

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS USE ART TO ENGAGE THEIR PEERS ABOUT THE
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF CONSUMERISM

By

HUNTER RION

A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF THE
ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
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Abstract

For my capstone project, I developed and implemented an art curriculum unit on the environmental impact of consumerism. In this unit, my middle school students learned about contemporary artists that address the impact of consumerism through their artwork. Students kept a journal for a week in an effort to examine their own consumption habits and how they impact the environment. They used their sketches and notes to work cooperatively to create a large mural that depicted images they developed based on the environmental impact of

consumerism. Their mural and journals were exhibited on our school campus to educate their peers and the school community about the environmental impact of consumerism. Students developed an exhibition guide and responsive questions to guide their peers through their exhibition. Classes were invited to view and respond to the exhibition. The research project took place at Fuquay-Varina Middle School in Fuquay-Varina, NC during February 2015. Using the active research method, I observed how students used the art they created to inform their peers about important issues concerning the environmental impact of consumerism. I gathered data in the form of questionnaires, written reflections, photographs, and peer responses. Based on my research, I found that students were able to use their research and art effectively to educate and provoke thought from over half of the peer students through the creation of their mural. Participating student responses proved that they clearly understand how their art can be used successfully to educate their peers. They also gained confidence in their ability to speak through the art they created. This project also proved to be a successful experience and motivator for me as an educator. Based on my findings, I created an online website (<http://hrionarteducator.weebly.com/capstone-research.html>) that exhibited the progression of student artwork, the final exhibit, and resources used during the research project.

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For my capstone project I wanted to help my students become responsible citizens that are aware of the environmental impact of consumerism. I also wanted to teach my students how some contemporary artists use their work to educate society. As an art educator, I believe it is my job to teach my students to understand how the art they create can be used to educate their peers. By keeping consumption journals, my students were able to examine their own consumer habits and how those habits impact the environment. They worked cooperatively to develop a mural that depicts images they developed based on the environmental impact of consumerism. The mural was exhibited and used to educate their peers about the environmental impact of their own consumer habits. Students organized ways to present and understand how their exhibition was perceived and the impact it had on their peers. This research project motivated my art students and their peers to become more environmentally responsible consumers.

Statement of Problem and Goals

In this project, students used their art to communicate the environmental impact of consumerism. This topic should be studied because the incorporation of environmental awareness into the arts serves as a powerful tool to educate and encourage students to become more responsible citizens. Thus the goal of this research project is to encourage students to create meaningful art that delivers important messages to their peers. Addressing important social and environmental issues is becoming important for art educators. Students gained new perspective about the environmental impact of consumption and explored possibilities to create meaningful art that educated their peers.

The research project began with students learning about contemporary artists that address the environmental impact of consumerism. Students watched video clips, participated in class discussions, and read excerpts from books to help them further develop their views on this topic.

Access to contemporary artists and their artistic purposes and beliefs helped students begin to see how they can create meaningful art that will express their views on important issues that can then be used to educate their peers. Based on what they learned about artists Kate Bingaman-Burt, who documents everything she consumes, students kept a sketchbook for a week. In their sketchbooks they kept a consumption list and sketched at least four items from their list daily. From these sketchbook entries, students created a cooperative mural based on the environmental impact of consumerism. Students exhibited their work on our school campus in an effort to educate their peers. They designed an exhibit guide to help their peers understand the exhibit and their artistic purpose. Classes were invited to view the mural and the sketchbooks. The classes that visited the exhibit were asked to answer reflective peer questions to help art students understand how their exhibit was perceived.

Research Questions

I developed the following research questions, to guide my research:

1. How can middle school students use art to communicate the environmental impact of consumerism?
2. How can middle school students use art to engage their peers about the environmental impact of consumerism?
3. In what ways can middle school students learn how others perceive their art?

Assumptions and Limitations

I assumed that the students who participated in this project would become more reflective about their own consumption habits and further understand the importance of educating those around them about being more responsible consumers. I believed that they would have a deeper grasp on the potential of how the art they create can be used to engage their peers. I hoped that in

analyzing my conclusive data that I would see that my students are further able to understand themselves and their views concerning the environmental impact of consumerism. I also hoped they would be confident speaking to their audience through the art they created.

The capstone project was disrupted by a winter storm. Students missed two weeks of school directly after we started the project. This caused them to lose some initial focus and motivation for the project. It was hard for students to grasp the fact that the art they create has to speak for itself and that they might not be present to interpret their work for the viewer. The class size was small and resulted in increasing demands of student participation. Exposure to the exhibit by student peers was dependent on my colleagues and their willingness to give up instructional time with their classes to bring their classes to view and then reflect on the exhibit of my students' work.

Definition of Terms

Eco-Art Education. Eco-art education combines science education and art education, "...eco-art education promises an innovative approach to environmental education, one that balances the traditional roots of the discipline, found in the cognitive, positivist approaches of science education, with the more creative, affective, and sensory approaches of art education" (Inwood, 2010, p. 34). Combining science and art education can help educators to inspire their students to shift their behaviors in positive ways toward the environment (Inwood, 2010). Bland and Hoffman (2010) define eco-art as: "to teach students about art in a way that promotes an understanding of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all things" (Inwood, 2010, p. 34). Ecological art is also defined as the study of the relationship between humans and their environment (Randazzo & Lajevic, 2013).

Authentic Learning. Teaching and learning that engages students in their own real world experience and meaningful knowledge construction is known in the education reform movement as “Authentic Instruction” or “Authentic Learning” (Gnezda, 2009). Through authentic learning students explore and inquire and are able to reach beyond the school context and create as part of the academic pursuit (Gnezda, 2009). Bringing the real world into the classroom promotes learning (Gnezda, 2009). The art room is an ideal environment for authentic learning because students are able to express their individual real-world encounters with self, history, and culture (Gnezda, 2009). Teaching art making encourages students to deal creatively with their authentic experiences and form knowledge about themselves and their connection to the world (Gnezda, 2009).

The Art21 Educators Program. According to Jessica Hamlin, Director of Educational Initiatives at Art21 Educators, the Art21 Educators program is, “a national network of teachers who work with the non-profit art organization Art21” (Graham & Hamlin, 2014, p. 48). Participating art educators commit to a full academic school year to examine the work of contemporary artists through Art21 films design and implement curricula based on these artists in their classrooms, reflect on their current teaching practices and their students’ work and contribute to professional learning communities (Graham & Hamlin, 2014). Jessica Hamlin makes a case for contemporary artists in art education this way: “I believe that the work of living artists is central to changing how we think about what an education in the arts should look like and what it should do” (Graham & Hamlin, 2014, p. 48).

Consumption. According to Webster’s Seventh New Dictionary (1972), *consumption* means the utilization of economic goods in the satisfaction of wants or in the process of production resulting chiefly in their destruction, deterioration, or transformation.

Literature Review

During the preliminary stages of my research I read several articles about service learning and the use of reclaimed materials in art education (Billig, 2002; Congdon, 2000; Eckhoff & Spearman, 2009). However, as my project took shape, service learning and reclaimed materials in art education didn't seem as pertinent. What is still relevant is: "motivating students to create meaningful art," "contemporary artists as role models in art education," and "advantages of environmental art education." There are scholarly articles that provide examples of ways in which art educators effectively include environmental art education into their teaching practices. However, I discovered a need for more research on how art students use the art they create to educate their peers about their environmental concerns and how their peers perceive their messages.

Motivating Students to Create Meaningful Art

Motivating middle school students is a key component in encouraging them to become more engaged in learning. When students are motivated and engaged in what they are learning about they are more equipped to express their views and meaningfully communicate through the art they create. Elizabeth Hopkins and Brenda Turrell made a goal for the 2010-2011 school year to change the way they teach in an attempt to motivate and engage students in the art classroom (Cummings, 2012). They discovered that students are motivated when the lessons acknowledge their interests and are able to relate on a personal level (Cummings, 2012). Students are encouraged when they know their teacher cares if they understand, takes time to learn who they are individually, and offer opportunities for students to learn through personal discoveries (Cummings, 2012). *Authentic Learning* is a way that students can explore personally. Nicole

Gnezda (2009) describes *authentic learning* as a way for students to explore and actively construct knowledge.

Students are able to take the knowledge they gain from *authentic learning* and make art based on the ideas that develop in their own minds during their personal discoveries. Meaningful art making helps students better understand themselves in relation to the world (Gnezda, 2009). It is our responsibility as art educators to introduce students to strategies that will help them make meaning (Gude, 2009). An art educator's compassionate response to students' artwork helps them transform their relationship to self, art, society, and culture (Gnezda, 2009). The ultimate goal is for students to become confident communicating what really matters to them, and be able to effectively communicate their views through the art they create.

Contemporary Artists as Role Models in Art Education

A majority of contemporary artists today work in ways that socially engage their audience (Graham & Hamlin, 2014). Art educators can help their students also learn to engage their audience in this same way by introducing them to the works, purposes, methods, and practices of contemporary artists. The definition of artistic practice continues to evolve and provides art educators with the opportunities to share the artworks, working methods, and ideas of living artists with their students (Graham & Hamlin, 2014). Art educators can present contemporary artists as role models to their students. Through their work, many contemporary artists raise questions about the role of art in our society (Graham & Hamlin, 2014).

The Art21 Education program is one example of an organization that equips art educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively incorporate contemporary artists into their teaching practices. The Art21 Education program invites art educators to explore contemporary artists through film, design curricula, and then share what they have learned with students

(Graham & Hamlin, 2014). This encourages students to think more deeply about the world they live in and the role of the art they create. It also helps students to consider what artists do and why they do it.

The Art21 program wants to inspire teachers to help students to make work based on their own learning. “We want to inspire teachers to construct learning goals that nurture critical thinking, research, and curiosity so that students can make work that is informed by their own learning rather than some preconceived collection of materials and skills” (Graham & Hamlin, 2014, p. 49). Gabe Randazzo and Lisa Lajevic were inspired by the work of contemporary artists Paul “Moose” Curtis to design a lesson on an environmental issue. Students were introduced to the topic of pollution and its effects on the planet and how they contribute to pollution (Randazzo & Lajevic, 2013). Students used the reverse graffiti technique, invented by “Moose,” to create charcoal designs that were stenciled onto objects around the school grounds. This lesson allowed students to educate their peers about an important ecological issue. This is an example of how art educators are able to effectively incorporate contemporary artists into their lessons to inspire students to become agents of change through art and think about how their actions impact the environment (Randazzo & Lajevic, 2013). I discovered and utilized the following contemporary artists in my research: Kate Bingaman-Burt, Chris Jordan, Luke Fischbeck, and Sarah Rara.

These artists were both relevant to my project and accessible to my students.

Advantages of Environmental Art Education

Art education is no longer just about making stuff. Art educators must create meaningful lessons for their students that address important social issues such as sustainability (Taylor, 1997). Hicks (2012) argues that, “Thinking about sustainability is an unavoidable part of thinking about our own humanity and the source of our identities” (p. 267). Gude (2009)

discusses how art educators must teach students disciplinary skills that allow them to investigate and understand contemporary times. Taylor (1997) expresses issues concerning the future and environmental art education, “If we can work towards students understanding their place, their hopes and their future in this world through the study of art, perhaps one student’s concern, one student’s action, and one student’s life can make all the difference” (p. 18). Garoian (2012) describes boundless art education,

Unlike conventional object-driven objectives, I advocate a *processual art education*, where its research and practice does not end with a project, a lesson, a course, or at its disciplinary boundary, but coexists spatially and coextends temporarily to enable ways of saying and doing, teaching and learning *through* art that is caring and compassionate, empathic and boundless. (p. 286)

Congdon (2000) expresses that incorporating ecological issues should be at the forefront of art educator’s mission. Song (2008) offers several ways that students benefit from incorporating ecological issues in art education: students become encouraged, excited, emotionally connected, appreciative, aware, responsible, and develop cognitively, personally, and morally in innovative ways. Inwood (2010) also believes that incorporating environmental education into the arts has positive benefits. She believes that it encourages positive behavior toward the environment and can stimulate the learner’s senses, open their minds, and touch their hearts. Smith and Cruz (2013) advocate collaborative environmental education; they believe that collaboration between art teachers and other content area teachers can result in higher academic achievement, employability, and higher participation in civic life.

Students Initiated Individual Learning Goals

Art students should be given the opportunity to practice authentic learning in the art room. Gnezda (2009) expresses that this type of learning allows students to express their individual real-world encounters. Art educators can incorporate contemporary artists into their teaching practices to help students think about the world they live in and their role as artists. The goal of Art21 is to encourage students to pursue their own learning goals and examine their own real-world encounters in an effort to create meaningful art. This also helps students, more deeply, consider, the role of their art in society.

Summary

The scholars included in this review explore ways to motivate students to create meaningful art, incorporate contemporary artists as role models in art education, and provide examples of the advantages of environmental art. I found that most of the articles provided ways to help students create meaningful art in response to environmental issues. I did not find as many articles that addressed how students can use their art to engage their peers with their art, become motivated to explain their art to their peers, and in turn understand how their peers perceived their art.

Methodology

I used an action research approach to collect data for my Capstone Project. This research was conducted at a public middle school. Kosky and Curtis (2008) express that giving students opportunities to actively participate in lessons allows them to be more involved in the learning process. I encouraged my students to become more invested in their own learning process. It also allowed me to examine the way that I teach and gave me opportunities to make improvements in my current teaching practices. Action research can be considered necessary for educators to

transform themselves, their curriculum, the way they teach, and ultimately society as a whole (Souto-Manning, 2012).

Students Educate Peers About the Environmental Impact of Consumerism

In my Capstone Project students learned about the following contemporary artists: Kate Bingaman-Burt, Chris Jordan, Luke Fischbeck, and Sarah Rara. They participated in discussions about consumerism, sustainability and the potential environmental impact of consumerism. Students kept sketchbooks for five days of consumed items and created sketches based on their lists. They used their sketches and further individual research based on their chosen subject, for their mural squares (see Figure 1). These mural squares became parts of a larger cooperative mural about the environmental impact of consumerism. The mural consists of recycled cardboard panels that have been painted with gesso by the students. They used sumi ink to paint their images onto the mural squares. Students attached the mural squares together with scrap matboard strips and hot glue (see Figure 2).

The mural was displayed in the school hallway outside of the art room (see Figure 3). I invited several of my colleagues to bring their classes to visit the exhibit (see Figure 4). The visiting students were provided with an exhibit guide (see Appendix C), my students developed, to explain their efforts, artistic purpose and the exhibition overall. The visiting peers responded to reflective peer questions, developed by my students. The development of participating students' views and the views of their peers, after seeing the student exhibition, were studied and documented.

Site and Students

The research was conducted at public middle school in February 2015. The student participants involved in the study included eleven middle school students, nine female and two

male, Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic. I submitted and received approval for the research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). Individual student consent and parent consent were required from all participants (see Appendix B).



Figure 1. Students use sketches to determine subjects for their mural squares.

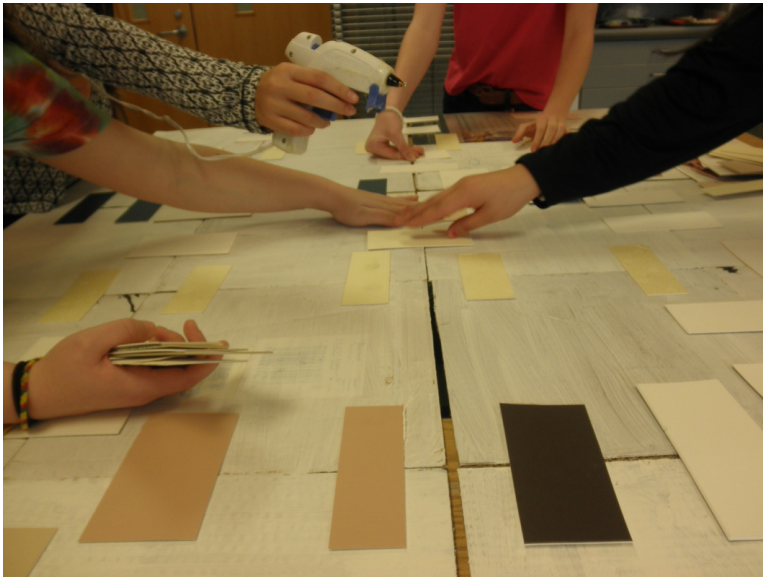


Figure 2. Students use matboard scraps and hot glue to attach mural squares.

Questionnaires, Photographs, Reflections and Responses

I gathered data for my project through questionnaires, written reflections, exit tickets, photographs of artwork, photographs of students working, and peer responses. The duration of data collection was approximately one month. Students wrote reflections and responded to exit ticket questions based on the day's lesson or art making practices. Students completed a pre questionnaire before the research began, to help me better understand how they defined consumerism and the environmental impact, and how they thought they could use their artwork to educate their peers. I then gave a post questionnaire to see what they learned about consumerism and its environmental impact, and the use of their art to educate their peers, as a result of participating in the project. I generated anecdotal notes throughout the study to document student responses. Furthermore, the participating students developed questions to ask their peers after they visited the final exhibition. I analyzed these responses in an effort to reveal how students personally responded to the unit and how participating students were able to educate their peers through their art. Photographs of the progression of the project are published on the following website (<http://hrionarteducator.weebly.com/capstone-research.html>).

Data Analysis Procedures

I began and ended my research study with a questionnaire. Walker (2014) discusses a similar approach using questionnaires in a research study done in David Miller's high school art course, "At the beginning and the end of the study, I conducted an online attitude survey with the students in the form of a questionnaire (Walker, 2014, p. 294). I collected photographs and reflective written samples, and exit ticket responses from participating students in an effort to exhibit the development of their views over the course of the study. I collected peer responses from the students that visited the exhibit. Walker (2014) describes similar approaches of

collecting data that were analyzed at the conclusion of the study. Like Walker, I discovered the most compelling evidence at the end of my study, “The most compelling evidence of personal transformation came from the students themselves, by way of interviews, survey responses, and classroom conversations” (p. 295). In looking back over the student’s responses to the exit tickets, given over the course of the project, I found that some students responded more meaningfully, while others responded with simple one word answers. I think that this can be attributed to the student who responded with greater consideration, as being more engaged in what we were doing. I think it is also important to consider that exit tickets are given at the end of the class period. Some students might be in a hurry to get to their next class. Perhaps they would have answered with more consideration if they had not felt rushed. It was interesting to also consider the evolution of students’ drawings in their sketchbooks over the course of the week they kept their consumption journals. The first two days of sketches generally were more detailed, neater, and contained more sketches. As the week progressed the sketches became messier and students included less sketches on their daily page. This can be attributed to the students being desensitized about their consumer habits as the week unfolds. It could also mean that students are just not as motivated about the sketches as the days go by.

Findings

The initial research questions for my capstone project included:

- How can middle school students use art to communicate the environmental impact of consumerism?
- How do middle school students use art to engage their peers about the environmental impact of consumerism?
- In what ways can middle school students learn how others perceive their art?

This section is organized by using a selected question from the pre-questionnaire (see Appendix D), post-questionnaires (see Appendix E) given to participating students, and from the peer response questions (see Appendix F). I compared student's responses to the question and classified into three categories: students have a clear understanding, students have a clear understanding about some aspects, or students are not able to clearly understand. A student who is able to clearly understand, responded to the questions meaningfully and had a clear understanding about the environmental impact of consumerism and how artists can use art to educate their viewer about important social issues.

Analyzing Student Responses

During the pre questionnaire, participating students were asked, what impact can your art have on your peers? It is clear from reading responses to the selected question, that the participating students all felt like the art they would be creating in this project would have a positive impact on their peers. It is also evident that the participating students felt like their art would prompt their peers to consider their environmental impact as consumers after viewing their art. Examples of evidence were revealed in student responses. Student one responded, "It can persuade them not to waste things. They can see a different point of view." Student two responded, "It could impress, change, and enlighten the mood of others."

During the post questionnaire, participating students were asked, how do you think your art can be used to educate your peers? It is clear from their responses to the post-questionnaire, that, after participating in this project students clearly understand how their art can be used successfully to educate their peers. In fact it appears that this project has helped them become more confident in knowing that their art can be used to communicate important issues to their viewers. It also appears that they feel like the visual impact of their work is an effective way to

provoke their viewers to think and potentially make changes to become more environmentally responsible consumers. The students have also learned that they not only have the ability to use their art to educate their peers, but the community as a whole. Examples of evidence were clearly revealed through student responses. Student one responded, “If our peers walked past, and viewed our artwork, hopefully they would stop and think. They could identify the thing that they are doing wrong and they could be motivated to do better in the community.” Student two responded, “When looking at a painting or work of art, you want to try and figure out what the meaning of the art is. They will see all the things they consume. Some may even change their ways at home. They can probably relate to some of the things we painted.” Student three responded, “I think that it is easier for our peers to understand something better when they have a visual explanation. After they see our mural and see how big it is, I believe they will notice how many different items we use everyday!”

After viewing the mural peer students were asked, if the exhibit made them think about their consumption habits. A total of 57 peer students were brought by their teacher to visit the exhibit and answer the peer response questions. From analyzing student answers, over half of the peer students clearly understood the purpose of the mural. It appears from studying the peer responses that the exhibit caused them to consider their own consumption habits and ways they can make changes to become more environmentally responsible. Examples of evidence were clearly revealed through student responses. Student one clearly understood the purpose of the mural, “We should reduce our different consumption habits and improve our world environment.” Student two clearly understood the purpose of the mural, “I waste a lot everyday and if I make small changes every once in a while, it can help tremendously.” Student three

clearly understood the purpose of the mural, “Visiting the exhibit made me realize how wasteful humans are.”

I interpreted the results based on my ability to understand student responses, from years of experience as an educator, whether a student was clearly exhibiting that they truly were engaged and meaningfully responded to the question with clear understanding. Students that I classified as having a clear understanding to the question proved through their response that they understood what I was trying to deliver through the project. As a result of this project, the student has a deeper knowledge about the environmental impact of consumerism and fully comprehends that the art they create can be used to educate their viewer.

Summary Across all of your Findings

From looking at the ways in which the participating and peer students responded to the selected questions from above it is clear that the participating students have a more vested interest and appreciation for the project over all because they have invested more time, thought, and consideration in it. The peer responses reveal that the participating students provoked thought and consideration about the environmental impact of consumerism from their peers through the mural they created. Thinking back to the initial research questions for my capstone project, it was refreshing to discover that the participating students were able to use their research and art effectively to educate and provoke thought from over half of the peer students through the creation of their mural. The participating students were able to look at the peer responses and see that their art effectively and positively impacted over half of the peer students that visited the exhibit.

Discussion and Conclusion

My initial goals of the capstone project were to show my students how they can use their art to communicate and to examine how middle school students use art to engage and educate their peers. Scholarly literature suggests that students are motivated when they are able to relate on a personal level, and that encouraging students to pursue their own learning goals and examine their own real-world encounters provokes them to create meaningful art. This also seems to encourage students, more deeply, consider, the role of their art.

Song (2008) offers several ways that students benefit from incorporating ecological issues in art education; students become encouraged, excited, emotionally connected, appreciative, aware, responsible, and develop cognitively, personally, and morally in innovative ways. By exposing students to contemporary artists as role models, art educators help their students more closely consider the role that their art can play in society. The mural was put on exhibit in an effort to educate peer students about the environmental impact of consumerism. Findings reveal that the participating students have a more vested interest and appreciation because they have invested more time and energy into their work. Peer responses reveal that participating students provoked thought and consideration about the environmental impact of consumerism from their peers through the mural they created. The remainder of the paper will reveal insights I gained from the project and conclusive remarks regarding its significance.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

I think the moment when I actually realized that the project had truly made an impression on my students was the day that their peers came to visit their exhibit. The mural was installed in the hallway outside of the art room. My class heard the first visiting class outside and asked if they could *spy* on their peers to see how they were reacting to their mural. I was thrilled and told

students they could even walk out in the hall and talk about their art. Several students spoke to the group about their artwork. Afterwards they told me that they were extremely nervous but happy with their decision to talk about their work. Several students asked to take pictures of the mural to text to their parents because they were so proud and excited about their final product. Students came in on multiple occasions during the duration of the project to work on the mural during their lunch hour. Students were motivated when they found autonomy. There were other moments in the project that allowed me to see that my students were truly engaged in what we were doing. One example of this was when a student with Type One Diabetes brought in her insulin bottle and was using it as a subject for her mural square. She said that she had started to consider the waste that was created as a result of her need to use insulin. I felt like this student was genuinely engaged and thinking on a level that was beyond what I had ever envisioned when planning this project (see Figure 5). Another example was a student that came in my room early one morning and asked if she could paint a mural square. A student, working on the project, comes into my room early one morning and asks me if she can make a mural square! She said that she was having a disagreement with a friend in the gym, waiting for the bell to ring. She said that while she was watching television the night before she saw a commercial about toilet paper that does not contain the cardboard roll. She said the commercial talked about Americans throwing away enough toilet paper roll tubes to fill the Empire State Building twice. The student made a mural square in response to the ad she had seen the night before (see Figure 6). My students' various reactions during different periods of the project validated my belief that this project was a successful endeavor that was a positive experience for both my students and I think this.

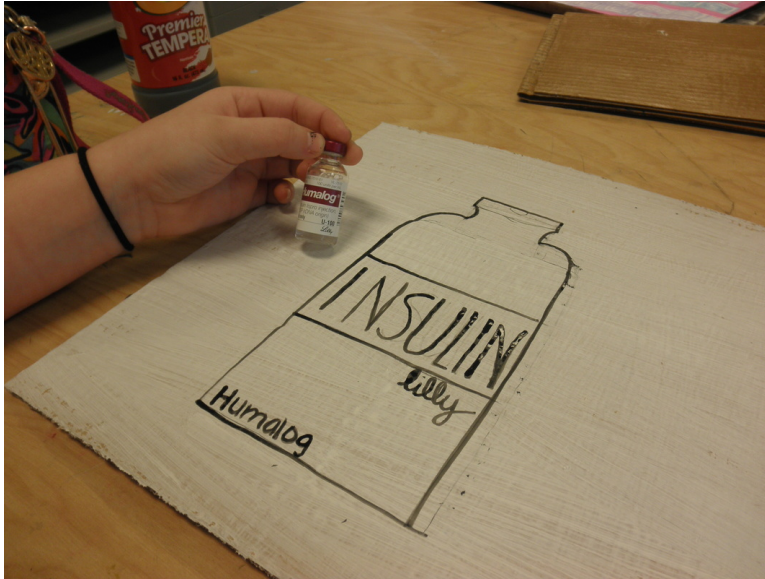


Figure 5. Student uses her insulin bottle as the subject for her mural square.



Figure 6. Student is inspired by a toilet paper commercial as the subject for her mural square.

Significance, Implications, and Recommendations

Art educators have the important responsibility of teaching students meaningful lessons that address important social issues such as environmental awareness. Art education is no longer

just about making stuff and art educators must make goals to create meaningful lessons for their students that address important social issues such as sustainability. Several years ago I took a workshop, from an environmental artist, Bryant Holsenbeck. The first portion of the workshop was dedicated to her sharing her sustainable practices and artistic purposes. She explained that she had recently spent an entire year going plastic free. As a result I am personally no longer able to look at plastic products in the same way. Through this capstone project I have been able to share this experience with my students and motivate them to form new perspectives concerning the environment. My students have been engaged in research and art making practices to help them form their own voices concerning important environmental issues and given an opportunity to educate their peers through their art.

Conclusion

During my research, I found answers to these questions, but these weren't the only things, or even the most important thing I've taken away from this project. This project taught me to trust my students to create their own artwork and allowed me to see that they have the ability to examine their own thoughts and ideas and then express those ideas through the work they create. I learned that they have a lot to say and should be respected in the same way that I respect professional artists. They do not need me to give them step-by-step directions to create art. If I encourage them to come up with their own ideas and rules for creating art, the results are rewarding for both me, as an educator, and them as artists. It also gives me an opportunity to learn new things from my students.

Through my research I am now able to understand how middle school students can use art to engage their peers about important environmental issues. I feel like they view consumer

waste in a different light and they now feel inspired to teach their peers, their parents, and perhaps one day their children what they learned from participating in this project. Ultimately this project taught me the importance of dealing with bigger issues. I still value the incorporation of artistic skills in art education, but I have a new goal to connect my students to the outside world through addressing important issues. I hope my capstone project will inspire other art educators to address important social issues in their lessons and encourage their students to teach their peers about important issues.

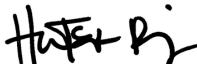
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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Protocols (IRB)

UFIRB 02 – Social & Behavioral Research			
Protocol Submission Form			
<i>THIS FORM MUST BE TYPED. DO NOT STAPLE. Send this form and the supporting documents to IRB02, PO Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611. Should you have questions about completing this form, call 352-392-0433.</i>			
Title of Protocol:	Middle School Students Use Art to Engage Their Peers in Important Environmental Issues		
Principal Investigator:	Rion (Last Name)	Hunter (First Name)	UFID #:
Degree / Title:	Graduate Student	Mailing Address: (If on campus provide PO Box address):	Email:
Department:	Art Education	1332 Dylan Heath Ct. Raleigh, NC 27608	Telephone #:
Co-Investigator(s): Coordinator: Research Asst.	(Last Name)	(First Name)	UFID#:
Degree/Title		Mailing Address: (If on campus provide PO Box address):	Email:
Department:			Telephone #:
Supervisor (If PI is student):	Roland (Last Name)	Dennis (First Name)	UFID#
Degree / Title:	Professor	Mailing Address: (If on campus provide PO Box address):	Email :
Department:	Art Education	PO Box 115801	Telephone #:
Dates of Proposed Research:	January 19, 2015-February 20, 2015		
Source of Funding (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):			

Describe the Scientific Purpose of the Study:					
To research how middle school students can use art to educate their peers about important environmental issues.					
Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language: <i>(Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.)</i>					
Middle school students will research contemporary environmental artists and environmental issues. They will use their research to create art using gathered, recycled materials. Their art will be exhibited on the school campus in an effort to educate their peers about important environmental issues.					
Describe Potential Benefits:					
I anticipate that the participating students will be more reflective about their own environmental practices, have enlightened views about environmental issues and further understand the importance of educating those around them about environmental awareness.					
Describe Potential Risks: <i>(If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)</i>					
Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited:					
Students will be enrolled in Sculpture at Fuquay-Varina Middle School					
Maximum Number of Participants (to be approached with consent)	27	Age Range of Participants:	12-14	Amount of Compensation/ course credit:	0
Describe the Informed Consent Process. (Attach a Copy of the Informed Consent Document)					
(SIGNATURE SECTION)					
Principal Investigator(s) Signature:					Date: 12-10-14
Co-Investigator(s) Signature(s):					Date:
Supervisor's Signature:					Date: 12-10-14
Department Chair Signature:					Date:

Appendix B: Parent and Student Permission Letters

University of Florida – Department of Art Education

Dear Parents/Guardian:

I am the Visual Arts instructor at Fuquay-Varina Middle School. I am currently pursuing my Master’s in Art Education at the University of Florida. For my capstone research study, I am conducting research to see how middle school students can use their art to educate their peers about important environmental issues. Your consent will allow me to observe and learn how your child will use their research to develop meaningful art that will be exhibited to educate their peers. I will be conducting my research for a month during regularly scheduled class time.

Through this study middle school students will research contemporary environmental artists and environmental issues. They will use their research to create art using gathered and recycled materials. Their art will be exhibited on the school campus in an effort to educate their peers about important environmental issues. Students will be asked to participate in reflective writing exercises to document their experiences. They will also create questions to ask the peers that see their art exhibit. The results of the study including their art, writing, and photographs of them and their artwork may be published, but all participants will not be identified by name.

There are no direct risks or benefits to students participating in this study. There is no compensation to participate in this study. Your consent is required to have your child’s work included. Your child may drop out of the study at any time, for any reason. If your child chooses to drop out of the study his or her grade will not be impacted.

Please return this form. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at xxxx@wcpss.net, my administrator, Mr. William Chavis at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, or Dr. Craig Roland at xxxx@arts.ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your child’s rights as a research participant may be directed to the IRB02 office, University of Florida, Box. 112250, Gainesville, FL, (xxx)xxx-xxxx.

Thank you,
Hunter Rion
Please complete and return this form.

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give consent for my child, _____, to participate in Ms. Hunter Rion’s study during the Sculpture class period. I have received a copy of this description.

Parent/guardian signature

University of Florida – Department of Art Education
Student Assent
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS USE ART TO ENGAGE THEIR PEERS IN
IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Hello _____,

I am currently pursuing my Master's in Art Education at the University of Florida. For my capstone research study, I am conducting research to see how middle school students can use their art to educate their peers about important environmental issues. During your Sculpture class time, I will be conducting a study of you and your peers for a month. Throughout this time I will be observing how you use your research and artwork to educate your peers about important environmental issues.

Through this study you will be asked to research contemporary environmental artists and important environmental issues. You will then be asked to use your research to create art. You will collect recycled materials to use in your artwork. You will exhibit your artwork on the school campus in an exhibition to educate your peers about important environmental issues. You and your peers will create questions to ask your peers after they visit your exhibition. You will be asked to participate in reflective writing exercises through the study. During this study I will be taking photographs of you and your art that will be published on a website.

No direct risks or benefits will result from your participation. There is no compensation for your participation in this study. You are not required to participate in this study and you can quit at any time. This study will not affect your grades.

Thank You,

Ms. Rion

_____ YES _____ NO

I have received a copy of this description.

Participant _____ Date _____

Appendix C: Exhibit Guide

Exhibit Guide

Since the first week in February, the 8th grade art class has been participating in a research project based on the environmental impacts of consumerism. In class we discussed what it means to be a consumer, and discussed what we as consumers purchase and consume on a daily basis. We devised lists of examples of items that we often, thoughtlessly consume: food, fuel, music, medicine, toilet paper, shampoo, toothpaste, laundry detergent, etc. We often use these things and do not consider where they come from, how they are made, and the pollution and waste they generate. Students learned about contemporary artists that address the impacts of consumerism through their artwork. Students read excerpts from Kate Bingaman Burt's book, "Obsessive Consumption". Kate Bingaman-Burt is an artist and illustrator that explores consumerism through her artwork. In 2006 she started to draw one thing that she purchased everyday and continues to do so. The students created a sketchbook, made out of recycled cardboard, and documented their daily consumption habits. Students drew and wrote in their sketchbook for a week in an effort to examine their own consumption habits and how they impact the environment. They used their sketchbooks and notes to work cooperatively to create a mural in response to the environmental impact of consumerism. One of the goals of the project and the mural is for students to educate their peers about the environmental impacts of consumerism. We appreciate you taking time to visit our exhibit and we hope that you are able to learn and consider your consumer habits as a result of viewing the exhibit.

We will provide you with our sketchbooks to look through before you visit our exhibit. Please be respectful and handle our sketchbooks with care. Teachers please return sketchbooks to Ms. Rion directly after you finish viewing the exhibit.

We would appreciate your responses to peer reflection questions in an effort to understand your responses to our exhibit. Teachers please return student responses as soon as possible.

Appendix D: Pre Questionnaire

Name_____ Date_____

Pre Questionnaire:

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS USE ART TO ENGAGE THEIR PEERS ABOUT
THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CONSUMERISM

1. How much waste do you produce daily?

2. What impact can your art have on your peers?

3. How do artists make people aware of their daily consumption and waste?

Appendix E: Post Questionnaire

Name _____ Date _____

Post Questionnaire:

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS USE ART TO ENGAGE THEIR PEERS ABOUT
THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CONSUMERISM

1. Describe what you did over the course of this project:

2. After participating in this project, how do you define consumerism?

3. How do you think your art can be used to educate your peers?

4. What changes will you make to become a more environmentally responsible consumer as a result of participating in his activity?

Appendix F: Peer Response Questions

Exhibit Peer Reflection Questions

We would appreciate your responses to peer reflection questions in an effort to understand your responses to our exhibit.

1. How did visiting our exhibit make you feel?

2. What are 3 things that you learned from visiting the exhibit?

1.

2.

3.

4. How did visiting the exhibit make you think about your own consumption habits?

List of Figures and Captions

Figure 1. Students use sketches to determine subjects for their mural squares.

Figure 2. Students use matboard scraps and hot glue to attach mural squares.

Figure 3. Peers visit student exhibition.

Figure 4. The mural displayed in the school hallway outside of the art room.

Figure 5. Student uses her insulin bottle as the subject for her mural square.

Figure 6. Student is inspired by a toilet paper commercial as the subject for her mural square.

Author Biography

I received my BA in Graphic Design in 2002 from Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Florida working towards my Master's Degree in Art Education. Since 2007 I have been teaching visual arts at Fuquay-Varina Middle School. Previously I taught visual arts for two years at Royal Elementary School in Louisburg, North Carolina. I serve as a member of a teacher advisory group for the Design Lab at the School of Design at North Carolina State University. This advisory group helps develop and implement programs for teachers and students at the Design Lab. We also help the Design Lab connect to the K-12 community. This group offers me opportunities to exchange ideas with other educators about implementing design thinking in my classroom. I meet monthly with a group of fellow art educators from Wake County Public Schools to fulfill professional learning requirements. We share lesson plans, develop visual arts curriculum and motivate and inspire one another. I am planning to continue teaching visual arts in public schools after I receive my Master's Degree. Futuristically I am exploring the idea of teaching abroad temporarily. I enjoy taking classes at the local arts center and participating in various visual arts centered workshops.