Exploring Family Heritage and Personal Space to Find Meaning and Content in Student Art

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Exploring Family Heritage and Personal Space
to Find Meaning and Content
in Student Art

Rebecca Link Wilhelm

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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March 2016

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Family Heritage and Personal Space to Find Meaning and Content in Student Art

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As an art educator, I found student art lacking in meaning and students lacking personal engagement. I sought a way to engage students in more meaningful art-making in the classroom by exploring family heritage and personal spaces. This case study searched the family heritage and personal spaces of students in a junior high art class to engage students and find deeper meaning and context for student art-making. The research was informed through an arts-based inquiry with a/r/tographic influence. It was a qualitative inquiry, mining the familiar for development of a curriculum rich in context and personal significance for students. This inquiry examined the influences of family through art-making and research into the visual culture of student homes and heritage. We curated our personal spaces and made art that reflected our findings, keeping reflexive journals of our experiences, and exhibiting our art in a culmination of our research. The results were meaningful content in student art as well as more enthusiastic engagement in the art making process. This experience gleaned more than just student art rich in meaning, but in a deeper understanding of one another in our classroom.

Keywords: meaningful, engage, student engagement, family heritage, arts-based, a/r/tographic, curriculum, visual culture, reflexive journal
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Chapter 1  Introduction

“[Family] is the most central element in the lives of most Americans. The family is the primary lens that filters the early and lasting light of every life.” ~Donald Katz (1992)

In designing my research thesis, I took a good hard look at what really matters to me, asking myself what spurs me on, makes me curious and inspires me? I came to the conclusion: family. “The home is the center and circumference, the start and the finish, of most of our lives.” ~Charlotte Perkins Gillman (excerpt from Cartwright, & Fishburn, 2007, p. 54).

*Family* is a word packed with meaning and emotion, conjuring images and connotations depending on the bag of experiences each person carries.

The word family originated with “household,” broadening to mean the social arrangement of *kindred* (dictionary.com). Family is also a metaphor for *community* (see Wiktionary.com). Those who live and work around us are our community. That environment of community includes objects and images; our material and *visual culture*. Traditions and beliefs comprise the history or roots of our family and community, and are our *heritage*, or “cultural patrimony” that is passed on to us (Signet, 1962). This cultural patrimony is further steeped in objects and imagery, comprising another part of the visual culture that is uniquely ours.

This visual culture is what my students drew from to share their heritage and cultural patrimony in art. To guide our investigations and research into the visual culture of our families, it was necessary to develop a curriculum that explored family heritage and one’s personal visual culture. This study describes what happened when we took the subject of family, heritage and visual culture as the content in the art mediums we chose to explore.
Background

This thesis emerged from a project required in the Methodology class after I finally stopped kidding myself about my ability to investigate art pedagogy through the unfamiliar, even foreign, territory of technology. I began an art-based research project for an assignment, choosing to do something that really mattered to me at the moment, which was family.

The project I chose took on a profound personal importance, as I faced the loss of my father to cancer, an event that tends to turn one to introspection. I looked deeper at my own core, at the lens through which I see and interpret the world, and saw family, the gospel, and my art. I saw that these tie into my dad in ways I never examined this closely before. I looked at his heritage, the ancestors who contributed significantly to who he was, and consequently, to who I am now. I come from people who left home and country to answer the call to build a new “Zion.” I come from pioneer stock. I can trace these core elements of faith manifest in art to Hermann August Thorup. He left his home country of Denmark for his faith, leaving everything behind but his family and his skills. He was a craftsman, and when he finally arrived in “Deseret,” his skills were put to work on the Salt Lake Temple. Among his many projects, he designed and crafted the doors of the Salt Lake Temple. These have become iconic symbols in LDS church culture. One of my exploratory projects was to recreate miniature replicas of these doors. For me the doors have taken on a more profound and personal meaning. In the process of making these doors, I found something deeply meaningful in my own art practice through family heritage.
Problem

“Art can only be truly Art by presenting an adequate outward symbol of some fact of interior life.” ~Margaret Fuller (excerpt from Cartwright, & Fishburn, 2007, p. 82)

One challenge I face as a teacher is how to get students to engage in meaningful art-making. This is a problem shared by many teachers--how to motivate students to connect their work to personally meaningful issues. Student art is frequently lacking in content and depth, regardless of what genre we venture into. It dawned on me that my students are likely in the same mire of needing incentive when it comes to making art in my class that I have felt in producing a personally meaningful thesis. They need that life-line of inspiration to cling to, to make it out of the swamp of required course work. This attitude is apparent in the typical school routine of post-assessment. No sooner than student art is graded and returned, than it is found in the trash, discarded where I wish they would spit out their gum. Yikes! Isn’t art supposed to be an expression of the soul, where artists bleed art mediums in grand expressions of ideas? This is hardly so with the majority of my students.

Response

I have found something deeply meaningful in my own art practice through family heritage, and I hope my students can have a similar experience, engaging in meaningful art. Could family be the engaging stimulus for me and my students to create something of consequence? Engaging students with this theme could overcome the challenge I encounter as a junior high art teacher: motivating students and generating meaningful student art.

Sometimes we miss the obvious. We may be unaware of the influence of family and community, becoming blind, or oblivious to the nuances and contexts of our surroundings
because of the constant exposure and familiarity we have with our habitats and our homes
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Our family heritage becomes a lens to the world, so ingrained, that we
don’t question it (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008). Because it is the lens through which we
perceive the world, we can become unconscious of it, taking it for granted as the way things are.
By opening our visual awareness to our community, our family and our heritage, what might we
encounter? If we research our cultural patrimony, and look more purposefully at our personal
spaces of the present, opening our visual awareness to our community, our family and our
heritage, what might we find, and what might happen with our art-making?

My response to the problem of student motivation and the lack of personal investment
and meaning in their art work was to focus on family as a source of content in art-making. We all
come from a family. We all live somewhere and are part of a community. When we are young,
our family is often the central theme and reference in our early art (Pattemore, 1974). Whether or
not we are familiar with our genealogy, taking a conscious look at our cultural patrimony and our
personal spaces may open our eyes to knowing ourselves better, hopefully serving to engage us
and enhance our art-making potential by having something meaningful to say.

This thesis used qualitative inquiry to examine personal visual cultures associated with
family. This project could be formulated as famili/a/r, mining the family community for
development of an art curriculum rich in visual and cultural meaning. In this study, I explored
with my students a curriculum that used our individual family heritage and personal spaces as the
basis for art-making. In my junior high art classroom, we explored our family heritage, personal
spaces, and visual art culture, and unpacked our bags of the familiar, looking at how they can
influence our art-making. This inquiry was informed and will continue to be informed by an
a/r/tographic influence, to see what may be discovered through tapping into the familiar. We
researched our family heritage, curated our personal spaces, made an exhibit of art that reflected
our findings and wrote our reflections of the processes we experienced.

The events of my own life also informed this project. Throughout my study I connected
my own family heritage to both my art making and to my research interests. The drama of my
family served to emphasize the importance of my topic, and gave my research a significant
autobiographical element. A/r/tography was very influential for me in this arts-based study as I
both thought about and lived the overlaps of teacher, researcher and artist. This influence is
reflected in the autobiographical character of my inquiry.
Chapter 2  Literature Review

This chapter is an exploration of the scholarly literature about how family, cultural heritage, and visual culture in the home and other personal spaces influence the art-making of students. It is a look at the roles of these familiar influences on teaching and learning.

Definitions

Family: A family is a group of people who are closely related to one another. In other words, a close knit group of people related by blood, law, custom or if they live or work together (Oxford Dictionaries). For this inquiry, the use of family will return to a closer tie to the etymology of the word, which came from the Latin familia, loosely meaning the collective domestic household. This inquiry will focus on the interpretation of family as those who live together in the same household, generally incurring that those residing within a common household are related by blood or ancestry.

Heritage: The etymology of the word heritage is French. Its meaning is: something passed down or inherited, as in a tradition or property. This meaning includes a status acquired at birth or a birthright. As an attribute, it is having a certain background (Oxford Dictionaries). In Merriam-Webster it is defined as “the traditions, achievements, beliefs, etc. that are part of the history of a group or nation.” It is further defined as “something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor, and something possessed as a result of one’s natural situation or birth” (Merriam-Webster). Exploring synonyms for the word heritage in Roget’s Thesaurus (Signet, 1962) led to the word: patronage, a word commonly used in relation to the support of the arts. Further investigation led to an intriguing set of words: cultural patrimony, meaning objects of continuing traditional and cultural importance to the heritage of a group. Interestingly, I later found this term
used on the New Mexico website for cultural preservation (see nmcf.org). Cultural patrimony, in short, is related to cultural wealth (Your Dictionary). The arts, heritage and culture are intertwined.

Culture: The word is rooted in the verbs cultivate, and worship. It is defined as “the arts, customs and habits that characterize a particular society” or nation, place, or time (Merriman-Webster). It is further defined as the beliefs, values, behaviors and objects that constitute a people’s way of life. Anthropologically, it is the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation (umanitoba.ca). Interestingly, the antonym of culture is ignorance (see Roget’s Thesaurus, p. 82).

Culture is something that is shared in common. Common is behind the etymology of community. Concise definitions that relate to this inquiry include: having certain shared attitudes and interests, as in a commune or residential or religious collective (Oxford Dictionaries). Merriam-Webster phrases it as a group of people who live in the same area, and a group of people who have the same interest, race and religion. In sum, culture is a unified body of individuals sharing history, geography or other attributes.

Influences on Child Art

Child art is influenced by family, cultural heritage, and visual culture. An influential idea of 20th century modernism was that child art is a spontaneous and unaffected act. However, Wilson (2004) showed that the cultural influences on child art are also important, as documented in the artifacts of child art that have survived throughout history. The most important people to a
child are usually members of his own family. It’s only natural that these people should appear in their drawings and influence their artwork (Pattemore, 1974).

The Influence of Family on Child Art

Family members are the most important people to a child (Pattemore, 1974). Their activities are an expression of society and their culture. These activities may become major themes in art for students and artists alike. The home and family can also become the focus for many activities in the art class.

The influences of family and community are potent. This influence can be visibly manifested in the choices of colors and patterns as visual evidence of reactions to the environment. “For the young child, his home is his whole world, for that is where his life centers” (Pattemore, 1974, p. 55). These two spaces, home and school, offer endless possibilities for increased awareness, and learning about environment.

Children describe the world around them when they make pictures. They will draw what they know, what is familiar to them. Children newly arrived at school will mostly depict themselves and their families. Quite often they will include their own home. Drawing pictures of houses is natural even for younger children. It is common to see the home drawn in children’s pictures the same size as the people, giving it equal importance or status to the child.

To an adolescent, their personal space, their bedroom, becomes a reflection not only of who they are and want to be, but of their past, younger selves (Steele, & Brown, 1995). The space is filled with photographs, clippings and posters on the walls, images of things they care about, and hopeful projections for their future. These are things they care about and fantasies of who they want to become and how they want to fit into the larger culture. Yet there remains
present the eclectic mix of sentimental childhood memorabilia. This adolescent personal space is filled with artifacts that are evidence of their past, reflection of present, and hopes and fears for their future. This is a space where teens can express who they are. As stated by a teen participant in the conclusion of Steele and Brown’s inquiry into Adolescent Room Culture, “I guess it’s really my room in general that’s just really me” (p. 573).

Child Art

Art educator Viktor Lowenfeld (1903-1960), posed the question of how individuals are influenced by the environment, their surroundings, community, and cultural influences. He concluded, “The factor that seems most influential in arousing a person’s interest, developing his perceptual set, directing his attention, and provoking his behavior (including visual symbolization) is the factor we call stimulation. …a constant flow of excitation from the environment; part of it is natural and part is cultural” (Lowenfeld, 1969, p. 238). However, Lowenfeld placed primary emphasis on the individual’s power of artistic expression rather than on the cultural or social influences on artistry.

Lowenfeld carefully described stages of artistic development in children that he felt were independent of cultural influences. For him, the everyday culture inhibited rather than stimulated creativity and growth. His assertions were influenced by his experiences in Nazi Germany, and he sought freedom of expression for children. He emphasized the importance of personal experience as content for art (Burton, 2001). Today we have a more nuanced understanding of the cultural influences on artistic development. This effect is clearly evident in the art the child makes. This enculturation is made up of many influential subcultures, including the family, neighborhood, and school, each with potential influence on a child’s art. Geertz (1988) states,
“Culture is concretely an open ended, creative dialogue of sub-cultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions” (p. 46). The habits, attitudes, and values found in a child’s environment has a huge impact, and influences the nature of an individual’s art because it has the power to shape the personality and perceptions of the individual (Lowenfeld, 1969).

The Influence of Community on Child Art

As a child grows, so does their community. What a community is will depend upon the age of the child. There are likely to be several kinds of communities in the experience of a child. Drawings extend from home and family to other themes as an awareness of the greater world outside their own previous environment increases. The community expands through media to include a vast expanse of possibilities. Contemporary scholars working in brain-based learning recognize how vital community is in learning and teaching (Nummela, & Caine, 1997), but strive to understand what community entails and how it influences learning.

The Influence of Visual Culture on Child Art

Wilson examines the visual cultural influences on child’s art, exploring the direct influences of adult art and cultural schemata. Taking a more attentive look at children’s art, it’s evident that children influence other children, often by something as simple as looking at each other’s drawings. These cultural influences cover many generations and are also evident regionally. Child art is not completely spontaneous, but rather, is influenced by their visual culture; these artifacts mark a time and place. Child art is what Wilson calls the “residue of graphic play” and “products of their time” (p. 305). Children watched adults create things, then imitated what they saw in their own naive, unskilled fashion. Children also create art as a means to express experiences and make their world meaningful (Burton, 2009). Burton’s analysis of the
motivations and influences on child art bring together Lowenfeld’s focus on self expression as a means for psychological wholeness and research on the cultural influences on child art.

“The image is also constitutive of cultural practices” (Sullivan, 2004, p. 810). The influence of a child’s community and culture is unmistakable in the pictures they make. The ideas expressed in the visual images they make are effected by and reflect their environment (Pattemore, 1974). “Our environment is people. It’s family, friends, neighbors, classmates, associates” (p. 25).

Art historian Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001) describes various historical approaches to art making and the cultural background of these art-making conventions. Gombrich (1969) describes how many different eras and geographic regions incorporated cultural influences in their art. These samplings include Chinese, Greek, and Dutch techniques as well as eras including the Victorian and Medieval. There are patterns, and schemas of drawing handed down in an attempt to preserve certain cultural views of art, and in some instances, were seen to have great social significance. This was cultural preservation through cultural schema (Wilson, 2004).

This view of artistic development coalesces with Wilson’s views. “Child art is not natural … its special character is the result of adult intervention" (Wilson, 2004, p. 299). A child does not learn in a vacuum. Acquisition of skills, as in the case of language acquisition, comes from exposure to it. It is generally the adults guide in the acquisition of specialized skills, but not all we learn comes from formalized or adult sources. We acquire skills from those who possess them. As with language, children learn from what is being modeled, through observation and mimicking. Gombrich (1969) stated “The artist relies on culturally acquired schemata for how to draw…” (p. 300).
Visual Culture Includes Family and Community

“Culture is a pattern of behaviors, ideas, and values shared by a group. The visual arts are a means of communicating, teaching, and transmitting these cultural ideas, and values” (McFee, & Degge, 1977, p. 272). This formal and informal visual communication surrounds us in our families and communities. It’s our individual visual culture.

“Visual Culture is the aspect of culture expressed in visual images.” (Wikipedia). This a simplistic way to define an interdisciplinary field of study that includes film, media and television studies, art, design, fashion and architecture, cultural studies and critical theory, philosophy and aesthetics, the social sciences, and art education. In art education, visual culture came on the scene several years ago, adding to controversy and contradictions in education (Saltz 2008). Visual culture has complex relationships between the superficial and the profound meanings of things, and continues to be a controversial topic (Herrmann, 2005).

Clifford (cited in Freedman, & Stuhr, 2004) looks at the influence of communal and personal visual culture on forming our identities. “Various aspects of our personal identity are made up of many cultural bits. Culture is a collage of many cultural identities that are selected and translated on a continuing basis” (p. 817). This idea of an evolving collage of identity was discussed in the research on Adolescent Room Culture (Steele & Brown, 1995). A recognition of our own cultural identities, with its preconceptions and biases, makes it easier to understand the multifaceted identity of others, and also gives us insight to the why and how students respond to visual culture in the way they do (Ballange-Morris, & Stuhr, 2001).
According to Ballange-Morris, and Stuhr (2001), art is a principle vehicle of transmitting ideas and emotional meanings from one person or group to another. “People both create and react to the culture that maintain and sustains their way of life. … Material culture and art continuously educate the members of a cultural group into the behavior patterns of a given society” (p. 280).

Duncum (2007) describes visual culture this way:

Everyday cultural sites… are set apart from experiences of art insofar as their appeal is to popular sentiment … Their references are familiar and together they help form the common culture. They directly address the present moment. Unlike the art of the art-world, they are neither a collection of sites that drive from the past, nor an attempt to articulate the future (p. 42).

His emphasis is in the everyday encounters with visual culture of the malls and parks and television programs. With newer technologies, daily encounters are embedded in all aspects of our lives (Freedman, & Stuhr, 2004). According to Duncum, (2007) everyday places are as legitimate a visual experience as a museum of art.

Why Should We Draw On Visual Culture in the Classroom?

We live in an image saturated world. The world has transformed into a global culture that is dependent on visual images that range from what we wear to what we watch. Visual culture teaches people even when we aren’t conscious of it. “In the process, we recreate ourselves through our encounters with it” (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004, p. 817). Duncum (2007) asks students to become critically aware of the aesthetic dimensions of everyday life.
chapter of the *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education* (Eisner & Day, 2004), Freedman and Stuhr address visual culture in art education. Their purpose is to broaden the scope of visual culture in art education, and to theorize about curriculum change. For example, art educations theorists have embraced the notion of visual culture as a way to broaden the field by bringing Visual Cultural Studies and critical theory into the discourse of art education (Duncum, 2006). The study of visual culture expanded the content of art education to include comics, fashion, shopping malls and other visual or designed artifacts or habitats (Duncum, 2009; Freedman, 2000) Paul Duncum (2009) describes seven principles of visual culture education that focus on critical theory and the deconstruction of images rather than an emphasis on materials, techniques, and objects.

“The shift to visual culture… includes issues concerning the power of representation, the formation of cultural identities, functions of creative production.” (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004, p. 816).

Inquiring into a student’s personal visual culture challenges traditional forms of art education because of visual culture’s emphasis on social and cultural issues. It’s not just about the production of art, but about life, through the arts. It helps, among other things, to understand about social experiences configured through visual imagery and designed objects. It shapes the way we perceive ourselves and the global community, and influences knowledge, effecting aesthetic sensibilities (Freedman, & Stuhr, 2004).

This research suggests parallels between artistic development and my inquiry, in which students explore their community and cultures through their art-making, uncovering layers of meaning and visual culture in themselves as evolving artists from children to adolescents. This is
an approach to contemporary art education that combines experience in the classroom with experiences and events outside of the classroom (Wilson, 2008). It is when visual culture becomes a guide for art exploration (Graham, 2008).

The investigation of visual culture in art education is a way to explore the visual images that influence and often define communities, and perhaps ourselves. Visual Culture studies creates a meaningful context for my study of the images and artifacts associated with the culture of the family. By exploring our own personal visual cultures, I hoped to engage my students in more meaningful art-making. It was a key aspect of this inquiry into students’ homes and personal spaces.
Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter looks at Case Study Research, and investigates how the use of an arts-based methodology with an a/r/tographic influence informed this inquiry with junior high art students. As a qualitative inquiry about and through family, art, and research, this inquiry can be expressed as $famili/a/r$, or exploration of the familiar for deeper understanding of our personal perceptions, and for development of a curriculum rich in visual and cultural meaning.

Case Study Research

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within real-life context, especially when the boundaries between context and phenomenon are not clear (Yin, 1994). Case study research is research that depicts a problem in all “it’s personal and social complexity” (Stake, 1998, p. 256). It is a research method for drawing inferences outside of the laboratory in a real setting. It is open to further evidences and implications that potentially arise outside of the original inquiry, allowing for rival explanations (Campbell, 1994). My case was a junior high school classroom and how they responded to a curriculum that focused on family heritage.

According to Kroll (2012), inquiry through case study research can assist in questioning the effectiveness of my own teaching.

Inquiry as a habit of mind, as a stance towards one’s own practice, supports the critical aspect of cultural relevance as well as developmentally appropriate instruction, along with continual reflection on one’s own practice and teaching… continuing to learn as one teaches, … [self-study] permits teachers to investigate the results of their teaching and to include the perspectives of their students as part of the research…. This multiple
perspective is essential …for looking at the results of one’s classroom teaching practice. (Kroll, 2012, p. 10)

Adopting this “habit of mind”, of questioning my art teaching practice, helps to maintain the passion, curiosity and judgment of being a good teacher. Gaining perspective from such a stance to “step back” and take a good look at what one is doing, gives more control over what one is doing. Teaching is a balancing act between episteme and phronesis, scientific versus practical knowledge. It requires active participation, which is what an inquiry stance can provide.

Kroll tells us “Learning how to ask good questions and then to systematically investigate those questions is the essence of research” (p. 24). He cites Cochran-Smith, & Lytle (2009) “The unique feature of the questions that prompt teacher research is that they emanate from neither theory nor practice alone but from critical reflection on the intersection of the two” (p. 24).

Case study has been an effective design to unpack my own understandings of my personal cultural heritage and how my personal identity affects my teaching and relationship with my students.

Cautions

Critics of case study claim it can be too subjective about observation, recording and data collection, called “research bias” (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008, p. 275). The key is to understand the researcher’s personal biases, a strategy called reflexivity. This calls for the researcher to “engage in critical self-reflection” (p. 276), becoming aware of predispositions, and by monitoring and checking biases. Including a section in the research that addresses the researcher’s personal background, and how it may affect the outcomes is advisable.
Issues may also emerge unexpectedly. There are many layers of meanings in phenomena. Uncovering the layers to understand more profoundly what is and has occurred is an investigation of questioning and a dialogue. It’s a process of interpreting through translation. Stake (1988) shares guidelines for the process of translation: 1) state your pre-understandings of the phenomenon, and explain its context; 2) state that your information is probably true; 3) seek totality and coherence of meaning in your description; 4) search for the human meaning of the phenomenon and all its etymological, traditional, and philosophical meanings, and 5) apply your findings to your own life and state how the experience changed you (p. 37). Cultures are always in transition. Therefore, interpretation is always in flux as “an historical understanding” (p. 37).

“What validates the research ‘viewpoint’ is its contextualization, not its elimination.” (Dallow, 2005, p. 138). Dallow asserts that in art practice in particular, to really understand the observation, one has to be not only the observer, but one must also be the participant, “contextualized relative to the internal and external position/perspective”, especially in context of “creative subjectivity” (p. 138). Inquiry has to be assessed “from the inside” (p. 138).

Any research practice which is divided from itself, removed from its own conditions, as well as those it intends to account for, as Bourdieu (see Bourdieu, 1977) has observed, is reduced to seeing practice as mere spectacle. The issue then is not objectivity per se.” (Dallow, 2005, p. 138)

Other warnings specified potential challenges with participants/students, who have the right to change their minds about participating, and may back out of the research at any time during the process of inquiry. Two students did just that during the final phase of my research project. This effectively changed the study, as suggested by Stake (1988). Because of their
change of heart, the study morphed from the initial whole class group to a few particular participants who demonstrated marked changes as artists.

Case Study and Art Curriculum

For an art curriculum to work in a contemporary context, student studio experience must be thought of as part of the visual culture and a vital way to come to understand the visual milieu in which they live. Student studio experience is essential to teaching and learning about visual culture because it is (a) a process of creative inquiry; (b) helps students understand the complexities of visual culture; and (c) connects and empowers people. (Freedman, & Stuhr, 2004, pp. 824-25)

My research project included the design of a curriculum. Art making in this art and visual culture curriculum followed procedures of discovering, planning, doing and assessing, as well as acquiring skills. “Students maintain freedom to explore while focused on questions and nature and function of visual culture in society and its impact on their lives” (Duncum, 2002, p. 7). In the case of this study, “society” was their homes and personal spaces. Carrying out a case study research methodology, using the classroom studio as the site of inquiry, enabled the discovering of the cultural patrimony each participant has in their own personal spaces. It was an open exploration, unfettered by quantitative restraints (Maxwell, 2005; Trochim, 2014).

“Some artists use their own subjective experience as scientists use nature. They search for truths that underlie the visual order of the universe” (McFee & Degge, p. 276). With that said, conducting a case study, using a/r/tographic methodology, is the right approach to the kinds of questions I am asking: Will our inquiry into family heritage and personal spaces engage students in creating more meaningful art?
Arts Based Research

According to Graeme Sullivan,

The artwork carries its own status as a form of knowledge…. As an object of study, an artwork is an individually and culturally constructed form that can be used to represent ideas, and thus be examined as a source of knowledge. (2004, p. 803)

The status of art work is elevated from mere object to an artifact with cultural meaning that can convey knowledge through inquiry. There is a long history of visual forms/art being used to advance various ends, political and cultural among them. The universal impact of visual culture warrants critical study. “As a socially constructed process, “visuality” is a persuasive form of cultural knowledge” (Sullivan, 2004, p. 803).

What is missing from…visual research methodology literature is an acknowledgement that the interpretation of visual data is not so much trying to describe visual content. Rather the task of the researcher is to understand how those who make images… construct their meanings as they present them in visual form. (Sullivan, 2004, p. 809)

The history of art education has fluctuated between an emphasis on either the process and the product (Sullivan, 2004). This inquiry was a look at the product through the process. “A/r/tography is a living inquiry of unfolding art forms and text… through its rhizomatic relationality” (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, & Xiong, 2006, p. 79). Certainly researching the literature, indeed, the very process of participation in this master’s cohort has been a rhizomatic undertaking.

In Handbook of Research in Arts Education, Graeme Sullivan wrote “The artist is the key figure in creation of new knowledge that has the potential to change the way we think” (p. 802).
He asserts the studio experience is a form of cognitive inquiry and therefore a site for research. This is a significant claim. Through the process of art-making we arrived at new knowledge and understanding beyond techniques and mediums. We grew to know ourselves and each other with more clarity.

Exploration in the studio was the perfect venue for this type of inquiry, for students using the processes of art-making, and reflective writing to explore their personal spaces for visual cultural heritage and identities. Hall (1990) said identity is a “production”, never finished, never complete, always in production (p. 222). The study by Steele and Brown (1995) seems to be in agreement.

Influence of A/r/tograhic Methodology

“A/r/tography is an arts-based research methodology that inquires into educational phenomenon through artistic and aesthetic means” (Springgay, 2008, p. 67). It can be expressed as a living inquiry that shows or renders self (Irwin & de Cosson, 2006). A/r/tography includes making inquiry through art-making, and is an appropriate fit for our exploration into family heritage, personal visual cultures through our student art making in the classroom. My study became autobiographical, which fits with an a/r/tographic approach because I am an artist creating artwork in this study, I am a researcher conducting the study, and I am a teacher to my students who are participating with me in the study.

The study undertaken in by Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, and Xiong (2006) entitled “City of Richgate” exemplifies potentials to be found in the journey of an a/r/tographic inquiry. Questions evolved from the original inquiry, an important distinction that distinguishes a/r/tographic work from other research forms. A/r/tographers pay attention to “tangents,
interruptions and unsettling conversations” (p. 75). “The rhizomatic nature of a/r/tography offers a methodology of situations” (p. 75). These a/r/tographers cite Kwon (2002) who wrote of “the impossibility of community” (p. 78), that total coherence in a group is impossible. It serves as a reminder that a/r/tographic inquiry is a living, breathing thing in a constant state of becoming (Britzman, 2006), and as such, there were moments of tantrums as well as bliss, the “coming together and coming apart” of the community of participants (p. 78). That is part of a journey, the evolution of questions, the process of invention rather than interpretation, and the idea that practicing is a verb. Thus, the lens of a/r/tography is appropriate for this inquiry into the familiar and personal visual heritage and cultures of my junior high art students.

Art, even the art of the fullest scope and widest vision, can never really show us the external world. All that it shows us is our own soul, the one world of which we have any real cognizance. … It is art, and art only, that reveals us to ourselves. ~ Oscar Wilde (Quoted after dedication page, Hoffman, 1996)

A/r/tography was very influential for this arts-based study, and the autobiographical character of my inquiry.
Chapter 4 Thesis Data and Analysis

In the Beginning

I was distracted while writing this thesis by an old movie about an American Air Force pilot who falls in love with a Japanese woman. It was a fortuitous distraction. The movie “Sayonara” (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1957), starring Marlon Brando and Red Buttons, reflects the racial prejudice of that Korean War era. Suddenly I was reminded of the “beta testing” phase of my early research. I had assigned the Studio Art class to create “Nichos” (a Latin American art form of tableaus in small boxes), using the subject of family heritage, or an ancestor they wanted to learn more about. When sharing her nicho (see Figure 4.1), one of my students told us the story of her grandfather, a young pilot in the Air Force. He’d seen a movie about a pilot sent to Japan who, against serious taboo, fell in love. My student’s grandfather was inspired by the movie. He thought it would be great to go to Japan, meet a beautiful girl and fall in love. As her story goes, her grandfather/pilot was assigned to Japan, and a family legacy began. It suddenly dawned on me this was that movie! My memory kicked in about those nichos and student presentations. It was a moment of serendipity in the process of writing this thesis that took me back to the beginning of my research with students, creating meaningful content from the subject of family. The nicho she shared with us was of the struggling Japanese girl he met and married after overcoming prejudice and fear. Each object and item carefully crafted into the art project was significant in its symbolism, telling her grandmother’s story, and her story of family heritage.
It’s a moment of kismet as I write about my research, and the connection of the movie and my student’s art project dawn on me. I feel like something has come full circle as I’m brought back to the beginning of my research with students.

I am laying out the experiences as I saw them; this is the raw data of the research. However, each story and image have been carefully selected to demonstrate how the students’ art experience changed as they engaged with important issues of family heritage. I am also keeping this description chronological to emphasize that is was a narrative that was woven into my own lived experiences.

These projects provided an intimate look into who students are as they reveal their family stories. They took on projects intended to deepen the content of their art, and I have found I am allowed, through their art and reflexive writing, to glimpse into their homes and sometimes their hearts. Their artwork stories were personal to them. This endeavor added more than just content to their personal art work. It added respect and understanding to us as a class as we have gotten to know each other, our similarities and our differences.
To create the semester long curriculum for my students with meaningful art-making opportunities, I explored projects and mediums that would be appropriate for both the age and skill level of junior high students, and fit our school budget (see Appendix A).

While in this process of creating a research curriculum, the BYU cohort group met and worked with artist and educator Jason Lanegan (see Figure 4.2). His medium was a match made in heaven! Jason makes beautifully housed, meaning-filled reliquaries that reflect personal cultures through visual collections and arrangements. He builds the reliquary to house a specific collection, filling the space with simple, but poignant images. It was a perfect fit for the curriculum, which needed to lend itself to exploration of family culture and heritage and personal spaces.

Knowing that many students initially registered for the class to experiment with the mediums of oil painting and chalk art, I maintained these in our curriculum. I kept our studio time fluid and open to possibilities that would lend themselves to our research, so we were able to try out some performance art ideas. However, time constraints kept us on a somewhat restrictive time budget.
To introduce this exploration of our own family heritage and our personal and community spaces to my students, we began with discussions of what I, the teacher, was doing at BYU (working on a Master’s degree, and conducting research to write a thesis), that they would become co-researchers by exploring their own family heritage and personal spaces for content in creating their art, and then sharing the experiences through written reflections and an art exhibit. I was very open about the project, and how the research would be used and presented to a committee at the university. We discussed the proposed curriculum, the projects and topics we would explore, and how we would report on our experiences, our processes and our resulting artwork.

The following is a brief account of what we did and the schedule we followed. Several students stood out during our research. Their experiences were particularly potent and I have chosen examples from their journal reflections to share their thought processes, their project descriptions and their personal discoveries in their own, unedited words with images from our a/r/tographic inquiry.

**Jan. 14: Welcome:** I presented my proposal to do research with the class to the students. I explained it would be an exploration of self through our family heritage, and personal spaces (home and community).

Our first project was to create *art journals*, where we began our creative process of planning, design, researching, and producing works of art. The journals were also for reflecting on our process and final outcome of our art. Student responses from these journals are included in this thesis research.
To keep with the theme of personal influences, I asked them to create their own art journals. The variety of journals reflect the make-up of the class, and the commitment of the individual (see Figure 4.3). As the semester progressed, students showed greater depth of expression of meaning. Their facility with reflection and expression increased. The journals helped me extract better explanations from the students for their art making decisions.

![Figure 4.3 Student Journals](image)

**Jan 16:** We began the semester of researching our families and personal spaces by discussing “what is your visual culture?”, and doing a visualization activity:

Visualization exercise: I had the students close their eyes and take a mental tour of their house. “Go room to room and look around. What do you see? What colors are on the walls, the furniture…? What objects do you see in each room? What objects are most important?”

Following that exercise, I had them draw a map of their homes. Most drew blueprints or aerial views. Some drew small, detailed rooms. One drew a landscape of her home.

**Jan. 21:** We discussed the semester schedule and what mediums we’d like most to explore.

I introduced *Reliquaries*, their historical use, and contemporary examples of “collections” as art form. We began brainstorming our own possibilities.
Jan. 23: We did a quick overview of box-making, and smart techniques: measure twice, cut once. I demonstrated how to make boxes and add sections using postal packing tape. The students began designing and assembling boxes for their reliquaries.

Jan 27 to Feb. 6: Students did independent work making reliquaries (see Figure 4.4).

Student Reliquaries and Reflections

![Student Reliquaries](image)

Figure 4.4 Student Reliquaries

Reading the student reflections about their work was a window into their lives and families in ways I did not anticipate. So for example, the following student used symbolism of colors and shapes in every aspect of her reliquary, such as green for her grandmother’s love of gardening, a boat to represent a river, and the flute and the rice basket, which are important in her Laotian culture (see Figure 4.5).

I learned a handful of things about craft, my family and myself…. I realized how much my family revolves around each other. We are very fond of the ideas of family, in combination of culture and the influence of today’s society. Through the organizations and coloring of the reliquary and objects inside, I saw that it has a very similar style to my mom. She loves neutrals and dark browns. Art is seriously influenced by family and
your feelings towards it. My reliquary has my mom’s style and with every object in it, makes me have warm and cherishing feeling every time I look at it.

![Figure 4.5 Student Reliquary 1](image)

The students’ reflections of working with parents and learning more about their heritage was, for me, especially meaningful (see Figure 4.6).

I loved doing this project, because I got to learn how to write some words in [Arabic] and my dad helped me make my box out of wood, so I got to spend time with him. He put lots of time and effort into it, and that makes it all the more special.
The following reflection is one of my favorite examples, giving insight into the student, her work, and her process. This student is generally reserved and quiet. Also, my initial understanding of her project was that it was unfinished and disorganized, and she was unable during a class critique to verbalize her intentions. The reflection helped me more fully appreciate her project (see Figure 4.7).

The blue paper that covers the box represents my mom. Her favorite color was blue. A funny story about that is how when people asked me, “What’s your mom like” when I was little, for some reason I’d always say she likes the color blue. The reason the box looks kind of messy is not because I was rushing. It’s because that is exactly how my family is. We’re a messy family, but we always deal with the “mess” and yeah. I now realize that that makes my box look worse, and that’s what I’d do different….

I never knew that I was Czechoslovakian, Scottish, Irish, Swedish, or German. That was really cool because first of all the word Czechoslovakia is a really fun word to say. It was
also cool to see how much my relics meant to the people in my family because of their history.

Yes, I feel like I’m a big part of the line that they pass things down in. Like the jewelry box and the Cabbage Patch doll are mine now. It’s really cool to think that the doll I am touching, is the same doll my mom touched as a young girl.

These student reflections share the personal discoveries and meanings that they lacked in prior artwork. The skills are not always there, but the depth certainly is (see Figure 4.8).

I chose the objects in my reliquary because they are the symbols I want my family to be remembered by….

I feel like I have grown as an artist and that I am wiser in certain areas too….
My eyes have been opened in a way I never thought possible. When I think of my ancestor before me, I could never picture them my age. However, after hearing the tales of my grandfather, I realized that he was a kid too. I think of my grandfather’s childhood as a separate time period from mine, but now I see our family as one time [continuum].

Another student focused her reliquary on her grandmother. She shows meaning with her choice of objects in her reliquary as well as deeper sensitivity for her heritage (see Figure 4.9):

![Figure 4.9 Student Reliquary 5](image)

In the end… Everything was symbolic-from the corkboard (her husband was a teacher) to the flowers (she grew a beautiful garden.)

… What I learned from my history was that people remember small things. Now I know so many personal stories about my great grandma who I’ve never met. I definitely see myself and my family in a new way because I’ve gotten to know [great grandma] so much better.

My analysis of this reliquary project was that students used objects, colors, shapes and techniques to symbolize meaningful aspects of their families. In contrast, typical student art often references and mimics popular juvenile culture. This movement toward using symbolism and
personal representation indicated to me a shift away from the external and into the internal world of meaning, where art becomes substantive and truly creative rather than imitative.

**Feb. 12:** We talked about family stories or *anecdotes*. Some are fond memories and funny stories we reminisce and laugh about, while others are legends passed on from distant generations. Most are oral traditions families share, but what if we were to create a book and record these stories? What should our stories look like? What shape should the book be if the cover was to reflect the story inside? What would the text and the visual elements look like inside? We looked at traditional and non-traditional books that share stories in visually powerful ways. We then began writing down our own stories and planning how these stories would be “housed” (one book we used for inspiration was of house shaped books, most with stories of home).

**Feb. 12 to 27:** Students did independent work making family anecdote books (see Figure 4.10).

![Figure 4.10 Student Book Samples](image-url)
March 3: Sharing & peer critique of books and reliquaries. Great student participation and support. Positive and insightful comments were made by the students as they shared their work and ideas for peer work.

Student Anecdote Book Reflections

Students were required to consider family stories and experiences that would be great to put into text and illustrate. They were encouraged to house them in a format that best presented or introduced their stories. The final results indicated their depth of engagement and were exceptionally creative, as in the following example (see Figure 4.11):

![Figure 4.11](image)

I chose to do the story when we got my dad a DNA test to find out his heritage. How ironic it is that the theme in studio art this term is heritage. The process of making my book was challenging. It took so much time. In the end it was all worth it, because it meant something to me and my family. My experience with planning and use of materials was the tricky part. There were so many steps to my story book, so it took time. All of the hard work and time put into it really paid off…. 
The motive behind my choices in my story book is to represent my family. I did succeed in that and showed something more to it than just an original book. My execution was to do something new and try to make an amazing piece of artwork. My final result were great, I felt really good about my story book. It didn’t represent someone else, it represents me and my family.

When I read these reflections I thought “Eureka!” These are not student projects destined for the trash can as soon as they are graded and returned. This was an indication that I may have hit upon what I was searching for.

My mom’s life is interesting and cool… I found a stellar picture of my mom high jumping (see Figure 4.12).

I hope I can keep this book forever, and give it to my kids to read about their grandma

![Figure 4.12](image)

In the student reflections, I also found examples of how these projects not only affect them, but members of their families. The following are unedited excerpts of a student’s reflection of her relationship with her mom and her family and how her perspective of family improved through this and following projects. She grew a better understanding of her mom by telling her story. Her mother’s story is included in Appendix C (see Figure 4.13).
I chose this story about my mom & her mom because it just amazes me everytime how it was back then and kind of makes me wonder what I would have done. I learned more then just art technique. I learned more about my grandmother and even though she isn’t here with us, It gives me a good idea about her personality and her strong belief in the church and makes me want to be able to strive to have a strong testimony like she did. I kind of did it in a remembrance of her because she lived in Korea so we never got the chance to visit her grave and this is also made me and my mom smile because how we both are at peace and after she told me the story she also felt the same way. That she wants to be like her and at least be ½ the person she is.

I kind of see my mom different because I understand how much she loved her and why she gets sad about certain stuff. And it makes me greater appreciate the wonderful memories I have with my Grandma.

She later wrote:

Reflection: I have learned many things about my family and myself. I have realized that my family is always there for me. No matter how much I might hate them sometimes. Or think my mom is crazy because she says she love me enough to punish me when I’m too
sassy for my own good. I know that families are forever. And God has blessed me with the best, and he place me in my specific family because he knew I would learn the most from this insanely loud and obnoxious group of people. I have learned things that I am good at and flaws that I should try to be better at. There is never a time when I should stop trying to be better, because there is definitely always room to improve.

Engagement in this book-making process was, for some, like watching a smith at a ford, refining metal into something precious. For many of these students, taking their oral family story and turning it into a physical relic was in essence creating a new family heirloom. Students generally complain when they have to put pen to paper to write a story, and they are apathetic about their material choices. These students, however, were particular about how their stories were housed. The results were unique, eclectic, and brilliant; they weren’t just books. Most student art ends up in the trash. Sometimes students will allow me to keep pieces as instructional aides for future classes. Not these students – they all kept their books.

**Mar. 5:** We discussed and planned our final exhibit. We set the date for May 13. Students also wrote reflections in their Art Journals.

**Mar. 10:** Introduction of Heraldry, and creating a Coat of Arms: The use of symbolism in shapes, colors, designs, patterns, and images in the realm of coats of arm was discussed. Students wrote a personal reflection on important imagery and colors that had meaning to them in creating their own coat of arms. They made choices to reflect family and the individual.

**Mar. 10 to 20:** Students worked independently, creating a personal coat of arms.
Mar. 24: We had a class share and peer critique of student heraldry. The students had more positive feedback and suggestion for each other. Their personal investment in this project was apparent with the poignant symbolism they created in their Coats of Arms.

Student Heraldry Reflections

As we progressed through the projects, student reflections showed their planning and decisions became more defined and well expressed. My analyses with student examples follow.

The colors I have chosen for this project are warm colors. I have selected an assortment of pastel colors. I chose warm colors because I think that my family is warm and I feel like it gives off warm and soothing vibes. Kind of like my family. All of the colors go nicely together (see Figure 4.14).

The Symbols vary from all of the things I have chosen. ... The trees I have picked to add a little of me in this artwork. I picked something I think is very important to me. The beautiful trees I have picked to place all around to act as the background in the picture.
To me it represents and that sometimes everybody can get frustrated and stressed out and it’s normal for you to need a breather away from the world…. 

They also expressed more personal connections and meaning for these projects than I have seen them express before.

![Student Coat of Arms 2](image)

**Figure 4.15 Student Coat of Arms 2**

**REFLECTION: FAMILY COAT OF ARMS:** It took lots of thinking & planning about what it was going to encompass to look like, but once I had that planned out, the final execution was fine…. I like the final result, each object, space use, color & line represent something about my family, so it does mean a lot to me. The work in Arabic on the front means FAMILY (see Figure 4.15). It was a good project, I enjoyed it. 😊

Their visual representations took on greater depth as they made connections and interpretations for abstract ideas and emotions through the use of visual symbols. They used these visual devices and symbols to try to convey important information that would reflect what and who they value.
In my personalized family crest, I tried to incorporate all of the values and traditions in my family (see Figure 4.16). I also wanted to include some of the experiences that I have learned or witnessed in my life. The inspiration of the two horses came from my life. Throughout my life, I have constantly lived on ranches. Horses have been my main companions. To me, horses are strong, brave, and motivated. Luckily, those are the things that the symbol of a horse means. The shield shape came from my family. I wanted it to be like a battle shield because my family is very protective. We all watch out for each other and the friends around us. I think my family is sturdy as well, much like a shield.

My family does not break easily. The right side of the shield represents my mother. Her favorite color is green…. The left blue side [represents] my father; his favorite color is blue. The two colors split off into a light shade of blue, which represents me. At the bottom of the shield are some symbols that are my personal goals for my life. I want to be kind, peaceful, etc. The rose under the two horses represents my grandmother. She loved to plant roses in her garden. I think roses are a sheer symbol of love and devotion. Each symbol at the top of the shield represents different things…. Overall I wanted my crest to look like what you would imaging my family to be like.
Apr. 1: Introduction of the oil painting project. We talked about the project’s subject: to research artists and art works that have a connection to their heritage or ancestor’s country of origin. They were to choose a painting that resonated with them. We had a discussion of how young artists were once apprenticed and copied from the master, and they were instructed this was an opportunity to imitate and learn from the master artist in the manner of apprentice artists. This was also a catch up day.

Apr. 3: Introduction of water-based oil medium: how to care for materials, use of medium, and other aspects of sharing this medium in a classroom setting. Emphasis was placed on clean-up.

We did a painting activity to get a feel for the medium by painting a color wheel using water-based oil. Students practiced the important aspect of mixing paint and clean up.

Apr. 3 to May 8: Students worked independently on their oil paintings.

Student Oil Paintings and Reflections

The paintings were more personal to the students than I thought they’d be. The connections made with their family and heritage seemed to be as full of discovery as was using a
new medium. From the comments, it appeared students enjoyed the challenge of this medium the most.

![Student Oil Painting 2](image)

Figure 4.18 Student Oil Painting 2

The [motives] behind my choices were to show family heritage and hard work. I chose this piece of art work, because it is from Spain which I have some heritage from. When I found that painting I immediately fell in love with it, [it is] almost like we connected. One other reason why I chose it is, because I know my family would love it…. My final result from my oil painting came out quite nicely. I was really Proud of myself for a first time using oils (see Figure 4.18).

Some students were part of the “beta” phase of my research, meaning they participated in both years of my research. Their input was especially valuable to me to see the differences in our projects and their attitudes towards them. By letting them choose from their personal heritage, the students showed more enthusiasm for their projects than they previously had shown. This indicated to me that using students’ family heritage did create an increased level of engagement and personal meaning. Additional examples of this depth of meaning follow.
The following student chose a level of artwork I felt was not progressive for her. She was adamant that she copy this particular work regardless of its amateur level because of the family connection (see Figure 4.19). Although the skill level wasn’t apparent, she did reach the depth of meaning I was after.

**CONTENT: Motives** - I wanted to become closer to the Great-grandma I never knew but would’ve loved to meet. She was an artist, too, like I want to be…. 

**FINAL RESULTS:** I have a personalized copy- in my own style- of Autumn Leaves, which I can be proud of. I feel like I’ve grown closer to my Great-grandma, who died before I was born. Trying to paint like she did presented a welcome challenge to my artistic abilities, and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I also feel that being able to choose our own paintings to replicate gave us a closer connection to the paintings. I certainly fell more attached to Autumn Leaves than I did last year with that oil painting. I think that choosing a painting for yourself is a better way to choose pieces that really connect with you and who you personally are.

The next student also connected with her visual culture.
I painted from a Laotian artist called “Anousa [P]hommeng” (see Figure 4.20). It [is] of a child and mother and its abstract. I chose it because I like the color scheme and that the scene is created with mere shapes and simple brush strokes. Oil paintings smell like fish.

**Apr. 14:** We attempted a visual culture performance art in chalk art medium to music (not so successful) and continued to make book tape Zombies (a popular culture collaboration with other art classes begun on April 10) for the exhibit “Zombie Apocalypse” in the school media center. This included mini brain post-it notes for students to jot down a memories to “feed” the zombie (a reference to the film “Warm Bodies”, Summit Entertainment, 2013).

**April 16:** Introduction of Wearable Art (t-shirts, shoes, etc). I shared a variety of fabric mediums to use to create different results (markers, dye, fabric crayons, fabric pens, fabric paints, applique and more) and we discussed design options that reflect personal visual culture.
April 16 to May 12: Students worked independently on fabric art designs (wearable art) (see Figure 4.21).

In this project, I gave the students more freedom to choose designs that could include popular culture sources. It was interesting to me to note, then, that many of these t-shirt designs reflected family themes. As with other projects in this class, I saw students move away from the common adolescent themes, and rather share images from their discovery of self, rooted in family heritage.

Final Student Art Exhibit

May 12: We made preparations for the student art show.

May 13: 3 P.M. to 4 P.M.: After school we set up for the Studio Art FAMILI/A/R Exhibit. Students worked collaboratively, and with teacher mentoring, to set up their art work of family heritage and personal spaces. We had a refreshment and guest sign in table. Parents, friends and family came to participate with them in their narratives of their projects (see Figure 4.22). It was well
attended and was a positive experience for those who came. I was able to speak to most of the parents. Parents said things like “They are doing wonderful things!” “Every one of those oil paintings is amazing.” “This is fun!” The students could feel the energy and were very proud of themselves.

Figure 4.22 Student Art Exhibit

**May 14:** Journaling time. Students reflected on their show, and I handed out two questionnaires: one for parents and one for the students.

**May 18:** Our last in-class studio day together. We used the time for make-up work, and journaling: We reviewed and wrote reflections of the exhibition. Students handed in remaining reflections and the questionnaires. I reminded students I will be hanging on to their projects over the summer, so make sure they are properly labeled and contact information is included. Also, if not yet completed, that all parent and personal reflection papers, journals and projects need to be turned in by the next class day.

**May 20:** Final reflections were due. Our journey had come to an end.
At the end of our art-making together, after our final show, I sent home a questionnaire (see Appendix B) for parents to respond about the art work, the show and their experience with their student over the semester. Not all students returned the questionnaire. From those that were returned, several parents expressed how much more vested in family their student became because of our projects. Family, not art was the central focus. Art became the vehicle. I’ve included some of my favorite comments. I’ve not edited grammar or spelling:

Question 1. Do you feel there is more depth and meaning in your student’s art about family heritage than their previous work? Or does it make no difference?

Parent Responses

“Yes, absolutely. Why not learn about one’s own family, while spending so much time on a project!”

“I feel she has a much richer appreciation for our family, and a better idea of what makes her apart of our family. She spent MUCH more time in the “planning or Researching” phase, really thinking how to represent themes unique to our family.”

Question 2. Write what you think/feel about your students work this semester, and what you feel they have personally learned/gained through our approach of exploring family heritage:

Parent Responses

“_____ has asked more questions about our families than ever before His curiosity has increased. This interest especially in certain ancestors is personal to him now.”

“I feel _____’s confidence in her own artwork has grown. By choosing the theme/story behind each piece, it allowed her to dig deeper, spend more time/effort which produced
even better Art. It was especially fun to report to the grandparents the things she recognised as important. thank you for getting her excited about our personal heritage.”

In many conversations with parents they expressed how excited and interested in family their student became, and how pleased they were with the interest and investment they saw in their students in their work. Months later, I spoke with a mother who told me that Studio Art was the most important and impressionable class to her daughter. Most of the talk with her friends, this mother told me, was about the art projects she worked on for our class.

I found a quote in a student journal, actually the only thing written in his journal, which sums up our art-making experience “Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.” ~ Thomas Merton.
Chapter 5 Conclusion

From the beginning I felt that meaningful content needed to be at the heart of student work, and at the heart of my research. Imagery in student artwork is generally saturated with clichés and cartoon-like images copied from popular culture. Their images often lack skill and original thoughts and intentions. As a teacher, I feel students need to find their own voice to create art that carries personal meaning with greater depth. It was my hope that this would also increase their motivation to make art, which, in my opinion, increases the quality of their art. I mused through several approaches to this end, including the use of digital technology, and investigating the pedagogical space between the rigid constructs of traditional curriculum in the classroom, and the freedom of exploring a more personal space. I “beta tested” ideas in my classroom in an afterschool “art club” with my students. However, not all were feasible with the resources I had on hand, nor quite the right fit for my skill set and where my own heart was on this thesis journey. I was, in a sense, being torn away from family history work, and dealing with the news my father was terminally ill.

Researching and writing a thesis, and losing my father, were tandem events. They became interwoven experiences. Adding another layer to the story, during this time, my son was away on a mission for our church. His call came as I began the application process for the Master’s cohort, and I received news I was accepted the week he entered the Missionary Training Center. After he left for his mission the family learned of dad’s prognosis. It was not easy breaking the news about grandpa to my son. He did not want to lose his grandpa before he could come home to say good-bye in person. My dad had similar feelings. He had no intention of leaving until my son returned home. It astounded us all, especially the medical professionals, that
they both got their wish. The doctors were amazed, telling us that dad had “outlived his expiration date” by more than a year.

I brought my son home in the middle of the most stressful and challenging semester at BYU. It was the last moment of coherence for dad to recognize and greet my son (see Figure 5.1). Then, shortly later, graciously waiting till the day after I submitted my final work for class at BYU, when I was relieved of that demand on my time so I could be with family, dad passed away quietly in his sleep.

Through it all, I got to chat and share my research with dad, and from him I gleaned stories I’d never heard before. I got to know so much more about his life. Though he did not get to see the final draft of my thesis, for me, it was enough. Now I hope to demonstrate that kind of tenacity in finishing this thesis and the master’s degree I started to pursue.

Figure 5.1 Homecoming
This all made school work seem like a distraction, in light of the time wanted, and needed, to spend with loved ones. The long and short of it is that the solution to “creating content and meaning” was staring me in the face. To help students put meaning in their work, they need look no further than to their family and their heritage. They needed to look around them with fresh eyes, not taking for granted their personal spaces and heritage (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Exploring these could render them an endless supply of inspiration and deep insights to share and express in their works of art.

Patrick Slattery (1995) argued that curriculum expresses autobiography because it is created by human beings who leave parts of themselves in their teaching and writing. He suggests that curriculum should “focus on issues of the self, because that is where learning takes place” (p. 823). His argument resonated with my own research. There is a clear autobiographical element to my choice of inquiry.

Settling on family heritage and personal spaces, what I term as famili/a/r (researching the familiar: family art research), I had several opportunities to talk with parents about my research goals. I actually used this as a recruiting tool for my advanced art class: Studio Art. The parents I spoke with were unanimously enthusiastic and supportive about our direction of study. I had no problem getting parent permission for their students to participate in class and research.

I had to keep my enthusiasm about using family heritage in perspective in an attempt to avoid research bias (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008), and keep an open mind about my students’ participation and motivation. After completing our first two projects, I did encounter resistance from a handful of students who wanted to try their own themes. These particular students worked closely together each day, or more accurately socialized together each day. Not surprisingly,
these students did not demonstrate the depth, impact or effort that others in the class
demonstrated, but this was true regardless of the project or theme. These students thought the
family heritage research focus was too narrow, and wanted to be free to choose any subject for
their art. This, however, was not the majority view. There was no class mutiny. Though the
theme of family and personal spaces did not carry the same excitement for the entire group,
everyone did participate. I did see more depth and thought in their process of art-making than I
had seen from all of them before, even the more reluctant individuals. When I would ask a
student about their work, they thought about their reasons and actually had solid answers. No one
gave me an “I don’t know, I just like it that way” response. But then again, these were my more
advanced art students who were willing to research with me.

I observed that not only were the students more involved and enthusiastic about the class,
but their parents were much more enthusiastic and involved with their students, and their projects
than in any other of my classes. The students demonstrated much more investment in these
projects. Though all responded when sharing their art work that they had made new and
meaningful connections, our research deeply affected a few students in particular. Unfortunately,
many projects did not get finished, some because of procrastination, or lack of commitment, and
others from lack of time or materials that fit their ideals. The greatest depth I observed came
from their personal reflections of the process and the work they created. In these reflections, I
found the depth of meaning I was hoping for in student art.

When all is said and done, perhaps what surprised me the most was the impact on me, as
the teacher. Their artwork took on depth when accompanied with well-written reflections. But
what I didn’t expect was how these reflections about their processes and content would affect
me. Their reflections opened a window into them that was very powerful for me. Through this
research they saw their world with new eyes. As their teacher, I saw them and their art with new eyes.

In my inquiry through arts based research and a/r/tography, I wanted to find out if exploring family heritage and investigating personal spaces would increase meaning and content in student art, which I hoped would contribute to the quality of student art. I found perhaps the most significant meaning was not necessarily in the final products, but in the process itself. The depth of meaning was most evident in the planning phase and reflexive writing of the students as they contemplated and researched their family heritage.

Through introspection, I’ve found family heritage meaningful in my own art practice, but didn’t realize until the conclusion of this study how extensive that influence has been. Much of my art is inspired by my family experience, and my most successful pieces relate to my family. Bringing that theme to my research, my students have engaged in more meaningful art-making through their research experience. I also understand them more, what they make and what they do in their processes because of what I understand about their family and where they come from.

A post script to my research study: I saw a meaningful payoff when students returned to the Studio Art class this year. Using family heritage and journaling have evidently had a lasting effect. This was made manifest when students began the creative process on a new art project in a new year. They were challenged to use the medium of collage to create a self-portrait that visually informs the viewer of important aspects of who they are, not necessarily what they look like. During the planning phase, the returning students discussed and detailed using family as context for images that they feel are important aspects of who they are. It’s somewhere between
goose bumps and a teary lump of pride to see the depth of thinking and engagement as they go through the art making process following participation in my study the previous year.

One of these students created “The DNA Test” (see Figure 4.11), a book about her dad’s search of his DNA. She took on a deeply personal challenge both to make artwork that represents her heritage, but also to engage in the process of art making more deeply than she had in the past. In the end, she found the challenge to be valuable and felt a sense of lasting pride in her results: “…it meant something to me and my family.”

In truth, this inquiry could probably be titled The DNA Test, as it was in essence a search through our DNA or our heritage, to see what influences it could have on us, specifically in terms of our art-making. Through this inquiry, I have found a more meaningful way to help my students engage in art and find their voice. The artwork they made gave a clearer vision of who they are, as opposed to who they were trying to assert themselves to be in their adolescent art prior to this study. This art was a revelation as well as a discovery.

The result was that we found engagement and meaning by searching our heritage and personal spaces. I also found something unexpected. This inquiry revealed a bigger picture to me. This experience has opened my eyes to an added perspective and insight. Not only did I see greater depth in their content, but I saw them as individuals more clearly. I embarked on this study to see if I could help students engage in and make deeper content in their art, and what I’ve come to grasp is that I am more than just an imparter of information and distributer of skills in a classroom. I see my role in the classroom through a new lens. I perceive myself as a co-participant in a laboratory with my students as we explore and learn through the visual arts, which I see as ever evolving. There is so much to explore as the world of art and art education
expands. My studies and research have opened the potential to me, and as a result, to my classroom, which has become a space of living art.

I have determined to continue with reflexive journaling and the use of personal heritage as content for engaging more meaningfully in art making with my students. The positive results for both the students and the teacher have made this a valuable approach and tool for engaging in and creating depth in student art making in the classroom.
Appendix A: Curriculum

A curriculum was constructed for the purpose of conducting an arts-based research with my Studio Art students. This is my advanced art class, and the research through curriculum focuses on encouraging meaningful content in student artwork by investigating and expressing family heritage and influences of visual culture of significant personal spaces. The goal was to provide students with personally meaningful content by delving into their family and community spaces by finding what moves and motivates them. By examining how these things actually can and do inspire their creativity and imagination, it was hoped the content of student art would become more meaningful. Awareness of family roots may, at the very least, better inform us about our habits, values, and the choices we make in our responses to the world around us. We may otherwise be unconscious of them, taking those influences for granted, and missing rich opportunities of artistic expression.

It was hoped that making these connections through exploring heritage and personal spaces would have far more reaching positive effects on the students’ lives, as suggested by the research from Emory University (Fuvish, Duke., & Bohanek, 2010). Another potential outcome of this experience was not only to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of our own heritage and community, but to gain more empathy and respect for the heritage of the other participants in this project, as we shared our endeavors.

To introduce this exploration of our own family heritage and our personal and community spaces to my students, we began with discussions of what I, the teacher, was doing at BYU (working on a Master’s degree, and conducting research to write a thesis), and that they would become co-researchers in the sense that they would research their own family heritage and personal spaces in creating their art, and sharing the experience. They shared and reflected more
purposefully about their experiences in this art class than they were used to doing in general, and
to a broader audience that included family, friends and a BYU committee, as they helped me to
examine our experience of art-making in the classroom. I was very open about the project, and
how the research would likely be used and presented to a committee, and kept on file at the
university. We discussed the proposed curriculum, the possible projects and topics we would
explore, and how we would report on our experiences, our processes and our resulting artwork.
To keep with the theme of personal influences, I asked them to create their own art journals to
work and reflect in. The variety of art journals reflect the make-up of the class, and the
commitment of the individual.

The curriculum is broken down into two categories: Family History & Heritage as
Inspiration for Art Content (Family Heritage art projects), and Personal Spaces & Visual Culture
as Inspiration for Art Content (Personal/Community Space art projects).

A class/peer critique was held for each project, providing students the opportunity to
share and receive ideas and suggestions with classmates. The critiques and personal reflections
provided the assessment tools for each of the projects, coinciding with the national standards:

*Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work*: VA:Cr3.1.IIa (Engage in
constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and
design in response to personal artistic vision.)
Family History & Heritage as Inspiration for Art Content Unit:

Unit objectives

*Students will investigate and examine their family heritage and history to identify cultural aspects of their personal spaces. They will explore and analyze the visual culture of a progenitor, family or cultural heritage, determining what items and symbols will be significant art objects, and share their heritage with classmates, explaining their artistic choices.

*Students will create a reliquary of an individual or of a family that represents their cultural history or heritage.

*Students will create a book to house a family anecdote or some other aspect of personal significance to their heritage, by using a fitting form with illustrations and text.

*Students will create a personal coat of arms that represents them and their families, using traditional and contemporary designs.

*Students will explore and reproduce paintings with connections to their family heritage, or place of origin. They will use water-based oil medium.

*Students will participate in class critiques to evaluate progress and visual success, giving and receiving peer input.

*Students will experience a new world view through the eyes of a progenitor in their family history.

*Students will curate and design an exhibit of their art work for display.
Reliquaries

Objective

Students will create a reliquary of an individual or of family that represents their family history or heritage.

National Standards

*Anchor Standard 2a: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work:*

VA:Cr2.1.IIa (Experiment, plan and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally significant theme.)

*Anchor Standard 2b: Enduring Understanding: People create and interact with objects, places, and design that define, shape, enhance, and empower their lives:*

VA:Cr2.3.8a (Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations.)

*Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work:*

VA:Cr3.1.IIa (Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.)

*Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work:*

VA:Pr6.1.IIIa (Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer’s understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.)

*Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art:*
VA:Cn10.1.Ia (Document the process of developing ideas for earl stages to fully elaborated ideas.);

VA:Cn10.1.IIIa (Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.)

Introduction

Collection as art form/history of reliquaries. *Reliquary* is a repository or receptacle for relics (French origin) [dictionary.com].

A look at reliquaries historically, and internationally. Variety of containers and relics.

Resources and samples/images of reliquaries from various cultures/sources.

Discussion

What might our *relics* be? Brainstorm possibilities of containers to use to house our relics, thinking about what to put into them, who and where (country of origin) they represent.

What materials and resources are available to us (school, home, store)?

Activity

Plan and design containers that will fit personal themes and best exhibit collected items.

Demonstration of box making, using paper postal tape, measuring, fitting, cutting…

Making boxes for reliquaries

Resources

**ART MAKING: Collections and obsessions: an intimate exploration of 35 artists**

Artist Jason Lanegan
Making RELIQUARIES

Family Heritage Lesson

Reliquary: a container for relics; a shrine

Lesson Objectives:
- Explore family heritage for
- Content in student projects
- Create awareness/ties with family/
cultural patronage

Standards:
- Making personal/cultural
  connections in art making

Materials needed:
- box/container for reliquary
- items/images to put into box/  
  container
- paper &/or paint to line
- interior/exterior
- glue or appropriate adhesive
- cardboard or other material
  to build dividers/sections
- paper wrapping tape

Preparations:
Students will need to explore their homes
and personal spaces, research and inter-
view family, and gather materials that
reflect their discoveries and personal
connections with family and their family
heritage. The items they gather will be
put into boxes or containers that reflect
the contents (i.e. a ship shaped contain-
er may reflect a mariner ancestor or a
cedar chest may reflect a pioneer).

Follow-up:
reflect and write in journal about the
process of creating reliquary, and the
meaning of elements chosen in the
final project

Figure A.1 Reliquary Lesson
Bookmaking: Family/personal anecdotes

Objective

Students will create a book to house a family anecdote or some other aspect of personal significance to their heritage, designing a fitting form with illustrations and text.

National Standards

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art:

VA:Cn10.1.Ia (Document the process of developing ideas for early stages to fully elaborated ideas.);

VA:Cn10.1.IIa (Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.)

Introduction

Anecdote, 1. a short account of a particular incident or event, especially of an interesting or amusing nature. 2. a short, obscure historical or biographical account. (Greek/Latin origin [dictionary.com])

Discussion

Family stories and how they get passed on. Recording our stories in book from preserves and enhances them with the opportunity to visually re-tell the story. Including a look at book examples- various shapes, materials, text… from bookmakers and artists. Journals, sketchbooks, altered books….
What are our family stories? Discussion of what can be our stories. How can we capture and tell our own family stories?

Resources:

**ART MAKING: Collections and obsessions: an intimate exploration of 35 artists**

Activity

Brainstorm ideas from family stories, create thumbnails and mock-ups

![Figure A.2](image)

Student samples: family anecdote/books

Designed and created books to fittingly “house” the stories

![Figure A.3 Student Book Samples 2](image)

Heraldry/Personal Coat of Arms

Objective
Students will create a personal coat of arms that represents them and their families, using traditional and contemporary designs.

National Standards

*Anchor Standard 2a: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work:*

VA:Cr2.1.IIIa (Experiment, plan and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally significant theme.)

*Anchor Standard 2b: Enduring Understanding: People create and interact with objects, places, and design that define, shape, enhance, and empower their lives:*

VA:Cr2.3.8a (Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations.)

*Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding:*

VA:Cn11.1.IIa (Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.)

Introduction

Heraldry is the art of blazoning armorial bearings, of settling the rights of persons to bear arms or to use certain bearings, of tracing and recording genealogies, of recording honors, and of deciding questions of precedence. (old French origin [dictionary.com])

Discussion

History of Heraldry, examining the symbols and messages historically.
Resources


Activity

Students research family background, countries of origin and family traits. Making lists of symbols and personal favorites.

Students design own original coat of arms including traditions symbols and personal images/symbols.
Oil painting: Reproduction of significant art work, with a heritage connection

Objective

Students will explore and reproduce paintings with connections to their family heritage, or place of origin. They will use water-based oil medium.

National Standards

VA:Cr2.1.IIa: Through experimentation, practice, and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.

VA:Cr2.2.8a: Demonstrate awareness of practices, issues, and ethics of appropriation, fair use, copyright, open source, and creative commons as they apply to creating works of art and design.

Introduction

Introduce the medium of water soluble oil paint. Discussion and Demonstration of how to care for brushes, clean-up and care of space and all materials. Include a heads up: mixing paint to create colors, avoiding muddying colors, and other beginner pitfalls. Encouragement to keep plugging along, and learning as you go- from each other, and teacher/mentor.

Review the color wheel, prep exercise for practice of mixing colors in water soluble and painting miniature color wheel.
Activity

In preparation, students will research historic periods and cultures that connected to their family heritage, by either the artist (i.e. Danish artist for Danish heritage), or the art about the place of their “roots”. They will choose a work, bringing a facsimile to class to reproduce in the manner of art apprenticeships from generations past (linked with the history of art apprenticeships, such as during the Renaissance, and current practices with special passes/permission in museums like the Louvre).

Students will be given several weeks to work independently on their paintings.

Figure A.5 Student Painting Samples

Personal Spaces & Visual Culture as Inspiration for Art Content Unit:

Unit Objectives

*Students will curate their homes, examining their significant personal spaces, searching for the presence of the influences of family heritage in their contemporary visual culture.

*Students will create art journals to brainstorm, record ideas, create designs and reflect on classroom and personal experiences.
*Students create designs of personally significant images on fabric as “wearable” art.

*Students will participate in socially engaged collaborative performance art (This spontaneous performance was a reflection on the impact of words, for good or ill, using a visual medium as a form of expression).

*Students will participate in peer critiques to evaluate own and peer work.

*Students will collaborate with peers to create art in a public community space.

Art Journals

Objective

Students will create art journals to begin the creative process for each project, by brainstorming, researching, recording ideas, creating designs and reflecting on classroom and personal experiences in the journal.

National Standards

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work: VA:Cr.1.1.8a: Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional and new media.

VA:Cr.1.1.1a: Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

Discussion

The use of the art journal, samples, and the need and expectation for creating, researching and documenting their experiences. Requirements include a realistic size (no smaller than 6” by 6”, preferably larger), the exterior will reflect the individual, with plenty of space (pages) within
for planning, recording, scrapbooking and reflection. No specific design required, rather, it needs to fit the theme of personal culture. Students will create or purchase their own journal, best suiting the individual (This will result in an interesting variety of art journals).

Figure A.6

Resources

Google images: “Da Vinci sketchbook”; “artist sketchbooks”; “23 artist sketchbooks to inspire art students”;


Activity

Previous knowledge: rudimentary skills of making a Japanese sketchbook.

Wearable Art

Objective

Students will create designs of personally significant images on fabric as “wearable” art.
National Standards

*Anchor Standard 2b: Enduring Understanding: People create and interact with objects, places, and design that define, shape, enhance, and empower their lives: VA:Cr2.3.8a (Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations).*

Resources

World of WearableArt Awards Show (WOW online)

![Figure A.7 Wearable Art Samplers](image)

Google images “wearable art” & cool t-shirt designs”

Introduction

Share samples of fabric mediums to choose from to create designs on various wearable surfaces, discussing appropriate uses, applications…

Activity

Create designs for T-shirt and other wearable items (shoes, skirts, hats, pants)
Student Art Exhibit

Objective

Students will collaborate with peers to create art in a public community space.

All projects will culminate in an exhibition of art work. Students will collaborate to curate and plan how to exhibit their art work to family and peers.

National Standards:

VA:Cr2.3.8a & Ia (Exhibit); Select, analyze and interpret works for presentation;
VA:Pr4.1.8a, Ia, Iia, IIIa (…critic…);
VA:Pr5.1.8a Collaboratively prepare and present selected theme-based artwork for display and formulate exhibition narratives for the viewer.)

Activity

Students will work together to figure out the best set up for the student art exhibit within the confines of the classroom. They will make decisions on how and where works will be viewed (for example, displaying 3 dimensional works vs. drawings), and how the visitors could access and move around the displays. Parents and students will complete an exit survey.
Appendix B: Student Forms, Surveys and Questionnaires

Thank you for coming to the CVJH Student Art Show and answering the Exit Survey

Student name:

Parent name:

Class name & period

What impressed you the most about the student artwork?

Did you have a favorite piece? Which was it and why?

Additional comments?
Studio Art Self Reflection

Name: _________________________________________

(Short answers required- yes or no alone is not acceptable)

What impressed you the most from our Studio Art show?

Was there anything in particular that stood out to you?

Would you do anything differently? What?

Do you feel there is more depth and meaning in your personal art about family heritage than your previous artwork? Or does it make no difference? (please write a brief explanation)

Write what you think/feel about your work this semester, and what you feel you have personally learned/gained through our approach of exploring family heritage:

What has impacted you the most this semester in Studio Art?
Studio Art Parent Reflection

For student: ________________________________

What impressed you the most from our student art show?

Was there anything in particular that stood out to you?

Do you feel there is more depth and meaning in your student’s art about family heritage than their previous artwork? Or does it make no difference? (please write a brief explanation)

Write what you think/feel about your student’s work this semester, and what you feel they have personally learned/gained through our approach of exploring family heritage:
Research Study Student Assent Form

Introduction
My name is Rebecca Wilhelm. I am a student at Brigham Young University. You are being invited to take part in a research study. I am conducting this research under the guidance of my faculty mentor, Dr. Mark Graham, Associate Professor of Art Education at Brigham Young University. Your parent, or guardian, needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don’t want to, even if your parent has already given permission. To join the study is voluntary.

What is this study about?
The purpose of the study is to help us to explore the influence of family history and personal stories on artwork and experience in the art classroom. You are being asked to take part because you are a student in the Art Foundations II (Studio) art class and you have a direct association and experience within the art room several days a week. Your parent(s) knows we are talking with you about the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to be in it.

What am I being asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will happen:
- You will be making art based on your family heritage and reflecting in an art journal about your experiences.
- Your art may be photographed, and or video-taped to be shared in research.
- Parts of your art journal may be photo-copied or transcribed.
- You may be video-taped presenting/sharing your artwork.
- You may be interviewed about your experience with family history and personal stories in art making.
- The interview may be audio or video recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
- The interview will take place in the art room.
- The researcher may contact you later in class or by email to clarify your interview answers.
- The total time commitment for your interview will be about 5-10 minutes.
- You will be curating and exhibiting your work in a student art show.
- Your artwork and journal may be kept for a time, but every possible effort will be made to return them to you.

What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?
There will be no direct tangible benefits to you. However, it is hoped that through your participation in this study, the findings from this research will influence your art making and learning experience in the classroom, and may increase your personal knowledge and connection to your family heritage. Additionally, it is hoped that the research in the study will benefit the future art students at Canyon View Junior High School.
Are there any risks to me if I am in this study?
The potential risks of taking part in this study are:
- Some social discomfort, emotional stress, or other forms of psychological distress being videotaped.
- You may feel strange or embarrassed being photographed and/or having your answers recorded.
- You may feel stress meeting project deadlines and exhibiting your work to others.
- You will have access to the counseling office if you feel overly burdened with any of the procedures from this research.

Will my information be kept private?
When we tell other people or write articles about what we learned in the study, we won’t include your name or that of anyone else who took part in the study. You can choose a pseudonym, or codename to be used, if you like. The data for this study will be kept by Ms. Wilhelm for 3 years. We won't tell anybody that you are in this study and everything you tell us and do will be private. Your parent may know that you took part in the study, and may be your best resource for family history information. They will be invited to attend your exhibition. When we tell other people or write articles about what we learned in the study, we won't include your name or that of anyone else who took part in the study.

Do I have to be in the study?
No, you don’t. The choice is up to you. No one will be angry or upset if you don’t want to do this. You can change your mind anytime if you decide you don't want to be in the study anymore.

What are my rights as a research study volunteer?
Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You do not have to be a part of this study if you don’t want to. You may choose not to answer any questions you don’t want to answer, and you can change your mind and not be in the study at any time without affecting your grades or standing at school.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?
If you have questions at any time, you can ask Rebecca Wilhelm, (801) 610-8130, rwilhelm@alpinedistrict.org or her faculty mentor, Mark Graham, PhD, at mark_graham@byu.edu. You can also talk to your parent about the study. We will give you a copy of this form to keep.
What if I have questions about my rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 801-422-1461 or by email to irb@byu.edu.

Statement of Consent
I give my voluntary consent to take part in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent document for my records.

__________________________________ _____________________
Signature Date

__________________________________
Name (Printed)
STUDENT RELEASE FORM

Dear parents,

I am conducting research for my Master in Art Ed. Program at BYU. I am doing various projects & research inquiries in my classroom. My thesis is to create a curriculum for my Studio Art students, which is to explore family heritage and personal spaces with the intent to create deeper content and meaning in student artwork. This includes collecting data from students in my research reporting. The data will include recorded interviews, student journals, photos and/or videos of students and student work, only as given your permission. Students will remain anonymous. I will not use student names. This is for educational purposes only.

I am including the student assent form, so you are informed, and can choose whether or not to let your student participate. Be assured it is perfectly alright not to give permission for participation. I understand. The language in the forms may sound scary, but legally necessary when including humans in research.

Thank you for supporting your student artist, and being a needed resource to your student in exploring their personal family heritage for projects done in Studio Art. This is a grand adventure, whether participating in collecting data for the research or not.

At the conclusion of our research, the students will be curating and presenting a special exhibit of these projects. This will be near the end of the semester in May. We will keep you posted on the date.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. If you would not like your student included in my research reports, please indicate below.

Thank you for your participation in completing this form,

Rebecca Wilhelm
rwilhelm@alpinedistrict.org

[ ] I give permission for the use of images & information from my student and their work in reporting on this research. All names and personal information will remain confidential.

[ ] I give permission for the use information, but not images of my students in reporting on this research. All names will remain confidential.

[ ] I would NOT like my student or any part of their work included in reporting of this research.

Feb. 3, 2015
PARENT ASSENT FORM

Dear parents,

I am conducting research for my Master in Art Ed. Program at BYU. I am doing various projects & research inquiries in my classroom. My thesis is to create a curriculum for my Studio Art students, which is to explore family heritage and personal spaces with the intent to create deeper content and meaning in student artwork. This includes collecting data from students in my research reporting. The data will include recorded interviews, student journals, photos and/or videos of students and student work, only as given your permission. Students will remain anonymous. I will not use student names. This is for educational purposes only.

I am including the student assent form, so you are informed, and can choose whether or not to let your student participate. Be assured it is perfectly alright not to give permission for participation. I understand. The language in the forms may sound scary, but legally necessary when including humans in research.

Thank you for supporting your student artist, and being a needed resource to your student in exploring their personal family heritage for projects done in Studio Art. This is a grand adventure, whether participating in collecting data for the research or not.

At the conclusion of our research, the students will be curating and presenting a special exhibit of these projects. This will be near the end of the semester in May. We will keep you posted on the date.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. If you would not like your student included in my research reports, please indicate below.

Thank you for your participation in completing this form,

Rebecca Wilhelm
rwilhelm@alpinedistrict.org

___________________________________________________________________________ Date ________________________________________________________________________________

Parent signature

___________________________________________________________________________

Student name

________ I give permission for the use of images and information from my student and their work in reporting on this research. All names and personal information will remain confidential.

________ I give permission for the use of information, but not images of my students in reporting on this research. All names will remain confidential.

________ I would NOT like my student or any part of their work included in reporting of this research. 
STUDENT RELEASE FORM

Dear parents,          March 7, 2014

As part of my Master in Art Ed. Program at BYU, I am doing various projects & research inquiries in my classroom. I would like to include data collected from your students in my research reporting. I will not use student names, and will only occasionally use photos and/or videos of student work in reporting on my findings. This is for educational purposes only—presentation is limited to my Master Program. If you would not like your student included in my research reports, please indicate below.

Thank you for your participation,
Rebecca Wilhelm

_______ I give permission for you to use images & information from my student and their work in reporting on your research. All names and personal information will remain confidential.

_______ I would NOT like my student or any part of their work included in reporting of your research.

Student name________________________________________________________

Parent signature____________________________________________________ Date: ___________
Appendix C: Data

Student Journals

Figure C.1 Student Book Samples

Figure C.2 Student Journaling

Having made art journals with me in previous art classes, the students had rudimentary knowledge of creating Japanese stitch books. Many students chose this form, while most surprised me, preferring professional, commercially made sketchbooks. Then there were the few individuals that pushed it to the cheap, and bought a regular lined spiral notebook. Very disappointing (Note: Lesson here for the teacher, be more specific, and more restrictive in requirements in order for students to have/use art journals with integrity).
The Students were “required” to write in them regularly as they worked on their projects. However, I did not have them turn them in to me for inspection on a regular basis. That resulted in sporadic journal keeping at best. Handouts (questionnaires, curating personal spaces guides, and surveys) were tentatively attended to by the students at best. I was lucky to get half of them returned, even after many “nagging” reminders. I found such things to be very unsuccessful tasks.

Student Reliquaries

![Student Reliquaries](image1)

Figure C.3 Student Reliquaries

![Students making boxes for reliquaries](image2)

Figure C.4 Students making boxes for reliquaries
Student reliquary reflection

![Student Reliquary](image)

Figure C.5 Student Reliquary

Student journal reflection is unedited:

Figure C.5: Doing all of this family oriented stuff has made me really interested in why im the person I am, what i’ve found out is that im \textbf{WAY} more similar to my father than I thought, We both act the same talk the same and mostly we connect with music, some of my earliest memories are getting into his jeep and listening to his favorite tapes like the Beatles, the Who & led Zeppelin, and growing up with a record player helped expose me to the music my father and grandfather listened to, I’ve always enjoyed playing and listening to music and its always had a huge!!! Impact on my life and that’s something I hadn’t thought about until just resently.

Student Anecdote Books

Student reflection of her grandmother’s story. In her own words:

![Student Anecdote Book 1](image)

Figure C.6 Student Anecdote Book 1
I chose this story about my mom & her mom because it just amazes me everytime how it was back then and kind of makes me wonder what I would have done. I learned more then just art technique. I learned more about my grandmother and even though she isn’t here with us, It gives me a good idea about her personality and her strong belief in the church and makes me want to be able to strive to have a strong testimony like she did.

I kind of did it in a remembrance of her because she lived in Korea so we never got the chance to visit her grave and this is also made me and my mom smile because how we both are at peace and after she told me the story she also felt the same way. That she wants to be like her and at least be ½ the person she is.

I kind of see my mom different because I understand how much she loved her and why she gets sad about certain stuff. And it makes me greater appreciate the wonderful memories I have with my Grandma.

Story about: my mother: My mother grew up in Seoul, Korea. My mom was taken care of in an orphanage…. My mother wouldn’t be the amazing person she is today if it weren’t for… Miss Hwang. And this is her story.

Figure C.7: Hwang worked in a large orphanage run by a man that always seemed to be . There were many women like Miss. Hwang who had a group of children to take care of
like they were their own in this orphanage. The children loved her and many looked up to her as a mother.

Figure C.8

Figure C.8: At least three to four times a week there was always a man that came and volunteered to sing and play his lovely guitar to the beautiful children in This man was in the military and the children loved when he came and shared his talent with them. The children being young and innocent asked the man what religion he is. He replied kindly and said “I am a simple man that attends an amazing church, called the church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints” He kindly pointed out that Miss Hwang was of the same religion. The kids were very happy.

Figure C.9

Figure C.9: A few weeks later the grumpy old man got wind of what religion Miss Hwang was and he was not happy. He decided to make her choose between two of the
things she loves most in this world: Her religion or her children. He said if she wants to continue working here in this orphanage then she would have to stop attending church and not speak about that in the walls of this building, or she could simply go to church and get fired from her job that she loved so dearly. She decided to keep doing both of the thing she loved, by leaving the orphanage and making her own.

Figure C.10

Figure C.10, some of the children loved her so much they decided to come and attend the orphanage that Miss Hwang owned and taught the gospel to these children. Of course she attended the LDS church still. She not only did that but also made sure that every child she took care of got adopted to an LDS family in the USA.

Figure C.11

Figure C.11: My mother was the last one to get adopted from her. When my mother was finally old enough to go visit Miss. Hwang, She did so. I got to meet her when my mom
and me made trips up to Korea every once in a while before she passed away in March of 2008. She is an amazing woman and I only wish to be half the person she was.

Figure C.12: Student's DNA Book

Evaluation for Book:

Figure C.12: We just finished our first project which was the reliquary and just again finished a new project. We had to make a story book about us or our family. I chose to do the story when we got my dad a DNA test to find out his heritage. How ironic it is that the theme in studio art this term is heritage. The process of making my book was challenging. It took so much time. In the end it was all worth, because it meant something to me and my family. My experience with panning and use of materials was the tricky part. There were so many steps to my story book, so it took time. All of the hard work and time put into it really paid off. I feel like I am getting better at my responsibilities and work just from all of the assignments I’ve had to do in Studio Art. The motive behind my choices in my story book is to represent my family. I did succeed in that and showed something more to it than just an original book. My execution was to do something new and try to make and amazing piece of artwork. My final result were great, I felt really
good about my story book. It didn’t represent someone else, it represents me and my family.

Student Coats of Arms

Figure C.13 Student Heraldry Samples
Figure C.14: The colors I have chosen for this project are warm colors. I have selected an assortment of pastel colors. I chose warm colors because I think that my family is warm and I feel like it gives off warm and soothing vibes. Kind of like my family. All of the colors go nicely together.

The Symbols vary from all of the things I have chosen.

The reindeer: I have chosen to represent my family the best way I thought. I chose this because a deer means skillful. Which I thought our family is very talented and very different and special in our own way. I made the antlers bigger to make the deer look wise and mature.

The BANNER: it is written in Korean to represent my mothers’ side of the family. It says “families are forever” pronounced “gajogeun yeong-wonhi”

The trees I have picked to add a little of me in this artwork. I picked something I think is very important to me. The beautiful trees I have picked to place all around to act as the background in the picture. To me it represents and that sometimes everybody can get frustrated and stressed out and it’s normal for you to need a breather away from the world…. 
Figure C.15: I did my coat of arms mainly focused on who I am and who my family is. The motive behind my choices is to show everyone who I am. That’s why I decided to do the designs I chose for my coat of arms.

… All of the symbols on my shield have a meaning to them as well. The whole shield has a meaning and purpose, that’s what I was going for. My final results were lovely. I loved all of my hard work put into it and I actually cared. It came out just how I wanted it to and it was perfect.

The star: you will notice that at the top there is a star. This little symbol is bight and beautiful just like my mom. This symbol also means third born and I have chosen to have that represent my mother also.

Reflection: I have learned many things about my family and myself. I have realized that my family is always there for me. No matter how much I might hate them sometimes. Or think my mom is crazy because she says she love me enough to punish me when I’m too sassy for my own good. I know that families are forever. And God has blessed me with the best, and he place me in my specific family because he knew I would learn the most from this insanely loud and obnoxious group of people. I have learned things that I am
good at and flaws that I should try to be better at. There is never a time when I should stop trying to be better, because there is definitely always room to improve.

Figure C.16

Figure C.16: OBJECTIVES, Go more deeply into your family history and create a coat of arms that represents you and your family, past and present (and maybe even future?) I felt like I did pretty well on this assignment. I was able to pull off some pretty deeply connected things w/ simple images/pictures, so I’m happy with it.”

REFLECTION: Process was pretty simple. I gathered information & picture ideas from my family & family history, along with a few symbolistic things….

Planning experience was interesting with each new piece of information that I recieved, I had to alter my design marginally until I was satisfied with the appearance and the meanings behind each item.

CONTENT: Choice motives: Celtic knots ’cause Dad likes ‘em lots. Flower because of mom’s maiden name, _____ . Diamond-shaped shield for “maiden”. Dragon wings “cause dragons are awesome and a symbol of strength and power. Different colors for different meanings. 2 stars for “chld of 2 3rd children”. Viking Helmet for Viking/Norwegian/Swedish ancestry; etc. etc…. 
FINAL RESULTS: I’m really pleased/proud of my Heraldry. I feel like it really represents me and my family pretty darn well.”

Figure C.17

Figure C.17: at the top of my family crest the work family is written in the languages of the countries I am from. Next I have the French and Greek flags because those are my main nationalities. In the middle are music notes because my family is very musical and it also represents my younger sister who plays violin, next to that I have a road leading to a sunset and that represents my journey through life. I have next to that a library of books and the titles are my favorite authors or influential people in my life, then I have a Cyprus tree which is a symbol for eternal life and eternal family, under that is the ying yang symbol that’s there to symbolize all the good and bad which happens in your life and how you can become stronger and learn from past experiences.”

Figure C.18
Figure C.18: I love my family. They are my very best friends who have seen the absolute worst of me. I wanted every symbol on the page to show how happy they make me. In the end, here is what I came up with. My heraldry is a sky. The sky is always changing, but it’s always there, just like family. In the sky are a moon, a sun & a star. The moon represents my mom. She is so wise, calm, and beautiful. The star is my brother, because the star is the sign for 3rd born and because he’s a lot like my mom, and we always think of the stars and moon together. The sun is my dad, because that’s the sign for warm, and I have never met someone more kind and generous I also like how the sun and moon love and compliment each other, but are very different, like my parents. They are the basis for the whole sky, and our whole family. Sticking up into the sky are the leaves of two aspen trees. The aspen trees are a symbol for me. In the bark of the tree is the firstborn symbol. Also, threes represent strength and wisdom, two of my character traits. In the branches of the tree sits a bird, which means 4th born. This is my sister ____. Because she is in the trees, and she and I are very similar. Around the bottom are some flowers. One of the shapes means 2nd born, and the other means 5th born. These are my sisters ____ and ____, who are two of the brightest happiest people I know, and who get along so well together. Flowers are a symbol of joy. There is a banner across the shield {that says, “nous boissons l’eau” which means “we drink water”} in French, because our last name is __________ and our family is from France. Finally, a deer is on the top of my family crest, because deer represent intelligence, and our family is very smart. I love the way everything fits together, like a family.
Student Paintings

Figure C.19 Student Paintings

Figure C.20
Figure C.20: So Deciding on what to paint I had a few options I decided to add a little of my Spain blood so I used a painting From Spain I had a lot of fun with the colors, mixing, even though I had a to [repair] a little of medinnes, It was fun, connecting to my grandparents culture and enjoying what they enjoyed makes me feel more connected to them

![Painting](image1)

Figure C.21

Figure C.21: Oil painting reflection: Oil painting was my favorite unit we did in Studio this year. It really taught me how to look at things,…I have learned to be more patient. I look at paintings in a new light now that I have used the medium. I really enjoyed this units, especially since I painted the Alps, where my family came from. This was such a great experience for me, and I hope to be able to do it again soon.

![Painting](image2)

Figure C.22
Figure C.22: I learned a ton from this project…. I also grew closer to my dad (step) because he’s an oil painter so I got to ask him about advice & everything. He taught me a lot & so did Mrs. W!”

Wearable Art

![Wearable Art Designs](image)

Figure C.23 Student Wearable Art Designs

Student Show

![Student Art Exhibit](image)

Figure C.24 Student Art Exhibit
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