Socially Engaged Art Education Beyond the Classroom:
Napping, Dreaming and Art Making

By: Barbara Bickel
with video by Gregory Wendt

It is the third week of classes in January and I invite the students in my Philosophy of Art Education class to meet in the student gallery where we will nap as part of a lesson on socially engaged art. The day of class there is no heat in the 100 year old building where the School of Art and Design classroom and gallery is located. I am glad there are many blankets in the gallery Dream Scroll installation as I enter the building that day. (Bickel, 2013, from journal)

Figure 1: Bickel, Barbara. (2013). Art Education Philosophy Class Nap-In. Vergette Gallery, Southern Illinois University.

Napping in a student gallery (Figure 1) may seem to be an unorthodox approach to teaching the philosophy of art education but it is one that is steeped in contemporary artist practices. Artists’ with practices such as Allan Kaprow’s Happenings in the 60s, to feminist artists of the 70s (eg. Chicago, Lacy, Edelson), to current socially engaged artists, who situate their art practices within community (eg., Ai Weiwei, Women on Waves Collective, Wochenklausur Collective) are interested in personal and social transformation, often with a critical lens (Lacy, 1995). These socially engaged artists are
engaging philosopher John Dewey’s (1934) understanding of Art as Experience, artist teacher Kenneth Beittel’s “nondifferentiated aesthetic or whole art” (1991, p. 50) and art critic Suzi Gablik’s (1992) Connective Aesthetics. These practices reflect a move to return art to daily life, with an awareness of human interconnectedness with the world and the more than human world through art. Socially engaged art practices involve a hybridity of art, research and pedagogy, including performance, activism, image making and social research. The shared method that crosses all socially engaged art is “dialogue between the artist and the participant” (Heim, 2003, p. 186).

The Nap-In, an on-going participatory arts-based inquiry project conceived by the Gestare Art Collective at an artist residency in July 2011 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada is the genesis of the pedagogical intervention introduced to students in Barbara's class (Bickel & McConachy, 2013). From Sit-Ins to Teach-Ins, artist/activist/educators have been interested in alternative

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1 To see and read more about the on-going practice of Nap-Ins go to: [http://www.gestareartcollective.com/nap-ins.php](http://www.gestareartcollective.com/nap-ins.php)
To see documentation of a conference presentation followed by an ocean-side releasing of the dreams on the Dream Scroll go to: [http://www.gestareartcollective.com/academic-artworkings.php](http://www.gestareartcollective.com/academic-artworkings.php)
To see an 2012 performance ritual with the Dream Scroll entitled Thread of a Dream: [https://vimeo.com/44233725](https://vimeo.com/44233725)
2 Gestare Art Collective was formed in 2009. Current members include Barbara Bickel, Cindy Lou Griffith, Nané Ariadne Jordan, Medwyn McConachy & Ingrid Rose. To learn more about the collective visit to [http://www.gestareartcollective.com](http://www.gestareartcollective.com)
sites of learning. The Nap-In is an on-going socially-engaged art practice that integrates aesthetics with the ethical, and political. Nap-Ins have taken place at artist residencies, galleries, community centers, and educational conferences in Canada, the USA, and Italy. To date, more than 180 nappers have contributed to the original Dream Scroll in 16 different locations.\(^3\) Nap-Ins offer an opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds to participate in, share and extend their dreams and visions for themselves, their community and the world in an uncensored and anonymous publicly shared cultural artifact. Integral dream scholars Bogzaran and Delauriers (2012) note how;

Dreams reflect our personal development journey while presenting us with enigmatic, partial, and difficult visions of the dilemmas that tie self and society together in their evolutionary dance; dreams reflect the traces of alienation and fragmentation as well as recovery and remembrance of our state of interdependence. (p. 165)

Social dreaming scholar Lawrence (2005) further describes dreams, memories and thoughts as “shadows of the future … that are just floating around in the social unconscious that belongs to all” (p.83-84). The Nap-In event and Dream Scroll artifact constitute a challenge

\(^3\) Additional Dream Scrolls have been created and Nap-Ins offered by Gestare artists to other communities. Barbara began one in her Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies program at SIU with specific dreams for WGS Studies in 2013. In 2015 a Nap-In workshop and scroll was begun at Vine Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba specific to their community outreach dreams. Gestare Art Collective invites others to engage with this socially-engaged art practice in their own communities, while acknowledging the source of the project from the collective.
aesthetically, ethically and politically to receive individual and communal dreams as significant forms of inquiry, knowledge, critique and wisdom.

Combining napping and walking the labyrinth with the reflective creative process of drawing, writing and sewing onto the Dream Scroll is intended to bring to light the collective awareness of a community (Figure 2 & 3). The Nap-Ins have held the potential to assist participants to dream and witness themselves co-poetically with/as the other. In these processes participants have the opportunity to step beyond personal boundaries to re-attune with themselves and others.

Following the socially engaged art experience in the student gallery the Dream Scroll was installed in the Rotunda Gallery at the university library-- a public location with comfy chairs where students often nap between study and classes (Figure 4).
The students, inspired by the student gallery Nap-In experience, volunteered to facilitate Nap-Ins for fellow students and library attendees in the library gallery at scheduled times throughout the three week exhibition (Figure 5).

Facilitation involved inviting those who came into the gallery space to nap, to walk the labyrinth taped to the floor surrounding the Dream Scroll, to engage thoughtfully and creatively through writing dreams or visions onto the supplied recycled cloth material (See Appendix One). Levels of engagement with the interactive installation varied. Active engagement resulted in participants sewing their completed dream art piece onto the collective scroll. Below is the poster invitation for the Library Installation (Figure 6).
DREAM WORKING II
A Participatory Art Installation in the Library Rotunda

February 11-28, 2013

What are your dreams for the university community, your education and higher education?

The Gestare Art Collective

Nap-In Workshops
No Cost
Fri. Feb. 15, 2 - 4pm
Sat. Feb. 16, 11 - 1pm
Sun. Feb 17, 3 - 5pm
Mon Feb 18, 6 - 8pm
Tue. Feb 19, 2 - 4pm
Wed. Feb 20, 1 - 3pm
Thurs. Feb 21, 2 - 4pm
Fri. Feb 22, 3 - 5pm
Sat. Feb 23, 11 - 1pm
Sun. Feb 24, 1 - 3pm
Mon. Feb 25, 1 - 3pm
Tue. Feb 26, 6 - 8pm

Drop in to nap & sew your personal dream onto the Dream Scroll

Nap-In Workshop Facilitators
Barbara Bickel, Joanna Clayton, Olivia Coker, Grace Katalinich, Jessica (Laine) Mayfield, Brigid McCann, Jenna Strickler, Megan Sims, Kathleen Frye

Closing Reception
Wed. Feb. 27, 3 - 5pm
All welcome!

Morris Library Rotunda
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois

Sponsored by:
School of Art & Design and
Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies.

www.gestareartcollective.com
for more info: bickel@siu.edu

A post Nap-In releasing ritual brings closure to each of the Nap-Ins. These performative ritual acts vary depending on the impulse and suggestions of participants in each Nap-In. At the suggestion of a student involved in the campus Nap-Ins the Dream Scroll was taken on May 19, 2013 to Inspiration Point in Southern Illinois. Students, faculty and community members climbed to the top of a 300 foot bluff to release the dreams into the winds off of the ancient cliff (Figure 7 & 8).
Figure 7 (top): Sims, Zach. (2013). *Releasing the Dream Scroll Dreams*. Inspiration Point, Southern Illinois. Photo.

Figure 8: Wendt, Gregory. (2013). *Releasing the Dream Scroll Dreams*. Inspiration Point, Southern Illinois. Photo.
This was a breathtaking experience, a cleansing, and release of dreams into the atmosphere. This performative event was filmed and made into video by videographer Gregory Wendt that includes the spoken narration of a compilation of randomly selected dreams embedded in the *Dream Scroll*. This dream text was culled for the video and can be read in Appendix Two. To watch the five minute video click below or visit [https://vimeo.com/74959744](https://vimeo.com/74959744).

There is something simultaneously powerful and playful about the collectively growing *Dream Scroll*, created by many hands, some seasoned sewers, others novice, as it borderlinks unknown others across dreams, time, cultures, identities, place and space. It has become a dynamic living curriculum. The socially engaged project has beckoned the artist in each person to co-emerge and co-learn with it; each prior dreamer becoming a wit(h)ness for the next dream.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the members of the Gestare Art Collective who dreamt the *Nap-Ins* into being with me, Medwyn McConachy and Nané Jordan, and the members that continue expanding the dreaming into the world, Cindy Lou Griffith and Ingrid Rose. I also want to thank the following students, faculty, staff and friends at SIU who assisted in multiple aspects of this socially engaged art project at Southern Illinois University; Joanna Clayton, Olivia Coker, Holly Cormier, Laura Dreuth Zeman, R. Michael Fisher, Kathleen Frye, Grace Katalinich, Jessica Mayfield, Brigid McCann, Hugh Muldoon, Megan Sims, Jenna Strickler and Gregory Wendt.
Appendix 1

Drop-In Nap-In – Facilitation Guide

[This is an adapted hand out created by Barbara Bickel given to the Art Education students and other volunteer facilitators of the drop-in Nap-In at the Rotunda Gallery. This has been adapted from the Gestare Art Collective facilitation process of prior Nap-Ins]

Objective:
In the Nap-In, participants have the opportunity to step beyond personal boundaries, to re-attune with themselves and others through adding their dreams to the collective. This is an opportunity for building community. Through this socially-engaged art practice we can begin to integrate aesthetics with the ethical, and political.

Prep:
- Set up table with art making materials, fabric, needles, thread, buttons, sharpies, crayons, etc. Participants are welcome to bring fabric scraps from home.
- Pre-make a few Dream Pillows. These are small pillow sachets. These can be given away to people who want to do the full process and nap. A participant may want to make their own Dream Pillow and that is good too. If we don’t have extra dream pillows to give to someone, let them inhale from the one that we have. Explain what they are and that as herbs, lavender relaxes and mugwort assists dreaming and visioning. Ingredients: a pinch of lavender, a pinch of mugwort, and stuffing (fabric can also be used to stuff)

Facilitation Guidelines
As people approach you, invite them to participate in the Nap-In and add their dream to the Dream Scroll. Explain the process to them. Give them a bit of background on the Nap-In if they are interested. There is no right or wrong way to participate.

Instructions of the Process for Participants:
1) Nap, rest in the chair for as long as you like. Walk the labyrinth as a way to start shifting into a reflective dream space.

2) When you have woken up or feel ready to start the art process – find fabric and write your dream, thoughts, onto it or make a piece that represents your dream

3) The dream can be a dream participants have had, a dream had that night before, a dream they want to let go of, a dream they want to explore further. It can also be words or ideas that come to them while they are resting/napping. Or it can be a dream they want to have. Dream is understood in the largest sense of the word.

4) After they have a dream they can choose art materials and being to write their dream down onto fabric or create a fabric piece that visually reflects their dream.

5) After completing their fabric dream art they chose where they want to attach it to the large Dream Scroll.

6) Sign their name on their fabric dream art piece if they choose.

7) Lastly, have them sign their name to the contact sheet (there is a sheet up for this) and add their email address. This is so they can be recognized the next time the scroll is shown and be notified when the Dream Scroll will be taken to Inspiration Point.
Facilitation Suggestions:

- Offer any sewing help they might want in the process. Encourage them to try it even if they have never sewn. Helps to have needles pre-threaded.

- As a facilitator you will have to intuit if the participant wants to work in silence or if they want to talk while they are working. If you are not sure ask. They will probably want to find a comfortable chair to work in. You can move around and check on how they are doing as they work. This will be practicing your ability to sense the mood of the maker. Some people will be talkative and others will not be. Some will want to share their dreams verbally; others will not. Remember that this is a new art creation and to treat it like a new baby coming into the world. Treat the art dream piece and the maker with care.

- When they are finished their art dream piece. Explain how it can be added wherever they want on the Dream Scroll. It may go onto the new white fabric tail. It may be added to another dream art piece that is already there. Ask them to think about where it wants to go. Lift the Dream Scroll to show how it will hang down if they are working on the lower piece. They can work on both sides of the scroll.

- It is also okay if they want to take their dream art piece home and not attach it to the Dream Scroll. Note: We have never experience this, as participants have been happy and at times relieved to leave their dreams with the other dreams on the Dream Scroll.

- If they need help sewing it on you can assist but encourage them to try – give them basic tips. Try to watch that they do not accidentally sew through a piece on the other side of the scroll. If it happens that is not a problem.

- After they leave – check that the dream art piece is securely attached on the Dream Scroll. Sometimes the stitching needs to be re-enforced.

- Its okay if they want to take a picture of their piece on the scroll.

- They can take their piece home to finish it and bring it back another day.

- Invite them to come back another day and add another dream.

Enjoy any conversation you may have in this participatory public art experience. Reflect and sketch in your Art Journals during and afterwards about what you learned about yourself as an artist-teacher and about what you saw the participants learn. Enjoy the experience of dreaming for yourself, and the community through your facilitation.
Appendix 2

Dream excerpts from the Dream Scroll spoken in the video

Because dream never just itself – it’s cool blue sea dropping into mouth like a wish

what I’m learning here about trust and control

I dreamt one day my heart higher than my head

I open jail cell quickly, dress is long and deep sky blue. when I leave I realize I’m eagle watching myself search for places to hide

Some people have luck with dreams – not me. my dreams are bad or strange. I want to be a happy person, happy dreams – what dreams may come? What dreams may come?

Why mass suicide surfacing in my dream, ecological crisis, current political moments? wings and heart, my desire to take flight – heart intact

I felt myself sucked into it at once, I opened into the universe, breathing turned into an intense hum – universe’s melody – I cried floating in timeless bliss

dream about a psychopath who was trying to kill me but I killed him first, then I became a psychopath.

used to fly, now grounded

I wish for all of us to realize this: earn what we work for, know from what we’re taught, life a continuous beautiful lesson challenging us to grow love change – like a rose we blossom and seed this world, ceaselessly, life continues based on what we put into it today.

- pruned by Ingred Rose sept 21, 2013
References


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