

**Do Community-Based Art Projects Make a Difference?**  
A Study of a Community –Based Art Project in Apalachicola, Florida

By

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SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Craig Roland, Chair  
Jodi Kushins, Member

A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO  
THE COLLEGE OF FINE 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  
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**Chair:** Craig Roland  
**Major:** Art Education

Much has been written about community-based art programs in urban settings. The purpose of my research is to shed light on how arts programming can benefit a rural community. Through the examination of current and past programs established by the University of Florida's Center for the Arts in Healthcare, Shands Arts in Medicine program, and a review of related literature on issues surrounding art education in rural communities, this project attempts to answer the question: Do community art projects make a difference?

The purpose of this one-week capstone project was to create a sculpture project with middle school students in the art class at the Apalachicola Bay Charter School. In addition to implementing the art activity, curriculum was developed for the teacher. I concentrated my study at the Apalachicola Bay Charter School in an effort to investigate issues relevant to the question "Do community art projects make a difference?" In doing so I explored issues such as access to resources plus the sustainability and efficacy of arts programs. My research attempts to define how the arts can help struggling communities for the art education community.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Integrating the arts into society through community-based arts projects has consistently provided a significant and positive influence on struggling communities (Ulbricht, 2005). The positive impact can be seen in a variety of well-documented programs. *The New Deal*, a series of economic programs implemented by the United States government between 1933 and 1936 is one historic example in which artists worked to elevate community and society at large (Kennedy & Larkin, 2009). Art educators have been instrumental in the advancement of such programs as well as in conducting informative research on the development, efficacy, and benefit of community-based art (Alexenber & Benjamin, 2004; Hutzal, 2007; Ulbricht, 2005). In an effort to show how community-based art programs impact struggling communities, I based my capstone project on lessons developed and taught in the art class at the Apalachicola Bay Charter School (ABC School).

I have been privileged to work closely within the community of Apalachicola in the Panhandle of Florida and observe the development of an Arts In Medicine (AIM) program and it's corresponding programs, over the course of three years. The impetus of the programs created by the University of Florida's Center for the Arts In Healthcare, Shands Arts in Medicine program is to improve the overall health of the community through an art-based approach to healing while helping to preserve the unique culture of Apalachicola through recorded oral histories. This program brought me to Apalachicola and working in this community gave me the opportunity to observe and contemplate the needs of the rural poor as well as to envision and create programs to benefit the community.

Working with Heather Clark the art teacher at the ABC School in the spring of 2011, alerted me to the needs of the school. I decided to return to base my capstone research at

this location and created a project with the students. I believe that working at the school with the administration and the teacher, introducing a project, and infusing the 'every half hour' class schedule with a school wide special project has had positive implications for improving the school environment, the student's learning, and supporting the beleaguered teacher.

This capstone project contributed to my understanding of the workings of community-based art projects plus the developments and innovations in the field. By gaining a firm understanding of the meaning and purpose of such work, I will be better equipped to carry out similar projects both locally and internationally. The knowledge I gained, I can pass on to others, in Apalachicola and beyond. My research thus far has not revealed any examples of community art projects quite like those implemented in Apalachicola. I believe that this study and accompanying project could open doors for other cultural workers interested in rural communities and community-based art projects.

## Statement of the Problem

“In America, we do not reserve arts education for privileged students or the elite. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, students who are English language learners, and students with disabilities often do not get the enrichment experiences of affluent students anywhere except at school. President Obama recalls that when he was a child ‘you always had an art teacher and a music teacher. Even in the poorest school districts everyone had access to music and other arts.

Today, sadly, that is no longer the case.”

– *U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, April 9, 2010*

Apalachicola, Florida dwells in a zone somewhat off the radar and typical to living in a rural area far from the resources that cities and suburban areas benefit from. Fortunately, the Apalachicola Bay Charter School (ABC school) has been able to retain its art class despite lack of resources and budget cuts and I have been fortunate to come to this school to create projects and to observe the workings of this special environment. The problems the school faces are in my view societal as the notion that the arts are not a serious academic subject is reflected in the short time period given to the study of art-half-hour per day, four days a week, for each grade. Donaldson and Pearsall (2008) reported that in Chicago the average elementary student received less than 45 minutes of music or art a week. The half hour per class given to art at the ABC School is no fault of the school administration, which struggles to overcome shortfalls in budget and parental participation and embraces with enthusiasm the art class however abbreviated the classes may be.

By returning to the ABC school in 2012 to create a Sculpture project with the students of the art class I attempted to find what impact outside help has on the rural school and its art program. How does the community-based art project model work for this school and specifically the art teacher and her students? This one-week project with middle school students would mark the beginning of my true understanding of and investigation into

issues facing the school 's art program.

### **The Community of Apalachicola**

Apalachicola, Florida is a place rich in history with a unique culture. It is situated on the Apalachicola Bay in the panhandle of Florida. A majority of the community of Apalachicola derives it's income from the bay and are undocumented workers whose survival is reliant on what they can harvest per day from the surrounding waters. Subsequently, this reliance on nature puts them in a precarious financial position and most live well under the poverty line. Returning to the community and the school time and again provides the scaffolding that shores up the programs being established. Building relationships and entering the community ready to be educated are key components to success and sustainability of community-based art projects.

## Chapter 2 **Literature Review**

Throughout this capstone project I have been enlightened and informed by numerous articles, studies, and books that address community-based art education. However, very few specifically discuss the rural school or community.

### **Key Terms**

Included in my list of key terms are: art education, art and community, art and society, and art and health. Art and community can be differentiated from art and society, as it is generally local in focus where as art and society carries a much broader definition that encompasses community arts programs and that encompasses all art in society. Art education is within community art, art and society, and art and health. Art and health is a very specific field that has positive implications for the well being of society. Art and health can be viewed as a philosophical term when one considers how the arts help to restore the spirit, provide an outlet for pain, and be viewed as meditative in nature. Exploring how community-based art projects influence the health and well being of a community and struggling rural communities brings these key terms together and can be synthesized into a cohesive plan for research through the supporting literature I have chosen.

### **The Literature**

Service learning is a mechanism for bringing needed support to schools. One issue facing the art teacher at the ABC School is lack of support. With low parental participation and volunteerism the art teacher goes it alone. Having professional and student volunteers in the class can provide needed support. Having a connection with a university can provide educational resources. Hutzel (2006) defines service-learning as involving “students using what they learn in their formal study to work with others and make a beneficial difference

in the world”(p.127). It is not charity because it is a mutually beneficial exchange.

There have been a number of studies that illustrate how the arts help communities. Many of these studies focus on the shared goals of a community, stressing the importance of art’s “inherent quality of cultural symbolism”(Dewey, 1934). Understanding the culture of the community is crucial in being sensitive when researching and developing programs, as is understanding the importance of collaboration between artist and members of the community. These understandings will help to ensure that the community narrative is alive and well in the process. *Art as Community Narrative: A Resource for Social Change* (Thomas, & Rappaport, 1996) reveals how the arts are a powerful tool and force in creating and empowering communities to write their own stories of identity. This concept has a lengthy historical dialogue and holds firm in the art education milieu as discussed in Kerry Freedman’s (1989) article, *The Philanthropic Vision: The Owatonna Art Education Project As an Example of “Private” Interests in Public Schooling* where she examines the role of philanthropy in the development of the Owatonna Art Education Project of the 1930’s. “Carnegie’s philanthropy in art contained a belief that cultural conservation was vital to the development of a civilized American society” (p.20). The function of philanthropy and altruism plays a strong role in community-based art projects and as I observed in the Apalachicola projects, help can come from surprising sources within the community.

Much research has been done on improving impoverished inner city communities through art projects (Kay, 2000; Hutzel, 2007; Stephenson, 2007) and I draw inspiration from these as many of the same issues that put inner city communities at risk are occurring at a high rate in rural communities. It’s the same issues in a different setting.

Hutzel (2007) proposes that a community-based art curriculum should be “intended

to engage the community in an asset-based approach to art creation and social change “(p. 307). She documents how the implementation of an art program and the revitalization of a playground exacted positive change for a very localized inner city community. I propose that such acts of implementation have far reaching effects on the health and well being of society. One community project at a time helps to transform the larger landscape of society for the better. My project in Apalachicola documents the revitalization effort made at the Apalachicola Bay Charter School through an integrated arts-based project.

There are many issues that face all communities. One issue that affects all of society is our aging population. *Creating Public Art Through Intergenerational Collaboration* (Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004) exemplifies a successful, collaborative community-based art project that honors the elderly. Using participatory art, the artists selected elderly people from three distinct cultural groups. The research participants included African-American elders, Hispanic elders, and Jewish elders from various locations in Miami and brought them together with students from the *New World School of the Arts* to create an intergenerational art project. The group created “Legacy Thrones”. This project was created under the framework of postmodern art education. “Postmodern art education is based upon personal and emotional metaphors and the acknowledgement of the importance of narrative and personal myth”(Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004, p. 15). When we consider the widespread implications for building a healthy and cohesive community such projects might serve as an example. This project demonstrates collaborative, participatory arts in a socially interactive framework that can be adapted to suit a diverse range of communities.

Jan Cohen-Cruz (2002) exposes the notion that community-based art projects are

akin to social activism and gives a thorough explanation of the history of activist community art. Can art move people to action on behalf of their larger community, for the greater good? As Cohen-Cruz states, “knowledge alone rarely leads to action” (pg. 1) but what community-based art projects do is to provide a natural bridge for uniting a community with divergent ideologies and interests. Unifying concerns, such as their children’s schools, threats to their environment, economy, and financial wellbeing can be addressed through the arts as we have seen with urban regeneration projects. Community art is about working collectively and is “rooted in a sense of place” (Cohen-Cruz, 2002). The arts can serve as a unifying bond and community-based art projects can serve as the cement to this bond, this communal thread.

Addressing one important faction of community-based art education, Ulbricht (2005) gives examples of what art educators might consider when “citizens try to eliminate art education from school curriculums, teachers try to figure out how to get students involved in ‘real world’ situations, and/or educators and artists confront important social issues through their artistic endeavors” (p. 6). With this in mind and as we consider community-based art projects influence on the well being of a struggling community, education is key and the school-community relationship is an important spring board into the larger community.

Cleveland (2008) a pioneer in community-based art wrote, “The frontlines are everywhere” (p. 1). These poignant words are apropos in describing how artists and educators often work in the heart of communities in turmoil and is a fitting metaphor for art educators in the traditional classroom as well. The issues that face our society are many and the teacher is often the first, “on the frontlines”, gauging societal health and wellbeing.

Cleveland (2008) defines community arts as an old activity, long before it was termed as such and the activity of artist and community coming together to create art reflective of “common concerns” (p. 1). When common concerns are understood by the artist, the educator and the community involved, it becomes the binding force that strengthen and ensure successful community arts projects.

*Works of Heart* (2006) is a brilliant ‘how to’ reflection on a variety of community arts projects. The artists featured in this book challenge “deficit-based models”(p.15) that most civic and community leaders are trained to see and that are inherent in developing new projects. The common belief of the artists featured in this book is quite the opposite, seeing the potential and possibility where others turn away. They see a world rich in culture, tradition, and talent. I see this book as a valuable resource for the projects I will develop.

In summary, the supporting literature discussed here is but a small example of research that has helped to develop my ideas about community-based art research in Apalachicola. The research process brought me from a wide range of sources including articles that address arts and urban renewal (Kay, 2000) and articles specific to the arts and the medical field (Angus, 2002). Beginning my research with reading material from a broad range of sources enabled me to see community-based art projects with in the larger context of society.

### Chapter 3 **Research Design**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to make observations and document the activities in a rural art classroom as a means of gaining an understanding of the benefits of community-based art projects. The research was conducted at the ABC School in Apalachicola, Florida during a one-week sculpture project with middle school students, with the help of two assistants from the University of Florida. This study employed qualitative research methods including an ethnographic approach because I focused on a community with a distinct culture, the oyster harvesting community of Apalachicola, Florida. It is a case study as bound to the school and a study of what happened in the school during the project. In addition, this research documents one episode in a long-term community project.

I explored the research question “Do community-based art projects make a difference?” through a series of interviews including the art teacher, the school counselor, and community leaders. I decided to do my capstone project at Apalachicola’s ABC School and realized that given the short time frame I would have to limit the number of students I would work within the project.

After conferring with the teacher one month before the scheduled project date we determined that it would be best to work with the middle school group. We discussed the recycled art project and the art teacher expressed enthusiasm because last year I gave her information on totem poles made of recycled milk jugs and one of her students had created one. We have an equal love for recycled materials and found objects. I made the decision to work with recycled materials because they are a readily available, no cost/low cost

resource for art making and the teacher had interest in this subject and wished to pursue this avenue in future projects with her students.

I originally planned for two sculpture projects. I had to choose between the two once I realized that the time would not allow for both. I made a prototype of a large scale recycle symbol made of boxes and an old Hula Hoop and would use this as an example to show the teacher and students but not for them to create during the week (see Fig. 3-1).



Figure 3-1. Recycle symbol

I then decided to work on the individual sculptures and during the weeks leading up to the project I had help to prepare materials such as cutting the wood for the sculpture bases and collecting bottle tops from local Moose Lodges and my parents favorite pub. This in itself was a community effort, spanning across the state. The preparation was lengthy and involved as I brought all the supplies with me with extra to leave behind at the school.

My mini van in essence, became a mobile art unit as it was filled with blocks of wood bolt cutters, news paper, scissors, masking tape, cans of paint, cardboard, recycled materials, not to mention the supplies needed for the restoration project such as gardening tools. This ties into the question of how can community-based art projects remain sustainable? One element or answer to this question is bringing in the resources for projects and equipping the art teacher with supplies to continue and maintain projects. The sculpture project continued on after my departure, the students painted and continued to build on their pieces. The timing was right for the class had two more weeks before the end of the current session.

During this process of preparing for the project at the ABC School I submitted the UFIRB-2-Social and Behavioral Research Protocol Submission Form (See Appendix A). Though mine was a minimal risk project it still required many revisions before I was given the go ahead to create the project at the ABC School.

### **The Recycled Art Sculpture Project**

The project was originally designed for the Apalachicola Bay Charter School. I wanted to work in a way that promoted what the art teacher was interested in working on with her students. Introducing alternatives to traditional materials has the potential for expanding the students' view of what art is and can be, thus deepening their understanding of the world of art while engaging their imaginations, cultivating their creativity, and employing their powers of observation. Using found objects and bi-products of everyday life provides limitless possibilities for lessons and activities. I chose the universal recycling symbol as the point at which to embark on the sculpture projects because the symbol represents the connectivity of our world, and to our selves as human beings, working in collaboration and

in healthy relating through art. Living in a rural community has limitations related to access to resources. This combined with working in a very short time period per class can prove challenging. When resources are scarce ingenuity comes into play. An excellent way to engage students in the process of art making with little resources at hand is to work with materials from daily life.

In preparation for the project I had my children and their friends create their own sculptures to work out any kinks and to provide a prototype for the students to study. These sculptures are made of masking tape, newspaper and plaster wrap with a variety of recycled materials to choose from to embellish, embed, wrap, and pierce through if the students so desire. I brought a variety of recycled materials for the students to use on their sculptures. These materials consisted of bottle caps, broken hair combs in a variety of colors, twist ties from various products, aluminum can tabs, and a variety of plastic materials from plastic packaging. I have been collecting these materials for a number of years and chose to use them for this project because of their flexibility and their commonality. These particular items are ubiquitous to American life and can be easily found and used for creative purposes (see Fig. 3-2, 3-3, 3-4).



Figure 3-2. Plastic caps



Figure 3-3. Twist ties



Figure 3-4. Bottle caps

### **Setting the Stage for Research**

The first year (2011) that I created a project at the ABC School I was a new student in the Art Education program at the University of Florida and had no experience in a classroom with a half hour period for each class. I had come to the community of Apalachicola as part of a service- learning trip with the University of Florida's Center for Arts in Healthcare, Shands Arts in Medicine program and was responsible for the design and implementation of an edible garden with an art element at the ABC School. I had jumped in head first with a comprehensive project that involved all students who passed

through the door of art class. This Art and Garden project of 2011 alerted me to the needs of the school and art teacher who teaches pre-k through 8<sup>th</sup> grade every half hour as well as the after school arts program. It showed me the reality that many teachers face. Art teacher Heather Clark commented (2012) on this project:

Last year's project was so much fun. I still can't believe we were able to get every student, pre-k through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, involved in creating the art for the garden! The students have really enjoyed working in the garden, harvesting the fruit and vegetables, and they are really proud to see their artwork out there. I can tell they really feel as though it is their garden. The students and I were both very excited to hear you would be returning to ABC school to do an art project with us. They love having visitors and doing something different.

This statement by art teacher Heather Clark points to the question of what benefits do community-based art projects provide?

### **The Class**

Mrs. Clark's art class is located in a separate building on the school grounds. It is the old music room and therefore spacious and multi leveled. Being separate from the main body of the school gives a level of autonomy. The students get to travel to the art room, see the garden they created and the accompanying art pieces, and perhaps have a moment to daydream before entering the art-making realm. Bats were dwelling in the ceiling of the room giving new meaning to *nature in the classroom* and lending to the feeling of unexpected life happening all around (see Fig. 3-5).



Figure 3-5. The art room

### **Collecting Data**

The project occurred during a one-week period from March 5-9, 2012. I made numerous observations while instructing and supervising a sculpture project, described in detail in chapter 4, with the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at the ABC School. The project started one week after I attained approval from the University of Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). On arrival at the school I attained assent signatures from the participating students and signed consent forms from those adults interviewed (see Appendix B). The purpose of the project and the assent form were fully explained to the students before starting the project. All students chose to participate.

Photographic documentation of the activities and student artwork were taken through the duration of the project but no video was recorded as directed by the IRB office. I also provided curriculum to support the sculpture project (see Appendix C).

On completion of the art activity at weeks end the students were presented a series of questions about the project (see below). These questions helped me to find out what the project and our presence in the classroom meant to the students. The questions were designed so the students could answer at length. The answers to the questions, the interviews with the art teacher and counselor, the recorded field notes and observations provided data.

### **Recycled Art Reflection Questionnaire**

1. Did you have a goal for what you were making, or did it unfold as you worked? Describe the process.
2. What do you think are the one or two most important features of your artwork? Consider such things as color, shapes, patterns, and usefulness.
3. Where did you get ideas for your artwork? For example, did you get ideas from the works of other artists you've studied? From an everyday object you hoped to mimic? Or purely from your imagination?
4. Would you like to do this project again? What did you like or dislike about it?
5. How did you feel about having us in your classroom?

I think it is worth noting the article *A Review of Evaluation in Community-Based Art for Health Activity in the U.K.* (2002) in which John Angus gives a thorough account of the study and documentation of the efficacy of the evaluation practice in the field of community-based arts art for health activity. In the chapter covering evaluation, Angus (2002) describes the research methods that evaluators use. "Most adopt an ethnographic approach... the best involve participative and reflective practice which attempts to maximize learning and generate reflection and informed debate"(p. 9), which is a good model statement for my research goals. Angus also points out the prevalent use of questionnaires and evaluation sheets, particularly in school-based projects and explains

that more often than not, this tool proved to be unsatisfactory for solid analysis, assessing effectiveness, and achieving aims.

With this in mind, I feel that the questionnaire was beneficial to my research given the short period of time of the project. The questionnaire gave students the opportunity to reflect on their own work and processes in making art. It also enabled the students and teacher to reflect post project, without pressure of the time restraints (see Fig. 3-6).

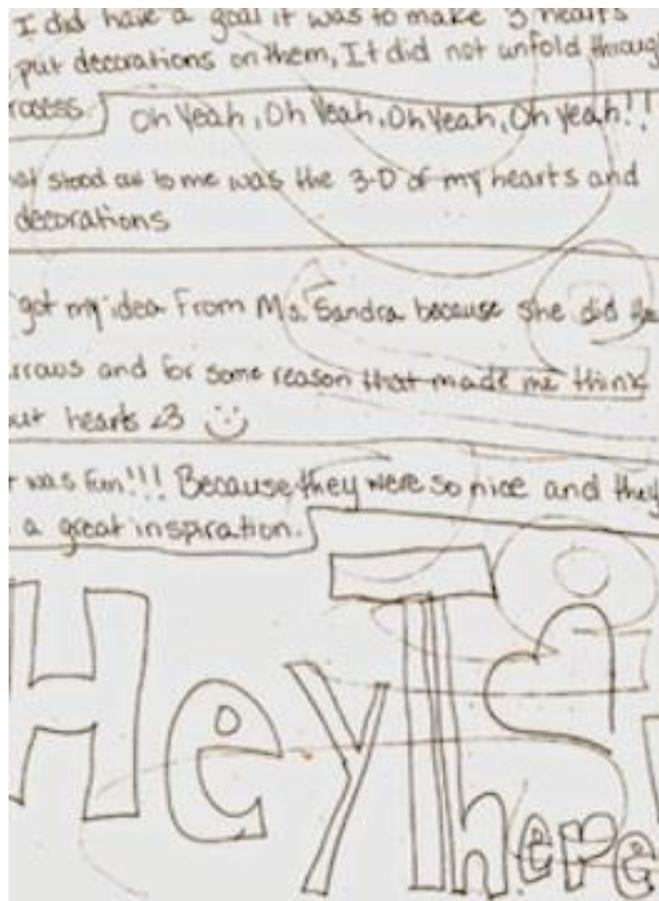


Figure 3-6. Student Questionnaire response

## Chapter 4

### Results

The day was split between the restoration of the previous “years” project and this years sculpture project. In the following section I describe my approach to the art project. This is to provide an overall picture of the project at the school.

#### **The Recycled Art Sculpture Project**

After spending the morning restoring the garden and art element from last year, my assistants and I joined Mrs. Clark in her classroom and set up the tables with supplies for the students. Students arrived to participate in their half hour art class. The team was introduced after the teacher addressed her students. I explained the purpose of the project and how my assistants would help. Our discussion was brief because of the half hour time of the class. When students sat down at their group tables they had materials set up on each table to expedite the process. Each table had rolls of masking tape, scissors, and newspaper. As we discussed the project the students were encouraged to explore the materials (see Fig. 4-1).



Figure 4-1. Exploring materials

I provided Copies of images of artists' work from the Web, books such as Katherine Harmon's (2009) book *The Map as Art, Recycled Re-Seen* (Cerny &Seriff, 1996), and Alessandro Rocca's (2007), *Natural Architecture*. Recycled art pieces were available to inspire discussion, as was the prototype (see Fig. 4-4).

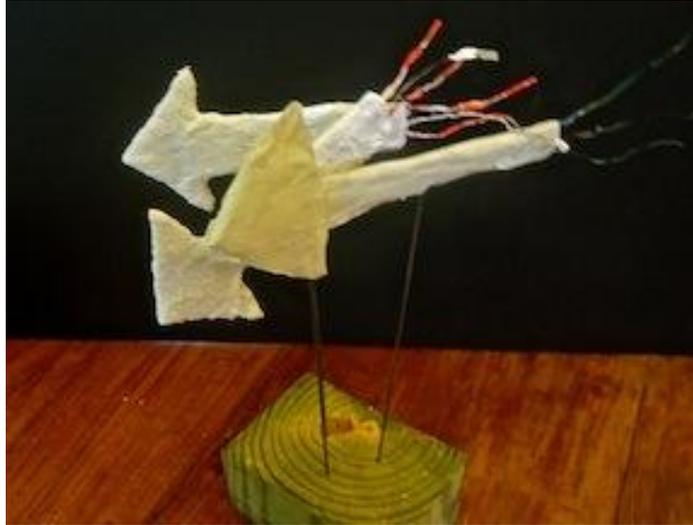


Figure 4-2. The prototype

My assistant and I demonstrated how to begin the project and continued to move around the room assisting students where needed. It seemed as if we had just begun when it was time for the students put their names on their pieces, place them in an area of the room, clean up their immediate area, and depart the classroom. The beginning of the project required minimal clean up as it uses newspaper and masking tape. This was helpful given the short time that the students have to work before the next group arrives. This process was repeated two more times before the end of the school day.

The first day we learned what would work given the limited class-time. The art teacher and I commiserated. Adaptations were made where necessary. The student work was beautiful. At the beginning of the project many needed individual assistance to understand how to use the materials, how to rip the newspaper, to crumple it and compact it into a base form. They needed a little time to think about the process but by day two it was full speed ahead. The students worked on their sculptures for the four days that we were present for the project and then an additional week following our departure. They needed assistance understanding how to use the materials, from ripping the newspaper to

the sizes they needed, to crumpling it to a compact state as well as needing general guidance in structure and how to make a sculpture and all the elements they were using, structurally sound. I talked about how to make strong connections between the elements and how important building a solid foundation is to the success of their sculptures (see Fig. 4-3).



Figure 4-3. Work in progress

The students talked and talked, it was such conversational group, and had many questions pertaining to how to construct their vision. How to go from a drawing they had made or a concept in mind to actually making it happen. Some students were up and around the classroom working standing up and while walking, giving them the opportunity to talk with my assistants and I as well as to peruse their classmates' work. The recycled materials and other resources were on a round table at the center of the room and remained a busy hub

of activity throughout the project. I would assist many students at a time at this junction of the room, often answering overlapping questions and helping with multiple sculptures at one time.

### **The student work**

The students created individual sculptures using newspaper, masking tape, plaster wrap and recycled materials (see Fig. 4-4, 4-5).



Figure 4-4. Student sculptures



Figure 4-5. Battle Flail

### **Analysis**

Robert Stake (1995) states, “If we have very little time we try to find the pattern or significance through direct interpretation, just asking ourselves “What did that mean?” (p. 78). The students, my assistants and I flew through the project. Therefore, the questionnaire, the students’ conversations, and observations of the class activities are the key resources of the analysis. Looking at the student responses to the questionnaire collectively (seen previously on page 26) enabled me to find predominant patterns from which to draw conclusions. I uncovered the patterns by noting the number of times words were used in the responses to questions four and five. In these questions I was looking at the impact of the project. There were 26 student questionnaires filled out.

The student questionnaire elicited an overall positive response to the project with the exception of one negative or “I disliked this” response, which appeared 24 times out of the 26 questionnaires that were answered. When asked what the students did or did not like about the project, all but two students responded that they did not have enough time to work on the project. This underscored my belief that the project I presented them was clearly a two to three week project given the half hour class time (see Fig.4-6).

In addition, from the student questionnaire the impact that our presence and participation had on the students was worth noting. They loved communicating with the assistants who themselves created sculptures along side the students. Communicating with the helpers came up numerous times as well as the words helpful, inspiring, kind, and understanding in describing the assistants and myself.

### **Limitations**

The short amount of time that students are in the classroom did not allow for in depth discussion or reflection with the students. Emphasis was placed on the activity and students reflected in retrospect after the completion of the project and our exit from the school. Recording data was not optimal because of the physical limitations of my assistant. An additional limitation was that the project was better suited for a two to three week time frame.

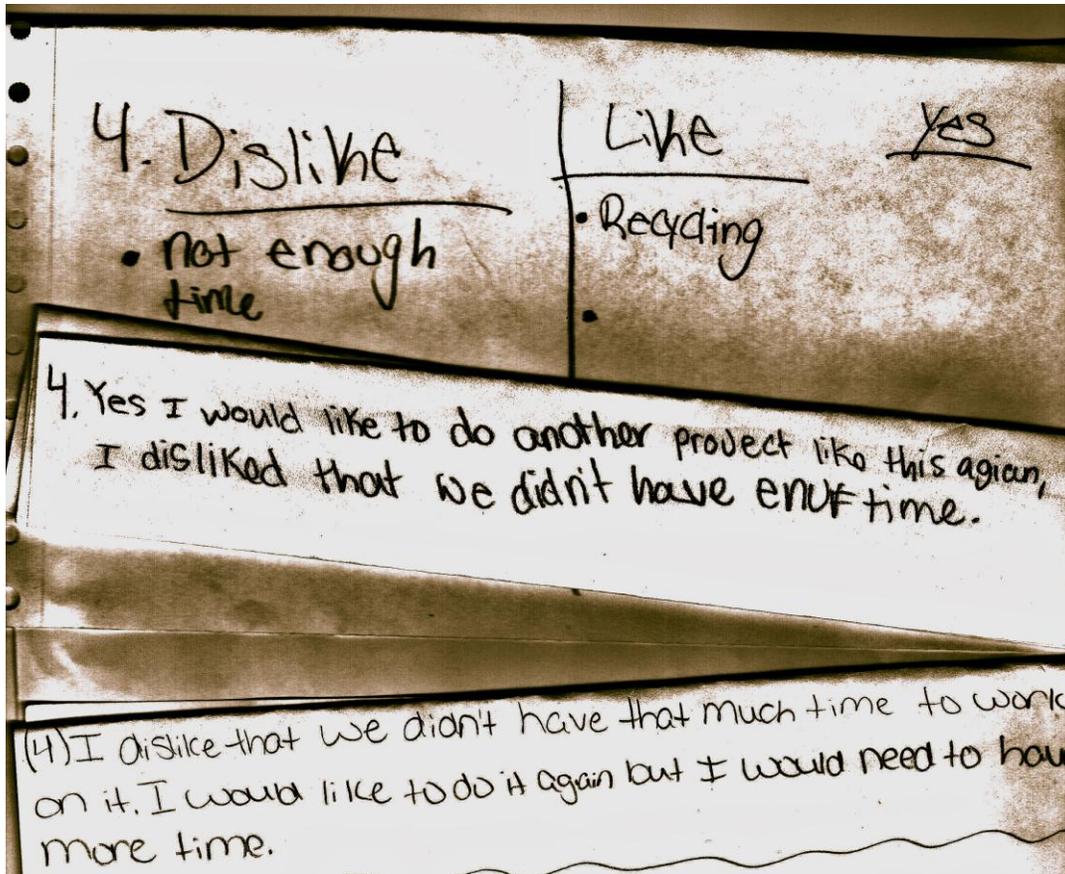


Figure 4-6. Student questionnaire response

### Observational Field Notes

I witnessed how cooperative and supportive the students were with one another. The students worked at group tables, which allowed for conversation to flow. It was a very noisy classroom. A sense of pride and enthusiasm as well as humor could be heard in the voices of the students as they talked about their ideas and joked with one another. The art teacher is very patient and has a good sense of humor, which adds to the positive atmosphere of the classroom.

### Findings

Do community art projects make a difference? This question continues to intrigue me yet remains unanswered. One of the key findings of the project is that we don't know

how community-based art projects remain beneficial over the long term. Returning to The ABC School to work on a project in the art classroom enabled me to see how our presence benefited the students and the teacher in the short term. The interview questions below and on page 41 are a selection taken from my interview with Art teacher Heather Clark. Here she speaks about the project:

**Question:** What do you remember about what you first heard about the program, what appealed to you at the time?

**Answer:** When I heard about the garden being put in and there being an art element that we would be working on I was very excited. I thought it was such a great thing to have your group come and do all the productive, educational activities with the students and the community. What an awesome opportunity for this community. As I have learned more about the Arts in Medicine program I am continually impressed. Combining the arts, medicine, and edible gardens just makes so much sense. It's so good to see programs like this put into place.

**Question:** What benefits if any, do you see from this project?

**Answer:** The project as a whole is beneficial on so many levels. Your program reaches out to so many people. Using the Arts as a way to communicate and teach is amazing, I love it! Students innately understand the universal language of art and are so responsive to the arts. So the benefits I see are that you are really reaching these kids, making those connections that are so important. The 3D project that we did in my art class was great. The students loved it, they were engaged and that's when the real benefits take place.

**Question:** Could you do these projects on your own without outside assistance?

Could they be adapted to fit your rigorous schedule?

**Answer:** Yes, I feel I could do this project with the students with no problem. I plan on using the materials you have given me to do this project with other students. All the kids love the sculptures. When they walk into the art room they go right up to them, they think they are so cool and want to make one.

The ABC School is my teaching ground. It is where I began my education into community-based art projects and holds a place dear to my heart. What the Capstone project and interviews provided me was a more informed understanding of the challenges the teacher faces and the benefits that outside assistance can provide. This information will support and reinforce my continuing research on community-based art projects in rural communities. Returning this year to create a project at the school gave me an understanding into the issue of sustainability. Seeing how projects fair from year to year will educate me further as I determine to answer the question, do community arts projects make a difference?

## Chapter 5 Discussion

While in the art classroom at the ABC School I marveled at how short each class was. It felt like a whirlwind swept the children in and out of each class and causing a production line effect as students created the elements for the sculptures. This year I gained further insight into this reality through interviews with both the teacher Heather Clark and school counselor Susan Bacarach (see Fig. 5-1). These interviews provided a view into the pressing issues of budget cuts and the limited time factor. When the question was posed as to why the art class was retained amidst dramatic budget cuts, Bacarach's (2012) answer revealed the following:

Funding cuts have affected our school in that we had to choose, we had to cut the music program and half of our teacher assistance. We needed an outlet for the kids through art. It is written in the charter.



Figure 5-1. Susan Bacarach

The ABC School is one story in a long-term societal trend. According to an NEA report (2011) on art education in America and declining arts participation, which includes findings from a 2008 survey by the Center on Educational Policy on the affect of the No Child Left Behind Act on access to art education. While inconclusive, the data suggests that, “arts education has been reduced since the passing of this legislation” (p.42). Given this reality, I feel to provide meaningful arts instruction, and a more profound and extensive art experience under such circumstances by bringing special art projects to the school on a regular basis helps to counter the deficiencies brought on by lack of resources, parental participation, and time. I can’t know for sure if community arts projects make a difference but when asked, what benefits do you see from this project? How has this helped you as a teacher? Clark (2012) responded:

It’s been helpful to me as a teacher by exposing me to something new. It’s not only been helpful to have you come and share your knowledge and ideas, but it feels great to have your support and understanding of what an art teacher’s challenges can be. Your words of encouragement have helped me tremendously.

Clark (2012) goes on to say:

If our society really saw the benefits of the arts in education and were willing to put as much emphasis on that aspect our children’s lives I believe we would be much more successful in educating our youth. It would help to have the support of all educators, administrators, districts and legislators to encourage such awareness and support. In my current situation, longer class periods would be very helpful. It would be ideal to have them for 45 minutes to an hour at least once per week. Funding for supplies and equipment would help of course.

The problems that exist here at the ABC School go beyond what a week project can help to resolve or remedy and does not affect the issues of sustainability and efficacy of community-based art projects in the rural school and community. However I feel I made a difference, albeit short term, based on the students’ response to the project as noted in chapter four as well as through the relationship I have built with the school over the course

of one year. For example, figure 5-2 shows Art teacher Heather Clark in front of a mural that we collaborated on after school during the capstone project week. This mural project has been in planning for one year and is the result of curriculum I designed on developing a mural project with middle students in 2011. I plan to return to work on the mural with the art teacher and her students. This tells me that the project is positive and does make a difference and that forming relationships is one element in supporting the rural art teacher and keeping projects sustainable (see Fig. 5-2).



Figure 5-2. Art teacher Heather Clark

In 2011 I designed an edible garden that was installed at the ABC School. It was in need of restoration in 2012. Each day, Monday through Friday prior to working in the art class my team worked on the garden in the morning hours to bring the garden and the art elements back to a level that the school can maintain and sustain (see Fig. 5-3, 5-4).



Figure 5-3. Totem repair



Figure 5-4. Garden rehab.

I use the garden project of 2011 as an example of efforts to promote sustainability of special projects and while the school continues to use the garden for educational activities and thus showing me the benefit of such a project, my team and I had to facilitate the restoration of the garden and the art elements to bring it to a level that I hope the school will maintain. Curriculum was provided to support the teachers, supplement the students learning, and to promote prolonged engagement with the garden. A teacher at the school volunteered her Girl Scout troupe to take over the care of the garden. Again, I believe that my capstone project has made a difference, as has the previous years project; however, the issue of sustainability is one that I must revisit for the long term. It is my goal to return quarterly to work with the art teacher at the ABC School.

Returning to the question, Do Community Art Projects Make a Difference? According to Sonke (2012), "the use of the arts as a means to educate the public, foster social change,

and influence the knowledge and behaviors of targeted populations has a long history”. What I extrapolate from this statement is that throughout history the arts have been used to bridge cultural gaps, to uplift the human spirit, to heal, and to capture the imagination. Community-based art projects often encompass all of these elements. While it is hard for me to judge the long-term impact of my capstone project, I do believe that perceived humanistic value plays an important role in the conception of and overall success and sustainability of community art projects. The first step is for communities, and society to understand the importance of art in the lives of all people.

Returning to the ABC School for the sculpture project this year gave me the opportunity to solidify my goals for developing projects for the rural community. The school is my training ground and the relationship that I have formed with the art teacher is one of mutual appreciation and support and is what keeps me returning again and again to Apalachicola, Florida and the ABC School (see Fig. 5-5, 5-6).



Figure 5-5. The ABC art class



Figure 5-6. Art teacher and student

### **Questions for Further Study**

- How have the arts influenced the health and well being of the community in Apalachicola, Florida? This question will take me outside of the ABC School and deeper into the community of Apalachicola to study the broad spectrum of programs established by the University of Florida's Center for the Arts in Healthcare, Shands Arts in Medicine.
- How are community-based art projects in Rwanda been created and sustained? Traveling to Rwanda in 2010 enabled me to work on projects designed by pioneer community Artist, Lily Yeh. I would like to study the art projects established there. Though this question is similar to what I explored in my capstone project, I would like to study first hand how international projects work.
- What can I learn from this project that can help in Africa?

## Continuum

This years project at the ABC School was but one episode in a long-term series of projects in Apalachicola and surrounding area. The question of sustainability, the benefit to the community, and how these projects impact the rural community will be revisited time and again through the study of this project and those to follow. I look forward to a continued relationship with the ABC School and the community of Apalachicola, both of which have welcomed me and the University of Florida's Center for the Arts in Healthcare, Shands Arts In Medicine program with openness, grace, and generosity (see Fig.5-7).



Figure 5-7. The Apalachicola Bay Charter School

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## Appendix A

# UFIRB 02 – Social & Behavioral Research

## Protocol Submission Form

*This form must be typed. 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.*

<b>Title of Protocol:</b>	<p>Do Community Art Projects make a Difference? A Study on Community-Based Art projects in Apalachicola, Florida.</p> <p>In an effort to show how such programs work, I will base my study on community projects developed in Apalachicola, Florida and surrounding area.</p>		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Sandra Murphy-Pak	<b>UFID</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>	<b>Masters of Art Education</b>	<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address):	<b>Email:</b> sanmurphypak@gmail.com
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Art Education</b> U.F. School of Art + Art History		<b>Telephone #:</b>
<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b>		<b>UFID#:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Supervisor (If PI is student):</b>	<b>Dr. Craig Roland</b>	<b>UFID#:</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>	<b>Associate Professor</b>	<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address): PO BOX 115801 Gainesville, FL 32611-5801	<b>Email :</b> rolandc@ufl.edu
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Director of Online MA Program in Art Education</b>		<b>Telephone #:</b>

<b>Date of Proposed Research:</b>	March 2-8, 2012
<b>Source of Funding</b> <i>(A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):</i>	None
<b>Scientific Purpose of the Study:</b>	
<p>Integrating the arts into society through community-based arts projects has consistently provided a significant and positive influence on struggling communities. Working in the art classroom at the school, the Principle Investigator will observe what happens in the classroom during the course of an art project. This will support the Principle Investigators examination of current and past community-based art projects, investigation of issues relevant to the problem question, and the study of access to resources, the sustainability and efficacy of community-based art projects.</p>	
<b>Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language:</b> <i>(Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.)</i>	
<p>I am studying one episode in a lengthy project and will conduct an Ethnographic case study. I will work with the art teacher and students on a project. I will interview the teacher and school administrator about the project through semi-structured interviews. The type of topics included will be: How does the project improve the school and the students learning? How has community involvement improved the school? What projects and programs work and what projects and programs do not work?</p>	
<b>Describe Potential Benefits:</b>	
<p>Potential benefits included improved learning, improvements to the learning environment, in-depth art experience with lasting effect, and the opportunity for participants to build stronger collaboration skills. The potential long -term benefits may include a stronger understanding and appreciation of the arts, and stronger skills in collaborative and cooperative learning.</p>	
<b>Describe Potential Risks:</b> <i>(If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)</i>	
<p>No more than minimal risk.</p>	

## Appendix B

### Consent Form

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Art Education at the University of Florida, conducting research on how community- based art projects improve the health and well being of rural communities.

The purpose of this study is to understand how art projects might benefit your school and that of the community.

The results of the study may help educators and researchers to better understand how community-based art projects are designed, maintained, sustained, and remain beneficial to your community. Such projects help to inform educators to design instructional practices accordingly. These results may not directly help you today, but may benefit future students and educators.

The information I collect from this project will be utilized for academic purposes only. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the interview at anytime without consequence.

There are no risks.

With your permission, I would like to create an art project in Mrs. Clark's classroom, observe the class, and interview Mrs. Clark during the week of March 5<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Interview questions on benefit, student learning, and sustainability will help to inform my research on how these projects may benefit the teacher, the students, the school and the community. No compensation is offered for participation. Group results of this study will be available after April of 2012 upon request.

If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Craig Roland at 352-391-9165. Questions or concerns about your rights as research participant may be directed to the IRB02 office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Thank you,  
Sandra Murphy-Pak

---

I have read the procedure described above. I, \_\_\_\_\_ voluntarily give my consent to participate in Sandra Murphy-Pak's study on community-based art projects and participatory group art project.

I have received a copy of this description.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Assent Form

Hi, my name is Ms. Murphy-Pak, and I am trying to learn more about teaching art.

Your teacher, Mrs. Clark, has invited me to your class to create a sculpture project with you and to talk about recycled art.

I would like you to work together on a sculpture. Afterward I will give you each an index card with two questions for you to answer about the art project.

Do you want to do this?

Do you have any questions before we start?

If you want to stop at anytime just tell me.

Thank you for having me in your class.

Ms. Murphy-Pak has explained the project, what she is doing, what we will do, and has asked us questions.

I \_\_\_\_\_ would like to participate on the art project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### The Three R's in 3-D

**Unit Overview:** Students use materials from everyday life to create sculptures. Designed for Middle school.

**Unit Title:** Explorations in Recycled Art

**Enduring Idea:** Through the course of human history the scraps of daily life have been used, reused and repurposed to create art and craft.

#### Rationale:

These projects were originally designed for the Apalachicola Bay Charter School.

Introducing alternatives to traditional materials has the potential for expanding the child's view of what art is and can be, thus deepening the student's understanding of the world of art while engaging the child's imagination, cultivating creativity, and employing the powers of observation. Using found objects and bi-products of everyday life provides limitless possibilities for lessons and activities. I chose the universal recycling symbol as the point at which to embark on the sculpture projects because the symbol represents the connectivity of our world, and to our selves as human beings, working in collaboration. Students may wish to connect this project with the school and the school's edible garden project.

Living in a rural community has limitations related to access to resources. This combined with working in a very short time frame per class period can prove challenging. When resources are scarce ingenuity comes into play. An excellent way to engage students in the process of art making with little resources at hand is to work with materials from daily life.

#### Key Concepts:

- Artists express themselves through a variety of vehicles.
- Artists often utilize materials beyond traditional means.
- Using alternative materials in art has a long tradition.

#### This unit explores these big ideas:

- Humans create using a variety of materials.
- Reusing objects for art and utility can be found in many different cultures.
- Folk artists are not the only artists to use recycled materials.
- Some artists take an old idea and make it new by using recycled materials.
- We live in an interconnected world.
- Collaboration.

#### Essential Questions:

- How are recycled materials used in art?

- Why do artists use recycled materials?
- How do other cultures use recycled materials?
- How have artist's use of recycled materials changed our ideas about art?

**Unit Objectives:** What students will understand as a result of this unit.

**As a result of this unit, students will be able to demonstrate and understanding of:**

- What the definition of the word recycled means and how it relates to art.
- Different ways artists use recycled materials to make art.
- What reasons Artists have for using recycled materials.
- Different ways and reasons that cultures reuse objects of everyday life.
- How they can create using alternative materials.
- How objects take on new meaning depending on the materials used.
- How they make meaning of their work.

## **Project One**

### **Mobius: A Collaborative Project**

Introduction:

Prior to this activity students will view and discuss works of art that utilize recycled materials from a variety of artists and cultures.

In this activity students will be introduced to the Mobius strip and it's relationship to the universal recycling symbol. Examples of how the Mobius strip is represented in art and architecture will be shown and discussed. The class will explore the concepts of connectivity, movement and continuum as they work on a collaborative work of art based on the recycle symbol.

### **Big Ideas and Questions:**

- Art can be created in different ways with alternate means.  
How and why have artists utilized recycled materials in their art?  
How do specific artists use recycled materials?
- Ideas about art constantly shift and change.  
How does working with alternative materials change your ideas about art?
- Using recycled materials in art making connects us to objects in our everyday lives.  
How might we use these objects from daily life to make art?  
Do these objects (or recycled materials) communicate something different than traditional materials?

## Activity:

### Making a large Recycle Symbol Using Recycled Materials

Following a discussion on the work of contemporary artists, folk artists and artists from a variety of cultures around the world, the class will split into groups based on seating order. If they are currently seated at group tables this will work. Students within each group will explore the recycled materials available to them on their tables and make selections to work with. These groups can be divided by color of objects, which will be present on their tables. Keep in mind that the students have less than a half hour to work so having a strong system with all materials at hand and ready for action is crucial. The cardboard serves as the basis for the found objects. The cardboard can be pre-cut and prepped before hand by teacher, assistant or students. They will then work on a section of the sculpture, adding elements, using their creative judgment to place the objects.

### Materials:

Cardboard such as Capri sun boxes or any sturdy cardboard packaging, found objects, masking tape and glue. To connect the elements into a hanging sculpture a Hula Hoop with one cut to separate it works really well and provides a nice scale approximate size 36"x36". Any tubing would work well to connect the elements. The teacher or assistant may have to help with final assembly.



Recycle Symbol 38"x38" Boxes, tape, Hula Hoop

## Project Two

### Sculptures: An Individual Sculpture on a Small Scale

We will focus the discussion on how artists incorporate elements of the found object into their work.

Students will work individually on a small -scale sculpture that incorporates both traditional and found objects. This project is designed for the short class period with a large

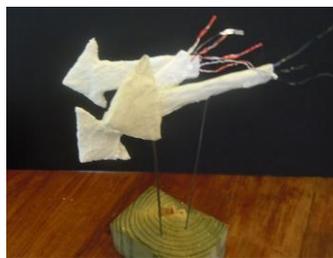
class size. It is designed to conserve and make the most of the materials at hand while providing an interesting and satisfying experience with a beautiful outcome! It is important to discuss scale and how that might affect one's choices for composition, imagery and materials. One may wish to share the works of artists who work on a tiny scale with the students.

### **Activity:**

Following the general discussion focus on concept and design with the students. Students will be familiarized with the project and materials, which will be on their tables. Organization is imperative given the short class time so materials will be prepared for the students to work with. In a half hour class the students have roughly 20 minutes of real work time. The students will first create a form by manipulating the newspaper into shape then binding it with masking tape. At this point decisions would be made to add the found objects, taping them in, or piercing them through before applying plaster-wrap. (Note that the plaster wrap requires water to make it pliable.) This way the elements are integrated into the piece. They will be encouraged to really explore with the found objects, by piercing through their form, embedding objects and superficially embellishing with found objects. It is encouraged that they bring objects of interest and meaning to add to their sculptures. When the sculptures are complete they will be mounted on wood pedestals using rigid wire to elevate the sculpture.

### **Materials:**

Newspaper, masking tape, plaster- wrap, and found objects. Rigid wire/rods (cut to size), metal snips, wood, (cut to size), water, bowls and a drill for making holes in the wood for mounting the sculptures. These sculptures are approximately 3"x3"x 12" (12" accounts for height once mounted). The teacher or assistant may have to secure the sculptures to the pedestal.



### **Discussion Questions:**

To encourage students to enter into the discussion, cards with various statements about the subject may be given to each student. Students will voluntarily read the statements and share their thoughts with the class.

### **Questions to lead discussion:**

What do the works we have viewed have in common? What is Different?

What do you think inspires artists to use alternative materials to create their work?

How do you like working with these materials?

How does this differ from making something with clay or traditional materials?  
How did you make your decision on which objects to use?  
What title would you give this work of art and why?

**Resources:**

**Books:**

Anatsui, E. (2006). *El anatsui*. South Africa: David Krut Publishing.

Cerny, C., & Seriff, S. Eds. (1996). *Recycled re-seen: Folk art from the global scrap heap*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Harmon, K. (2009). *The map as art*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press.

**From the web:**

Art in a Box.....Recycled Art History: an Art Installation form Desert Vista High School April 22, 2003 Temple Center for the Arts (pdf.)

Robert Bradford <http://robertbradford.co.uk>

Michel de Broin <http://www.micheldebroyin.org>

Susan Stockwell <http://susanstockwell.co.uk>

Yuken Teruya <Http://www.yukenteruyastudio.com/projects-1/coner-forest>

Barbara Wisnoski <http://www.barbarawisnoski.com>

## **Biography**

Sandra Murphy-Pak began the online MA Program in Art Education at the University of Florida in 2010. Prior to this program Ms. Murphy-Pak was building a diverse portfolio of skills and experiences as a fine artist, school volunteer, a substitute teacher, and long time volunteer with the University of Florida's Center for the Arts in Healthcare, Shands Arts In Medicine. Ms. Murphy-Paks' work with the Center for Arts in Healthcare lead her toward a life of community-based art and design projects in rural areas in Florida and Africa. Her research focuses on the efficacy and sustainability of arts programs in rural communities. Projects include the design of community gardens and collaboration with rural communities in their school arts programs. Ms. Murphy-Pak is team member of Rwanda Sustainable Families and co-director of marketing and design for Komera cooperative, an artist cooperative based in Murara, Rwanda where local artists teach sculpture and weaving to the women and children of the co-op.