People may choose to engage in public interests in a variety of ways. In today's world, it appears that art educators are faced with more issues in which they ought to be engaged: where to teach (public schools, higher education, community-based sites, online, etc.); what to teach (aesthetics, art production, critical theory, art history, visual culture, multicultural, etc.); how to teach (structured studio, copy-the-cat, play art, school art, technology-based, mentorship-based, etc.). And, perhaps most importantly, why to teach (to reflect thoughts and memories; to express emotions and ideas; to solve problems that address desires and needs; to make a living; to be a role model; to project hope; and many more reasons). For each art educator, the answers to these questions, individually or collectively, is often personal and situational: engagement in art, education, and/or advocacy depends on her experiences, efforts, and resources.

Old School Art…or not.

Efland (1976) noted the difficulties in which art educators have been expected to engage in school art style, which [has] essentially [been] the same for the last forty-five to fifty years" because it reflects the school, rather than the minds of students. He outlined the "hidden curriculum problem" (p.40) as one in which the system's definition of purpose includes manifest and latent functions, which are rhetorical and repressive, and the resulting school structure is cooperate-based rather than societal-sound. In order for contemporary art to be part of the classroom, Efland argued for changing the school (i.e. versus trying to change school art). School art style still exists today, as the school "system" still exists. Will the system ever change enough to reflect all differences? Ideally, we would like to think that changing the school system is the cure-all, but realistically, multiple solutions must and do exist.

Today's art educator has the power to affect change by challenging the purpose of manifest and latent functions; the difficulty lies in the 'other' powers of structure and system that may oppose change. Opposing powers may view change as disagreeable, unfounded, nonproductive, or 'insubordination' when it goes against the rules. Such was

the case of suspended teacher, Joseph Thomas, for his refusal to be evaluated by the system http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/suspended-teacher-knew-he-faced-consequences-for-refusing-evaluation/1201452 . Teachers who choose to exercise their democratic power in support of social justice, will at times clash with the system. However, with the voice of one, others do exist and will follow. Thomas did not stand alone in being unsatisfied with the system: only 7000 of 11,500 tested teachers were satisfied. The article reported this result as 'most are satisfied' (a reflection of the system's perspective?). In contrast, recognition of 60.8% satisfaction as a failing grade would have been more appropriate.

US versus THEM…and the power of WE.

Challenges exist in bucking the system: it is often difficult to fight the battle of us versus them, as alluded to in Darts' (2008) cultural wars. These battles are important and significant, but there exists other solutions that should and could be played out, alongside the battles. Different perspectives offer other solutions. Delacruz (2011) also noted problems with our public school set-up in trying to engage students; she noted that "administrators – people who should know better – are either silent or buying-in wholesale" (p.6), in reference to programs that measure/reward/punish teachers based on standards and scores. She put forth positive suggestions to guide today's thoughts regarding art education: assert teachers as public intellectuals; use the foundations of entrepreneurship; network through new digital social media; connect with others. These suggestions arm art educators with the optimistic view in the "power of we" (p.8). Alongside battles, the number of possible positive outcomes increases with "collective endeavors to inform and shape the public debate over education" (p.7).

Out of school…and more hope for art.

Delacruz (2011) emphasized that educators are "public intellectuals" (p.7), at all levels of teaching and in many settings of learning; as a collective group, they advocate and support art and art education. Outside of public schools, there exists an army of art

educators who contribute to the collective efforts of teachers in formal classrooms. Campana (2011) highlighted her research that illustrated five settings of artist/educator/activist work in different communities and engage the public. Each of the five examples made internal and external connections, which she noted as "intersections [that were] more than the sum of the three parts" in how they contribute to their communities. Campana focused on assets (inspiration, drive, local people/culture, collaboration, participation), rather than deficits (external impositions and evaluations, external powers and resources, pre-determined needs and strategies), in developing art education in the community.

In addition to local community efforts, artists and activists can be found in different efforts, locations, and experiences. Maja and Reuben Fowkes (2010) homepage article on Green Museum's website highlighted the story of Ivan Ladislav Gelta and her living space (Spiral Mow, 2005) as exemplar of art that focuses on earth, man, and other life forms, collectively resulting in "an understanding of ecological equality." This type of sustainable art relates to issues of social responsibility, grass roots democracy, and environmental thought, which may "take on the role of alternative knowledge producer… dealing with issues that are marginalized" (http://greenmuseum.org/generic_content.php?ct_id=265).

In contrast to Fowkes' nature-based principles is the artistic appeal of design (innovation and technology) as featured in Paola Antonelli's TED talk, "Treat Design as Art" http://www.ted.com/talks/paola_antonelli_treats_design_as_art.html . Antonelli spoke of the ideas of contemporary art and design, with functionality as the end result of good design. In assembling her design shows for New York's Museum of Modern Art, she emphasized that design is not merely aesthetic (i.e. decorative furniture), yet appreciated that shows at the highly aesthetically-appreciated institution (where "80% of [the] public go to see Picasso and Matisse") may best be received using its power in promoting aesthetics. She promoted designers as "synthesizers of the world," who use hands-on innovation and technology to address human needs and relationships with

contemporary issues; all, in order to "make a point" of everyday objects, with the purpose of "better design for better life."

Conclusion…a reflection on personal practices.

For personal practices, I find comfort in knowing and discovering the differing sources/examples/opinions to support how art and art education are able to address contemporary issues. The wide range of ideas, theories, and practices –natural sustainability to synthetic design, aesthetic to functional purposes, old school to new school theories – and whether one chooses production, education, and/or advocacy/activism, should be reminders that there are many vacant paths to occupy. The many issues we face guide and sometimes force our hand in how we engage in art, education, and/or advocacy: my passion for each of these areas motivates further search for learning and sharing with others. What I choose to share will hopefully inspire others to create, learn, explore, and express in their own ways, through their own experiences, and in their own due time what they view as worthwhile.

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