

MUSE Proposal Summer 2021
Amplifying Local Teen Voices through An Outdoor Photography Exhibition

Mentoring Faculty:

Faculty A

_____@tcnj.edu

Associate Professor of Art Education

Pre-tenure

5 years at TCNJ

Department of Art & Art History

Faculty B

_____@tcnj.edu

Professor of Photography

Tenured

21 years at TCNJ

Department of Art & Art History

Student collaborators:

Name: Student A

Email: _____@tcnj.edu

Name: Student B

Email: _____@tcnj.edu

Requested Amount: \$9,032.00

This project/study will require IRB approval

Previous MUSE award: N/A

Project and Learning Plan

I) Intellectual Merit: One of the many constructive tools we have to give voice to the voiceless is through artmaking, particularly in the form of public art or community-driven art which can reach a broad audience and act as an agent of change through its enhanced visibility. Even before the pandemic, Trenton youth indicated a need for creative outlets in the community. In the Capital City Youth Violence Coalition Youth Safety Playbook, a 2016 survey of over 100 Trenton youth, students identified a lack of community programs and outlets for self-expression as a significant concern. Communicating a broader desire to have more programs for teens and older kids, one participant advocated for “More expression programs. More programs where teens can express themselves” (p. 8). For many teens, school art programs are the primary point of access to the visual arts. Although data is still emerging, early reports indicate the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing educational inequities, including disrupting access to schools and the many services and expressive opportunities they provide for disadvantaged students. Many students lost access to art classes, studio equipment, and materials, eliminating key pathways for expressing their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings at a time when such outlets are much needed. As resources evaporate and uncertainties persist, students’ social and emotional needs are escalating.

Simultaneously, school policy has begun to (re)focus on character education in the form of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), which includes: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision making. Recently revised and renamed to foreground equity and inclusion, Transformative SEL brings new focus to the skills students need to navigate and embrace diversity. The arts have long been informally associated with social and emotional content and are now poised to amplify Transformative SEL outcomes in a more formal role. In New Jersey, we are leading the way; The New Jersey Department of Education’s 2020 visual arts standards were released in concert with a SEL overlay (<https://selarts.org/>). Arts educators are expected to incorporate these competencies by September 2022, making New Jersey among the first states in the nation to formalize the intuitive connections between social emotional outcomes and participation in the arts. By extension, future art educators—such as those in TCNJ’s teacher preparation programs—need to be prepared to meet those expectations.

Addressing these dual concerns, we are planning a program to engage local high school students through collaborative participation in a summer photography workshop that culminates in a public outdoor display on campus. A concurrent research project would serve to collect data on the outcomes of participating in a collaborative public art project through the lens of SEL. Ultimately, this data would be used as the basis for a sample chapter in an edited book on facilitating SEL through the visual arts, and submitted as part of a book proposal.

Program Details: In partnership with local high school art teachers and local organizations, such as the Trenton RISE Youth Center and The Boys and Girls Club, this program will aim to provide local teens with access to studio resources, particularly the darkroom and other

photography equipment, in order to produce large-scale public artwork that will be displayed in an outdoor exhibition to be held in fall 2021 in and around The College of New Jersey Art Gallery and the Art and Interactive MultiMedia Building. This will be achieved through a three-day studio workshop in which issue-based art education will be taught to encourage students to use artmaking as a tool for grappling with their experiences as couched in the bigger issue of social justice. In doing so, they might generate new skills for using the arts as a constructive means to amplify their visions and voices, as well as a platform for doing so. The materials for this workshop are funded by a Local Art Program Grant from the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission. MUSE would elaborate on this support by funding TCNJ students who can assist in planning and facilitating the workshop and conducting research. For such a large-scale collaboration and installation, many hands are essential.

Research Details: The goals of the concurrent qualitative research project would be to understand the impact the activity has on participants’ self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills and responsible decision making (SEL competencies). A secondary lens may be employed to interpret the impact on self-identity, self-efficacy, collective identity and collective efficacy, common outcomes of participation in community art (Krensky and Steffen, 2009), with the intent of identifying specific ways in which artmaking can give voice to collective feelings. Because little empirical data has been collected on the explicit potential for collective artmaking to facilitate SEL competencies, the goal of this project is to pinpoint some of the most effective strategies for meeting SEL learning goals through art. MUSE support would provide resources to conduct targeted research on artmaking via the lens of SEL.

Schedule:

March-April	Submit formal proposal for public art installation to TCNJ’s Art Installation Review committee. Submit IRB application.
June 7 - July 30	MUSE
Week 1	Begin initial work with MUSE student mentee. Work with local organizations and Mercer County High Schools to identify participants and finalize the workshop schedule. Finalize and distribute participant forms.
Weeks 2-3	Lesson planning, Finalize participants and collect forms. Reserve spaces. Human Subjects training for TCNJ students.
Weeks 4-5	Finalize lessons. Material and space prep. Planning with facilities.
Week 6	Conduct workshop. Collect data. Document workshop and projects.
Week 7	Finalize installation plans and secure materials. Prepare student work for printing; Begin printing photographs. Send banners out for fabrication.
Week 8	Prepare student work for printing; Finish printing; Begin installation. Transcribe data. Prepare marketing for exhibition.
August 2021	Install large-format prints on campus, mail announcement postcards, and distribute the exhibition posters. Transcribe and analyze data.
September 2021	Hold opening celebration to correspond with opening of photo exhibition of faculty emeritus _____ in the TCNJ Art Gallery. Document installation.
October 2021	Deinstall the exhibition. If possible, gift banners to High Schools and partner organizations for re-use.

II) Role of Student(s) and Mentor: Planning and preparation will be a joint enterprise. Both professors will work closely with students to generate lesson plans for the workshop, including training students to apply and implement Transformative SEL strategies and to teach photographic media and techniques. Training students in qualitative research methodology, including Human Subjects training and transcription will give them an added skill set that few undergraduates have the opportunity to access or apply. After training, we will scaffold students toward more independent work and transition to guided practice, in which students work independently with regular check-ins (for example, when preparing materials, collecting forms, transcribing data, printing photographs, installing artwork, etc.). As this is an ambitious project requiring a significant amount of logistical labor, two students are necessary. Working in tandem will allow us to develop a dynamic and in-depth program, maximizing student opportunity to develop new planning skills and work with urban youth. Because we are working with up to 15 High School students, having a sufficient teacher:student ratio is important to facilitate personalized instruction and a positive experience for the students. Adequate supervision is essential when working with minors. In addition, we will be working with large-scale work that will require several people to manipulate and install. Having two professors and two students will ensure that this ambitious project will have an adequate number of hands on deck.

III) Broader Impacts: The implications of this project are broad and impact local High School students, the Trenton/Ewing Community, TCNJ students, and the field of visual arts in general, as well as benefiting the scholarly agendas of the mentor faculty. Trenton's poverty rate is 27.3%, and only 12.2% of people 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher. According to the United States Census Bureau, the student population is approximately 43.8% Black and 54.7% Hispanic. Based on these demographics, we expect a significant number of BIPOC students to participate in the workshop, where they will have the opportunity to use studio experiences to react to, investigate, explore and express their feelings and ideas through issue-based art education, which contextualizes their learning in personal meaning and social change (Gaudelius & Spiers, 2002). This might further inspire local High School students to pursue degrees and careers in art, art history or art education, professions in need of increased diversity. In addition to including underrepresented students, this project would further address systemic racism by diversifying art institutions, including academic galleries, by foregrounding the voices and experiences of BIPOC students in a fall exhibition at and around the TCNJ Art Gallery. TCNJ students, pre-service art educators, would have the opportunity to plan and implement lessons that resonate with urban teens, administer a collaborative project, apply transformative SEL to their work, and participate in a qualitative study of the outcomes--skills that puts them on the cutting edge of educational research. These high-impact experiences will prime them for student teaching and make them exceptional teacher candidates. Informed by the scholarly trajectories of both mentoring faculty, this would be the first MUSE project for Faculty B and Faculty A, who is pre-tenure. Melding their respective specializations in community-based art education and photographic installations, this project would yield both a highly visible exhibition and some of the earliest empirical data on the outcomes of SEL and the visual arts.

II) Budget:

Student Stipend	\$3000 x 2	\$6000.00
Faculty stipend	\$1,250 x 2	\$2500.00
Student Housing	N/A	\$0
Guest Speakers Local artists	\$100 x 2 = \$200	\$200.00
Project expenses (studio materials)	LexJet TOUGHcoat™ Synthetic Banner \$332 (42in x 100 ft) https://www.lexjet.com/lexjet-toughcoat-synthetic-banner	\$332.00
Total		\$9,032.00

IV) Past MUSE award reports: N/A**V) Student Application(s)** See below