance/Ahí donde bailan las luciérnagas*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Miller, E., I. (1999). *Just like home/Como en mi tierra*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. Morton Grove, ILL: Albert Whitman and Company.

Moroney, L. (1990). *Elinda who danced in the sky*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Moroney, L. (2003). *Baby Rattlesnake/Viborita de Cascabel*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1989). *Uncle Nacho's hat/El sombrero del tío Nacho*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1999). *Honoring our ancestors: Stories and pictures by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

***Selected awards and honors for Mira Reisberg***

2000–2001 Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List

Unicef Ezra Jack Keats Award Citation

Recommended by the Elementary School Library Association

2000 Skipping Stones Honor Award Winner

1999 Parent's Choice Silver Honor Winner



## Appendix C

### Required Course Packet Readings and Online Video List

- Armstrong, T. (2000). *Multiple intelligences in the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Cahan, S. & Kocur, Z. (1996). *Contemporary art and multicultural education*. New York: Routledge.
- Check, E. (1998). Close to the knives: A memoir of disintegration. *Journal of Multicultural Research in Art Education*. 16, 73-75.
- Cornett, C., E. (2003). *Creating meaning through literature and the arts: An integration resource for classroom teachers*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Elfland, A. D. (2005). Problems confronting visual culture. *Art Education*. 58(6), 35- 40.
- Eisner, E. W. (1991). What really counts in schools. *Education Leadership*. 41, 10-17
- Fiske, E. B. (2001). *Champions of change: The impact of the arts on learning*. Washington: The MacArthur Foundation.
- Galbraith, L. (1992). Crossing cultural boundaries: Case studies, reflective inquiry, and a common language in pre-service classrooms. *Journal of Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Research in Art Education*. 10, 89-99.
- Gruenewald, D. A. (2003a). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, 34(4), 3-12.
- Harmon, K. (2004). *You are here: Personal geographies and other maps of the imagination*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- R. L. Irwin & K. Grauer (Eds.). *Starting with...* (pp. 42-49). Vancouver, B.C.: CSAE
- Klein, S. (1992). Social action and art education: A curriculum for change. *Journal of Multicultural Research in Art Education*. 10, 111-125.
- Klein, S. (2000). Spirituality and art education: Looking to place. *Journal of Multicultural Research in Art Education*. 18, 57-66.
- LaPorte, A. (2000). Oral histories as intergenerational dialogue in art education. *Art Education* 53(4) 39-44.
- McPherson, R. (unpublished handout). Content from four art disciplines (DBAE).
- Neperud, R. (2000). Personal journey into the aesthetics of farming. *Journal of*

*Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Research in Art Education. 18, 97-100.*

Pastro, H. A. (2000). The elements of art. In R., L. Irwin & K. Grauer (Eds.), *Starting with...* (pp. 34-41). Vancouver, B.C.: CSAE

Pearse, H. (2004). Themes, cross-curricular connections and daily drawing. In R. L. Irwin & K. Grauer (Eds.), *Starting with...* (pp. 34-41). Vancouver, B.C.: CSAE

Smith, G. A. (2002). Place-based education: Learning to be where we are. *Phi Delta Kappan, 83*(8), 584-594.

Stephens, P., & Walkup, N. (2000). *Bridging the curriculum through art: Interdisciplinary connections*. Glenview, IL: Crystal Productions.

Ulbricht, J. (2005). J.C. Holz revisited: From modernism to visual culture. *Art Education 58*(6), 12-17.

### ***Drawing Techniques from:***

Best-Maugard, A. (1990). *A method for creative design*. New York: Dover Publications.

De Reyna, R. (1972). *How to draw what you see*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications.

### ***Online Videos***

<http://www.kqed.org/spark/artists-orgs/annavonmer.jsp>

Anna Von Merten's needlework maps.

<http://www.kqed.org/spark/artists-orgs/annchamber.jp>

Ann Chamberlain's work with communities and themes of "memory and place."

<http://www.kqed.org/spark/artists-orgs/axis.jp>

AXIS Dance Company's mind-opening work employing dancers with varying degrees of able-bodiedness.

## Appendix D

### Book Related Integrated Fine Art Lesson Plans

#### **Elizabeth Gomez, *A Movie in My Pillow* and Immigration Cartoon Narratives**

**Objectives:** Students research history as they learn about culture and immigration, to promote empathy with recent immigrants. They will create a cartoon narrative about how their family came to their community, exploring issues of relocation and immigration.

**Grade Level:** All grade levels.

**Instructions:** K-1 students can change content to simplify, e.g. "Where my family comes from." "How I learned to do something I never thought I could do," or "Things I like to do" as a getting to know you activity without using the template.

#### **Steps:**

##### *Cartoon Narrative*

1. Students should interview family members to research the history of how they came to their community.
2. Find pictures of transportation and scenery that will provide resource images to depict this journey.
3. Give students a cartoon template to draw their story in.
4. Using this template, students should draw their family history using pencil lightly, then either inking with pen or painting with tempera paints.

#### **Materials:**

- Cartoon template on cardstock, pencil, erasers, pen, tempera paints.
- Pictorial reference materials such as maps, planes, trains, ships etc.

#### **Artist Connection:**

- Elizabeth Gomez is a Mexican born painter whose vivid images convey powerful narratives related to place, immigration, and the natural world.

#### **Children's Book Connection:**

*A Movie in My Pillow*. Written by Jorge Argueta. Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez.

This autobiographical story tells how young Jorgito fled the war in El Salvador with his father to come live in the Mission District of San Francisco. Full of intensely colored and evocative images, the book uses poetic language to tell the story of Jorge's life in rural El Salvador and then in urban San Francisco. This was the first children's picture book to address El Salvadoran war refugees from a child's perspective.

**Music:** Alerta Sings: Children's Songs in Spanish and English by Suni Paz.

**Content Integration:**

Discuss different reasons for immigration and the historical and personal forces that shape people's movements.

**Content Areas:** Art, Reading, Communication, History.

**Place Based Education Extension:**

Create an exhibition at the local library leaving extra templates and pieces of paper and pushpins for viewers to add their own immigrant narrative.

### **Joe Sam, *The Invisible Hunters* and Paper Maché Animal Banks**

**Objectives:** Students will create art that benefits their community. They will decide on a local non-profit that they wish to raise money for and design an animal or object to make a savings bank to raise money for this organization. After creating the bank they will place it in a public space to raise money.

**Grade Level:** All ages can benefit from this project. Younger students will need more assistance in creating the banks and placing them in the community.

**Instructions:** Students will create their own paper maché animal bank to connect with and benefit their community or an organization in need. They will also create a description of who or what the bank is raising money for including a website address that donors can visit to find out more about them.

#### **Steps:**

1. Using a balloon with toilet paper rolls attached with masking tape for legs, cut tagboard or cardboard attachments for ears, nose etc.. Students will paper maché the form using either flour and water 1 part flour to 3 parts water, or 1 part white glue to 2 parts water, or use blue liquid starch from bottle, and strips of newspaper. Begin forming a crust and bulges to form eyes or other bumps as necessary by wadding up newspaper strips.
2. Apply 2-3 layers of newspaper strips
3. Let dry for a day.
4. Add another 3–4 layers and let dry.
5. Paint the mask with tempura paints. Paint base coat first with larger brush and then use contrasting colors to make patterns, textures and paint features. Let dry.
6. Place the bank in a public place with a description of who or what the bank is raising money for.

#### **Materials:**

- Balloons, toilet paper rolls, cardboard or tag board, scissors, newspaper, paper maché mix/glue, tempura paints.

**Artist Connections:**

- Joe Sam is an African-American artist whose work frequently addresses issues of environment, place, class, race, and special needs. He is also a children's book illustrator. Sam's work is known for its exceptional use of strong color, texture, and pattern.

**Children's Book Connection:**

*The Invisible Hunters* is an indigenous story from the Black Miskito Indians of Northern Nicaragua, which also serves as a cautionary tale about the destructive consequences of greed and colonialism for three wild boar hunters.

**Music:** Juju Music by King Sunny Ade and His African Beats.

**Content Areas:** Art, Reading, Math.

**Content Integration:** Students should discuss what can happen to an environment when greed becomes more important than caring for a place and the people in it. This is an excellent book to use in promoting an ethic of care and community responsibility. Content areas include math, civics, writing, and art.

**Place Based Education Extension:**

Students create art that raises money for and brings attention to the needs of the community. After raising money the banks can then be auctioned off to further raise money for the organization and to celebrate the students work and connection to their community.

## **Maya Gonzalez, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* and Sacred Places Pastel Drawings**

**Objectives:** 1) To teach about the importance of protecting special or sacred places. 2) To foster an appreciation for the beauty and importance of environments, either man made or natural.

**Grade Levels:** All grades levels.

**Instructions:** Using either reference material from photographs or magazines or from memory, students will create a portrait of a special place on black construction paper. The pastel chalks present a stark contrasting color against the black construction paper giving the pictures an intensely luminescent quality.

### **Steps:**

1. Research and discuss special or sacred local places. Perhaps it's a favorite park, or the corner store, or the ocean
2. Have students choose a special or sacred place and if possible do a field trip to one or more of these places. If not have students bring pictures of their special place if possible.
3. Draw with pencil on black construction paper.
4. Color with chalk pastels blending colors together to create soft hues and gradations.

### **Materials:**

- Black construction paper and pastel chalks.

### **Artist Connection:**

Maya Gonzalez is a contemporary Latina artist whose personal work often addresses themes of healing and nature. She is a multi award winning children's book artist whose books are frequently place-specific depictions of Latino culture that include issues such as pollution, colonialism, immigration, and the importance of respecting the environment and nature.

### **Children's Book Connections:**

*Prietita and the Ghost Woman*, written by Francisco X. Allarcán. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. In Anzaldúa's retelling of the La Llorona myth she draws on older scholarship that shows La Llorona's connection to nature and posits her as a helping ghost rather than the terrifying figure often depicted. The book touches on issues of colonialism, traditional ways of knowing, and

nature as teacher. In an afterward, Anzaldua asks children to look beneath the surface because things are not always as they appear.

**Music:** Bach for Book Lovers.

**Content Areas:** Art, Science, Reading

**Place Based Education Extension:**

By exhibiting the pictures in a public place children can draw attention to the importance of conserving special places in their community.



**Carl Angel, *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* and Salmon Gone Wild**

**Giant Paper Fish Hangings**

**Objectives:**

Students are encouraged to learn about salmon and other local fish, including their habitats and how they can be protected, while playing with making wildly patterned fish shapes to hang from the ceiling or banisters.

**Grade Level:** 2<sup>nd</sup> grade up. Modify for younger students by making smaller fish out of colored construction paper and using adult help for stapling or taping together.

**Instructions:**

Students will make a school of colorfully patterned oversized salmon to hang.

**Steps:**

Use large colored butcher paper and fold in half.

Draw salmon shape on one side and cut both sides out at the same time while folded.

Open up like a mirrored butterfly shape and paint each side.

Flip over and place two sides together with paint on the outside and start stapling edges. stuffing with small pieces of newspaper as you go, leaving top open.

Twist a length of newspaper to form a U shape and tie fishing line to the middle before taping ends to make an oval. Place inside fish before completing the stapling.

Hang from ceiling or banister in an atrium

**Materials:**

Newspaper, rolls of colored butcher's paper or construction paper, tempera paints and brushes, staples and stapler.

**Artist Connection:**

- Carl Angel is a Filipino-American artists whose work frequently addresses issues such as the Filipino-American war, or different forms of religion and spirituality in his neighborhood.

**Book Connection:**

*Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* takes us on a playful yet educational tour of the now defunct

Manilatown district of San Francisco, once home to a population of elderly manongs (male Filipino workers brought in for cheap labor), the book is a wild ride through time, space and the imagination. While being both playful and lighthearted the book also provides opportunities for older students to explore issues of place and displacement and the racism that Asians have endured.

**Music:** The Pahinui Brothers, Hawaiian music from where Carl Angel was raised.

**Content Areas:** Art, Science, Reading

**Content Integration:**

Students should learn about the local wildlife of where they live and honor it.

**Place Based Education Extensions:**

By hanging the "salmon gone wild" (or local fish, or birds, or animals) out in the community, community members can benefit from the beauty of the students work while learning about their local wildlife.

**George Littlechild. *What's the most beautiful thing you know about horses?***

**Animal Paintings and Interviews, (or Glue Drawings and Interviews)**

**Objective:** To learn about natural science and local wildlife and also learn about contemporary Native-American culture.

**Grade level:** All ages

**Instructions:** Students will create realistic or stylized drawings of a favorite local animal. Students will interview friends, family, and/or community members about why this particular animal is beautiful. Using prose language they will create pages for a class book that not only tells us about the importance and beauty of this animal, but also about the person(s) interviewed.

**Steps for painting:**

Preparation: Students should copy various animals from Best Maugaurd in course packet to learn how to draw many kinds of animals.

1. Visit a natural history museum or examine nature/photographs and draw a few selected animals.
2. Have students create a drawing of a local animal on heavy paper such as cardstock or tag board.
3. Paint the animal, keeping in mind the style of artist George Littlechild.
4. Interview a friend: ask and write the response to this question, "What is the most beautiful thing about this animal?"
5. Type out the prose and attach it and display with the painting in a public venue to educate the community about the beauty in their area.

**Alternative project–Steps for glue drawings**

1. Draw your special animal on black paper with pencil
2. Go over pencil lines with a bead of white glue
3. Allow to dry
4. Fill in areas with chalk pastels layering colors and blending with fingertip

**Materials:**

- Sketch paper and pencil, tempura paints.
- Or for glue drawings – black paper, pencil and chalk pastels

**Artist Connection:**

- George Littlechild is a biracial First Nations' artist who separated from his Cree community and raised in foster homes from an early age. His art addresses First Nations' themes of displacement and survival against brutal odds. Littlechild celebrates his heritage and culture with exuberant colors and patterns.

**Children's Book Connection:**

The author, Richard Van Camp, is from the Dogrib tribe that reveres dogs, while the artist, George Littlechild is from the Plains Cree tribe that reveres horses. The book functions like a call and response between the author and the artist as Van Camp asks his family members and friends "What is the most beautiful thing you know about horses?" What makes this book so exceptional is its contemporary representation of First Nation's culture and their contexts through handsome illustrations.

**Music:** Music For the Native-Americans by Robbie Robertson

**Content Integration:**

Students should relate this project with science through discussing the local environment and animals. It is important for student to examine cultural styles of representing nature. Use these observations to create your own animal. It is also important for students to become critical readers able to pay attention to the ways that Native-Americans have frequently been represented as either "spiritual guides for white folks" or as stereotypes justifying, usually unconsciously, the atrocious history accompanying manifest destiny. At the same time, most of these representations portray Native-Americans as existing solely in the past, or as ghosts.

**Content Areas:** Science, Reading, Writing, Art.

**Place Based Education Extension:** Students will display the book they created at the local library drawing attention to the local environment and wildlife. If possible the library will make a copy for its collection so the original art can be displayed in an exhibition as well.

## **Mira Reisberg, *Uncle Nacho's Hat* and Visual Culture Puppet Shows**

### **Objectives:**

Students learn to be critical viewers of visual culture by deconstructing media events such as newspaper articles or television shows to produce playful puppet shows replete with an excess of advertising.

**Grade level:** All grade levels. Younger grade levels need simpler puppets such as sock puppets or cutout puppets on a stick.

**Instructions:** Students will create puppets and perform a puppet show based on a television program or some other form of media to show the underlying messages.

### **Steps:**

1. Choose a media event to write a play for a puppet show.
2. Rewrite the event so that the characters will be telling the story with marionettes, which sock puppets continually interrupt with advertisements.

### **Marionettes**

Stretch felt around 3" Styrofoam ball. Glue yarn for hair to cover seam.

Wrap skin colored felt around 2" x 1/4" dowel and push one end into bottom of head.

Using light, flexible fabric make top with long sleeves and pants with long legs.

Lightly stuff and close seams leaving seams open only for hands, feet, and neck dowel.

Make hands and feet out of heavy cardboard adding extra leg and extra arm length on cardboard to place inside sleeves and pant leg.

Glue all these into the clothing, gluing all the seams.

Using 2 popsicle sticks make a cross between a T and a cross.

Cut 3 pieces of cord from floor to waist length.

Push cord in hole in top of head and glue, attach the other end to the top center of the cross. The other 2 cords attach to wrists and feet (1 cord on each side for both hand and the foot) glueing first at wrist, then at ankle. Attach other end to either side end of the cross.

### **Sock Puppets**

Cut oval from cardboard paying attention to the "grooved grain," fold in half to make mouth and paint or cover with felt.

Glue buttons or googly eyes on and yarn for hair.

**Materials:**

- Children's book, felt, stuffing, glue gun, googly eyes, buttons, cardboard, fun fabrics, yarn, etc.

**Artist Connection:**

- Mira Reisberg: My artwork fuses my many interests pertaining to relationship, environment, nature, spirituality, and healing while playing with color, pattern, shape, and texture. This art frequently evidences humor and a childlike fascination with the world.

**Children's Book Connection:**

- *Uncle Nachos Hat*, Adapted by Harriet Rohmer, illustrated by Mira Reisberg: Uncle Nacho's Hat is a story about change, which originated as a Nicaraguan puppet show following the Sandanista revolution and has been performed as such all over the world.

**Music:** Nicaragua...Presente!: Music from Nicaragua Libre

**Content Integration:**

Students should develop their literacy skills by analyzing and synthesizing text and different forms of visual culture.

**Place Based Education Extensions:**

Students can benefit their community by creating plays dealing with themes or events from their local communities and/or by performing their puppet shows in places like the local senior center or children's hospital. The puppet shows are usually so delightful they can also serve as fundraising performances to raise money for a local non-profit.

and work.

## Appendix E

### Student Handouts On Artists

#### Elizabeth Gomez-Freer

Elizabeth Gomez was born in Mexico City in 1960. Her childhood was initially poor so her family had few children's books. However, her mother introduced her to encyclopedias, encouraging Elizabeth to use her imagination and creativity. She was fortunate enough to go to a bilingual school in Mexico where she was exposed to English and Spanish. It was at this school that Elizabeth learned from magnificently designed bilingual textbooks.

Elizabeth's grandfather had a farm near Mexico City. During her time spent there she developed a great love and appreciation for nature. This would inspire her artwork and make her aware of political problems involving nature and society.

Ten years ago Elizabeth moved to San Francisco with her husband, who is from an Argentinean Jewish background. This is when she first experienced racism when a neighbor not realizing she was Mexican, warned her that Mexicans were moving into the neighborhood as if this were a terrible thing. Elizabeth has witnessed many examples of racism and creates her books to both contribute to multicultural education anti-racist teaching *and* delight children.

Elizabeth also has two daughters who she collaborates with on some of her paintings. She graduated from San Francisco Art Institute with a BFA (Bachelor's in Fine Arts) and a MFA from San Jose State University. Throughout her life she has illustrated children's books, designed prints, and made her own personal paintings.

Elizabeth describes the main difference between her children's book illustrations and her personal art as one where she makes the children's book art softer, sweeter, and more nurturing. Her personal art deals more with issues such as death and problems with nature such as deforestation. These environmental themes show her great love for all creatures and plants. In addition, Elizabeth always wanted to illustrate children's books, and her childhood experiences only encouraged her to fulfill her dreams.

As seen in the book *A Movie in My Pillow*, Gomez paints colorful pictures for children

with great symbolism. This book is a story about a boy who immigrates to America because of the war in El Salvador. She has also illustrated the *Upside Down Boy*, another story about a migrant family, and *Moony Luna*, a more mainstream book about a young Latina girl's fears of going to school for the first time.

**Teaching Idea:**

Elizabeth Gomez is very interested in nature and world issues such as racism, immigration, and deforestation. She considers herself a feminist Latina environmentalist, caring deeply and compassionately for all living things. For this project students should first research issues they feel strongly connected to that affect their community. From here they could write a letter addressing the concerned issue and follow it up with an art project such as a mural or posters displaying their feelings toward it. Younger grades can definitely make art about something they feel strongly about or about their love for nature keeping it in line with Elizabeth's work

**Children's Books:**

Argueta, Jorge (2001) *A Movie in My Pillow*. Illus. by Elizabeth Gomez. San Francisco:

Children's Book Press

Argueta, Jorge (2001) *Moony Luna*. Illus. by Elizabeth Gomez. San Francisco:

Children's Book Press

Herrera, Juan Felipe. (2000) *Upside Down Boy*. Illus. by Elizabeth Gomez. San

Francisco: Children's Book Press

**Sources:**

-Mira Reisberg

- Elizabeth Gomez- Freer

<http://www.hexabus.com/art/Elizabeth/CurrentNews.html>

**Written by:**

Kara Gallagher, Katie Ritter, assisted by Mira Reisberg



## Joe Sam

There are many people in this world who have never heard of Joe Sam, yet his name and work are unforgettable. He was born in Harlem, New York in 1939, and raised during the 40's by his three inspiring aunts. These aunts, Edna, Viney, and Grace worked as maids in wealthy White homes in Manhattan. Originally from Trinidad, Joe Sam's aunts carried their heritage with them all throughout New York. They would wear the most colorful clothing and fabrics that they could find. His aunts and their great love of their African and West Indian culture inspire much of what Joe Sam presents in his art. According to Sam, his aunts "brought the warmth of Africa and the West Indies to Harlem" (Honoring our Ancestors, p.26). As a mixed media painter and sculptor, Sam uses his heritage and love of color to create his art.

Despite a difficult childhood Sam earned a doctorate in education and psychology at the University of Massachusetts. He was involved in human services until 1984, when he quit his job to become a full-time artist. Amazingly, he never received any formal art training. He enjoys using all types of media, yet he is most famous to this day for his sculptures.

The content of his work often involves social and political commentary. His style is characterized by the combination of diverse, independent, and often quite simple elements along with bright colors, reflective of his African-American heritage that together combine to form powerfully complex pieces. His first major body of work, the "Black West Series", portrayed Blacks who played important roles in the American West and have typically been omitted from movies and history books. It was highly acclaimed and won him an NEA grant for 1985/86. He then created the "Black Bible" and the "Black Jazz" series, works that also highlight African-American culture.

Joe Sam's work in public art combines his artistry with his past as an educator and administrator. His public sculptures are always reflective of the communities surrounding the project, and he often involves community members, especially children, in the design process. The community takes spiritual ownership of the work, it becomes a symbol for them and their neighborhood.

A good example of this process is the giant game of Hide'N'Seek Joe Sam designed for the Metro Rail Station in South Central Los Angeles, a community where more than 50% of the people are under 18 years old. He designed sculptures depicting this universal children's game

around the columns of the freeway bridge working with children from the local Boys and Girls Club. He distributed coloring books with the outlined sculptures to school children in the surrounding area and worked with the children in the classroom. They later completed the books under their teachers' guidance and returned them to Joe Sam. The images the children created are reflected in the final sculptures.

Because of Sams's desire to have his work be accessible to people with limited incomes, Art-Pins are also created based on his work. People with disabilities make these pins and receive income for doing so. They are sold in museum stores nationwide and are issued for each commissioned work. One of his most popular Art-Pins is a replica of his wheelchair sculpture showing a person in a wheelchair playing basketball.

Joe Sam's work can be seen in many cities, including Santa Monica, Seattle, Cleveland, Oakland, and San Jose. Overall, his work is described as bright, colorful, exuberant, and amazingly significant. Although the sculptures that he creates take up the majority of his time he still paints and creates mixed media works all the time. According to his webpage, he is currently working on the "Black Indian Series," which is about the mixing of African-American and Native-American races.

**Teaching Idea:**

Joe Sam's work is very place-based, which is very appealing. He enjoys creating a sense of community. Students will design multiple sculptures from clay that are based on the community. Although the sculptures must be different they need to relate to one topic. For instance, it can be based on a local farmer's market or a local park. Each group of students would need to design and then build a clay sculpture based on their theme. The sculptures would then be donated to their community center or the senior's center so that the community can enjoy them.

**Content areas:** Art.

**Teaching Idea:**

Along with culture, Joe Sam also sees community involvement as a very important aspect to anyone's life. He creates most of his art for community enjoyment. Many of his commissions are in public places where everyone has the possibility to enjoy the artwork. As teachers we could have our students create a drawing or mural complete with all different types of inter-

ests, cultures, and experiences. This could be a project that can easily be turned into place-based education. Following in Joe Sam's footsteps, the class could then donate the mural to a local library, hospital, or town hall.

**Content areas:** art, history, social studies, and math

**Children's Books:**

Rohmer, Harriet (1987). *The Invisible Hunters*. Illus. by Joe Sam San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, Harriet (1997). *Just Like Me: Stories and Portraits by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, Harriet (1999). *Honoring Our Ancestors: Stories and Pictures by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

**Sources:**

Internet: <http://www.joesam.com>

**Written by:**

Megan Foster, Derek Bluhm, Blair Broughton, Sabrina Hetland, Justin Gundlach, Angela Higgins, and Mira Reisberg

## **Maya Gonzalez**

Maya Gonzalez is an incredible artist, who when in good health, spends hours each day silent in front of her board "applying color, creating form, traveling unspeakable distances while standing in the same spot" painting (Maya is currently recovering from heavy metal poisoning acquired while silkscreening years ago). Painting is her healer, her teacher and her guide. Much of her work represents a very deep personal and spiritual landscape.

Maya's background of European and Latino cultures has influenced her art and allowed her to create a very unique and bold style. She grew up in Oregon and was raised by a very religious family. As a child her family had an old, classical Bible that weighed at least five pounds! Within it the text was accompanied with beautiful and colorful pictures of angels and other biblical illustrations. Maya would look at them, and wish that she could create art as beautiful as this. As a young child she loved to draw, but whenever she looked at her books, she realized that none of the faces looked like hers. None of these books had round brown faces like her own, so she drew them in herself on the blank pages of her children's books.

Maya attended college at the University of Oregon and graduated with a creative writing degree, not planning to be an artist. She stumbled upon her career when she accidentally took a History of Arts course, and it soon took over her life. After this she knew that she wanted to be an artist. As a survivor of racism, she knew she wanted to do what she could to change this for other children and her work making children's books has helped children of color feel less alienated and more valued while providing positive images of all children for all children.

Maya's art uses sensuously curvaceous figures that incorporate bold images and colors reflecting her cultural ties to both her Chicano background as well as her European influences. Reflected in her personal art and her book illustrations are references to Pre-Colombian life, mythology, Catholicism, and symbolism, which she weaves together in very creative ways. Proud, strong female figures reoccur throughout Maya's work reflecting the respect Maya feels for women in the world, particularly from her Latino culture, as well as an abundance of animals and wildlife reflecting Maya's love for nature.

It is very important to Maya that her books are published in both English and Spanish. Her immigrant father went to a school in which he was taught only in English, and this was initially very difficult for him. Because of this, plus her family's desire that Maya "fit in," she did not learn Spanish as a child and is now attempting to learn Spanish as an adult. Maya sees that bilingual books allow children to learn two languages and allow all students from Spanish speaking cultural backgrounds the gift to read her books and appreciate their own cultural heritage. However, even without knowing a word of English or Spanish, a child can learn a great deal about culture, magic, and beauty, just by looking at the exquisite pictures. Maya's art is healing not only for herself but for all those who see it on both individual, social and political levels.

**Lesson idea:**

Maya Gonzalez art has strong components of her cultural and religious backgrounds. She uses bold colors and many mediums to express her feelings and emotions. Have students create a self-portrait that allows them to create personal symbols that display their life and culture through the arts. Students are encouraged to use a variety of artistic mediums to create a mixed media or assemblage or art. Students are encouraged to research and interview their family, this allows them to really understand where they came from and how this influences their art and life. Once the self-portraits are complete, instruct students to write a paper or poem, which describes their art and the symbols that they used. Once the self-portrait description is complete have each student describe this art to the whole class. Have tables discuss their pasts to develop an understanding of the different places that people come from and how these influence not only their lives but also their artistic style. On completion, display the self-portraits in the local library or community center to show the diversity in the community.

**Content areas:**

Writing, Reading, Art, Social Studies

**Children's books:**

Alarcón, F. X. (1997). *Laughing tomatoes and other spring poems/Jitomates risuenos y otros*

- poemas de primavera*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Alarcón, F. X. (1998). *From the bellybutton of the moon and other summer poems / Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas de verano*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Alarcón, F., X. (1999). *Angels ride bikes and other fall poems/Los Angeles andan en bicicleta y otros poemas de otoño*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Alarcón, F. X. (2001). *Iguanas in the snow and other winter poems/Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Anzaldúa, G., E. (1996). *Prietita and the ghost woman/Prietita y la llorona*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Gerson, M.-J. (2003). *Fiesta feminina: Celebrating women in Mexican folktales*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. New York: Barefoot Books.
- Pérez, A., Irma. (2000). *My very own room/Mi propio cuartito*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Pérez, A., Irma. (2002). *My diary from here to there/Mi diario de aquí hasta allá*. Illustrated by Maya Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.
- Rohmer, H. (1999). *Honoring our ancestors: Stories and pictures by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

**Resources:**

<http://www.latinoartcommunity.org>

<http://www.mayagonzalez.com>

Rohmer, Harriet (1997). *Just Like Me: Stories and Portraits by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco,

CA: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, Harriet (1999). *Honoring Our Ancestors: Stories and Pictures by Fourteen*

*Artists*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

**Written by:**

Jamie Frieling, Leann Johnson, assisted by Mira Reisberg

## Carl Angel

Carl Angel was born in Bainbridge, Maryland in 1968. From there his family moved to Hawaii, where he grew up until the age of 18. It was at this time that he moved to the United States to attend college. Currently, he lives in Oakland, California. As a child, Angel never saw himself within books. The pages were always covered with Anglo-American characters, which is completely opposite of his style as a professional artist.

These days, Angel frequently portrays the Filipino culture to which he belongs, as well as other cultures that have historically been left out of children's books and art history books. His art is often representational of his history, heritage, and culture. He tends to build relationships in his work, making sure to include the place. According to Angel, "creating a sense of place provides the context to making sense of what's going on." For example, within *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* he portrays history through the use of place. Manilatown was an actual area within San Francisco where citizens protested when developers tore down a major Filipino residential hotel that had been the heart of the area. Although the story has nothing to do with the hardships that faced the community, he interweaves it within the pictures. Faces are painted within the buildings and the International Hotel is mentioned. In many cases his artwork is considered politically motivated. Some of his other art actually displays harsh political histories or realities.

As an artist, Carl Angel's focus is on storytelling and on symbolism and its relationship to the human condition, both social and spiritual. He says his first objective as an illustrator "is to serve the writer's vision and capture the spirit of the narrative." For *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish*, "the story allowed for a more lyrical painting style, a more outrageous color palette, and for the compositions to have more movement." He wants the book to be a starting point for children to learn that there once was a bustling, vibrant Manilatown and also about the humor in Filipino culture. He hopes that after reading the book, children will want to explore their cities, and learn that stories are created through appreciation of heritage and history.

Carl Angel has done numerous painting exhibitions, usually based on a theme such as Filipino mythology, racism in America, religion and spirituality in Oakland, and the Philippine-American War. In addition to *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish*, Carl Angel has also illustrated and designed many other books for children and adults including a recent sequel to *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish*.



**Teaching Idea:**

Allow your students to experience a major political event or a sense of community through the use of art. Have them research an event where protestors fought for their rights and their lives, or the role of famous people within their community, then have them portray that history within a picture. For instance, draw a scene from your hometown and then integrate faces from the community. Include teachers who have inspired you, the founder of the town, and maybe even the mayor. On a separate sheet of paper, the students could also describe their art and the figures they chose to include. After completing the artwork, display it anywhere around town, such as the local community center, senior center, or library.

**Content areas:**

Writing, history, art

**Children's Books:**

*Illustrated by Carl Angel:*

Littlechild, G. (1993). *This land is my land*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Ahenakew, F. (1988). *How the mouse got brown teeth: A Cree story for children..* Illustrated by George Littlechild. Saskatoon, CAN: Fifth House.

Ahenakew, F. (1988). *How the birch tree got its stripes: A Cree story for children*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. Saskatoon, CAN: Fifth House.

Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Van Camp, R. (1994). *A man called raven*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Van Camp, R. (1998). *What's the most beautiful thing you know about horses?* Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press..

**Sources:**

Carl Angel's Website: <http://carlqangel.com>

Mira Reisberg notes.

**Written by:**

Angela Higgins, Sammy Burgh, Justin Gundlach, Sarah Nelson, Lindsay Brown, assisted by  
Mira Reisberg.

## **George Littlechild**

George Littlechild was born August 16, 1958 on the Hobbema Reserve in Edmonton, Alberta. His First Nations' affiliation is Plains Cree. When Littlechild was five he went to live with a foster mother, Mrs. Winnie Olthius. Because George was one of the few Native-American (or First Nations) people in this primarily Dutch community he encountered a lot of racism and art was a means for him to deal with the pain of his childhood. Fortunately Winnie Olthius was very loving and encouraged him in his artistic pursuits, sending him to art classes as a youth and insisting that he attend art college after graduation.

Littlechild received a diploma in art and design from Red Deer College in 1984 and a B.F.A. from the Nova Scotia College of Art and design, Halifax in 1988. He is recognized as one of the foremost First Nations artists currently working in Canada. Among the many awards and honors he has received, he was presented with the British Columbia Cultural Services award.

George Littlechild describes his work as, "art that speaks from the heart, the social and the political" (<http://www.georgelittlechild.com>). He uses color and energy to tell stories with his art. He believes that colors have the ability to spiritually cleanse and purify and uses them liberally in his work. Littlechild is also known for his collages using haunting vintage photographs.

In recent years, George Littlechild's interest in his heritage has led him to learn about his First Nations' history. Since he was raised in foster care, away from the Cree people, he was out of touch with a large piece of this heritage. His work explores many sociopolitical issues related to his people including the reservation system and residential schooling. His art is directed toward those who do not understand First Nation's culture because he wants to alleviate prejudice and ignorance. Littlechild hopes to work toward the end of racism, which he feels is one of the most destructive forces in our society.

Although he is perhaps most well-known in Canada, George Littlechild's work has also been displayed in the United States, Japan, Australia, and Europe. Included among the locations where his work is displayed in Canada are: the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull,

Quebec, the Edmonton Art Gallery, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and in the Dunlop Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Working with writer Richard Van Camp, Littlechild has created two books, *A Man Named Raven* and *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* In addition, a book he wrote and illustrated on his own, *This Land is My Land*, describes personal and political issues for First Nation's people. For example, one of the paintings is about the first meeting between his Plains Cree ancestors and the first European settlers in North America from a First Nations person's point of view. In the book he tells how he discovered his indigenous heritage and what it means to him. Littlechild expresses his desire to make use of his art as a means to express the wonders of his heritage, and to help heal the pain of his people's history.

**Teaching Idea:**

George Littlechild's work examines social and political issues of the day, especially those that relate to his people, the Plains Cree. Students will research their own cultural background through the use of both interviews and reference material and then create a work of art that embodies their newfound knowledge. In addition to interviewing family members, students will seek out other people in the community who are knowledgeable about the student's culture. The art and text will be displayed at a local cultural center or library to celebrate the diverse cultures in their community.

**Content area:** Social studies, history, art, writing, communication

**Teaching Idea:**

Students will research the history of Native-Americans from their area and create a piece of art about how it must have felt to be displaced from their homes and lands. They will write poems to accompany their pictures. The finished art, along with the student's written statement about their pieces, will be displayed in the historical society or other community venue.

**Content area:**

Social studies, history, art, writing

**Children's Books:**

Littlechild, G. (1993). *This land is my land*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Ahenakew, F. (1988). *How the mouse got brown teeth: A Cree story for children..* Illustrated by George Littlechild. Saskatoon, CAN: Fifth House.

Ahenakew, F. (1988). *How the birch tree got its stripes: A Cree story for children.* Illustrated by George Littlechild. Saskatoon, CAN: Fifth House.

Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Van Camp, R. (1994). *A man called raven*. Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Van Camp, R. (1998). *What's the most beautiful thing you know about horses?* Illustrated by George Littlechild. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

**Resources:**

Rohmer, Harriet (1997). *Just Like Me: Stories and Portraits by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

<http://www.georgelittlechild.com>

<http://www.collections.ic.gc.ca/artists/littlechild.html>

<http://www.artists4kids.com/artists/littlechild.php>

**Written by:**

Megan Walker-Richards, Andy Hedrick, assisted by Mira Reisberg

## Mira Reisberg

Mira Reisberg was born in Melbourne, Australia in 1953. Both of her parents were Holocaust survivors who came to Australia after the war. Reisberg writes that Australia holds a special place in her heart and she cherishes that heritage – from the dolphins swimming in the oceans to the Koori (Aboriginal) people whose art inspired her from an early age. She remembers her mother supporting her love for art when she gave her first art supplies, she said, "I can't give you a beautiful world, but you can make one for yourself." Reisberg found that art provided her the power of transformation, to either make sense of things that were difficult or to create her own world to escape into – "I could be a mermaid or a kangaroo if I wanted to" she writes. In Australia Reisberg grew to love the eccentric animals and mysteriously beautiful landscapes; this love of nature and environment is still evident in her work.

Her first exhibition of paintings and drawings was in 1976 and called "A Different Kettle of Fish" (an Australian expression for anyone or anything that's unusual or different). Reisberg went to school to become an animator, which lasted until she made her first animation film. It was a rewarding experience but took 2 months to create a 2 minute film!

In 1981 Reisberg came to the United States. She lived in New Mexico for 6 months before going to San Francisco. There she further developed her art skills and pursued her passions as an artist, designer, illustrator, and teacher. She writes that she has been very lucky to have been able to travel through Australia, New Zealand, New York, Washington DC, Oregon, New Orleans, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Diego, Mexico, Vancouver, Bali, and Europe. Reisberg loved the experience of meeting people and experiencing and learning about different customs and cultures as well as different ways of making art. Traveling has widened her world and increased her respect and appreciation for life and art. After living in San Francisco for 21 years she came to WSU where she is working on her Ph.D. in Education. In Pullman, Washington, Reisberg also teaches art to future educators at Washington State University. She lives with her husband and cats, Guido, and Possum.

Some of her heroes include Albert Einstein, Frida Kahlo, and Hannah Senesh – all have contributed something to this world and have affected her life in some way. Reisberg has illustrated eight children's books, including *Baby Rattlesnake*. Her personal artwork explores

themes related to relationship, language, environment, and spirituality. She describes art as bringing her much joy and happiness, and that she can't imagine anything more wonderful!

**Teaching Ideas:**

Have students create their own poster exhibiting important aspects in their life involving the places they have visited or grown up in and what they love about those places. Create a second poster the same as the first that shows what they love about where they live now. To complete the activity hang all the posters together and see if students can estimate how far apart the different places are from each other.

**Content areas:** Art, math, geography

**Children's Books:**

Bresnick-Perry, R. (1992). *Leaving for America*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Corpi, L. (1997). *Where fireflies dance/Ahí donde bailan las luciérnagas*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Miller, E., I. (1999). *Just like home/Como en mi tierra*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. Morton Grove, ILL: Albert Whitman and Company.

Moroney, L. (1990). *Elinda who danced in the sky*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Moroney, L. (2003). *Baby Rattlesnake/Viborita de Cascabel*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1989). *Uncle Nacho's hat/El sombrero del tío Nacho*. Illustrated by Mira Reisberg. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1997). *Just like me: Stories and self-portraits by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, H. (1999). *Honoring our ancestors: Stories and pictures by fourteen artists*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press

**Sources:**

<http://www.mirareisberg.com>

Rohmer, Harriet (1997). *Just Like Me: Stories and Portraits by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

Rohmer, Harriet (1999). *Honoring Our Ancestors: Stories and Pictures by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

**Written by:** Andy Hedrick, Vanessa Privette, Joyce Franke, Anne Jaca, assisted by Mira Reisberg



## **Apendix F**

### Student Handouts on Books

*A Movie In My Pillow* Written by Jorge Argueta. Illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez

#### **The Plot:**

*A Movie In My Pillow* is about a young immigrant boy from El Salvador. He and his family move to San Francisco to escape the deadly war in their home country. Throughout the book, Jorge tells of different adventures that he encounters when he arrives at his new home. Some of these stories include images of war and leaving his family back home, spending time with his father, and doing childlike things such as playing yo-yo and riding his bicycle. During the book, Jorge deals with loneliness, but he can always remember his family by “listening to the wind”. The book is made up of many different poems, capturing the dreams of a young boy who is dealing with a new home but also trying to remember El Salvador. At the end of the book, Jorge is reunited with his family in San Francisco where Jorge gets the chance to show his family their new city.

#### **The Art:**

The illustrations in this book are very bright and colorful. These bright colors really create a feel for Latin American culture, while providing eye-catching illustrations for children to look at. The pictures also portray a lot of symbolism, such as when Jorge is eating Pupusas (an El Salvadorean type of pie) a figure of his mother appears out of the steam showing how she looked making them back home. The imagery in the book makes it possible for children to be taken into the book. Since it is such a wonderful and emotional story, the colors and the pictures really make the book come alive. The imagery and symbolism helps the reader to understand and appreciate the joys and hardships of immigration and the toll that war takes.

#### **Core Themes:**

The core theme in this book would be the issues surrounding immigration. Argueta and Gomez both dealt with immigration and this book helps children learn about the emotions involved within it. We recognize that emigrating from another country provides one with mixed feelings. It is sad to leave your homeland, but at the same time you feel fortunate to be safe with loved ones. It's a very difficult transition to go through, and in the book they show how much pride Jorge had for El Salvador. Another theme mentioned in the book was how Jorge could imagine

his loved ones even though they were not there with him. The book also focuses greatly on the emotions behind the war in El Salvador. This was difficult for many families, as you can see with Jorge's situation.

**Lesson Idea 1:**

Have students explore why wars happen and what they can do to help prevent them. See if they can research conflicts that have happened in their area. As a class make some large peace murals with cut paper and geometric shapes, or create historical murals documenting what students have learned.

**Place Based Education:**

Display the peace murals throughout the school and at City Hall.

**Content:**

Art, History, Social Studies, Math

**Lesson Idea 2:**

The vast majority of Americans are immigrants. Have student research their family's immigrant history and make a small picture of an important aspect of their family's history including where they came from. Create a large world map and make a border using the students' art. Then have students draw a small picture of their ancestors and place on the map in the location where they came from.

**Place Based Education Connection:**

Display the map in the library to show the diversity in the community.

**Content:** Art, Social Studies, Geography.

**Lesson Idea 3:**

Jorge was very proud of his culture. To help students appreciate this, have them bring in a few items that are representative of their home and/or culture. The students will then share with the other classmates what items they brought in. After this, the children will make a diorama of a scene capturing their culture or home.

**Place Based Education Connection:**

Have the students place their diorama in the local library for others to view. This might get community members interested in learning more about their own culture and appreciating others' cultures.

**Content:** Art, Social Studies.

*he Invisible Hunters.* Written by Harriet Rohmer, Octavio Chow, and Morris Vidaure.

Illustrated by Joe Sam. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

**The Plot:**

*The Invisible Hunters* is an intriguing book about three brothers from the village of Ulwas on the Coco River in Nicaragua. One day, they set out to hunt wari, which is a wild pig when they heard a voice that was coming from the vine of a tree. The voice called out, "Dar. Dar. Dar." The hunters grabbed the vine and became invisible, then reappeared when they let go. The vine, which is called "The Dar" then explained its powers and told the brothers that they may use it to hunt as long as they didn't sell the meat and gave it instead to their people and hunted only with sticks and not guns. The brothers agreed to the Dar's request and used its powers to become famous hunters in their village. As the story continued, traders came to see the hunters to try and get them to sell their meat. They convinced them that they were foolish to not sell it so they did. The traders then told them that they were foolish for not hunting with guns, so they did. By the end, the hunters were making so much money by selling the meat, that that had forgotten all of their promises to the Dar and would not give any of their meat to their people so they could sell more. After this, the hunters came back from another day of hunting, but all the people could see were floating wari carcasses. The Dar had made them invisible at all times for breaking their promise. The brothers asked for forgiveness from their people, but were shunned and banished. The hunters then left the village forever and legend has it that they wander up and down the coco river to this day calling for the Dar.

**The Art:**

Joe Sam creates unique illustrations by using mixed media (paint, paper, ink, wood, and color pencils). His pictures are bright and flashy which catch the eye. On the other end of the spectrum, Sam also uses the absence of color to tell the story. The traders are displayed as white bodies, which adds mystery to them and sets them apart from the colorfully displayed villagers. Also, the paper cutouts he uses, makes the story come alive to the readers. Sam uses strong geometric shapes in his illustrations. Sam uses collage illustrations for this book. What the artist has done is use found objects (bits of wood and such), and painted pieces of paper cutting them out to make a collage. However, it is the use of color and Sam's masterful use of positive and negative space

that makes these illustrations really stick out.

**Core Themes:**

The impact of contact between cultures can influence society in negative ways. Greed can make any pure heart ugly. It becomes clear that is that money can't buy you happiness. Thus, a core theme is about how greed can make you forget about the importance of caring for the environment and your community. The moral in this book is to stay true to your promises and to not forget who you are and where you come from. Readers can grasp that concept through this book by learning from the mistakes of the three hunters. This book also shows a culture that is not typical for many children in this country. The authors and artist did a great job of giving a glimpse of this culture and showing the importance of roles and the overall togetherness of a community.

**Lesson Idea :**

After reading *The Invisible Hunters* to the class the teacher would go over the illustrations and talk about what a collage is. The class would then make their own collages about caring for or conserving something important in their community such as saving water or caring for the local wildlife.

**Place Based Education Connections:**

The students could take a trip to the library to hang up their collages. These collages would show other readers artwork that was inspired by Joe Sam. This could be used as a way to promote Joe Sam's artwork and show the community what kind of activities they are doing in school.

**Content:** Art, Science

**Lesson Idea:**

This book shows a very different culture than most people are used to. After reading this book, the teacher would discuss the differences of the characters culture to the student's general culture. As a class, the students would list things that are valued in the hunter's culture. After that, the students would be asked to write about things that are valued in their own local culture, and draw an illustration describing it.

**Place Based Education Connections:**

The students could take a trip to a nursing home and show their pictures of what is valued in their culture and explain it to the elderly that live there. The students could then ask questions about

what was valued in their culture when they were the same age as the students and do art with the seniors about it.

**Content:** Art, Social Studies, Communication, Writing

**Lesson Idea:**

Have the students create a short story about what they might see in their community by being invisible for a day. They can create a picture to go with the story, using mixed media. Children will present their story and picture to the class.

**Content:** Art, Writing and Communication

**Place Based Education Connections:**

The student's work can be posted in the public library for all to see and enjoy. Students can also share their stories during story time at the library to young children.

**Written by:** Sabrina Hetland, Justin Gundlach, Angela Higgins, Blair Broughton, Derek Bluhm, Meg Foster and Mira Reisberg.

*Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. Written by Gloria Anzaldua. Illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez. San Francisco: Children's Book Press

### **The Plot**

*Prietita and the Ghost Woman* is about a young girl's search to help her sick mother. Prietita knows la curandera (the healer) and goes to her to see what she can do. La curandera has every ingredient to heal Prietita's mother but one. . . the ruda plant. La curandera draws a picture of the ruda and tells Prietita that the only place she can find this ingredient is in the woods of King Ranch, but the woods are not a safe place for young girls. One of the reasons it is not safe is because King Ranch is privately owned land that was probably once Prietita's family's ancestral lands but is now forbidden to them. Another reason is that the woods are said to be haunted. Prietita just has to find the ruda so she walks along the outside of the woods of King Ranch; she decides to go into the woods just a little bit to look for the ruda. As she enters the woods Prietita remembers the story of la Llorona, a ghost woman who haunts the woods calling for her lost children and looking for children to steal.

Prietita ends up getting lost in the woods, but with the help of a some different animals she finds herself near La Llorona the ghost woman. La Llorona helps Prietita find the ruda to cure her mother and guides her back through the woods and safely to her family. La curandera shows Prietita how to make the remedy and her family are proud of how much Prietita has grown up and also that la Llorona did not steal Prietita but helped her get home safely. Llorona turned out to be quite different than how others portrayed her.

### **The Art**

Maya Christina Gonzalez uses bold colors that evoke the reader's imagination; every page is filled with beautiful colors and illustrations. There is an emphasis on people in every page who are surrounded by vivid colors that really make them stand out on the pages. Gonzalez uses interesting lines on the faces throughout the book to accentuate wrinkles, creases on top of lips, chins, and noses. The words also stick out because they are enclosed in blocks of color. Throughout the pages there are a lot of curvy lines with few straight lines. Gonzalez's art features wonderful patterns on all of the people's clothing and the plants have many small details that draw your attention. La Llorona seems to float off of the pages as though she is floating through the pages. Gonzalez's art just puts your imagination to work throughout every page.

**Core Themes:**

Maya Christina Gonzalez is very proud of her Mexican heritage, and this really comes through in her illustrations. The Mexican folktale emphasizes the strength of women. Prietita, although tired, scared and exhausted eventually prevailed and “saved the day.” This book also highlighted family and how important it was. Prietita’s mother became ill and without question Prietita put herself in harms way to find a remedy for her mother’s illness. One more attribute the book stresses is independence. Prietita went on this journey alone. Her little sister did not come, nor did her cousin, she did this all by herself.

Finally, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* has a big lesson in the end; not everyone or everything is as it seems. There are also many other themes woven throughout the story such as the importance for caring for your family and valuing animals, plants, and the wilderness.

**Lesson Idea 1:**

Maya claims as a child she was never able to find her round, Chicana face, and long black hair in her children’s books. She also says “Our face is important. It is a mark of who we are and where we come from.” Have the children research their family tree, ask them to find out where they come from then have them draw a self portrait, encourage them to include certain features of their culture. Along with the portraits the students should write a short response paper about what they learn about their family and themselves.

**Placed Based Education**

Display the portraits in the town hall or community center, so that others will be able to see the things that make us similar and the things that make us different from one another.

**Content**

Writing, art, social studies.

**Lesson Idea 2:**

Have your students research other local myths, legends or folklore about where they live. For example typing in “Pullman Washington ghost stories” in Google brought up a whole bunch of stories students could use as research or have someone from the historical society come in to talk with them about local legends. Students would thus be learning about their local history while also benefiting their community when they display the stories and pictures. The groups would then make a picture and mask that resembles who the myth is based upon and write a short story

about the myth. I would have the students present these to other classes in the school (such as the grade below).

**Placed-Based Education Connection**

When the students are finished display their art hang it at the local community center for the community to enjoy. The students could even be there to explain about their projects.

Content: Art, Writing, Social Studies, History

**Lesson Idea 3:**

The rue plant is very important in saving Prietita's mother's life. Arrange for a naturalist or herbalist to come on a field trip to teach students about local plants and their uses. Bring sketchbooks to draw plants up close as well as the environment they are in from a distance. Collect and press some of the plants to make math mandalas using parts of different parts of the plant to create radial symmetry. On returning to the classroom write poems about the plants and their uses to accompany the drawings and mandala pressings.

**Placed-Based Education Connection**

Display the mandalas, drawings, and poems at the local science museum, health food store, or grocery store to teach community members about the local landscape.

**Content:** Art, Writing, Science, Math

Written by: Carly Afdem, Jaime Frieling, Jamie Soule, Kasi Snyder, Leann Johnson, and Mira Reisberg



*Lakas and the Manilatown Fish*. Written by Anthony D. Robles. Illustrated by Carl Angel. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

### **The Plot**

This surprising book begins in the young boy in the story Lakas' dream, where he's told about a special fish that can walk, talk, run, and play. Amazingly, he finds such a fish at the Happy Fish Market the next day. Unfortunately, however, Lakas wants to take the fish home and his dad wants to eat him. Before long the fish jumps out of the tank, kisses the fish man, runs to the bus, kisses the driver, and then drives the bus. After driving the bus for awhile the fish stops, jumps out, kisses a man, steals his clothes and teeth, and takes off running once again. Everyone ends up jumping into the bay after the fish, and then he saves them from the water. At the end of the day everyone joins together in a feast of tomatoes, chili peppers, and rice, and then Lakas plays in the bathtub with the fish.

The story is set in Manilatown, which was not actually a town but a section of San Francisco (10 square blocks) where many Filipino people settled because at that time Filipino people were not allowed to own property or live anywhere else in the city. So, this story is not only the story of Lakas and his chase with the fish, but is also the story about the real Manilatown and the people who lived there.

### **The Art:**

The illustrations within *Lakas and the Manilatown Fish* are amazing. The pictures by themselves are so animated and the expressions on the character's faces are so descriptive that the pictures nearly eliminate the need for the text. The book is written in Tagalog on one page and English on the other, a first in U.S. history.

The colors are done very brightly, where the buildings are painted in purples and pinks, and blues with real Filipino people collaged in from the original Manilatown. This provides not only a story for children to read, but when looking at the paintings you can see a background story of real Filipino people. Besides Lakas, the fish is the main character in the story, so it is painted in a bright orange color with lots of swirly designs all over it to help it stand out. Each and every page paints a picture of the text as well as around the text. For example, the layout of every illustration is different. Some are boxed within squares and rectangles, whereas others float on the page or frame the outside. The colors are vivid, yet subtle. Angel also uses

shadowing to his advantage. The people that he draws spring to life with light and shadows. Within the background, or setting, Angel also placed members of the activist community as a representation of the past and the struggles that Manilatown has faced. It's a great example of Angel's work because he strives to add a strong sense of place within all of his work. He created the feeling of a dream within *Lakas* and the Manilatown Fish, which is what the story is based on.

### **Core Themes**

The themes that are woven within this tale are imagination, family, and Filipino heritage. In addition, there is an undertone of civil rights and activism embedded within the illustrations. This book also gives children a chance to appreciate different animals, because in the end, the fish ended up saving everyone's lives.

### **Lesson Idea 1.**

If you could choose one animal that you could talk to what would it be and why? Write a short story about a day you would spend with that animal as it takes you on a tour of your town or town's history. What would you do? Where would you go? Illustrate your story using oil pastels pictures that go along with your words.

### **Place Based Education Connection**

Take the kids' stories to the local library and display them for the people of the community to see.

**Content:** Art, Writing, Science

### **Lesson Idea 2.**

The fish in the story was bright orange with lots of swirly designs on it. With a partner or small group, create a large fish out of butcher paper and decorate it any way you would like. Make a name for your fish and write about where it lives.

### **Place Based Education Connection**

Hang the fish up at the local fish hatchery during a field trip to the hatchery so the kids can learn about fish in their area and the community can see that the kids have been there and what they have been doing in school.

**Content:** Art, Writing

### **Lesson Idea 3.**

Many things about the Filipino culture were integrated into this book. Have the students all research things that are unique to their culture and come up with a way to integrate these things into a story about themselves and their families. Have the students illustrate these books and create a cover. The teacher would then bind the books and the students could share them with their classmates so that everyone could learn about all the different cultures in the classroom.

### **Place Based Education Connection**

Organize a night at the school and invite the community to come and listen to the children read their stories out loud. Invite parents to bring special foods from their culture to help celebrate their children's work and heritage. After that night, display the books at the local library for all to see and read.

**Content:** Art, Writing

Written by: Sammy Burgh, Justin Gundlach, Angela Higgins, Lindsey Brown, Sarah Nelson, and Mira Reisberg

*What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* Written by Richard Van Camp.

Illustrated by George Littlechild

### **The Plot**

Read almost like a found poem, Van Camp embarks on a question to last the ages and surpasses time. Such a question as, “*What's the most beautiful thing you know about horses?*” seems to have little importance or bearing on anything, but in reality this question transcends its words. By finding beauty in a creature and talking with friends and family, Van Camp captures the essence of this creature’s spirit, as well as those he interviews, and it becomes meaningful for more than just himself. At the end of the book the author then encourages his readers to do the same as the characters in his book and find the most beautiful thing about horses as well. Creativity and freedom in this book run hand in hand, students can have a strong example of a non-traditional style of writing and can model it.

Creativity and imagination are definitely some strong core themes imbedded in this book. Along the same lines as encouraging the acceptance of creative ideas and freedom of imaginative pieces of artwork, students can also be shown the importance of accepting different cultures, understanding different perspectives and being willing to share.

What’s the most beautiful thing you know about horses? was written by Richard Van Camp. He is a member of the Dogrib tribe in Northwest Territories, Canada. It is a very cold day so he can’t go outside, and this leads him to ask the question that is the title of this book. Richard asks several family members and calls some friends, including the illustrator of the book, George Littlechild, who is a Plains Cree tribe member, and who knows a lot about horses. Richard gets many different answers, ranging from, “They can run sideways,” to, “They have secrets.”

### **The Art**

George Littlechild’s art compliments Van Camp’s story perfectly. He is able to capture the creativity and spirit behind the story. His pictures go along with what Richard Van Camp is talking about, but they are much more fantastical than they are realistic. He works on getting the point across in a colorful and inventive way more than he does with the realism of the picture by using lots of pattern and contrasting colors. Although there are some pictures, which do incorporate realism, particularly one which shows the horse’s jaw bone. The illustrator makes it easy to feel the power in the pictures, narrated by the words on the other page.

The pictures actually exemplify the theme of creativity and imagination. Littlechild is not afraid of sharing his art with the world, he let's his art speak for itself. Littlechild draws a whole, new, realistic picture of contemporary Native Americans today.

**Core Themes:**

At first glance, the core theme of this book is that Richard wants to know more about horses, and the best way to do that, apart from being around them, which is presently impossible, is to ask people about them. Specifically he asks, “What do you think is the most beautiful thing about horses?” The book is all about people’s answers to this question. However, the book is really about relationships, and in this case relationships in contemporary Native American communities – something we rarely if ever see in children’s books.

**Lesson Idea:**

Students will create their own story and art involving an animal from their local environment asking community members the book’s central question.

**Place Based Education Connection:**

The teacher will allow the Chamber of Commerce to scan the pictures and stories for their areas website to educate people about local animals and what children are learning. After the Chamber of Commerce has finished scanning the pictures and stories the book will be bound and presented to the local library.

**Content Areas:** Writing, science, art, communication

**Lesson Idea:**

Students will be actively participating in a geography lesson when this lesson will come up. Students will look at the animals found in their area of study and find out the roles or uses of the animals in the area’s culture or history. After researching the animals, the students will create a mural with all of their animals included in the massive picture.

**Place Based Education Connection:**

In order to make this place-based learning, the students would choose local animals and create a public mural or display their artwork in a local community center. At the community center there could be an open house where students can share what they have learned about their animals and the areas they come from.

**Content Areas: Writing, science, art, communication, geography**

**Lesson Idea:**

Students will create an illustrated timeline or make a diorama of animals from their area from as far back as they can find including when humans arrived and the different waves of settlers to show the co-existence of people and animals.

**Place Based Education Connection:**

Display the timelines in the local historical center or science museum to teach community members about their history.

**Content Areas:**

Writing, science, art, communication, geography

Written by: Andy Hedrick, Megan Walker-Richards, Sammy Burgh, Sabrina Hetland, Virginia Martinez, and Mira Reisberg

## Appendix G

### Final Book Projects

Andy Hedrick Final Paper:

#### A Movie in My Pillow

A Movie in My Pillow is a true story about a boy, Jorge Argueta, who moves to the United States with his father in 1980. This move is prompted by a civil war which took place in El Salvador during the 1980s. He is originally from El Salvador and the book primarily focuses on the differences between life in El Salvador and life in the United States, although how Jorge responds to these changes is also a prominent feature of the book.

Jorge now lives in San Francisco, the same city he moved to as a child. He works with organizations which help families and children in El Salvador and he also teaches poetry in the public schools. A Movie in My Pillow is the first book he has written for children.

Jorge's life tells the story, through both words and pictures, of many Salvadorians who immigrated to the United States to escape war. The artwork in A Movie in My Pillow, can enhance multicultural and socially activist education by helping to build students' understanding of their own place in history and emphasizing the capacity and ability of all human beings, including those who have been culturally degraded, politically oppressed, and economically exploited (Course Packet, 32).

I chose this book because I found the artwork to be appealing and also because I liked the title. Something I really enjoyed about this book is that it is written in both Spanish and English. As well as just being really neat, it is also something that will be helpful to me when I am teaching in Pasco, and will likely have students who speak Spanish better than they speak English.

A Movie in My Pillow helps to answer the question posed in page 77, by Lynn Galbraith, of the course packet, "How then, can I as a teacher educator actually teach someone to embrace multiculturalism, and to act in ethical and sensitive ways?" Reading this book in class, showing the students the pictures and the Spanish writing will help to build multiculturalism in my classroom. Granted, this alone will not be enough to do much of anything, but given time and additional resources, this book can be a great building block for a multicultural classroom environment.

As is stated in the course packet on page 77, written by Lynn Galbraith: Teaching is a cognitive and conceptually complex endeavor and is an intentional and ethical activity, and must have relevance to the lives we lead. Teaching must reflect curricular and instructional decisions that have been made, as Shulman (1987) and Maxine Greene (1986) advocate, with sensitivity and passion, and a true respect for cultural diversity.

A Movie in My Pillow deals with the very real issue of war refugees within the United States, and it does so in a thoughtful and sensitive way.

Several times throughout the book, pictures are used to add to the meaning of the text. For instance, on page 8, Jorge says that “Here chickens come in plastic bags. Over there they slept beside me.” The picture has Jorge dreaming of a chicken who is looking rather frightened by the idea of being in a plastic bag.

Page 13 describes the fear that the civil war brought to people, including Jorge. He describes the wind as howling, but the pictures shows a face in the wind, much like *The Scream*. It really adds meaning to the words that might otherwise be overlooked.

Page 24 contains no text, so all of the meaning comes from the picture. This is a picture of Jorge’s grandmother, and it shows her heart. The interesting thing about her heart is that it is shown both as the fanciful, “Valentine’s Day,” heart and also as the literal muscle with its various vessels. I thought that was really neat. The meaning in the picture lies with Jorge’s grandmother’s heart, as she hopes that she will see him again.

Lesson Ideas

Lesson Idea #1

My hometown of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania has a fair amount of Mexican immigrants. These people speak Spanish primarily, although some have a good grasp of the English language. After reading this book with my class of fourth graders, I would have them draw a picture of their hometown and also write a short paper about what it is like where they are from.

Place Based Education:

Their papers and their artwork would then be taken to a local library to be displayed.

Content: Writing, Art



### Lesson Idea #2

The students will, over the course of several weeks, make a series of pictures about their family, starting with their parents and siblings and going back to their grandparents and beyond. This will help the students to establish a feeling of connectedness with their past, and with their ancestors.

#### Place Based Education:

The Student's work will be displayed in businesses and municipal centers throughout the area. This will allow people an opportunity to see into the lives of the students, and to feel as though they have a connection with them.

Content: Writing, Art

### Lesson Idea #3

The students will create a book about their own past. This book will contain at least 5 pictures and will describe the student's own immigrant history, up to the present day.

#### Place Based Education:

The books will be displayed at local businesses.

Content: Writing, Art

I thoroughly enjoyed this book for its fanciful and life-like pictures. I also enjoyed the poetry, which did not always seem to say everything, but would let the pictures do some of the talking. Another thing I liked about *A Movie in My Pillow* was that it was written in both Spanish and English, making it easy to use in a bilingual classroom. I will most likely use this book in my future career as a teacher.

## Section 1

For my final project I chose to write about the book, *Invisible Hunters*, written by Rohmer et al. and illustrated by Joe Sam. The book tells of a legend from the Miskito Indian people of Nicaragua. A good moral lesson of keeping promises and the consequences of breaking such promises is a core theme in this book. This is one of the reasons I chose this book. As Elliot Eisner says, “A second aim that really counts in schools is helping youngsters learn how to formulate their own problems and how to design the tactics and strategies to solve them.” As the book displays, beautifully, the problem is presented, an easy solution with a dilemma is given, and stipulations are stated. This book outlines a key goal of Eisner’s article, not only solving a problem, but also understanding it fully.

As you read the book and look at the illustrations, the biggest thing that I noticed is the lack of white figures represented. With this being a book of Nicaraguan folklore, the characters are often black cut outs or dark figures. As Sheri Klein states, “The first [issue] is a lack of meaningful connections between schooling and the lives of children, particularly, in urban areas.” This book is an excellent example that can be representative of African-American or dark skinned children. By seeing a figure that is similar to them in a book at school can help them bridge the gap between them and the school.

The main characters or “hunters” in the book are given a lot of power with the use of the Dar. While the power they receive eventually is the cause of their demise, the balance of power is a strong theme in this book. Paralleled to multicultural education’s purpose, which is, “...to change the power structure in the wider society in order to foster social and political empowerment for all students.” Like the hunters need to share their glory of hunting the wari, education needs to share all of its benefits with the entire schooling community, not just a select few for an arbitrary price.

## Section 2

On page 9 of *Invisible Hunters*, the artwork sets the reader off into a wild jungle along with the hunters. The trees are represented nicely with excellent use of negative and positive space. But it is the stages of drawing the leaves that is really powerful on this page. Over the

trees are first blank spaces for the leaves, and then pencil drawings of the leaves, and finally green-colored leaves. This really greatens the emphasis of the supernatural quality that the Dar possesses that gives the hunters their power.

On page 17 of *Invisible Hunters*, deep tones of red fill the background, which really make the hunters stand out. The goods the traders bring are cut out of wildly designed paper. This gives them extra allure and gives the reader a sense of why the hunters were so tempted by these prizes. Also, the traders are drawn in completely different shapes than the hunters, which makes them even more different than described in the text.

On page 25 of *Invisible Hunters*, after the hunters have become invisible without the Dar, the hunters have changed to light figures, contrasting with a dark background. In the background, as well, are drawn in wari in white pastel. This gives the page a feeling of being in the land of the dead, as if all the dead wari the hunters have killed are standing among them. This piece of artwork really shows the dread of the hunters' situation.

### Section 3

Students will think of a common community role or provision, such as 'Look both ways before crossing the street.' Students will then create their own folktale or legend following the same structure of *Invisible Hunters*. Students can then act out this story, which can then be presented to a live audience or recorded so that it may be broadcasted on a local community access channel.

Taking a closer look at the artwork, students will be asked to look for any geometric shapes they can find in the book and then what geometric shapes they find in their own environment; square desk, circle clock, etc. Students will then write how the shapes in the book compare or contrast with the shapes found in their lives. Students will need to use correct math language such as, angle, side, obtuse, etc.

Students know the hunters hunt the wari in the book. Have students research what wari are and what uses or status it keeps in Miskito culture. Students will then research an animal indigenous to their own environment and find any meaning that the animal holds in our society. Students will then "hunt down" the history of the animal and write a paper, short story or poem about the animal.

### Section 4

I enjoyed this book because unlike most books there is not a happy ending, which is more realistic to real life and gives a good moral lesson. Also the book is written in both Spanish as well as English, which would help with any bi-lingual students in the classroom. I really liked the illustrations in this book. They were my favorite part. I liked the different kinds of elements used in each piece. Each piece was different and unique. It shows that art can be more than just pencil or crayon. This can widen students understanding of art and what art can be.

Jessie D'Unger

Final Paper

*Prietita and the Ghost Woman* by Gloria Anzaldua begins with a young girl, Prietita who goes on a journey to find a rue plant thought to be able to cure her sick mother. When looking for the plant, Prietita gets lost in the woods and asks animals to help her find her way. Finally she finds La Llorona, a ghost woman who helps Prietita find the plant and her way home. La Llorona as legend has it wanders around looking for her lost children and people say she steals other children. While Prietita is scared, she finds that La Llorona is nice and helps her.

This story teaches children that everything is not what it seems. It teaches that children should give people a chance and look beyond the surface. Prietita faces lots of obstacles, but in the end she is brave and finds the rue. She also grows up in the process as the healer notices. I chose this book because I love the bright colored pictures and the fact that it incorporates the Spanish language into the text.

This book would be great to use in a classroom because it incorporates Spanish culture. It would be great for students who speak Spanish because the text is in both English and Spanish. Sheri Klein says in her article, for some students, “the chance of learning anything remotely connected to their lives is extremely limited” (Klein, 1992-1993). Including this book would connect those students of Spanish or Mexican decent to their culture. Klein supports a social action position and also writes about the importance of multicultural education. Klein also wrote another article about the importance of place. This book gives a good example of the importance to place. The teacher can expand further on this idea through having students “reflecting on place and responding to place in ways that are personally meaningful and visual” (Klein, 2000). This could easily be done by comparing the place in the book to a student’s own environment. Prietita and the Ghost Woman can also be tied to place-based education. As we’ve learned in class and in the readings, place-based education is extremely important. According to Gregory A. Smith, what students “learn is closely tied to their own experience, connecting them more directly to their place” (Smith, 2002). Therefore it is important for teachers to connect students’ learning to their experiences. By reading this story in class and doing art projects that are place-based, students will learn more.

Prietita and the Ghost Woman takes place in the woods of Texas. Preitita runs into animals in the woods, some of which are also native to my state of Washington such as the deer. The jaguar and salamander are two animals not found in Washington. A Mexican legend is discussed in this story and while it is not one from my culture, I can relate because there are legends that exist in my culture. Three place based art lessons that could be done are researching a legend from the student's own culture, choosing a person from the community who is brave and compassionate, and choosing an animal from the area to draw.

The story talks about a Spanish legend of La Llorona. Students could choose a legend from their own culture, such as the tooth fairy. Students would then use clay to construct the character they have chosen. They would also write a paragraph describing the legend briefly. This would incorporate language arts and history into the lesson. The clay structures would be displayed in the local community center and would show multiculturalism by showcasing legends from the different cultures of the students.

Prietita goes on a journey and is brave. She is also compassionate because she goes on the journey in hopes of helping heal her mother. Have students think of someone in their community who is brave and/or compassionate. Students will have two pieces of white paper. On one piece of paper, they will paint a picture of that individual in their most common environment. For example, if it is a teacher, the teacher should be painted in the classroom, a police officer in the community. On the other piece of paper they will write 1-2 paragraphs about why the person is brave and compassionate. After paintings are dry, they will be combined into a book titled "Brave and Compassionate Individuals in Our Community." This book will be placed in a local library for the public to see. Subjects that will be incorporated are writing and communication.

Eyes are very powerful in this book. The eyes direct us to look at certain elements of the painting. Animals are also important to the story. Students will choose 1 animal that is native to their own community. They will then draw themselves and the animal in nature. Students must draw attention to the animal by drawing their eyes focused on the animal. These pictures will be done in colored pencils or paints. They will be displayed in a local pet store or city hall where community members can see them. Integrated subjects are science and history.

I enjoyed this book. The pictures were very significant because of their great detail. The

use of eyes and body position were important because I was able to look at what was important in the picture. Christina Gonzales, illustrator, used detail in her paintings and this showed texture. I could see wind by the way she drew everything in one direction and Prietita's hair as if it was being blown by the wind. The story itself was meaningful because it taught me about a legend in Mexican culture and that not everything is what it seems.

November 28, 2005

T&L 390.1

Art Final

Through Kearney Street and big wet kisses that leads to falling dizzy in love, Lakas, his father, the Happy Fish man, and the manong standing on the street corner find themselves trying to catch a wild fish. It all starts from Lakas' dream one night. A old man or a manong, tells him of a fish that can speak Tagalog and English and this particular fish can only be found in Manilatown. Through wild chases, Lakas and the fish end up playing in the bathtub enjoying each other's company and the manong of course gets his teeth back. This is why Lakas and the Manilatown Fish is fun and entertaining.

Students in my classroom will be able to learn about Manilatown through the fun chase and will also learn about Filipino culture. As the illustrations show, Carl Angel included pictures of activists in the buildings in Manilatown. Students will also learn about these activists through this book and why many people move to America, to lead a better life. As for my own experience, my close relatives came here to the U.S. to lead a better life also. I chose this book because not only is it about my heritage but also a friend gave it to me as a gift and I just really enjoy reading it.

According to Eisner (1991), "one important aim of schooling should be to create a climate that evokes children's sense of wonder and inspires their imaginations to soar." This is very important to not only know but to understand as a teacher because imagination and creativity is provoked through interesting stories such as Lakas and the Manilatown Fish. With many other duties as a teacher, another is to encourage students, imagination so that they are able to create stories like these and be engaged in it. As Klein (1992) stated, "In order for students to even learn they must be engaged, interested, and motivated." Students must be able to express themselves through their imagination and creativity because art empowers children's lives. As in *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* by Wojnarowicz, "drawing or a story meant making something that spoke even if I was silent." By letting students express themselves through imagination and creativity, it is giving them a way to speak even if they are silent, espe-



cially the students who are very shy in the classroom. The teacher also is given another chance to learn more about the student through the expressions.

Throughout the book, Angel illustrates images that are not in the words but are very meaningful. For example, on page four and eight, the illustrator depicts Lakas, sweater to be the same as the fish on page 18 and on. According to the manong in Lakas, dream, it is because he is like the fish that likes to jump around and play. Also on page 8 and throughout the book, the pictures of Filipino activists are shown in the buildings of Manilatown. Since Angel, is also an activist, he included the pictures of activists of the “ old days” to honor them. Finally, on page 14, the International Hotel is in one of the buildings. The International Hotel was a community center and a historical monument that was also part of Manilatown. It was demolished, however from its rubble “the proud heritage of the manongs who lived there” is preserved.

Three place-based ideas:

- Have the students check the water of the Columbia River. Check the pH and other pollutants that could be in the water. Have the students report the results through art and graphs. Post the results in the City Center or somewhere many people will be able to see.

Content areas: Writing, Science, Math, and Art.

- Have students interview relatives or people in the community that have made a difference. These activists may or may not have made big changes however, voicing their opinions is enough to be heard. Have students report and draw their experience or depict their activist in how the students imagine them as.

Content areas: Writing and Research, Communication, Art

- Have students voice the own opinion through research. Freedom with what they want to research such as endangered species or maybe a lot that is not being taken cared of. They can propose ways to clean up or to help solve the problem. If the students choose an endangered species, they can adopt ways to illustrate like in Lakas and the Manilatown Fish. Post where people will be able to see or where students choose to post.

Content areas: Writing and Research, Communication, Reading, Art

I loved this book! I especially liked it because it is very uncommon to find Filipino books. I love the illustrations. I enjoy the vibrant colors and the story was so much fun. I can imagine hearing sound effects such as the shears snipping at the barbershop, the louder voice when the bold font was used, the smack when the fish kissed someone, the screech of the bus, and the splash when they all jumped into the bay. Not only do the words express what is going on on the page, but the illustrations definitely show the actions. Students will be able to know a little bit more about my culture through this book and I love that!

Integrated Arts FINAL

The book, *This Land is My Land*, had a very unique feel to it. The author George Littlechild was really able to write about his ancestors and also create some truly beautiful illustrations to go along with the text. *This Land is My Land* brings you along a journey with the author, showing you ancestors and the obstacles he himself had to overcome in addition to the obstacles that his ancestors overcame. The book uses some great narratives about George Littlechild's family and the nature that they experienced around. Certain sections of the book mainly focus on parts of nature, while other sections focus on the people that kept George's culture alive through many hard times. I was given this book at the library by Mira Reisberg and told that it would be a great source for my lesson plan in addition to being a great read. The longer I read and looked at the book I realized that this book would be a great book to help bring in some multicultural education into my classroom.

While reading through *This Land is My Land* I was really taken aback by how much information there was. The paintings were gorgeous and very insightful, but the text also added another dynamic to the book. When I was thinking about integration ideas a particular quote came to mind, "The most effective approaches integrate the study of art into a broader social, cultural, political, and historical framework" (pg. 29). I felt this quote was speaking to me specifically about this book because it deals with the social life, the politics, and the history of George Littlechild's First Nations people. I would love to use this book in my classroom as a great example of beautiful artwork but also because it deals with so many important issues that my students will be learning about. This book is so valuable with its historical context because it is a first hand account and perhaps may have a more profound affect on my students.

When I began thinking of curriculum ideas I could use to integrate art into my classroom I began thinking of ways that I could respect the First Nations people. Looking through my course packet I located a comment that stood out to me when thinking about using multicultural art in my classroom. "Instead of enhancing cultural understanding, these approaches reduce cultural artifacts to empty forms devoid of historical or social significance" (pg. 30). The approach-

es they are talking about involve when students are studying African masks and they simply just make their own type of mask, this way of integrating art is not enhancing the students' minds, they are simply just creating a mask with no reference to the beautiful African masks they had just learned about. When I eventually use my place-based ideas in my classroom I want them to be meaningful and actually teach my students something about a new and different culture. I especially want to use place-based education in my classroom because I really feel like it benefits the students and the community so much and brings the two worlds closer together. According to Gregory Smith (2002) a place-based education is something where, "They are inventing a wide range of experiences that allow students to connect what they are learning to their own lives, communities, and regions" (46). This quote goes along really with what I want to accomplish in my classroom, a fun learning environment where students and community members can come and learn from one another. Students are also able to connect to their community and then later on prosper and add to the wonderful community they have helped build.

There were some very special images that stuck out in my mind as being exceptionally moving and beautiful from the book, *This Land is My Land*. One image that moved me was the image of the Mountie and the Indian (pg. 9). The image is so moving because their body language is so defiant and they are both not backing down in defending what they feel is right. The colors they are wearing are both very bright but what the Indian is wearing really calls attention to him because he is so bright. Another interesting thing I saw in the piece of artwork was how the piece was divided and down the middle each side had their own way of life, for example the Mountie had his traditional house while the Indian had his traditional housing. Another piece that struck me was the painting from when George Littlechild visited the city (pg. 27). Looking at the piece of artwork I enjoyed how he added the red horse as if saying, "Along with me comes my heritage. No matter what you may think". The statement just stood out so much to me. Also, the picture of George pasted into the picture almost seemed as though he was trying to get across the point that he felt small and overwhelmed to the size of the big city. If you look at the sky and the tops of the buildings the color is very dark and hazy perhaps meaning the city is a dark and at times dangerous place. My favorite piece of artwork from *This Land is My Land* is the painting of the winner of the Miss Habbema Indian Princess pageant (pg. 24). This piece is my favorite because it really has a lot of fun elements added to the paint. For example, there is a

beaded crown at the bottom of her beautiful headdress. Also, I enjoyed how her Grandmothers make her whole outfit and it is made out of objects found in nature. One of the most unique that I liked were the seashells that were life-like in the painting. You can tell that the outfit that she was wearing took a lot of time and was made with love for her.

I really enjoyed this book because it allowed me to look into George Littlechild's life and gain some very important insights into the culture of the First Nation's People. I especially loved the extremely colorful illustrations, they really added to the impact of the book in addition to being eye-catching. Another reason I enjoyed this book was because George Littlechild gave an explanation for each piece. At first I would look at the piece and try and interpret it and next I would read his explanation and it would all really connect at that point. I would use this book in my classroom in a heartbeat and also use some of my ideas for place-based art because it is so very important to show the community that we care and also show them what we are doing in our classroom.

Lesson Plans:

SUBJECTS: Language Arts, Art, and Oral History

Just as George Littlechild talked about his community and illustrated certain land aspects and the people that influenced him and helped him students will write a short narrative about their local community (i.e. their neighborhood or their school community) and then illustrate a picture that depicts what is stated in their narrative. These writings and drawings will be hung in the classroom during parent teacher conferences so that parents will be able to see what we have been working on and also how their student is learning about their community and how they feel about where they live.

SUBJECTS: Art, Language Arts, and History

1. George Littlechild often glued small trinkets onto his artwork including seashells and small toy horses. Students will have the chance to bring in special "artifacts" from their home that describe or reflect them. These artifacts must be small enough to glue onto a piece of paper. The student will then create a self-portrait using their small "artifacts about them". The student will then write one sentence about why they chose that certain "artifact". These self-portraits will be hung at the school library so that the students that they attend school with can get to know my classroom a little better.

SUBJECTS: Art, Language Arts, Problem solving, Narration

2. George Littlechild included a small passage describing a certain piece of artwork. Students will ask one classmate to describe a time when they had to work together with someone else to create a solution (i.e. problem on the playground). After both students have shared their story they will then create a piece of artwork describing the situation and then have other students write what they think the situation is. Then the students who created the art will then reveal what the real situation is and how they solved it. This will help students realize that all problems can be solved in a mature way and that other people around you have a different outlook on the situation at hand.

Megan Foster

T&L 390.2

November 23, 2005

Final

### Where Fireflies Dance

Story by Lucha Corpi. Illustrations by Mira Reisberg

The story is about the adventures of a sister and brother growing up in Jaltipan in tropical Mexico. One night Lucha and her brother Victor decide to sneak into the home of Juan Sebastian. The house, said to be haunted by the ghost of Juan and his mother, has remained empty since the day Juan left to fulfill his destiny. Later they hear the story of Juan from their grandmother and learn that sometimes you have to leave your family, home, and all that is comfortable so that you can make a difference in the lives of others. At the end of this enchanting story Lucha, now a young lady leaves her hometown to stretch her wings and fulfill her own destiny. Lucha the author of this book later went on to become a teacher in California and write poetry and mystery novels. *Where Fireflies Dance* is Lucha Corpi's first children's book but is a very important piece to her because it is her memories from her own childhood and family.

This book would be so incredibly helpful in any classroom due to the fact that it includes so many important topics and deals so much with culture. I am in agreement with the statement that "Brains are biological [while] minds are cultural" because so much of what children learn is filtered through their cultural beliefs (Eisner, 1991, p. 39). Throughout the book there is a theme of destiny and sometimes having to leave what is familiar and comfortable to so that others will have a better chance of succeeding. This book could also be used as a unit of Social Studies because it touches on the history and culture of Mexico. Due to the fact that there are such strong feelings towards the importance of family, songs and story telling throughout the book, this would be a great addition to any lesson dealing with differences and similarities between different cultures. Story telling is the lifeblood and history of so many cultures, "history lives through its people. By talking with community members...children can then learn to appreciate the richness of their [community]" (La Porte, 2000, p. 66). This book for me would also be a really awesome example to show before an assignment where the students are asked to write a personal reminiscent. Impress on the students that they are helping to keep history by writing down their

memories. Like Smith (2002) said, “It [pleases] them to be doing something that was clearly useful” This book shows that all aspects of life are important and no matter what the past held there is always something that we can learn from it, whether the event was positive or negative.

Throughout the entire book the illustrator does a great job of going just a bit further in depth about the story with their illustrations. The illustrations are all amazing but there are a few that really help the reader visualize the feelings that the author emanates through her words. The following examples are those that jumped out to me. On page 5 the “cool” blue border really adds to the creepy, ghostly feeling that Lucha and Victor must have felt upon entering the house. The border gives the reader the eerie feeling that if one breathed out slowly they could almost see their breath while standing in the house of Juan Sebastian. The fireflies that are present through the window on this page give me the feeling that Juan Sebastian is watching over the children while they are investigating his home. The second page that I really feel the illustrations add to the story is page 21. In this part of the story Lucha is talking with her grandmother about the meaning of the word “destiny”. While the words don’t speak of the love of the grandmother and granddaughter, the illustrations show the mutual admiration, care, love, and hope in both the grandmother’s eyes and in Lucha’s also. This picture does so much for me because it really gives me a picture of what their relationship is all about. It is a visualization of the love that is present between both characters. Finally I really got a lot from the illustrations on page 28. This illustration, for me, really sums up Lucha Corpi; it shows all that is important to her and what she looks forward to in the future. The boarder is like a crust, her heritage and culture are her base, while the road going through the picture goes off the page in both directions and therefore doesn’t have a specific beginning or ending in sight. The bus with the fireflies on the side and the words “El Mundo” tells me that it is her way into her future but also her way home.

#### Placed Based Education

1. Start a “Future Day” celebration in your town. Have the students create a poster telling of their lives so far and depicting their dreams for themselves in the future. Have them include a prediction about their lives and then hang them in the community.
  - Writing, Art, History and Communications.
2. Have the children interview their grandparents or parents about family stories that have been passed down through the generations. Have the students choose the one that is their



favorite and then illustrate the stories. Take all of the student's stories and combine them to create a class story book. Once the book is done have an Author's Night at the local library where students are able to share their stories with the community.

Writing, Art, History, Publishing and Communications.

3. Have the students create a piece of art that represents something with a "feel good" nature that reminds them of home or the community. Remind the students that there are endless possibilities to what they produce and that there are absolutely no specific criteria for this project other than it being original and unique. Once the projects are done have the students present them to the community center as a "Coming Home" attraction or present to the community.

- Art, Language and Social Studies

I really enjoyed the book because of the colorful and defining illustrations, the strong sense of family, legacy and destiny. I loved the way that the illustrations present the feelings that were in the words in a different way that the reader could almost feel within themselves. I also loved how the book showed how in every day life there is history, whether it is personal history, public history or even a combination of the two. My favorite thing about this book was the theme of destiny and how the author stressed that everyone has a destiny whether it is to leave and break out or to stay and take care of those that you love. No matter what your destiny is, it is great and purposeful.

Joyce Franke

T&L 390

Final

The book *Honoring Our Ancestors* by Harriet Rohmer is about who different artists honor their family members. It includes family histories or stories from fourteen different artists about special people in their lives. This book would be wonderful to use in a classroom. Everyone looks up to someone, and each person has a story to tell. This is a great way for students to connect with each other and the teacher. “Many teachers, in general, are struggling to find some fit between their own personal identity and the professional goals of teaching.” (Galbraith, 1992/1993, p.93) This book is a great way to connect to students while using academic skills such as, reading, writing, interviewing, and geography skills to teach more about ones history.

Through using this book students are encouraged to think about important people in their own lives. It is a great tool to get the students out of the general textbook and into real life. In this project “teachers expect students to think for themselves, to generate rather than imitate.” (Cornett, 2003, p.158) Students won’t find the information in books. They will have to remember and come up with their own thoughts about the important people in their lives. Through coming up with their own examples of important people “students feel more invested in ways that are deeper than “knowing the answer”.” (Course Packet, 2005, p.12)

I particularly chose this book because Mira highly recommended it to me. I also like learning about different family members who have greatly influenced an individual. Learning about different cultures is also an interest of mine. It is fun to look into other people’s lives and see a different perspective on life. The artwork in this book is also very interesting. I enjoy seeing a variety of different techniques. Some of the pictures are very simple, while others are very complicated and complex.

## Section 2

Some of the artwork that stood out to me the most was on page five by Carl Angel. His artwork was very detailed and mind provoking. There were many different sections to this one piece of artwork: airplanes, ship, clouds, people’s faces, a boy on a fish, and the phrases. All aspects of his work were very detailed and looked realistic. The shading in his figures and objects

were very clear. I really like that.

The second artwork I liked was on page 12 by Maya Gonzalez. It is a painting of her great grandmother on a horse. The painting is with very defined lines and shapes. The part that I found intriguing was the hills in the background. They resemble the Palouse hills that I love so much. I also enjoy the detail in the flower that is at the bottom right corner of the painting. Pink is one of my favorite colors, and the detail is wonderful.

The final piece of artwork that stood out to me was on page 24 by Mira Reisberg. It is a painting honoring her family history in a series of little paintings hanging on a family tree. I find it interesting around the words and throughout the tree there are bones. I believe these bones represent the life and death of her family members who she loved and respected. The shapes of these mini paintings within the large painting are generally very defined by the use of shadows and contrasting colors. Each person stands out from the background, clearly identifying the important person.

### Section 3

After reading the book *Honoring Our Ancestors* students could possibly do the following activities relating to this book.

#### Honoring Our Town (or City)

Students will research and find out about the history of their local town. They will discover how the city or town was founded, the first buildings, and any important landmarks that are still in the town. The class will then take a tour of the town seeing all the important landmarks in the town. Once the tour of the town is completed they will make a 3-D model using paper mache of the town, including all the important landmarks. Once the project is completed it will be displayed for public display at the local county fair.

#### Honoring Our Ancestral Homelands

The class will research using the library and interviews to find out where their ancestors came from. They will then figure out what the geographic landscape looked like from where they originally came from. The students will then each make one square to a quilt focus-

ing on using complementary colors. The complete squares will be sewn together by the teacher once every student has completed their artwork. The quilt will be displayed in the local library so the people of the city can see where the student's ancestors originated.

#### Honoring an Important Person

Students will choose one important person that has influenced their life and create a 3-D model of that person. They will collect materials that are all recyclable from a variety of different locations. Students will be encouraged to go outside to see if they can find items others have thrown out. The items will be cleaned and assembled in to a person that has influenced them. One of the main purposes of this project will be to understand that what one person sees as trash can be another person's treasure while conserving the environment. The sculptures of important people will line the halls of the local City Hall Building.

#### Section 4

Honestly I did not know what to think about this book at first, but once I started thinking about it more I found it to be very interesting. I love learning about others history and family background. It is a way we can connect to others, even if our backgrounds are not the same. The artwork in this book is beautiful. Not all of it is my realistic style that I tend to be drawn to but I still enjoyed it. Overall this book is great and is a great tool for ideas teaching a variety of subject areas.

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Danielle Pike

TL 390, Section 1

November 28, 2005

### Integrated Fine Arts Final Project

Because I am so interested in using literature that incorporates diverse cultures, I chose to focus on the book *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*, edited by Harriet Rohmer. In this book, artists represent themselves through self-portraits and short stories about their lives and art.

Rohmer explains that she had always hoped children would be able to open books and see characters they could really relate to; in essence, see images of themselves. When Rohmer was not seeing many examples of diverse book characters, she decided to contact fourteen multicultural artists and create a book in which “the artists [she] has worked with would make pictures of themselves—and then talk about their self-portraits as a way of inspiring children to see art from a new perspective, as a way of showing children that artists come from many different places and work in many different ways” (31).

This book would be very beneficial in the classroom because of this exact idea—children deserve to know they can be artists (or anything else) regardless of where they come from. And once they realize this fact, they need role models. Fiske writes in *Champions of Change* that an effective arts learning experience will, “enable young people to have direct involvement with the arts and artists” (p. 13). *Just Like Me* provides this involvement with artists.

By incorporating this book into a curriculum, I would also be able to teach my students that “‘culture’ is not a set of artifacts or tangible objects, but how the members of a particular group interpret, use, and perceive them” (Cahan & Kocur, 1996, p. 29). *Just Like Me* shows people of various backgrounds who explain their culture through their art. Their self-portraits portray different aspects being used in different ways, and this is important for children to understand. Culture is not just about holidays, dress, and food; it is about how people live on a regular basis.

Finally, this book features artists who are socially aware and want to make changes in a

world where inequalities and injustices abound. Klein (1992) states that, “young people are interested in the primary issues of the day, whether it’s the economy, the environment, homelessness, crime, drugs, or jobs. They are aware of the outside world and often have keen insights into our social and economic problems” (p. 111). When students are introduced to the artists in this book, they will be given a sense of purpose and a vision for the future—if influential people care about the same things the students do, there is hope.

One aspect of the art in this book that I think is very meaningful is that each artist has a relatively current photograph of themselves next to a childhood photograph (all artist pages). Because the artists are shown as children, the reader senses that children are important. Children don’t just grow up to be artists, they are artists right now. I like that my students will be able to see these artists as they were when they were younger like the students themselves, as motivation and sense of self-importance will likely increase after seeing those photos.

In Michele Wood’s self-portrait, the length of her neck is the most striking characteristic. Although her neck is disproportionate to the rest of her body, it does not look unpleasant; instead it looks regal and beautiful. She truly looks like a member of ancient African royalty (26).

The use of color in Elly Simmons’ self-portrait is beautiful. Her face radiates with life due to the warm colors painted onto her skin. Reds, oranges, creams, and browns highlight her features and make her smile feel very real. Simmons discusses her love of life, and the reader is able to sense that enthusiasm simply by taking in her smiling eyes in the painting (22).

The following are place-based lessons I would use in my classroom in conjunction with *Just Like Me*:

1. Students will write to one of the artists featured in *Just Like Me* and ask about a social issue that is important to the artist (what the issue is, why it is important to the artist, and any possible solutions). When students receive a reply, they will read the letter to the rest of the class. The student will then create a piece of art that reflects the social issue and any changes that could be made to help the situation. The piece of art and the letter will then be displayed in a local center that promotes social justice.

Content Areas: art, social studies, writing, speech, reading

2. After reading the book, students will create a self-portrait using an art medium they choose. The guidelines are simply that the student must be creative, a sense of their personal

culture must be incorporated, and the piece must be meaningful to them. Students will then write a one-page vignette about a meaningful moment in their lives or explaining their self-portrait. The projects will then be presented to the community and school leaders at a school board meeting, to ensure the leaders get an idea of who the students truly are and where they come from.

Content Areas: art, diversity, writing, speech, reading

3. Students will interview members of the community (someone who is not a relative) and ask questions about their lives, including where they are from, their family's background, what they do for a living, what they care about in society, etc. Students will then create a portrait of the person they interviewed, incorporating information from the interview. The artwork and a transcript of the interview, along with a photograph of the student with the interviewee will be displayed in a high-visibility community center, such as a local grocery store or shopping mall.

Content Areas: art, communication, writing

Just Like Me is a book I feel would be an important addition to anyone's personal or school library, for many reasons. The artwork is beautiful and unique, as fourteen different artists are able to share their styles. Each page is bursting with a piece of art completely different from the one before it. On another level, the stories shared by each artist are interesting, moving, and often humorous. The reader is able to get a sense of why the artist creates art and why they have chosen the specific style they use for their art. Overall, my favorite part of the book is the fact that real people are portrayed in a very special way: as themselves. It is important for children to see that anything is possible. As they relate to the artists in this book, they will begin to realize that this could be them. I want my students to believe that their future is bright no matter where they come from or what their past has been like so far. This book presents great role models for youth and adults alike. It is very inspiring.

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