

# An Exploration of Curriculum for Culturally Responsive Teacher Education at an International Art Museum

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Alma Thomas (1969)

*Tiptoe through the tulips*



# Purpose

This paper presentation analyzes artworks, museum spaces, and curriculum materials as documented in journal entries and photographs that I created while participating in the National Gallery of Art's Summer Institute (2022).



Romare Bearden (1967)  
Tomorrow I May Be Far Away



# Purpose

Showing teachers how to integrate museum objects and inquiry-based learning techniques is a goal for many museums (Lemon & Garvis, 2014).

Object based learning is a way for teachers to provide students with artifacts related to classroom curricula.

Access to historical artifacts is particularly impactful for teachers learning about culturally responsive teaching.

I engage with art objects in this autoethnographic study.

Kehinde Wiley (2005)  
*Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps*





# Purpose

- This current work aims to identify whether and how learning with art objects leads to reflective experiences that expand educator's emotional capacity (Tishman, 2022) and their wide awakensness (Greene, 2000) in synthetical moments (Pinar 2004) or moments of prolepsis (Slattery, 2012, 2017).
- Expanded emotional capacity, wide-awakensness, and moments of prolepsis, or synthetical moments, may support teachers as learners to more deeply understand social justice issues.



**Keywords**

# Emotional Capacity

- Tishman (2022) put forward the notion that “emotions function as a signpost to cue us to look further or dig deeper.”
- Picasso’s (1905) *Family of Saltimbanques*
- “What feeling does this painting evoke for you?”



# Proleptic moment

- A moment when one becomes completely aware of past, present, and future events all at once. In a proleptic moment, one experiences heightened insight. A proleptic moment is any experience " that moves one outside of or beyond " linear segmentation of time and creates a holistic understanding of the past, present, and future simultaneously " (Slattery, 2013, p. 305).
- Prolepsis is a moment when all moments in a narrative or story coalesce.



Byron Kim (1991-present) *Synechdoche*

# Synthetical Moment

- The synthetical moment (Pinar, 1995, 2004) is the final step or moment in the method of *currere*, which Pinar explains is “a strategy devised to disclose experience, so that we may see more of it and see more clearly. With such seeing can come deepened understanding of the running [of the course], and with this can come deepened agency” (Pinar, 1995, p. 518).
- In the synthetical moment—etymologically *syn* means “together”; *tithenai* means “to place”—one reenters the lived present. Conscious of one’s breathing, one asks “who is that?” Listening carefully to one’s own voice one asks: what is the meaning of the present? (Pinar, 1995, p. 521).
- The synthetical moment makes us whole. “It, all of it—intellect, emotion, behavior—occurs in and through the physical body. As the body is a concrete whole, so what occurs within and through the body can become a discernible whole, integrated in its meaningfulness . . . Mind in its place, I conceptualize the present situation. I am placed together. Synthesis (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 61).



# Wide- awakeness

powerful moments of self-  
exploration (Greene, 2000).



# Theoretical Frameworks

- Pinar's *currere* (1975/1994) allowed me to reflect on the relationship between my teacher education experiences at an art museum, my life and identity, and how together these shape my perspective and provide a means for me to reconstruct how I understand and teach social justice issues in a culturally responsive way.
- “The method of *currere* seeks to understand the contribution academic studies makes to one's understanding of one's life (and vice versa), and how both are imbricated in society, politics, and culture” (Pinar, 2012, p. 45).

By seeking to understand how my educational experiences at a museum teacher education program inform my awareness of social justice issues, I undergo *currere* by “living simultaneously in the past, present, and future” (p. 5).



# Theoretical Frameworks

- Another relevant framework for this study is object-based pedagogy. Several theoretical frameworks inform object-based pedagogy, and these include constructivist theories of learning (Piaget, 1978), experiential learning (Dewey, 1934), socio-cultural theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1962), inquiry-based learning (Dewey, 1910), and multimodal learning (Kress, 2012).
- Harvard's Project Zero research (PZ, e.g., Perkins & Ritchhart, 2003, 2004) significantly influenced the museum's teacher education curriculum, particularly its "thinking routines" (Ritchhart et al., 2007; Ritchhart & Church, 2011), and these thinking routines incorporate object-based pedagogy.

# Theoretical Frameworks

- An essential theoretical framework to approach this study included culturally responsive pedagogy (Akinyele, 2017, 2019, 2022), which approaches students' cultures and lived experiences as (a) assets to include when designing learning experiences, (b) a way to respond to students' brilliance and needs, and (c) a pathway for transforming the world into a more just society.



# Method

- In this autoethnographic curriculum study, I explore my lived experience of teacher education programming at a major international art museum.
- This study situated me within a curriculum anchored by learning with art objects, Harvard's Project Zero Thinking Routines, social emotional learning, and culturally responsive teaching.
- Pinar's (2004) exploration of curriculum theory in the United States and his advocacy for *currere* is relevant to the autobiographical inquiry for this study.
- The experience of art objects in teacher education curriculum provides rewarding and empowering opportunities for teachers as learners, especially as teachers expand their emotional range and awareness about teaching in a culturally responsive way (Akinyele, 2019).



# Method

The museum-based teacher education program and the researcher are located in a major US metropolitan city. In July 2022, the museum designed and hosted a 3-day in-person Summer Institute. Data collection occurred during my attendance at the in-person programs. I conducted data analysis in the fall of 2022.





# Data Sources

- **Building Emotional Capacity through Slow Looking (Tishman, 2017)**, a guided exploration of how artworks expand learners' emotional capacities. Harvard Project Zero scholar Shari Tishman led this workshop and integrated Picasso's *Family of Saltimbanques* (1905) and Weems' (2002) *May Flowers*.



Weems's "May Flowers," featuring in the center a model, Jessica, whom she has recently begun working with again after 15 years. Carrie Mae Weems, "May Flowers," 2002. © Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

# Data Sources

Learning groups with museum educators and affiliated school program teachers. Programming held in museum galleries where educators engaged in Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routines and creative writing. Participants use object-based pedagogies with works of art (Perkins, 1994) and culturally responsive learning (Akinyele, 2019).





# Data Sources

- **Tours of museum exhibits**, a multimodal (Kress, 2012) guided experience for educators to approach and examine difficult histories such as enslavement, colonial genocide, white supremacy, and counterstory (Martinez, 2020).
- Artworks approached during these tours included Bearden's (1967) *Tomorrow I May be Far Away*, Quick-to-See Smith's (1992) *I see red: target*, and Lind-Ramos' (2016-2020) *Figura de Poder*.
- Teachers learned to approach these works of art in culturally responsive ways.



Daniel Lind-Ramos (2016-2020) *Figura de Poder*



# Findings

- One of the plenaries I participate in at the Summer Institute was Shari Tishman's (2022) presentation entitled "Building emotional capacity through slow looking with works of art." Tishman begins her presentation with the idea that human emotions may function as signposts to cue us to look further or dig deeper. As she brings this to our attention, I engage with what Pinar (2004) refers to as *currere*, a form of curriculum theory that is autobiographical and centered on my narrative history and reflection as a learner

I jot into my notebook, "In the Guest House," Rumi says that emotions are gifts from the universe that teach us, and that we should welcome them."



Jalal al-Din Rum (1488-1489) *Masnavi of Jalal al-Din Rumi*

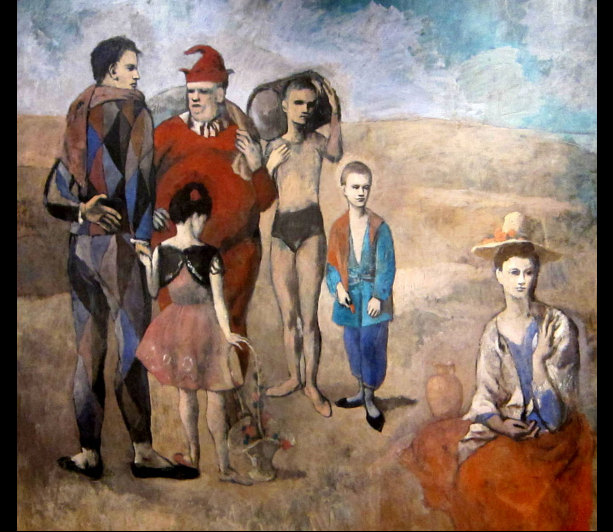
# Findings

- I reflected on a recent experience when I comforted a suicidal student. One evening as I was finishing grading papers and walking to the parking garage, I encountered a female student sobbing on the stairwell. Over the next hour, I learned that this young woman experienced harassment within her academic program from her advisor and wanted to drop out of college. Leaving college made her suicidal since she was just one semester from graduation. I stayed with her and counseled her until the police arrived, but I remained shaken by this experience. I continue to advocate for students who experience hostile learning environments, and I encourage them to report these incidences.



# Findings

- Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routine called “See, Feel, Connect.”
- Look slowly at Picasso’s *Family of Saltimbanques* (1905).
- Reflect on our feelings, “What feeling does this evoke for you?”
- Maxine Greene (2000) calls on educators to see big and recognize the integrity and humanity of our students. I thought again about the college student contemplating suicide and reflected on what her life means to me, our university, to everyone who knows her, and most importantly, to herself.





# Findings

- Tishman asked us, “What’s good about expanding our emotional range?”
- Tishman said, “The more we appreciate the range of human emotion, the less susceptible we are to seeing things as dichotomous or black and white, unnuanced, etc.”
- I wondered about the possible dangers that accompany my taking on the emotions or feelings of someone else without necessarily understanding the context of that individual’s life.
- I think about how empathy can only take me so far.

# Findings

- How far can empathy take us?
- Can empathy be potentially inauthentic and lead to faulty understandings of racism?
- As I reflect on how art can expand my emotional awareness, I realize that art also supports my wide-awakeness (Greene, 1977) so that I am able to see and feel connections with others despite apparent differences.
- I can bring this awareness, or wide-awakeness, to my teaching and strive to teach in a culturally responsive way.



Weems's "May Flowers," featuring in the center a model, Jessica, whom she has recently begun working with again after 15 years. Carrie Mae Weems, "May Flowers," 2002. © Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Halpern Gallery, New York

# Discussion

When museums host culturally responsive teacher professional development, they expand educators' access to the arts, object-based learning, and their own awareness of how societal issues are implicated in their lives and in their students' lives.

My experiences with art and museum-based teacher education provided me with powerful moments of self-exploration, a deeper understanding of the possible meanings in works of art, and a profound encounter with what culturally responsive teaching can be in an institution that promotes social justice in its learning environments.





# Significance and conclusions

Studying teacher education programs at museums and socially responsive curricula is increasingly important as museums expand their educational programming and address social justice issues.

The autoethnographic approach here provides insight into how educators experience art objects as artifacts to support dialogue around teaching difficult histories in the United States. This study establishes how museums participate in social change by providing culturally responsive professional development for teachers.





**Thank you!**  
**Questions**



Milton Rogovin (1972-1977) *Untitled (Lower West Side)*



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