# Art & Design Education
## Theses Exhibitions



# Pratt Institute
## 2011

**April 27th & May 4th, 2011**

# Life History, Auto-ethnogrpahy and Teachers' Learning

# Magin Schantz

## Physical Theatre for Teachers:
## Cultivating the Affective Characteristics of Effective Teaching

Teacher effectiveness is currently a central topic in education reform discourse. Several recent studies highlight the necessary teaching skills that lead to success in the classroom. While many of the new methods for evaluating teacher performance are contentious, the effective teaching characteristics addressed by most evaluation systems and state standards are largely unvarying. They consistently include teachers' planning and organization skills, pedagogical knowledge, and clinical experience. Yet, there are also nods to more subtle, personal qualities such as positivity, emotional availability, flexibility and self-awareness.

This thesis argues that these affective qualities of effective teaching can be cultivated through the use of physical theatre exercises. The thesis analyzes the content and outcomes of a theatre workshop for pre-service and beginning teachers. The research methodology entailed workshop design and implementation, pre and post interviews with participants, and video recordings of the workshop itself. Findings show that the use of physical theatre exercises help pre-service and new teachers develop greater self-awareness, leading toward the development of an authentic teaching persona.

# Chelsea Washington

## "Wet Clay is the Best Clay": A Self-Study in an Elementary After-School Program

This thesis is a case study of a ceramics class in an elementary after-school program. The thesis follows my journey as a teacher as I experimented with curriculum design, materials, and processes. I recorded my teaching practices through journal entries, photos, videotapes, and audio recordings. My goal was to explore the creative process and how it manifests itself in students' responses and actual work.

Through my data collection, it became clear that environment, material and ceramic-making processes are inter-related and promote creative growth in the classroom. In addition, the after-school setting provides a significant amount of creative freedom on the part of the teacher, and because there are few limitations, it is an ideal place for teachers to experiment and learn about their teaching. The thesis also identifies the ways in which I would change my practice based on the documentation and analysis of three ceramics projects.

# Kevin Farrant

## The Defining Elements of Teaching Style:
## A Comparative Case Study of Three Veteran Teachers

This thesis investigates the essential elements that define teaching style. While previous research has defined approaches to teaching and teaching style, this study focuses on the experiences of three veteran teachers and investigates what pedagogical methods characterize effective teaching. Findings suggest that personal history, the approach to teaching, content knowledge/awareness of the student, environment, professional learning communities, and teacher disposition, while not evenly weighted, contribute to teaching style.

# Alexandra Gerbe

## Art and Healing for a Mentally Ill Adolescent:
## An Autoethnographic Study

This thesis examines the ways in which art making helped an adolescent with mental illnesses. In an auto-ethnographic study, my journals, poetry, drawings and paintings were analyzed alongside interviews with, my parents, teachers, psychiatrist, and therapist. In addition, I analyzed my treatment files from a residential facility.

Thesis findings suggest that art making supported an increase in self-confidence and provided a means of expression and communication. It allowed me to express my needs and emotions in ways I could not do verbally. It also provided me with a constant when my life and settings were constantly changing. It was an anchor that allowed me to connect with reality and gain control over my life, when I had no control over my settings and even my mind.

# Joseph Smeraldi

## Creating and Re-Working Backdrops:
## Choosing Teaching as a Vocation

This thesis is based on both auto-ethnography and life history research. The thesis considers the life histories of three teachers whose art backgrounds played an essential role in overcoming learning obstacles. I identified two of the subjects based on their similar educational experiences and involvement in the arts. I participated in the life-history process as the third subject, and was interviewed by another researcher.  I conducted two extended life-history interviews, collected subjects' art work and other related school work, and analyzed these, and my own interview, for their thematic content. The resulting themes became part of a narrative interpretation of the teachers' experiences.



The thesis argues that these individuals chose teaching as a vocation, or a life path, because they wanted to provide more fulfilling learning opportunities than those they had experienced as students. The life histories revealed that teachers create an image or backdrop of their histories, and this backdrop is something they stand in front of when they choose to become teachers. Although this backdrop is constantly re-worked, it remains a constant part of their lives as teachers.

# Student Access and Opportunities in Special Education and Museum Education

# Stephanie Chew

## "I Just Want to Write the Picture": An Exploration of the Relationship Between Expressive Language Development and Artistic Development in Children

This thesis investigates the correlation between expressive language development and artistic development in children. In a comparative case study of two boys in the same first grade class in a suburban elementary school in Saratoga County of upstate New York, the question was asked, "What, if any, correlation exists between expressive language development and artistic development in children?"

The children were observed over the course of five school days. Observations suggested that art was used to help the children learn to write, while artistic development became a secondary concern. The study also analyzed observations, interviews with school personnel, and work samples from the two children, in relation to literature on artistic development, creativity, and language development. Findings show that the relationship between expressive language development and artistic development is interdependent in the elementary classroom.
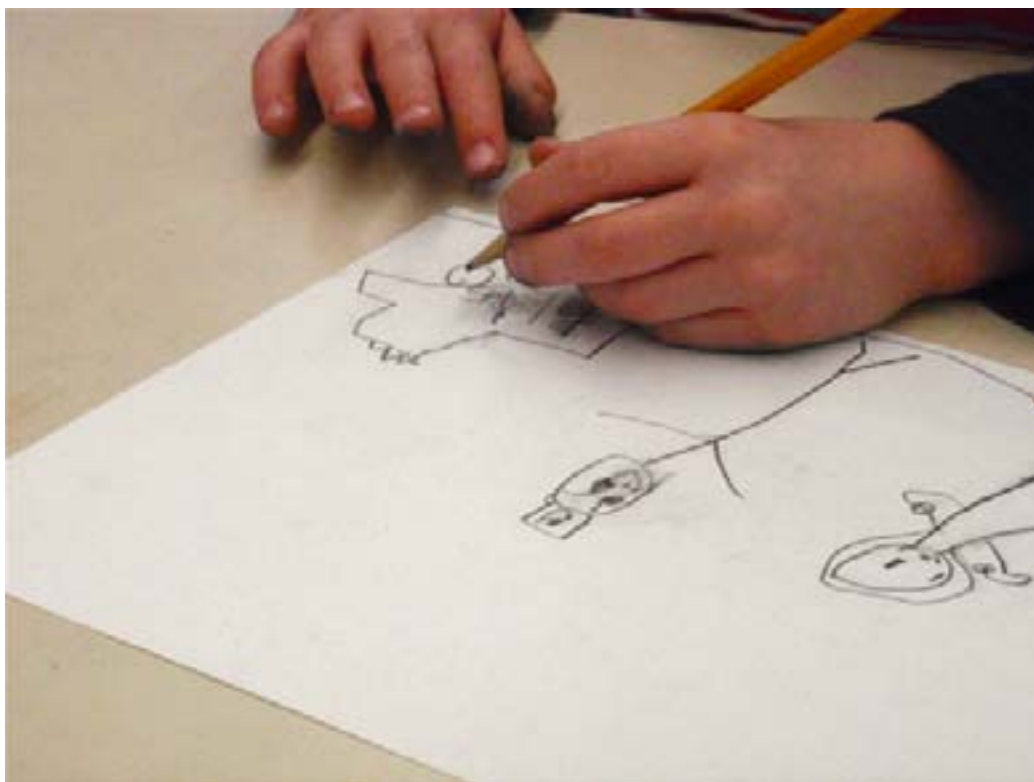
# Prisilla Siregar

## Accessibility to Enrichment Through Museum Programming



This thesis explores the accessibility of public programming in museums from the perspective of those who provide it and those who seek to benefit from participating in it. This research considers the difficulties involved with accessibility, first from the perspective of teachers in the public school system who access educational programming in museums, and then from museum educators and administrators who provide access for both the schools and families by way of educational outreach and the museum's family programming. The thesis examines museum access on the part of public schools through case studies of teachers in two schools located on the Lower East Side of New York City. The thesis also explores the work of public programming in museums through a case study of El Museo Del Barrio's education and family cultural events programming, analyzing the challenges involved with creating and maintaining accessibility in public programming from the museum's perspective.

The research was conducted through several interviews with public school teachers and administrators and museum educators and administrators, as well as site visits. Additional information was gathered through published sources such as museum literature, websites and government studies.

# Information Design in K-16 Education

# Nathalie Hall

## The Art and Science of Information Design

This thesis considers the new field of information design and how it is permeating the business world and filtering into higher education. Innovators in the information design world have even invented a niche for this new field and have created new titles such as "information architect", "information designer", and "information journalist". The problem is that although there is a demand, there is not enough awareness of how it can be used to enhance teaching, course content, and student learning. In addition, because there is a disconnect between the expertise in the business world and those who are using information design in higher education, the potential for how higher education can be an incubator for information design has not yet been realized. In the design world, there are connections between the scientific community and information designers which yield sophisticated and innovative products. There is a lot of excitement in the design world and among those who teach design courses, yet this excitement has not yet extended to how this can apply to the teaching of other disciplines such as science, nor how it can be more effectively used in K-12 education.

The thesis is based on a series of case studies about the demand, rationale, and application of design information in early childhood settings, higher education courses, and continuing education settings. The methodologies used were survey and document analyses, observations, interviews, and participation in conferences.

# Integration of Technology, Design and Arts in General Education and Arts

# Melisa Christensen

## An Artist's Classroom:
## Arts Integration in the 60s and 70s



Community News . . . C

Racine Teacher Finds Cartoons Help Children Learn Writing Skill

This thesis tells the story of an artist, my grandfather, who taught sixth grade for 35 years in Racine, Wisconsin during the 1960s and 70s. The thesis explores his life and classroom against the backdrop of the major social changes that occurred throughout this era. His approach to arts integration changed over time, and was shaped as much by his artistic interests as by the federal curricular experiments that grew out of the War on Poverty. He used narrative as a way of incorporating not just visual art but also creative writing, theater, and music into traditional academic subjects.

Arts integration is one of the many names used to describe how general education teachers incorporate the arts into their curriculum. During the 60s and 70s, arts integration was known as the arts in education movement. My grandfather became a team leader of a unit made up of regular education teachers and university researchers. Through this collaboration, they designed curriculum and evaluated its effects, as a way of improving learning opportunities for students who were considered "culturally deprived". Although he is no longer alive, his life was explored through oral history interviews of his former students, colleagues, and wife. In addition, the thesis draws from his personal teaching archives, federal and district reports and newspaper articles from the 60s and 70s.

# Tiffany Navarro

## Teacher's Experiences When Implementing Technology in The Classroom

This study asks "What does a teacher at a Brooklyn elementary school need to successfully implement technology in the classroom?", "How is technology used in the classroom?, and "How does the art teacher use technology in the classroom?" The study analyzed data from interviews, observations, and class websites and blogs. An art teacher, a science teacher, and a fifth grade classroom teacher, as well as the parent volunteer (who acts as the technology leader for the group Mouse Squad) were interviewed. Findings suggest that teachers received sufficient support from the administrators in acquiring technology, but needed more guidance on how to use technology in the classroom. Findings suggest that administrative support, professional development, and communication between teachers were important factors in the successful implementation of technology in the school.

# Minji Kim

## Design Thinking in Elementary School Art Classrooms

This thesis explores how the concept of design thinking can be applied in situations where the elementary art teacher has limited design experience. Design methodology emphasizes process-based learning, which enables students to use design thinking as a way to develop problem-solving abilities. This in turn helps children become creative thinkers who will be more innovative when faced with multi-disciplinary challenges. This paper investigates how integrative design approaches can change the lesson content, purpose, and capacity in relation to children's educational and societal needs, and demonstrates that design thinking enriches a young child's learning opportunities in school.

Through an analysis of interviews with three art teachers, classroom observations, student work, and action research in my own teaching, this paper reveals the existing and potential benefits and challenges of implementing design aspects in the art classroom at the elementary school level. The paper argues that even in traditional art lessons, it is possible to integrate design thinking. Design thinking methodology in the art classroom enhances a student's learning experience when art and design come together.

# Alana Glantz

## Conquering Clutter: Design Modifications to Enhance Teaching and Learning



This thesis is a case study of two New York City public school teachers and their classroom environments. Although one is a kindergarten special education teacher and the other is a Pre-K to 5 art teacher, both express frustrations with the organization of their classroom environment. They would like the environment to serve as a support system for their teaching, but find that in some instances, it only distracts students from learning. To their credit, although neither is trained as a designer, they use their design instincts to plan lessons, arrange classroom furniture and space, and situate signage. However, the thesis argues that they can improve their current practices by using design principles to modify their classroom environment and curriculum. The thesis also looks at the external challenges they face, such as inadequate allocation of time, furniture, and space.

The two case studies draw on classroom observations and interviews, captured through field-notes, photos, video footage, and audio-recordings. The proposed modifications to classroom design derive from existing design principles, scholarship in the field, interviews and observations of design teachers, and the researcher's teaching and design background.

# Community Arts in Homeless Shelters and Post-Disaster Landscapes

# Shoshana Goldsmith

## Case Study on the Use of Art and Recreation Programs Offered at a Homeless Shelter in Brooklyn, NY

This thesis looks at the use of art and recreation programs offered at a homeless shelter in Brooklyn, NY. Homeless shelters have evolved over the years, providing many services to residents and the surrounding community. Part of these services includes art and recreation programs.

Data was gathered through interviews with the shelter recreation director, staff, and parents, additional interviews with the Chair of Pratt's Creative Therapies department, Pratt's Art and Design Education after-school programs professor, Pratt student-teachers, and an official at the Department of Homeless Services. Children were observed, with over 20 hours of recorded program participation.

Findings suggest that art and recreation programs strive to lessen the despair of homelessness by nurturing hope, self-esteem and resiliency through creative expression.

# Ashley Slater

## Community Arts in a Post-Disaster Landscape



This thesis considers the work of two community arts organizations in New Orleans and their impact on the social and physical environment of New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. One case study profiles the artists and organizers from AORTA Projects, a grass-roots public art collective that organizes site-specific public art pieces in communities struggling to recover in the aftermath of Katrina. The second case study explores the work at KIDsmART, a non-profit that focuses on art integration in under-resourced public and charter schools throughout New Orleans. Both organizations work with the residents of Gentilly, one of the most devastated areas in New Orleans after Katrina. However, Gentilly did not garner the same media attention as the Lower Ninth Ward and therefore did not receive the same level of public support. This made the work of arts organizations even more important to the recovery effort. The thesis argues that arts-based interventions can help turn a crisis situation into an opportunity for creative growth, rebuilding and renewal for communities and schools.

The methodology included a survey of community arts organizations throughout New Orleans, and the final research centered exclusively on their activity in Gentilly. The case studies are based on an analysis of data gathered from interviews, document analysis, and site visits. These research approaches were documented through audio recordings, field notes, and photographs.

# Classroom Culture, Sustainability and the Promise of Printmaking

# Megan Hummell

## Community in Pratt's Printmaking Studios: The Space, People, and Goals that Create It

This study investigates the interactions, community and learning in the shared studio spaces of Pratt Institute's printmaking department. This thesis examines how factors such as space, campus and administrative policies, and student and faculty's goals and philosophies affect the creation of community, as well as peer teaching and learning in the studio spaces. The literature that aided this research was on communities in printmaking and also student perception and student engagement in higher education. Data was collected through interviews with students, faculty and administrators involved in the printmaking department, and observations were conducted in the Steuben basement relief printmaking studio.

Findings show that although Pratt's printmaking department is in a state of transition, due to the addition of a new studio technician and new faculty, students and faculty continue to feel ownership of the space. This is evident in their increased use of the studio outside of class time and the ways in which they care for the space. As a result, there are higher levels of interaction and peer learning; thus, community is created in the studio.

# Rachel Margolies

## "Pulling Prints" : Traditional Printmaking Processes in Non-Traditional Settings
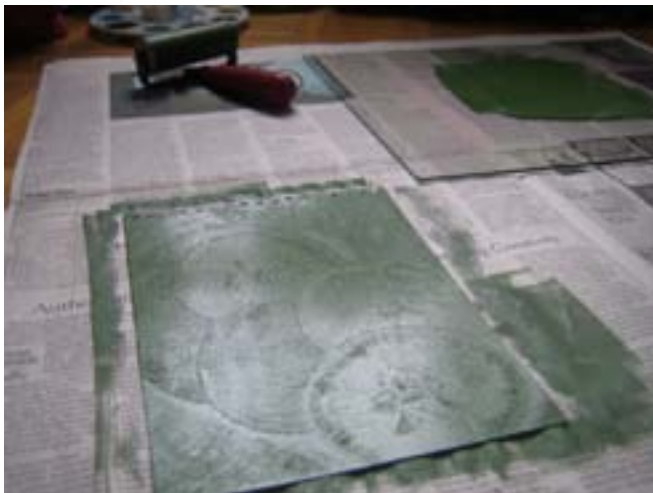


The thesis focuses on non-toxic material substitutions and adaptations of three printmaking processes—relief printing, intaglio, and monoprinting—that can be introduced into the K-12 curriculum. The thesis argues that quality prints can be pulled using these substitutions and adaptations—even by an inexperienced printer—if the traditional steps are followed with attention and care. It also argues that some processes that traditionally use a press for the printing component can be adapted and used effectively in a variety of settings.

Research for the thesis was multi-faceted. The first stage involved a review of recent research, interviews with practicing printmakers, and a self-study as a way to experiment with material substitutions and adaptations of the three printing processes. The second stage involved documentation of classroom teaching that applied the experimental processes in K-12 settings.

# New Paths for Colleges of Art and Design

# Angela Yeotsas

## A Look at the Foundation Core

This thesis explores the first year program at a private art and design institution in Brooklyn, New York, by examining the viewpoints of a sample of chairpersons and faculty in the first year program. Through a case study of the foundation program, the research provides insights about the role of the foundation year, the methods of curriculum development used within the institution, and proposals for change among the different constituents interviewed.

Findings suggest that there is a tension within the institution, both within the foundation department and in the institution at large about what should be taught in the first year of the art and design school. Given the strong history of the foundation program in this institution and in other art and design schools, the opinions on what the future of the curriculum ought to be vary greatly from person to person.

# New York City's High Schools

# Romina Wixom

## The Mission Made Real: An Analysis of a School Mission Statement as it Relates to Teacher Practice and Approach

This thesis considers how personal philosophies on education, as well as environmental factors created largely by the small schools reform movement, allow teachers to engage with and realize their school's mission statement. While the contextual basis for this study is the research surrounding school reform movements and teacher motivation, it is unique in that its focus is on the environmental and philosophical factors of school reform that support teachers' commitment to the school.

The research involves a qualitative analysis of two teachers at a high-achieving New York City high school, with roots in the small school movement. The teachers were chosen for this study based on their reputation for being highly enthusiastic and committed. This study is grounded in an analysis of in-depth teacher interviews, classroom observations over a two-week period, and audio recordings of classroom lessons, including advisory periods.

# Dmitry Gubin

## The People vs. The New York City Department of Education: Paradigm Shifts Under Mayoral Control, 2002-2011

This thesis explores the recent high school closings in New York City--resulting from local and federal accountability policies--against the historical backdrop of the city's school system. The number of closings and the way in which they have been implemented has provoked major public protest and conflicting policy analyses. The thesis considers certain aspects of grassroots resistance to the increasing school closings—on the part of students, parents and teachers—and its effectiveness. This thesis argues that school closing policies and practices, together with recent budget cuts, have undermined learning opportunities for the city's most disenfranchised students. In contrast, the school closings appear to be benefiting charter school management organizations and their corporate backers whose schools are co-located in many of the affected high schools.

Data collection draws from historical sources, both published and unpublished, official government reports, and institutional studies. In addition, interviews were conducted with teachers involved with citywide and school level grassroots organizing. Additional data was gathered through video-footage of school protests, public hearings, and interviews with teachers and scholars. The video footage was edited into a 50 minute documentary about school closings in New York City.