



**IMAG::
INSEE**

issue 11
June 2021

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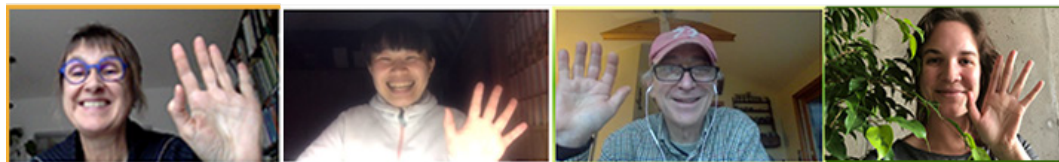
RESILIENCY THROUGH ARTMAKING

Re-charging the IMAGination

As artists and educators, we continually find ways to energize and invigorate our practice. Now, as we strive to make sense of unprecedented global events that have uprooted our routines we are at new beginnings compelled to again witness the power of art to bring us hope, joy, and meaning. In this issue we present visual essays that have demonstrated novel and innovative ways that artists, educators, and community members recharge as an active commitment to revitalize the imagination and sense of wonder. These essays illuminate how visual language and aesthetic experience brings optimism and resilience into the creative process. By exploring the unexplored they refresh the imagination of self, learners, and community members.

As newly appointed co-editors we are also at new beginnings exploring the unexplored and honored to present this, our first issue. We are grateful to Teresa Eca who pioneered and edited IMAG through these past seven years and to graphic designer Angela Saldanha for her keen dedication and vision. We hope to follow their path to Re-charge Imaginations for our readers through many upcoming IMAG issues.

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Contact: InSEA Publications, Quinta da Cruz. Estrada de São Salvador, 3510-784 São Salvador, Viseu Portugal

Website: <https://www.insea.org/publications/imag>

Email: imag-editor@insea.org

Frequency: Three issues per year

ISSN: 2414-3332

DOI: 10.24981/2414-3332-11.2021



IMAG issue 11 **RESILIENCY THROUGH ARTMAKING**

The first issue by the IMAG QUARTET ::

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INDEX

- 5 **Invitation to Use Your Imagination**
Seija ULKUNIEMI

- 10 **Explaining “Real” in Landscape Photography**
Esa Pekka ISOMURSU

- 17 **Renew, Recharge and Resiliency Development Through Artmaking During a Global Pandemic**
Christina BAIN, Donalyn HEISE, Dawn STIENECKER

- 24 **Imaginary classrooms.**
Exploring new directions in visual art education through future workshops in teacher training.
Ingrid FORSLER

- 30 **An extra-curricular art engagement for Irish secondary school students within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic**
Fergal KILKENNY

- 35 **A Pedagogy of Photographic Seeing That Seeks to Dwell**
Wanfei HUANG

- 40 **Forest talks to us: Art and coping with forest disputes**
Maria HUHMARNIEMI

Front and back cover image: ©Wanfei HUANG



Renew, Recharge and Resiliency Development Through Artmaking During a Global Pandemic

Keywords or phrases: Covid-19, resilience, arts-based learning



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Abstract

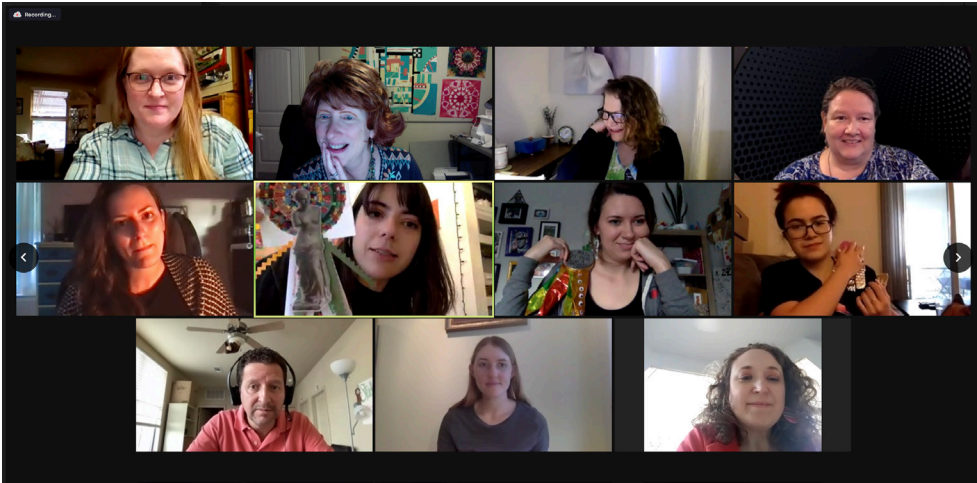
Resilience is the ability to cope in the face of adversity. This visual essay describes how artmaking served as a catalyst for personal and professional rejuvenation and resiliency building during a global pandemic. Data was collected through visual artifacts, reflections, discussions, and exit surveys. Findings suggest that workshop participants felt that artmaking strategies could be integrated into their curriculum and adapted for their personal and professional well-being.

Introduction

If we asked you to name a historical event in your lifetime, what would you choose? A year ago, we might have selected the horror of 9/11. However, the COVID-19 global pandemic would now top our list. Indeed, living, learning, and working during a pandemic has been fraught with both enormous challenges and opportunities impacting our personal and professional lives (Hicks, 2021; Kantawala, 2021; LeJevic, 2021). This visual essay describes how artmaking served as a catalyst for personal and professional rejuvenation and resiliency building during a challenging time. More specifically, as the pandemic dragged on, we wondered: “Who is taking care of teachers’ well-being? How might we utilize artmaking to support local teachers?” These concerns inspired us to create a four week-long visual art professional development workshop for K-12 teachers.

Our Participants

We invited a group of educators from a local school district to attend a free artmaking workshop (February 4 – March 4, 2021). Participants who attended all four sessions earned a continuing education certificate.



Workshop Overview

During our weekly synchronous zoom meetings, we engaged in brief warm-up activities, introduced contemporary artists and children’s literature¹, and provided artmaking prompts. “Completed” art works were not expected, but participants shared weekly reflections and artworks.

- Prompts included:
- Week 1- Repetition. What is worth repeating? What is not?
 - Week 2 - I AM (my identity)
 - Week 3 - I Can’t, But I CAN...
 - Week 4 - Celebrating Our Accomplishments

¹
Contemporary artists featured in workshop:

1. Reginald C. Adams (US)
2. Melissa Miller (US)
3. Susan Herbert (British)
4. Alma Lee (US)
5. Ken Hoffman (US)
6. Svjetlan Junakovic (Croatian)
7. El-Anutsui (Ghanan)
8. Olu Amoda (Nigerian)
9. Ocean Sole (Kenyan artist cooperative)
10. Calder Kamin (US)
11. Virginia Fleck (US)
12. Vic Muniz (Brazilian)
13. Yao Lu (Chinese)
14. Victor Nunes (Brazilian)

Children’s literature featured in workshop:

1. *Quick As a Cricket* by Audrey & Don Wood
2. *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat* by Simms Taback
3. *Galimoto* by Karen Lynn Williams

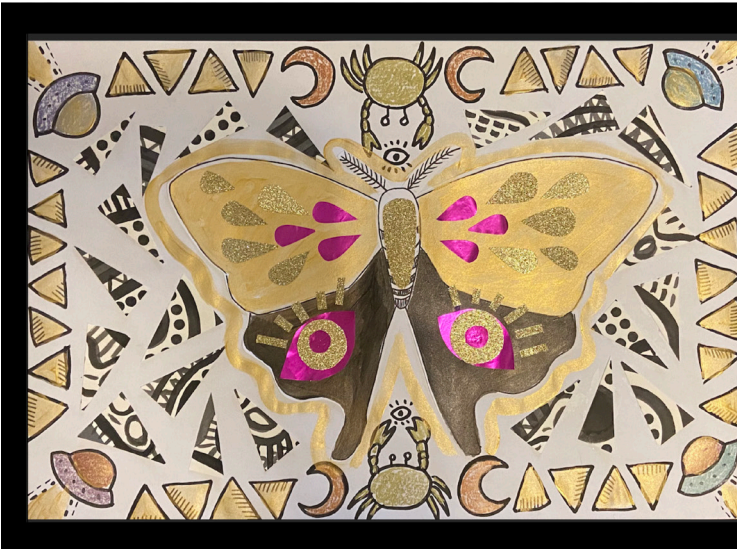


Cat Face (joy):

- I love animals
- I have 3 cats
- I feel like my personality is similar to a cat. Some days my joy is being able to sleep all day and other days I want to be around people

Cactus (strength):

- TEXAS
- Doesn't just withstand harsh climates, it adapts to and thrives in a harsh climate
- Resilient



For my animal I choose a moth. A moth is a symbol for **transition and change** which I believe to be a theme in my life recently. Moths are also always **determined in seeking the light** in the darkness. This has been a dark year and I have often had to remind myself to focus on the positive and seek the light in others/situations. The moth is also a creature of the night guided by the moon which is a symbol I included in my border.

—
Mother Nature Interlude

After our second workshop, Austin, Texas experienced unexpected severe winter weather, causing widespread power outages, water disruptions, as well as business and school closings.

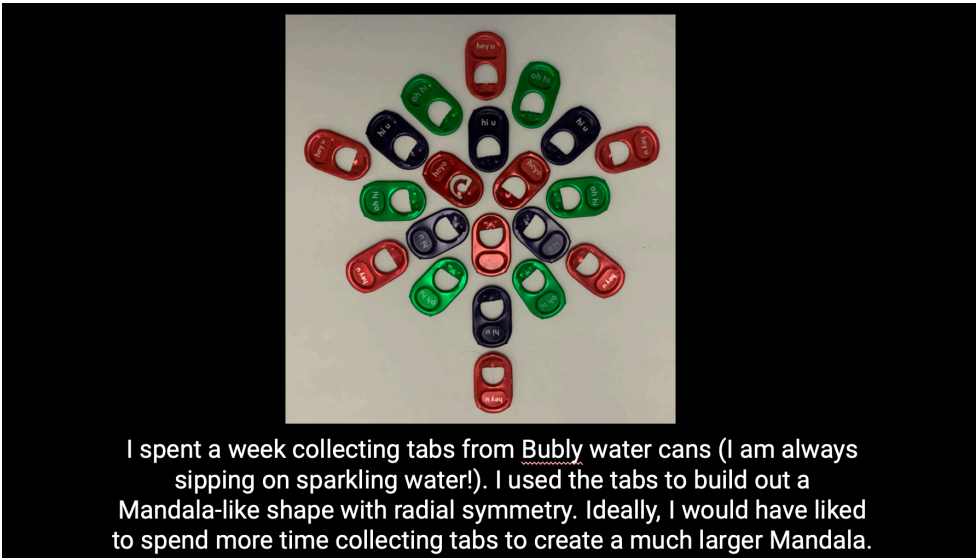


We had no choice but to reschedule our third workshop. On top of many personal and professional demands, the storm gave us an opportunity to demonstrate flexibility, which is an important characteristic of resilience.



—
After The Storm

Our group was eager to reconnect with one another, share our winter weather stories, and begin a new artmaking activity. As we discussed how lack of resources had recently impacted our lives, conversely, we considered how limitations in materials might inspire creative solutions. After examining several artists, such as El-Anutsui, who use discarded objects to create artworks, we were eager to create art from recycled materials.



I spent a week collecting tabs from Bubly water cans (I am always sipping on sparkling water!). I used the tabs to build out a Mandala-like shape with radial symmetry. Ideally, I would have liked to spend more time collecting tabs to create a much larger Mandala.

Virtual Gallery Walk

As part of our final celebration, we utilized Artsteps (2020) to create a virtual gallery. Participants expressed surprise and pride at seeing their creations in a digital format. Beranger commented that it was exciting to see her work on such a large scale and that she looked forward to using a virtual gallery in future critiques with her high school art students. Kaley, a speech pathologist, said that she never imagined that her artwork would be in a gallery, and she thought it looked “pretty cool” (personal communication, March 4, 2021).



The Award Goes To...Or What Our Participants Gained

As a wrap up activity, participants created an achievement ribbon that showcased a personal success from the workshop. Kaley felt empowered to create art without step-by-step directions. Similarly, Angela said that the open-ended activities reminded her how much she enjoys making art for her own enjoyment as opposed to simply making instructional examples for her classroom.



Each participant acknowledged the need to re-connect with their creative side and not “worry about how things are supposed to look—just do it” (personal communication, March 4, 2021). Beranger reflected that making time for artmaking is important and that “this hour is a gift to myself” (personal communication, February 11, 2021). Katie’s grandmother passed away during our workshop and she stated that artmaking contributed to her resiliency during this difficult time. The participants felt that our professional development workshop was informative, engaging, as well as personally and professionally useful. Initial findings suggest participants experienced additional factors which strengthen resiliency through artmaking, such as personal accomplishment, self-awareness, freedom to take risks, creative expression, and vision for the future.

What We Learned

In closing, it has been said that the arts cannot change the world, but they may change human beings who might change the world (Greene, 2000). We hope that the lessons learned in this workshop will not only find their way into our participants’ classrooms, but also into their lives. Artmaking helps us make sense of the world, process our feelings, connect with others, renew our hope for tomorrow, rejuvenate our well-being during difficult times, and help build resiliency (Heise, 2014; Heise, 2013). Online teaching and learning can feel isolating, yet technology enabled us to build new and strengthen existing relationships with educators through artmaking during a global pandemic.

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