Double Helix, Vol 7 (2019)

Report from the Field

Creating Art in a Critical Research and Writing Course

Kate Hanzalik
Syracuse University

Key Questions in the Art-Based Writing Movement

Is there a place for artistic creation in a required writing course that emphasizes critical thinking and research? A necessary starting point to answer that question for the purpose of this report is another question: What is the nature of critical thinking? Three perspectives inform the response: the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (Framework; Council of Writing Program Administrators [CWPA], National Council of Teachers of English, & National Writing Project, 2011); the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition 3.0 (Statement; CWPA, 2014), which is applicable to required general education writing courses; and that of those beyond writing studies: educators and practitioners in the fields of art and design.

According to the Framework, critical thinking is "the ability to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that." By "writ[ing] about familiar or unfamiliar texts [and] examining assumptions about the text held by different audiences," students can "think through ideas, problems, and issues; identify and challenge assumptions; and explore multiple ways of understanding" (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7). The Framework offers a comprehensive list of indicators of, and strategies for, critical thinking:

1) write about texts for multiple purposes including (but not limited to) interpretation, synthesis, response, summary, critique, and analysis;
2) craft written responses to texts that put the writer's ideas in conversation with those in a text in ways that are appropriate to the academic discipline or context;
3) create multiple kinds of texts to extend and synthesize their thinking (e.g. analytic essays, scripts, brochures, short stories, graphic narratives);
4) conduct primary and secondary research using a variety of print and nonprint sources;
5) write texts for various audiences and purposes that are informed by research. (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7)

The Framework's definition of critical thinking "has been adapted or adopted by hundreds of writing programs nationwide" (O'Neill, Adler-Kassner, Fleischer, & Hall, para. 5, 2017) and should be considered when attempting to legitimize creating art in a critical research and writing course.

According to the Statement, critical thinking is "the ability to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, situations, and texts" (CWPA, 2014, p. 2). The Statement makes explicit that students should "learn the kinds of critical thinking important in their disciplines" (CWPA, 2014, p. 3), and good critical thinkers "separate assertion from evidence, evaluate sources and evidence, recognize and evaluate underlying assumptions,

DOI: 10.37514/DBH-J.2019.7.1.05

read across texts for connections and patterns, identify and evaluate chains of reasoning, and compose appropriately qualified and developed claims and generalizations" (CWPA, 2014, p. 2). Similar to the Framework, the Statement offers a comprehensive list of indicators of, and strategies for, critical thinking, which I will also refer to throughout this report:

> 1) use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts;
> 2) locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources;
> 3) use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources. (CWPA, 2014, p. 2)

What's missing from the Statement is the Framework's point that critical thinking involves "mak[ing] thoughtful decisions" (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 3), which has implications for the ethos and viability of creating art in a writing class, simply because making thoughtful decisions is at least one aspect of creating art.

If we are to legitimize art in writing studies, then it would only make sense to ask the following types of questions: In the process of creating art, can students learn to "analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that" (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7)? When creating art, are students "examining assumptions about the texts held by different audiences" (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7)? How do students "think through ideas, problems, and issues; identify and challenge assumptions; and explore multiple ways of understanding" (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7) when they create art? When students create art, do they "analyze, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, situations and texts" (CWPA, 2014, p. 2)? In other words, are the students thinking critically in terms of the Framework and the Statement?

It also makes sense to see that the critical thinking that happens in art happens on its own terms, and that this type of critical thinking is valuable to critical research and writing students. As arts educator Edmund Burke Feldman (1970) pointed out, art is a form of knowledge, one that evinces an "affective manner of connecting the elements of perceiving, doing, knowing, and sharing" (p. 85). We should not project what our disciplinary institutions define as critical thinking onto art in order to justify its use in our classrooms. If we adapt, adopt, or are otherwise influenced by the definitions of critical thinking stated in the Framework and/or the Statement, and if these definitions lead to the Framework's "habits of mind," such as curiosity ("the desire to know more about the world") and openness ("the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world") (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 1), then it would be incongruous to say that because art exhibits the elements of our field's influential understanding of critical thinking, it is acceptable for use in our classrooms. It would also be contradictory to say that because art does not exhibit our own understanding of critical thinking, then it is not acceptable for use in our classrooms. Artistic creation, when coupled with reflective assignments (journals, class discussions,

presentations), helps students to gain a dynamic perspective of critical thinking that seems otherwise impossible.

Conversations in Art, Writing, and Design

"Art's role in the teaching of writing is something that scholars in writing studies have been playing for some time now," Nathalie Virgintino (2019) noted in the keynote speech of the 2019 State University of New York Conference on Writing, whose theme was "The Art of Writing/The Writing of Art." The conference was somewhat of a milestone in that "art" was the center of pedagogical conversations ("Arts-Based Research and Writing," "The Art of the Story: MFA Influence in the FYW Classroom," "Listening to Write: The Aural Aesthetics of Sound and Voice Composition," etc.). Presentations were given by visual, literary, and performing artists as well as writing teachers. Although writing conventions are changing and conversations about art and design in writing studies are proliferating, the word *art* is often replaced by *multimodal text, visual text,* or *non-alphabetic text* in literature about multimodality, multimedia, and multigenre (3Ms), implying a lack of openness to artistic creation in writing studies and the assumption that art is a subordinate form of knowledge. In *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, Jody Shipka (2011) encouraged writing teachers to incorporate "non-linguistic sign systems" (NSS) into course designs. NSSs are "other modes of representation" (p. 12), other "multimodal texts" beyond what she defined as "academic texts": linear, alphabetic writing that is made through research and has a narrow focus, an argument, an address of opposition, and the purpose of selling an idea (pp. 142–143). NSS texts are, however, also like conventional academic writing in that each is "but one stream within the broader flows of semiotic activity" (Prior, as cited in Shipka, 2011, p. 13). Her approach led students to create dynamic products such as a research-based essay written on ballet slippers and a performance based on scrapbooks and photos from a deceased person the performer had never met (a collaborative project designed by Shipka herself). Her research shows the numerous benefits of NSSs, ranging from giving students an opportunity to expand their awareness of what writing can be to helping them become better at writing in diverse contexts to providing new ways for teachers to become better guides for student writers. This approach offers an alternative to dominant modes of writing and benefits students and teachers. But it seems as if artistic compositions are only credible when they are positioned as non-alphabetic texts or "non-linguistic sign systems."

In *Remixing Composition*, Jason Palmeri (2012) positioned artistic genres as "multimodal texts." Palmeri's central argument is that multimodal pedagogies are not new to the 21st century; he rewrote history to show the value of 20th century pedagogies that were multimodal, and he vowed to play the role of the remix artist representing pedagogies of the past rather than problematizing, codifying, and evaluating them like the critic, which is to say, the habit of mind that causes us to dismiss or question pedagogical progress (pp. 4–17). He pieced together moments in history when artistic genres and practices such as acting, photography, filmmaking, documentary, and montage were at work in composition classrooms. However, his intent was not to show that art and artistic creation have been vital to the history of composition pedagogy. Nor was it to show that art is valuable on its own terms. Instead, artistic texts were recast as multimodal texts that then become vital to a revision of the history of multimodal pedagogy. Regardless, the book is crucial to making art visible in the history of writing studies, and his subsequent work, "Nevermind Jackson Pollack, Where's Judy Chicago?," continues to demonstrate the vitality of the arts in writing

studies, by drawing upon the peer review strategies of feminist artist and arts educator Judy Chicago (Palmieri, 2019, pp. 149–172).

Patricia Leavy (2009) pointed out that art's lack of credibility in academic contexts is the consequence of the positivist, quantitative paradigm (pp. 5–6). She noted that art-based ways of knowing in academic contexts are "disrupting and extending the qualitative paradigm" (p. 9), a paradigm that has historically been at odds with positivist science and the quantitative paradigm, which is predicated on the fact that the natural and social worlds are "governed by rules that result in patterns, and thus causal relationships between variables can be identified, hypotheses tested and proven, and causal relationships explained" (p. 5). In the quantitative paradigm, "the context of justification" is paramount (p. 9). She stated that "[t]he resistance, by some, to the newer breed of arts-based practices is therefore linked to these larger struggles about scientific standards and knowledge-building" (p. 6). However, writing studies scholar Geoff Sirc (2002) saw art as a method of resistance to "conservative professionalism"; specifically, he acknowledged the art-based writing pedagogies and avant-garde practices of the 20th century that might "lead a Composition in which faith and naiveté replace knowingness and expertise" (p. 32). Whereas Sirc envisioned writing classrooms as sites for "happenings," performative spaces made by artists determined to rethink traditional "form and content" (pp. 7–9), Virgintino positioned writing classrooms as improvisational spaces where the methods of jazz musicians, dancers, and actors can teach writers that writing is extemporaneous, that it requires flexibility, spontaneity, risk-taking and self-reliance, and that failure is not only inevitable but also completely acceptable (Hanzalik & Virgintino, 2019).

In addition to conversations that allude to art and/or defend its inclusion in academic contexts, writing studies scholars, designers, and artists are having conversations about how the fields converge (Dunnigan 2019; Leverenz, 2014; Marbeck, 2009; Stowe & Rico, 2019). For example, writing studies scholar Vittoria Rubino (2019) argued that a "design disposition," the attitude in which the composer composes to solve a problem, can develop students' creativity and expand the possibilities for invention. Steph Ceraso and Matthew Pavesich (2019) discussed how post-pedagogies, which aim to be non-hierarchical and playful but often end up in chaos, can be deployed through design studios, which facilitate learning that is high impact (composing for broader audiences), collaborative, do-it-yourself (independent learning), and ecological (embodied interactions with materials and innovative learning spaces). Design educator John Wood (2000) argued that "because 'rigorous' writing is fundamentally rule-based and organizational, and can therefore be at odds with the situated, opportunistic judgments involved with much design practice," design students ought to practice "empathetic modes of writing [that] enable designers to focus on shared issues by 'thinking as,' 'thinking-for,' and 'thinking-into' their nominated reader" (p. 44). Empathy is a vital aspect of the critical thinking that happens in artistic creation, as Feldman (1970) noted: "empathic behavior—that is, bodily imitation of and psychic identification with what is seen—in order to feel and to understand the impact of visual configurations on oneself or someone else" (p. 96). And he offered what should be a salient perspective that "[a]rt claims a very ancient right—older than alchemy—to rearrange things, to transform substances, to call new forms into being. In other words, aesthetic education implies taking things apart and putting things together in the light of an affective idea about what they might become" (p. 86). These conversations are essential to understanding styles

of critical thinking outside of writing studies. They are also vital for justifying why alternatives belong within the discipline.

This report from the field joins these conversations by demonstrating that creating art in a critical research and writing course is useful for the acquisition of critical thinking skills necessary for college writing contexts, specifically those skills enumerated by the Framework and the Statement. I also wish to show that creating art is, on its own terms, an important form of critical thinking that can benefit student writers.

Writing 205: Critical Research and Writing

For the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 semesters, I gave students in a required sophomore-level critical research and writing course (WRT 205) the option either to compose a work of art in any genre, prepare an artist statement, and present both to the class or to craft a researched argument about an issue in the arts that matters to them, prepare an abstract, and then present their findings to the class. (This report focuses on those students who chose the former.) Leading up to the project, the students composed an artist profile, where they researched and wrote about an artist of their choice, and a critical review of a work of art, where they researched, described, interpreted, and evaluated any work of art that resonated with them. The course was intended to teach students how to research rhetorically, to compose within and across genres, and to realize that research writing is a situated process, one that necessitates reflecting on rhetorical choices (Syracuse, n.d.), all skills that are facilitated through critical thinking. To meet these outcomes, students practiced artistic creation alongside reflective work, such as journal entries, class discussions, and presentations.

Students who chose to compose a work of art completed a series of writing process worksheets, which helped them to use writing to think critically about artistic creation, which is to say, "write texts for various . . . purposes that are informed by research" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7) and "use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts" (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). For their genre analysis worksheet, they had to research and write about the genre they wanted to compose within, which is to say they had to "write about texts for multiple purposes including . . . response, summary, and analysis" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7). For their source list, they had to document and explain the sources that would inform the form (the artistic design) and content (the topic addressed through the artistic design) of their art project, which is to say, they had to "locate and evaluate primary and secondary research materials" and use reading strategies "to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources" (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). (While some readers of this report presumably align with the argument that form and content are one, a position that I maintain as well, for my purpose of teaching sophomore-level critical research and writing students who were creating art, I found the distinction helpful for them [see Foucault, 1976; McLuhan & Fiore, 1967].) They researched practical artistic techniques that contributed to the structure of their work, such as drawing techniques or literary devices, and they researched a topic that they ultimately addressed and expressed by means of those techniques. For their project proposal worksheet, they were required to explain the purpose and intended audience for their project, and how their approach to subject matter, media, and form would help them to achieve their purpose, both of which required them to consider "various audiences and purposes [as they] are informed

by research," "analyze a situation . . . and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7), and "use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources" (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). In other words, the students' critical thinking through writing in the preliminary stages of the project was integral to artistic creation.

A colleague posed two key questions about the approach: 1) "I wonder if giving students the option to create art as one of the major projects of the course is actually an appropriate move for a research writing course," and 2) "the range of creative/artistic options is so vast . . . it's hard to imagine any writing teacher being able to evaluate final projects with any consistency." Many teachers are likely to have similar questions, so in reflecting on my experiences and observations, I hope to demonstrate that creating art is both appropriate and assessable for a research writing course.

Critique One: Is Creating Art Appropriate for a Research Writing Class?

Yes, because students are engaged in critical ways of knowing and processes of meaning-making.

Anne Berthoff (1975) argued that the teaching of first-year composition should embrace the imagination, that is, "the active mind," instead of a generic composing process; she argued that we should see "the composing process as an act of knowing" and to notice "how what we do when we compose is related to what we do when we make sense of the world" (p. 13). When poets make sense of the world, they do not write a poem about it, as the critic Clement Greenberg (1939) pointed out: "The poet or artist turns [their attention] in upon the medium of [their] own craft," not using the form to convey meaning, but to be in the process of meaning-making (p. 36). The same can be said for visual artists; he wrote: "Picasso, Braque, Mondrian, Miro, Kandinsky, Brancusi, even Klee, Matisse, and Cezanne derive their chief inspiration from the medium they work in. The excitement of their art seems to lie most of all in its pure preoccupation with the invention and arrangement of spaces, surface, shapes, colors, etc. to the exclusion of whatever is not necessarily implicated in these factors" (p. 37). Creating art, as "an act of knowing" and a way of "making sense of the world" (Berthoff, 1975, p. 13), is just as valuable as the kind of writing and critical thinking common to academic contexts, particularly because creating art gives students the opportunity to turn inward upon "the medium of [their] craft" (Greenberg, 1939, p. 36) and "explore . . . [a] way[ ] of understanding" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7). If students are to create art in a writing classroom that values critical thinking, then it is important to appreciate those moments of composing when they are not writing *about* something, when they are not concerned with the "context of justification" (Leavy, 2009, p. 9), "assertions," "evidence," "chains of reasoning," and "qualified claims" (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). The "excitement of their art" is an integral element of critical thinking that happens in the process of composing it, as is "the ability to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7).

Crystal Van Kooten (2016) found that when students in her writing class composed videos "that used still and moving images, sounds, and written text in combination," the students were emotionally invested as they gained meta-awareness of their composing processes and engaged in "rhetorically layered actions," which is to say, simultaneously

"orienting, addressing multiple audiences and purposes, and revising the parts and the whole" (pp. 60–67). The process of orienting, a notion Van Kooten drew from Queer theorist Sara Ahmed, is much like the experiences artists have when they decide which paint they want to use—it is emotionally and intellectually challenging. As Feldman (1970) wrote, "an area of paint becomes for [them] much more than an area of paint: it becomes a vehicle of ideas and feelings—ideas and feelings that are familiar or original, pleasing or displeasing, clear or ambiguous" (p. 95). As with Klee, Picasso and others, these ideas and feelings occurred for Van Kooten's students because, as she reported, "the medium of the video itself provided stimuli for particularly layered rhetorical actions and metacognitive articulations" (2016, p. 76). Emotions turn into what Dewey called "interest" (as cited in Van Kooten, 2016, p. 58), which, according to Feldman, is just as innate to artistic creation as decision-making when working with materials—but all this is what Feldman argued should be read as a critical process:

> The artist engages in complex processes of decision-making. You can imagine how vast an array of choices he must range over before making the decisions that are finally evident in his performance and in the visible appearance of his work . . . It should be plain that the physical materials the artist uses constitute critical issues. That is, their actual and potential sensuous effects pose problems of choice for him (pp. 94–95).

What follows is, as Feldman pointed out, "organization, discrimination, choosing, prediction, and inference"; "creating effects and judging their meaning; taking chances and calculating consequences; erecting hypotheses and looking for confirmation; [and] interfering with ideas and suggesting alternatives" that lead to a finished product (p. 99). In other words, the critical thinking that happens in artistic creation is not diametrically opposed to the critical thinking that happens in constructing academic texts, but emotion, excitement, and feeling are built into the way thinking in the arts is done, rather than motivating forces for an academic text.

The excitement of working with material forms in the composing process, as mentioned by Greenberg (1939), Van Kooten (2016), Dewey (as cited in Van Kooten, 2016), and Feldman (1970), was also experienced by my students as they engaged in an emotional process of meaning-making and knowing that many described as "freeing"/"freedom"/ "free." This freedom was integral to the process of development. For instance, one student, who wrote a short story, explained that when creating art, he "could talk about what he wanted to talk about, write for days"[1] rather than rely on the perspectives of others to make an argument, and that "typically [he] did all [he] could to meet the word count" for writing assignments. When he was creating art, he said he "had so much more to say" and that he could go "well beyond" what he had written for the project even after submitting it for a grade. When, during a class discussion, I asked why, he said because he had more freedom: he chose the genre, relied less on the perspective of others to express himself, had more intellectual and emotional investment in the writing, and ultimately "could be more creative." Another student said that experimenting with an artistic process was the central purpose of her project, a collection of poems in three different genres that explores the extent to which creativity, ideas, and feelings are regulated through different genres. Other students identified the excitement and joy as a motivating force that enabled them to work through

the composing process. One student, who replicated Picasso paintings to make self-portraits, said, "Other than enjoying my assignments this semester, I also learned valuable lessons from them. Primarily, knowing your target audience and how to only include relevant information. Writing about the arts or creating art itself really sparks imagination and allows you to get creative, something not many other academic practices accomplish." Students think critically and engage creatively, and as part of the process, they are interested in and excited about the materials that they are working with.

Yes, because critical research is vital to art making.

Pablo Picasso wrote, "Paintings are but research and experiment. I never do a painting as a work of art. All of them are researches" (cited in Liberman, 1956, p. 133). Picasso's quote reveals that research is an essential element to art-making, and, according to both the Framework (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7) and the Statement (CWPA, 2014, p. 2), it's also an essential strategy for and indicator of critical thinking. In other words, creating art is critical thinking. Critical thinking by way of research in WRT 205 happened when students discovered that research varies from one genre to the next, one situation to the next, and that research requires rhetorical sourcing (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). To make this visible to students, the genre analysis worksheet and source list guided them toward "locat[ing] and evaluat[ing] sources" that would inform the project (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). I also provided them with reflective space (journal response, artist statement, reflection essay, class discussions) to help them to see and articulate how their research strategies and experiences shaped their composition (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2).

Several students commented on how research was integral to the content and that they used research rhetorically. One student, who created a hip-hop album, recognized that she had to research and evaluate the beats that she wanted to include in a song to best achieve her stated purpose, which was not only to express a mood and to make the listeners happy but to affirm her ethos. The student therefore was required to "conduct primary and secondary research using a variety of print and non-print sources" and "write texts for various audiences and purposes that are informed by research," both of which are part of the Framework (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7). By asking her to discuss her purpose and choices with the class, I was also able to see how she was able to "use strategies . . . to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas from those from appropriate sources" (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). A student who created a photo essay researched the artistic forms found in the environment and the different ways humans are destroying the natural world "to ensure that [she] was doing [her] description [of the photographs] justice." She noted, "I used research that was primarily pathos driven to ensure that my message that nature should be preserved was being portrayed. With that being said, I still used reputable sources such as CNN and USGS to support my claim." Through reflective writing, another student was able to articulate how her research compared from one project to the next projects (the artist profile, the critical art review, and the art project):

> The research process was similar across all three projects. However, for project one, I talked to more individuals. For the latter two, I did a lot of research online: JSTOR, ProQuest, and a simple Google [search]. I would say that different research styles are needed for different genres. For the review, as mentioned, I talked to the director; with this genre, interviews were an

> aspect of the research. For the artist profile, it was more academic, hence I used databases to find scholarly articles. Lastly, for the art-based writing, I needed answers that were more simple, making the research simple as well. The most time-consuming research was done through the latter two projects.

Here we see the student "conduct[ing] primary and secondary research using a variety of print and nonprint sources" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2014, p. 2), that is, "locat[ing] and evaluat[ing] (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources" (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2). The student's awareness that "different research styles are needed for different genres" was a key takeaway for the course and, of course, a crucial element of critical thinking according to the Statement and the Framework, but her comment also suggests that creating art and reflecting on it in relation to other texts is a useful way to introduce students to a variety of research forms and practices. Finally, her response shows that by not relying on and rigorously integrating an overabundance of sources into the art project, she learned how research processes across and within genres are context-dependent, but there is always some research associated with artistic creation. As van Gogh (1958) said, "Not only does drawing figures and scenes from life demand a knowledge of the technique of drawing, but it also demands profound studies of literature, physiognomy, etc., which are difficult to acquire"—or that substantial incorporation of sources is not valuable (pp. 214–215). Both approaches toward research are comparable, equally valuable, and appropriate for a critical research and writing course.

The student who researched Picasso's techniques to craft a series of three self-portraits, replicates of Picasso's, reflected on a variety of experiences with research, most notably learning about the strategies, stages, and some challenges with applying artistic strategies learned in research to the drawing paper. Reflecting on replicating a portrait Picasso made at the age of eighteen, the student noted,

> This was at the early stages of an iconic artist's lengthy career. Picasso used charcoal in a traditional style, as he was just learning his craft and did not want to stray too far from what was considered the norm at the time. Picasso was highly skilled with charcoal and was able to shade and smudge his art to the perfect effect. This allowed for a realistic portrait of himself.

He described his own experience manipulating the media, 8B charcoal pencil, with some difficulty:

> Picasso's piece looks quite effortless, but that's just because he is already a master of his craft at just eighteen. I found this to be the hardest of all the pieces I replicated as it probably requires the most artistic skill and the ability to actually draw someone's facial features . . . . This was Picasso following a more typical art form, before he delved into abstract art in his future.

By researching the artist's life, art history, and techniques and then applying all of that knowledge to the drawing paper, the student was able to identify with Picasso and by the

completion of the project to realize a "a very clear evolution in the style of Picasso's art as he found himself in the artistic world." This realization was made possible not solely by researching and writing about Picasso but by working with the materials in a process similar to Picasso although unique to the student. His approach could also be read as what Feldman (1970) called "empathic behavior," "bodily imitation of and psychic identification with what is seen—in order to feel and to understand the impact of the visual configurations on oneself or someone else" (p. 96). He imitated Picasso's techniques, identified with him, imagined what it would be like to be Picasso, and used that knowledge to compose for his audience. All of this was made possible through critical research and the invitation to create art.

Yes, because creating art and writing results in synthesizing.
A well-respected violist who has toured throughout the Americas and Europe was also a student in my WRT 205 class. He performed for the class an interpretation of a concerto with the viola, with the purpose of explaining "the process by which a musician interprets music and the work we do to get our end result." During his presentation, he walked us through his process, beginning with playing the original concerto, pausing at crucial moments of the process to explain the decisions he made in order to tell his "story." For example, he stated that he wanted to make the tempo more upbeat to convey a sense of excitement and to add "grace notes" that add his own character to the music while honoring tradition, not "distorting" the original text, but imbuing it with his own style to achieve his purpose. During the artist's talk, we discussed how a musician interprets a concerto much like students took up the genre of the Artist Profile. He explained the relevance of research in music, noting that there is an "intellectual side" of music which, for this particular concerto, required him to "know and understand the artist" and the way the piece was originally written. In addition to biographical research, he had to learn the historical context of the concerto, which was necessarily related to writing, because "literature is at the forefront of each piece of music, then visual art, then music." In other words, books inspired musicians, who then inspired visual artists (See also van Gogh's [1958] discussion of Shakespeare, p. 205, and his discussion of Balzac's *L'historie des treize*, p. 213). This student recognized that social context "shapes the style" of the musical text itself, such as "placing an accent on the second beat to capture the spirit of the music," a spirit whose intonations he said are inflected by the aesthetics of Venezuelan culture, aesthetics that may well be his home language. This transitioned into an important conversation about the social acceptance of code meshing (remixing or combining linguistic styles into a single text) in different genres and gave us a reason to look at an assigned reading, Vershawn Ashanti Young's (2010) article, "Should Writers Use They Own English?" We discovered that writers might not have as much freedom to code mesh as musical composers, who are often expected to code mesh, which is, according to the violist, one of the joys and purposes of creating music. In this sense, learning about art in a writing classroom leads to new discoveries for both students and teachers about the natures of both disciplines, how they intersect, and what we can make from them.

Yes, because research results in critical art making.
One student's substantial research led to his consideration of a social problem and how he could respond to it by making use of art, what Brisben and Theissen (2019) referred to as "criticality" (pp. 3–4). This process involved "analyzing situations and making thoughtful decisions based on that" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7). Specifically, he used his

nuanced understanding of, choices with, and use of genres, media, and formal techniques to "shed light on the Dakota Access Pipeline protests on the mistreatment of Native Americans . . . for everyone to look at," ensuring that "no one is left out because it's important for all" to see what he was trying to convey. He created a series of three visual texts, each having a different purpose that contributes to the composition as a whole. In his artist statement, he articulated his decisions:

> The form is organic primarily for what is shown in the Photoshop, acrylic painting, and pen and ink drawing, but they also contain some geometric forms as well. This creates some contrast and makes certain sections of the pieces stand out more than the others on purpose. The pen and ink drawing has the most organic form in it. The Photoshop, acrylic painting, and pen and ink drawing are all done on a two-dimensional surface. I chose to do a Photoshop, acrylic painting, and pen and ink because to me these are three forms of media that can really show emotion. I chose to make all of my images in black and white for this reason as well. Each piece shows something that can be seen in the protests by the Native Americans. The Photoshop displays the strength of the Native American people by having them standing side by side. The acrylic painting displays the anger at the government and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for trying to interfere with their land. The pen and ink drawing displays the tiredness and sorrow felt by the Native Americans.

Here we see what happens behind the scenes of criticality. He was "think[ing] critically about the materials [he] use[d]" (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2) and made careful decisions about the form ("organic" with "some geometric forms as well"; "two-dimensional surface" rendering) to achieve a visual effect ("this creates contrasts and makes certain sections stand out"). He demonstrated how the media (Photoshop, acrylic painting, pen and ink drawings) helped him to achieve his purposes ("these are the three forms of media that can really show emotion"), decisions that are driven by his emotional investment in and research about the issue. Creating art allowed the student to think critically using methods outside of the discipline of writing studies while gaining skills that enhanced his criticality overall. To restate Feldman (1970), "art claims the very ancient right . . . to rearrange things, to transform substances, to claim new forms into being" (p. 86); the student was able to make use of that right to create a powerful social critique.

It is difficult to capture criticality in art without writing, which is why the student's artist statement is important. It demonstrates how he applied a careful understanding of the material he was working with (i.e., "acrylic is a plastic and paint mixed substance . . . that can look like a water color or an oil painting") along with his research about other artists' styles (i.e., "a famous British Pop artist named David Hockney") and their formal approaches ("geometric form and is contrasted by organic shapes while having everything look simplified"), which puts into words what is not evident simply by looking at the artwork alone. The artist statement not only proves that the work the student did is critical but also provides the student with a space to synthesize and report on his criticality while achieving his purpose as an artist.

Yes, because of Art Crit.
The Statement (CWPA, 2014) outlines that critical thinking is made possible by way of "us[ing] strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources" (p. 2). Creating art in a writing classroom introduces students to alternate strategies of critique, namely the "art crit," for the purpose of composing texts based on others' ideas and feedback in such a way as to encourage design/redesign. Art crit is a method of workshop where art students gather together as a class to display their works in progress (Owens, 2019). In my class, students read and discussed the essay "Workshops, Crits, and the Arts of Response" by Derek Owens (2019). Owens pointed out the limitations of art crit, notably how it fosters competition, judgement, and authoritativeness; the article offers an alternative approach called an Empathic Critique, where the students become the viewers of art, not classmates, and focus on "what we see, why it makes an impression, and what it might mean for how it makes the viewer feel . . . [to go on] a hunt for visual effects, meaning, purpose, and new ideas" (Bartel, as cited in Owens, 2019, p. 205). While students met in small groups and practiced the empathic method, I met with students individually and modeled it. The situated process of the empathic critique facilitated candid discussions with students about their process, purpose, tentative and/or hypothetical structure of their project, and what makes the project meaningful, which resulted in strategies for revising and redesigning.

Additionally, the students reflected on how this workshop was a situated process in relation to other workshop processes, a method for shaping art that is different from a method for shaping writing and part of a broader process of creating art. The students drew comparisons between the workshop experiences of the art project and the first two projects (an art review and artist profile). Some students described the collaborative empathic process as more "open" or "open-ended" than the workshops for the first two projects (i.e., a partner peer review considering the features of the genre in relation to the composer's draft and plan); a student pointed out that writing workshops were already collaborative and that she would prefer the traditional art crit model that fosters competition, judgment, and authoritativeness, not the empathic model responding to it, in a writing class: "writers could benefit from the harsher environment because sometimes people do not necessarily want to tell someone that their work is not good so they don't say anything but if the work was on display it would be obvious to all and someone would have to say something to help the other person advance their project." In this way, the workshop paired with the reflective work allowed students to articulate "analyze, synthesize . . . evaluate" the processes of composing critical projects in different disciplines and forms (Statement; CWPA, 2014, p. 2).

Critique Two: How Do Writing Teachers Assess Art?
My colleague pointed out that "the range of creative/artistic options is so vast . . . it's hard to imagine any writing teacher being able to evaluate final projects with any consistency." Scholars on this topic include Jody Shipka (2011), who asked students to create a Statement of Goals and Choices in which the students become conscious of their processes by detailing "how, why, and under what conditions they made their rhetorical, technological, and methodological choices" (p. 113). This approach is designed for a diverse range of texts; as Shipka said, "Because students often choose to work with materials, methodologies, and

technologies I am not familiar with, the statements serve an additional purpose in providing me with ways of both navigating and responding to texts that may not look or work like texts with which I am more familiar" (p. 113). Another useful text, albeit not framed in arts assessment, is *Digital Writing Assessment and Evaluation* (McKee & DeVoss, 2013), a fourteen-chapter web-based collection that offers a comprehensive take on the complexities of assessing multimodal compositions, including equitable assessment practices for administrators, program revision strategies, evaluation strategies for teachers, and perspectives from members who contributed to the National Writing Project Map.

I chose to grade with a rubric, which allowed students flexibility and gave them a sense of structure that I could refer to should they have questions about their grades. The rubric states that an "A" project "exhibits all of the features of the genre as explained in your Artist's Statement. Research has clearly been done in order to complete the project. Subject matter, medium, and form are carefully conceptualized and composed." I graded for both process and product, with the writing process worksheets and artist statement offering proof of progress, so to speak. I also took an empathic approach toward evaluating the final product, engaging with the art and asking: What do I see? Why does it make an impression? What might it mean for how it makes me feel? In keeping with the method of critique, I am on "a hunt for visual effects, meaning, purpose, and new ideas" (Bartel, as cited in Owens, 2019). One advantage of the empathic critique is that it repositions the professor from authority and master of genres to collaborator and facilitator of critical thinking, meaning-making, discovery, and an emotionally invested aesthetic experience. Of course, there will inevitably be students who fail to see the significance of a project, including this one. Unsuccessful projects were ultimately from students who had missed a significant number of classes and/or had not workshopped, participated minimally during class activities, and/or failed to complete process materials, all of which showed in the final product.

Conclusion

Is there a place for artistic creation in a required writing course that emphasizes critical thinking and research? Considering the definitions of critical thinking discussed in this report, art has an important place. Creating art helps students to acquire the diverse range of critical thinking skills as enumerated in the influential Framework (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 7) as well as the Statement (CWPA, 2014, p. 2). By creating art, alongside reflective work, in addition to academic and alphabetic texts, students "extend and synthesize their thinking" (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p.7). By navigating the composing processes of artistic creation, from researching and emotionally engaging with the materials to analyzing, designing, and redesigning, students "explore multiple ways of understanding" (Framework; CWPA et al., 200, p. 7). From start to finish, students are engaged in critical, rhetorical work. They learn new approaches to research, social critique, and peer review. They encounter new opportunities for synthesis. What's more is that given the various opportunities for critical thinking that artistic creation lends itself to, students can cultivate the Framework's "habits of mind," such as curiosity ("the desire to know more about the world") and openness ("the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world") (CWPA et al., 2011, p. 1).

In light of the history of positivist science and the quantitative paradigm, as previously discussed, it is understandable why aesthetic experiences and artistic expressions are dismissed, subordinated, or otherwise considered irrelevant to a student's

critical research and writing education. However, it is worth doing the work to ensure that they are valued and upheld as much as the Framework and Statement. As Leavy (2009) noted, meaning-making in the arts happens through an "*iterative process* (not a linear one) and meaning emerges through labeling, identifying, and classifying emerging concepts; interrelating concepts and testing hypotheses; finding patterns; and generating theory" (Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon, & Chandler, as cited in Leavy, p. 10). More specifically, she stated, "arts-based practices draw out the meaning-making process and push it to the forefront" (2009, p. 11). What we have then is another way of knowing, another way of understanding; we have another process of composing that shows us how "what we do when we compose is related to what we do when we make sense of the world," (Berthoff, 1975, p. 13). This cultivates openness and curiosity, two key habits of mind (Framework; CWPA et al., 2011, p. 4), which is to say the nature of an aesthetic education. As Feldman (1970) stated, an "aesthetic education implies taking things apart and putting things together in the light of an affective idea about what they might become" (p. 86). An aesthetic education, one that is guided by affect, process, and possibility, should be a welcome addition to a critical research and writing course.

While assessment of art projects presents its challenges, there are a number of approaches to draw from, none of which requires the educator to have mastery over the diverse range of art projects from which students can choose to create. Experimenting with art in a research writing class has promising possibilities for the future. The more teachers, students, and researchers engage in art-based writing practices, the more we will discover and learn from connections between artists, writers, writing, and art.

Note

Permission was obtained from students for all quotes.

References

Berthoff, A. E. (1975). Reclaiming the imagination. *Freshman English News, 3*(3), 13–14.

Brisbin, C., & Thiessen, M. (2019). Criticality; Or woe is me, what is it good for! In C. Brisbin & M. Thiessen (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to criticality in art, architecture, and design* (pp. 3–8). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ceraso, S., & Pavesich, M. Learning as coordination: Postpedagogy and design. *Enculturation, 28*. Retrieved from http://enculturation.net/learning_as_coordination

Council of Writing Program Administrators (2014). WPA outcomes statement for first-year composition (3.0)." Retrieved from http://wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/pt/sd/news_article/243055/_PARENT/layout_details/false

Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, & National Writing Project. (2011). Framework for success in postsecondary writing. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED516360.pdf

Dunnigan, J. A (2019). A place for writing in the studio. In K. Hanzalik & N. Virgintino (Eds.), *Exquisite corpse: Studio art-based writing in the academy* (pp. 42–61). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Feldman, E. B. (1970). *Becoming human through art: Aesthetic experience in the school*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gogh, V. V. (1958). *The complete letters of Vincent van Gogh* (Vol. 1). Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society.

Greenberg, C. (1939). Avante-garde and kitsch. *Partisan Review, 6*(5), 34–49. Retrieved from http://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/books/PR1939V6N5/HTML/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#1

Foucault, M. (1976). *The history of sexuality: Vol. 1. An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Hanzalik, K., & Virgintino, N. (2019). Social justice in (and beyond) the studio art-based classroom: Improvisation and play as responses to economic inequality. In K. Hanzalik & N. Virgintino (Eds.), *Exquisite corpse: Studio art-based writing in the academy* (pp. 173–196). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Leavy, P. (2009). Method meets art: Arts-based research practice. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Leverenz, C. S. (2014). Design thinking and the wicked problems of teaching writing. *Computers and Composition, 33,* 1–12.

Liberman, A. (1956, November 1). Picasso. *Vogue,* 132–133.

Marback, R. (2009). Embracing wicked problems: The turn to design in composition studies. *College Composition and Communication, 61*(2), W397–W419.

McKee, H. A., & DeVoss, D. N. (Eds.). (2013). *Digital writing assessment & evaluation*. Logan: Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State University Press. Retrieved from https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/dwae/

McLuhan, M. & Quentin F. (1967). *The medium is the massage: An inventory of effects.* New York, NY: Bantam Books.

O'Neill, P. Adler-Kassner, L., Fleischer, C., & Hall A. (2017). Foreword. In D. Roen, N. Behm, & S. Rankins-Robertson (Eds), *The framework for success in postsecondary writing: Scholarship and applications*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Owens, D. (2019). Workshops, crits, and the arts of response. In K. Hanzalik & N. Virgintino (Eds.), *Exquisite corpse: Studio art-based writing in the academy* (pp. 197–221). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Palmeri, J. (2012). *Remixing composition: A history of multimodal writing pedagogy*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Palmieri, J. (2019). Nevermind Jackson Pollack, where's Judy Chicago? In K. Hanzalik & N. Virgintino (Eds.), *Exquisite corpse: Studio art-based writing in the academy.* (pp. 149–172). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Rubino, Vittoria. (2019). The artistry of composition: Design thinking in writing studies. In K. Hanzalik & N. Virgintino (Eds.), *Exquisite corpse: Studio art-based writing in the academy* (pp. 125–148). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Shipka, J. (2011). *Toward a composition made whole*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Sirc, G. (2002). *English composition as a happening*. Logan: Utah State University Press.

Stowe, S. A., & Rico, C. (2019). Write your title here. A conversation concerning arts, methods and some more. In K. Hanzalik & N. Virgintino (Eds.), *Exquisite corpse: Studio art-based writing in the academy* (pp. 20–41). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.

Syracuse University, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition (n.d.). Course descriptions and learning outcomes*.* Retrieved from https://thecollege.syr.edu/writing-studies-rhetoric-and-composition/undergraduate-programs/writing-105205-sequence/descriptions-outcomes/

Van Kooten, C. (2016). "The video was what did it for me": Developing meta-awareness about

composition across media. *College English, 79*(1), 57–80.
Virgintino, N. (2019, November). Studio art-based writing in the academy. Keynote address presented at the SUNY Council on Writing Conference, Purchase, New York.
Wood, J. (2000) The culture of academic rigour: Does design research really need it? *The Design Journal*, *3*(1), 44–57. https://doi.org/10.2752/146069200789393599
Young, V. A. (2010). Should writers use they own English?" *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, *12*(1), 110–117.