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Writing in the Discipline for the Studio Art Undergraduate

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINE FOR THE STUDIO ART UNDERGRADUATE

By

LAURA MILLER

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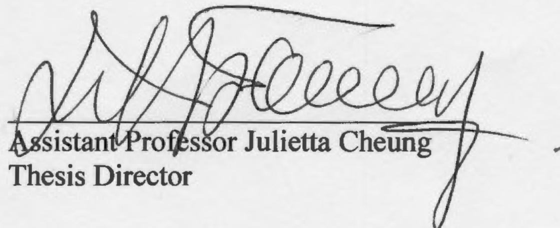

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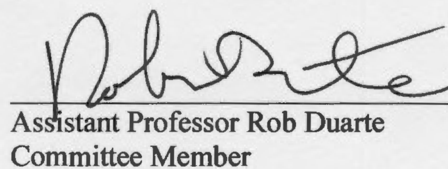

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes applications of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Discipline (WID) initiatives in undergraduate Studio Art curriculum as a heuristic tool to improve student's visual art practice and prepare them for graduate-level writing. Scholars involved in Studio Art MFA programs have noted graduate students' difficulty at adopting writing as a part of their creative practice, but they focus on addressing the issue at the graduate level rather than scaffolding undergraduate curriculum to support students' transition to upper division writing. This thesis argues that writing instruction should be incorporated into Studio Art undergraduate study to prepare students for careers and further study in the arts while improving their art practice through introspective journaling, research, and revision. This research features assignments and exercises from WAC/WID scholarship that meet the needs of visual art students based on various rhetorical situations, genres, and discourse communities. I included a public writing assignment, reflection exercises, and exphrastic writing as appropriate writing assignments for studio art undergraduates because they allow students to explore their own art within the broader cultural landscape as well as develop their own critical voice as participants in their discourse community.

Introduction

Undergraduate Studio Art coursework teaches students technical skills, historical context, and critical thinking abilities that allow students to pursue higher education in the arts, careers as artists and designers, or careers in museums or other arts institutions. Unfortunately, many universities across the country neglect to incorporate writing instruction within Studio Art curriculum, and when writing is included, it is typically found in single-semester, writing-intensive courses which do not allow students to truly grasp composition in the arts or develop habitual writing behaviors. I draw on Writing in the Discipline and Writing across the Curriculum initiatives to argue for the incorporation of broad writing curriculum within Studio Art coursework. These programs provide rhetorically inventive and relevant assignments for all disciplines and can provide undergraduate students with the necessary writing skills to succeed in post-secondary education and creative thinking skills to incorporate in their arts practice.

Background

Undergraduate writing instruction at the public 4-year university is often delegated to English and Composition courses to help first-year students transition from high school-level writing to collegiate-level writing, but first-year composition courses use broad curriculum to provide each student general writing knowledge thus leaving a gap in discipline-specific writing skill sets (Carter, 386; Russel, 2013, 163; Thaiss & Zawacki, 121). These one-size-fits-all composition courses may provide students with generalized writing knowledge and an ability to address many different genres, but I contend that it is impossible for first-year composition courses to prepare students for the multitude of genre conventions, styles, and rhetorical situations they will encounter in specialized disciplines. Further, writing skills, like any other

skill, must be developed through continued practice, and without regular use these skills will degrade overtime. Writing within the disciplines and outside of first-year composition is especially important in Studio Art courses which focus on visual and kinesthetic learning, thus putting Studio Art majors at risk of losing writing skills due to lack of use. This thesis argues for writing curriculum to be incorporated into Studio Art curriculum to provide students another mode of learning and prepare for graduate-level coursework in the arts.

Some composition scholars criticize first-year composition courses for providing only baseline skills that don't always transfer to the disciplines, but any shortcomings associated with first-year composition courses should not be judged too harshly given the extensive amount of responsibility composition instructors (often graduate students in English or Rhetoric and Composition) are burdened with. Teaching hundreds (if not thousands) of freshmen rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, process knowledge, and multimodal composition in four months (or even a nine month academic year) may seem like a fool's errand, but compositionists have met the challenge head on for over 50 years, teaching students as much about writing, thinking, and knowing as they possibly can before students enter upper-level courses in their disciplines to continue building upon the skill sets acquired in first-year composition (Carter, 2007; Russell, 2002; Yancey, 2014). Instructors from every discipline must work in partnership with English and Composition faculty to ensure all students are taught appropriate field-specific writing skills.

At many universities across the country, freshman composition courses teach students basic writing conventions like planning and prewriting skills, the importance of revision and reflection, and other general writing concepts to lay the foundation for future work writing in the disciplines. While these courses have proven to be effective in assisting students in their transition from the standard high school five-paragraph essay into more complex and

sophisticated texts, the scaffolding created in introductory composition courses loses its value if students are not challenged within their discipline (Melzer).

Composition scholars have developed two initiatives to meet the growing need for discipline-specific writing instruction: Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID). WAC and WID programs identify relevant genres and community-specific modes of composition (e.g. the lab report, documentary, critical analysis) to assist educators in incorporating writing exercises in their curriculum to improve students' understanding and writing proficiency. These initiatives have been evaluated and applied in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, but there is little scholarship that applies these programs in Studio Art curriculum. WAC/WID applications in Studio Art courses may help arts faculty develop or improve their writing curriculum to help students compose strong argument-based critiques, coherent artist statements, or a personal or scholarly essay related to their work or the work of other artists.

Studio Art courses incorporate theoretical knowledge, technical skills, and an understanding of visual composition. Studio Art coursework includes extensive attention to visual elements like color, material, form, and scale of objects and images to inform students' visual literacy, but less attention is given to the development of students' written verbal skills. At my university, students' speaking skills are developed through an art-specific speech class available to students in the College of Fine Arts, and these speech skills are also practiced in verbal class critiques. Despite the attention to spoken verbal skills, students are rarely asked to communicate with an audience (be it their instructor, peers, or the public at large) through written texts. This lack of discipline-specific writing skills may limit students' ability to engage in their discourse community and hinder student success in MA/MFA programs and other post-

grad opportunities for Studio Art students that require written communication skills.

Based on my personal experience at a public 4-year university, writing is not widely adopted as a content area within arts curriculum. The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) at Indiana University surveyed over 92,000 arts alumni (including performing arts, architecture, fine arts, and design) and 91% of respondents stated writing as an important skill to their art practice and professional life. Unfortunately, writing is rarely broadly adopted within Studio Art curriculum. A quick browse through online arts curriculum maps shows that when writing is adopted within a program, it is typically only included in a writing-intensive course or a component in a senior seminar. The lack of WAC/WID initiatives in the visual arts could lead to post-grad difficulties, whether it be struggling to adapt to MFA caliber writing (including academic literature reviews, critique, and the academic thesis) or an inability to compose formal documents in a creative career. The SNAAP survey found that 52% of arts alumni pursued an advanced degree, and without the proper training, these students may have entered their programs ill-equipped to meet the challenges of graduate-level writing. If over half of students are pursuing advanced degrees, arts faculty and administration must prioritize writing instruction to ensure these students are prepared for graduate coursework

Scholars involved in Studio Art MFA programs have noted students' difficulty at adopting writing as a part of their creative practice, but they focus on addressing the issue at the graduate level rather than scaffolding undergraduate curriculum to support students' transition to upper division writing (Apps and Mamchur, 2009; Borg 2004; Daichendt 2011). The problem is exacerbated in international programs whose terminal degree is the Ph.D., as is the case for professor Linda Apps from Simon Frasier University in British Columbia who states, "Regardless of whether the problem art students are having with writing is contextualisation,

resistance, or some other factor as to why and/or how writing should and can be integrated into studio-based programmes, what may be subterranean is that art students may not even possess a set of literary tools or a language to adequately describe or discuss their process." For students to effectively communicate within a higher education discourse community, some form of writing instruction should be incorporated at the undergraduate level to begin building the literacy tools and rhetoric needed to succeed in graduate programs.

In addition to applications in continued education, WID scholar Michael Carter argues that the act of writing is a way of knowing in the disciplines that allows students to shift from conceptual knowledge to a more engaged procedural knowledge— "the difference between knowing that and knowing how" (Carter 2007, 387). Writing can be used as a heuristic tool to facilitate learning that may then inform students' visual practice, shifting students' procedural knowledge to a deeper understanding of the concepts and language shaping contemporary art making. I argue that WAC/WID applications in Studio Art curriculum can help students obtain the conceptual knowledge necessary to scaffold their ability to succeed in graduate programs in the arts in addition to the self-discovery and reflection opportunities presented by writing exercises.

This thesis will attempt to answer the question "Which writing assignments and exercises are most useful to the Studio Art undergraduate?" Effectiveness of WAC/WID initiatives can vary from university to university based on differences in financial resources, staffing, student need, and programs of study. Rather than try to seek conclusions about the effectiveness of WAC/WID for Studio Art undergraduates, I review WAC/WID scholarship to explore writing assignments and exercises best fit for visual art students. I draw upon composition scholar Dan Melzer's framework of rhetorical situation, genre, and discourse community in evaluating

writing assignments (2014). Based on my understanding of the goals of Studio Art programs and WAC/WID initiatives, I propose for potential coursework to assist students in developing discipline-specific writing skills.

Applications for WAC/WID in Studio Art curriculum may be most beneficial to visual arts students who may gain a deeper understanding of their practice as well as practical composition skills that may be useful in further education and professional careers in the arts. Because no data exists recording the effects of writing coursework within Studio Art curriculum, more research is necessary to evaluate the extent to which writing improves students' learning. Faculty interest in experimental curriculum will be needed to evaluate the efficacy of writing on student performance in Studio Art courses and post-graduate success. This investigation of WAC/WID applications in Studio Art courses may also be of interest to those involved with WAC/WID programs who may use this research is a starting point for applied writing initiatives for visual art students.

In the following pages I outline goals for Studio Art writers and use these goals to evaluate writing assignments and exercise from three categories of student writing: transactional, expressive, and poetic. The categories clarify different purposes and audiences for student writing, and the goals provide a point of reference for me to evaluate the relevance and benefit of specific assignments for Studio Art students.

Goals for the Studio Art Writer

Before exploring different categories of student writing, it is useful to describe the goals of writing courses in general and how they relate to goals of Studio Art curriculum. Because little scholarship describes the benefits or effects of writing curriculum, I use Anne Beaufort's

goals for undergraduate writing as a point of reference to evaluate the potential relevance of writing assignments for Studio Art students. Because I have not collected or discovered any data on the efficacy of specific coursework for specific goals, I make educated claims about which goals may align with certain assignments later in my thesis. Further research is needed to evaluate the true relevance of my assignments to the goals for undergraduate Studio Art writers. Beaufort's goals are as follows (2012):

1. The *expressivist* goal, facilitating self-expression, finding one's voice, one's personal truths;
2. The *critical theory/cultural studies* goal, facilitating critique of social hierarchies and cultural hegemonies;
3. The *democratic, rhetorical* goal, facilitating informed participation in civic issues;
4. The *pragmatic* goal, facilitating successful written expression in school and work contexts;
5. The *aesthetic* goal, facilitating an appreciation of the craft of writing and a love of language;
6. The *process* goal, facilitating growth in managing writing tasks.

Many of these goals overlap with university Arts programs' mission statements, and they serve as a marker by which to evaluate assignment relevance for a given course. The expressivist goal encourages the development of one's distinct voice. Expressivist thinking deviates from traditional academic writing in that students are encouraged to write for the sake of writing rather than to draft an argument or informative paper. The critical theory/cultural studies goal is at the heart of many Studio Art programs across the country. Art programs value critical thinking and the creation and study of cultural artifacts. Critical theory and culture studies ask students to consider art historical precedents and theoretical frameworks in addition to positioning themselves within a broad landscape of visual culture. In the context of the Studio Art discipline, I include the rhetorical goal under the umbrella of the pragmatic goal of student writing. Engagement in social and political issues is commonplace in the arts, so it is important to include this under the pragmatic goal of developing writing skills to use beyond the classroom.

Classifying Student Writing

University of London professor James Britton's landmark longitudinal study of writing by British students from age 11-18 found three classifications of student writing: transactional, poetic, and expressive (Britton, 1975). Transactional writing is the most broad category and refers to content whose purpose is to inform or persuade an audience beyond the author (e.g. research paper, persuasive argument, document analysis). Poetic writing may also be considered creative writing or artistic endeavor via written language (e.g. a poem or fiction narrative). Expressive writing may be thought of as stream of consciousness writing, or that which informally explores an idea with no clear goals or audience in mind (e.g. freewriting and journaling). WAC scholar Dan Melzer uses Britton's taxonomy coupled with considerations of discourse community and genre in his framework for studying college writing assignments (2014). I use Britton's three categories and Melzer's inclusion of genre and discourse community to break down different writing assignments into their constituent parts, like purpose audience, and genre to find which are most relevant for Studio Art curriculum.

The State of Student Writing: Transactional Assignments

In Melzer's study of 2,101 writing assignments from universities across the country, he found 83% to have a transactional purpose (2014, 21). Transactional writing encompasses the most assignments due to its broad purpose of informing or persuading an audience. Transactional assignments generally take the form of a student completing an assignment in exchange for a grade. The chief objective of the transactional assignment is for students to demonstrate knowledge of facts and theories rather than provide their own opinion or analysis (only 17% of Melzer's assignments had a persuasive purpose) (2014, 21). Further, not only were the majority

of assignments transactional, but 82% listed the instructor as audience as opposed to an audience of peers, oneself, or a general public reader (2014, 28). Melzer found the limiting rhetorical situation of assignments with a transactional purpose and instructor as audience was common across disciplines, types of institution, and course difficulty (2014, 21). Despite the prevalence of these types of assignments, WAC scholars favor assignments which allow students to explore real-world writing applications, relate course material to their own experiences, and receive feedback from peers (Melzer, 2014; Soliday, 2011; Thaiss and Zawacki, 2006).

When considering assignments for Studio Art curriculum, the transactional assignments described above are surely not appropriate for the expressivist, critical theory, and pragmatic goals that I believe are crucial for Studio Art writing. Genre theorist Mary Soliday asserts that "because genre is a social practice, an assignment must be aligned with the larger social motives the genre performs for readers in the first place" (2011, 11). When students are unable to understand or connect with the social motives of writing, they tend to produce observations without interpretation which then prohibits them from developing an authoritative voice. The disconnect between genre and content may be resolved by allowing undergraduates to explore real-world genres like the critical essay, review, or collaborative presentation. Outside of the academy, graduates will be able to routinely collaborate with others, yet within the academy students will rarely write for a public that extends beyond the singular instructor as audience (Russell, 2012). When students begin to conceive of their audience as larger than one person (one who directly controls their grade in a course, no less), they may be more willingly or confident in incorporating personal opinion and experience into their writing, thus developing their internally persuasive voice.

Asking students to take on entirely new rhetorical situations with their own voice and for a broad audience may be intimidating for a student who has never written for anyone outside of their instructors (as is likely the case for many students given the overwhelming number of audience-as-instructor assignments in Melzer's study). For the art student who has perhaps never had to write in the context of the art classroom, public writing may be especially intimidating. To build up to more rhetorically diverse assignments, different elements of a rhetorical situation can be changed one at a time. Changing the audience for student writing is a possible first step in shifting from Carter's "knowing that" to "knowing how" (2007).

Transactional Writing for the Studio Art Student

The first step in expanding traditional transactional writing assignments could be expanding audience. In Studio Art courses, student work is routinely shared with classmates and perhaps an even larger audience through exhibitions in campus galleries, but students may find it challenging to share their writing with a public audience (general or expert reader) if they have not had adequate time to develop confidence in their skills. One avenue for public writing I suggest is Wikipedia entry creation or edits. Wikis are online, collaborative encyclopedias, and Wikipedia is a popular global destination for information. Articles can be created and edited by any user with an account. The collaborative nature of Wikipedia acts as a safeguard to misinformation and trolling. Wikipedia reminds its users that "you can't break Wikipedia; all edits can be reversed, fixed or improved later" ("Introduction"). Because Wikipedia relies on factual evidence rather than personal opinion, students with little experience incorporating their own opinion or perspective in writing should not feel disadvantaged. By manipulating one aspect

of the rhetorical situation—audience—students are invited to inform a public without the pressure of developing and defending an argument.

Another advantage of writing for Wikipedia is that the site allows entries on just about everything. Students can create entries on what matters most to them, and topic selection can be catered to specific classes. In the context of, say, a public art course, students could choose to write about local public artworks, street art, or lesser-known public artists who do not yet have Wikipedia pages. In Appendix A I adapt Christine Tardy's "Writing for the World: Wikipedia as an Introduction to Academic Writing" because of its vague language and direction toward second language learners (2010). In some ways, developing writing skills within a new discipline is similar to writing in a foreign language. Tardy's assignment allows students to pick a topic they are comfortable with which allows them to focus on the craft of writing rather than researching an entirely foreign topic. If students are to create a brand new entry rather than add to an existing entry, as I describe in the full assignment description in Appendix A, they are developing strong research and analytical skills by diving into various primary and secondary source materials to organize the most relevant information into a clear body of knowledge. Even first-year students could successfully create entries using basic research skills from high school. The open-ended nature of writing for Wikipedia allows this assignment to be incorporated into many different courses.

The Wikipedia writing assignment does fall under the transactional writing category because students are exchanging their text for a grade, but the assignment does offer a unique rhetorical situation by way of public writing and writing for the Web, complete with hyperlinks and images. A student will never write for a grade from an instructor outside of the university, yet transactional writing dominates collegiate writing assignments as an unfortunate side effect

of the university grading schema. The narrow rhetorical situations of transactional assignments may originate from strict rubrics which ensure fair grading and little time allowed for instructors to grade student work, but the instructions of the assignments themselves may also be doing a disservice to students. Melzer argues "rhetorical strategies associated with key verbs like 'explain,' 'describe,' or 'compare' look different enough across disciplines that phrasing 'describe' or 'compare' in generic ways is at best misleading" (2014, 110). “Explain” in the humanities may be asking a student to describe a literature passage, historical event, or phenomenon with course material as well as their own knowledge, contrasted with “explain” in the sciences which exclusively asks for objectivity. Word choice in an assignment’s instructions can make a world of difference in the types of responses students write. Paying special attention to assignment language and discussing expectations in class produces better work from students, regardless of the category of writing.

By clarifying assignment instructions and expectations and altering the rhetorical situation of transactional assignments by expanding audience, instructors can make the most of transactional writing, ultimately for the student’s benefit. Persuasive writing can be an important step in developing composition skills as students can incorporate their own opinions and experience. Melzer argues, “Persuasive assignments require students to go one step further and argue a position, moving students closer to Bartholomae’s notion of working inside the discourse rather than outside it” (24, referencing David Bartholomae’s 1986 article “Inventing the University”). The invitation to include personal opinion can (and should) be explicitly stated in the assignments instructions. “Assigning tasks and explaining the logic of the tasks are a necessary condition for their successful completion,” states Kathleen Blake Yancey (2014, 323).

A persuasive essay does fall under the transactional umbrella, but its rhetorical situation is vastly improved from basic informative essays. The persuasive assignment asks students to use and evaluate evidence to support a claim. Persuasive writing also creates an opportunity for a unique audience in varied situations. The business proposal, letter to the editor, and critical analysis may all be considered persuasive assignments with different exigencies, audiences, and constraints which can be real or imagined. Unlike the transactional Wikipedia assignment which asks students to organize and synthesize existing knowledge, persuasive writing offers students an opportunity to engage with a discourse community by incorporating their own opinion and experience supported by evidence. Further, "inviting students to write about their own experience validates that experience" and situates the student writer as a producer of knowledge (Yancey, 2014, 326; Carter, 2007).

The critical analysis/review style paper will feel familiar for Studio Art students who have completed art history coursework in which criticism is a common component. Following the generic approach to persuasive writing, the art historical essay describes the formal elements of an artwork (color, composition, scale, etc.) and makes meaning for the reader by analyzing those elements based on symbolism and other cultural signifiers present in the work. Below are two sets of instructions for analytical assignments from two introductory art history courses offered at Florida State from 2014-2015:

> Write a 2-3 page paper (600-900 words) in which you return to the work discussed in the first assignment, now considering the cultural and historical context for its production. Consider the meaning of the imagery (iconography), the physical setting of the work, and speculate as to why it was placed there.
>
> In the study of the history of art you need to develop two very important skills: the ability to analyze a work of art and the ability to analyze scholarship on a work or works of art. In your third (and final!) paper you will choose the pair of articles The Bayeux Tapestry posted on Blackboard and then write a 1,400 word paper analyzing the articles and comparing them to one another.

Both of these assignments speak to the goals of art history curriculum: 1) make connections between imagery and context, and 2) critically evaluate scholarship. These purposes also meet Beaufort's critical theory/cultural studies goal in which student writing examines and evaluates social hierarchies and cultural hegemonies (e.g. the authority of scholarship, the cultural icon).

Because analytical and persuasive writing are the focus of art history writing curriculum, it would be easy to put a check mark in the persuasive writing box on the 'writing for Studio Art' checklist, but there is an equally important opportunity for persuasive writing within visual arts coursework. While the art history courses geared toward first- and second-year students focus on ancient and distant histories, visuals arts classrooms use more Modern and Contemporary examples. Writing about art and artists from the recent past and present moment creates a different framework for the critical essay. For instance, an essay about Glenn Ligon's use of text as imagery and one about the ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead* will use vastly different source material to support their claims; the former would rely on personal experience, published reviews, and interviews, and the latter would use scholarly articles to decode the symbols that create meaning in the text. Time and space create distance in description and analysis, thus separating writing about contemporary artwork from writing about ancient artwork. Analysis of contemporary art within Studio Art courses allows students to connect their own practice with current trends in their medium or geographic location, and these connections can be directly tied to the work they are producing in the art classroom.

Michael Fowler, Professor of Design at the University of South Carolina-Aiken, requires students in his Intermediate Graphic Design course to examine how cultural and historical influence shape their designs. One assignment asks students to "make connections between the typographic designs we study…and their own original weekly designs" (2015). Fowler's

students write reflective paragraphs after completing their typographic design to describe the historical/cultural factors that influenced their design choices. This assignment successfully incorporates writing in a studio course by offering students an opportunity to reflect on specific decisions they made regarding color, font, and layout in their visual work. Reflections require students to take a step back from the creative process and consider whether and how their design accurately depicts the concept/time-period/genre in which they are working. The weekly repetition of reflection invites habit-forming behavior in which students naturally make more informed design decisions. The reflection can easily be adapted in different kinds of Studio Art courses and can be used even as assignments change from semester to semester.

The short-form, repeated reflection falls under Kathleen Blake Yancey's finger exercises. The concept is based on "…a practice that piano players engage in. The point is to warm up, sound the keys, and rehearse informally" (Yancey 2014). Finger exercises bring the writer into a composing mindset, quickly jotting down thoughts in preparation for writing a longer piece. Like normal warm-up exercises, writing finger skills become a habitual action. Once the practice is ingrained as a pattern of behavior, students can adapt reflections in other Studio Art courses which may not have a writing component and even beyond undergraduate coursework by using reflections as points of reference in graduate writing. Reflection writing satisfies Beaufort's process goal for undergraduate writing by inviting another step in the writing process for students to better their own work through identification of strengths and areas for improvement (2012).

Self-reflection creates a pathway for deeper understanding of the choices that go into making a work of art thus making students more critical viewers (Power, 2016). Asking questions like "How does this color selection impact the meaning?" or "How does the artist's

background inform the work?" are especially useful in studying contemporary artworks which, unlike a Picasso or Warhol, do not have extensive research and analysis to help the non-expert viewer unpack the work. Basic surface analysis of images can provide an entry to writing about bodies of work in museum or gallery exhibitions. Of course, journalistic writing is not the end goal for writing in Studio Art curriculum. While some students may become regular contributors to arts publications like *e-flux*, *ARTnews*, or *Aperture* to write thoughtful reviews, biographies, or think-pieces, I am under no illusion that every Studio Art undergraduate will use their writing skills for journalism. However, I argue that reflective writing can be still be a powerful tool in the development of a student's art practice.

Reflections can provide an alternative to the problematic structure in which grades are the sole measure of achievement by inviting students to find another measure of success separate from their academic score (Yancey, 1998). An art student in John Power's study of reflection writing stated after finding personal success, "I will not yearn for the outcome of my grade, for I already put everything that I have on my work, including effort, concentration and my passion." (2017, 244) Letter grades are only one measure of academic success, and Power's student astutely notes how personal measures of success can be more fulfilling for students long term. For graduate students, grades become less of a marker of success, and once students enter the workforce, employers won't be handing out A's and B's. It is crucial for students to find other markers of achievement, and reflection writing is an entry-point into this self-discovery process.

As beneficial as I find reflection writing, students may be limited by the evaluative nature of the assignment depending on how it is delivered. Graded reflections, typically preceded by another writing task, are what Yancey calls "reflection-in-presentation" (1998, 15). As transactional assignments, students are inherently aware of the grade attached to the assignment

and may cater their writing to their perceived audience's (instructor) expectations. Students may get caught up in the task-based nature of the reflection and neglect to make use of the opportunity for critical thinking and personal improvement. Power warns against the "formulaic pattern" of guiding questions for students' reflections (2016, 246). To avoid prepared answers or shallow reflections, Power encourages instructors to give feedback and prompt students to expand upon certain thoughts in the future. Reflections should be treated like any other writing assignment and given the appropriate level of feedback to promote student growth throughout a course. A brief guide to reflection writing can be found in Appendix B which includes Power's more broad reflection prompts and questions I adapted from Yancey's Talk-Back structure in which students reflect on their work following feedback/critique. These are not definitive reflection questions, but rather an entry-point into the concept of written reflection within an arts context.

Expressive and Poetic Student Writing

Outside of transactional assignments and reflections, instructors can embrace Britton's other writing categories—expressive and poetic—to guide students in invention and creative writing. Expressive and poetic present opportunities for art students to explore their thoughts and respond creatively to the world around them instead of following the academic writing model frequently found in transactional assignments. Expressive writing invites students to investigate ideas, explore opinions, and record observations. Poetic writing, more creative in nature, plays with language to produce a product to be read. Expressive writing may never leave a journal, whereas a poem or song may be shared. Regardless of audience and delivery, expressivist and

poetic writing invite "self-expression, finding one's voice, [and] one's personal truths" which Beaufort defines as necessary to meeting expressivist goals for student writing (2012).

I find expressive and poetic writing especially useful as tools for invention–the rhetorical building block of arguments. In the context of Studio Art courses, invention can also be described as ideation or concept development, the process of finding an idea to bring to life visually (Melzer, 2014). Expressive assignments like creative nonfiction essays, journal entries, and autoethnographies ask students to recall personally significant memories (recent or distant) about people, place, and time which may lead to the subject matter for their next assignment. Public expressive writing can include online discussion posts, blogs, and social media posts. One benefit of public writing is the opportunity for dialogue with an audience which can point students in new directions and consider differing opinions. Expressive writing can vary in length and audience, thus creating a variety of rhetorical purposes for students.

Poetic writing presents a unique challenge to Studio Art students by asking them to use language in new ways. Writing poetry in any form may be challenging for students who don't work with language on a regular basis (e.g. don't read academically or recreationally, don't practice non-academic writing). Contemporary poetry offers exciting writing opportunities for students of all skill levels because they are not chained to a specific structure (haiku, sonnet, lyric), but instead, they can move words around the page (cut-up poems) creating a text that is both verbal and visual. Alternatively, structured poems that follow a syllable or rhyme scheme may provide structure for an inexperienced writer. Poetry presents language in familiar and unfamiliar ways for Studio Art students; foreign in structure and composition, yet familiar in sound and as image. Poetic texts supports Beaufort's aesthetic goal for student writers by

offering a format for learners to appreciate “the craft of writing and [develop] a love of language” (2012).

Exphrasis, Greek for description or explanation, describes poetic texts that responds to a work of art. Literary examples include Homer’s description of a shield in *The Illiad* and John Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. Ekphrastic writing can bridge visual art and language for art students, allowing them to discover “the ways in which textuality and discourse function in the sign systems of visual and written art” (Childress, 2006, 74). Unlike the formal analysis in art historical study, ekphrasis asks the composer to consider a work of art rhetorically by putting themselves into the scene, imaging a life for the art before and beyond its current location, questioning the validity of the image, or describe the affect they feel when looking at the work (Childress, 2006). Ekphrasis refers to the content and style of a poem rather than a particular structure, so art students are free to adopt any poetic form to compose their poem. I adapt Cynthia Childress’ resources and instructions for ekphrastic writing in Appendix C because her assignment was designed for an introductory writing course, therefore more appropriate for students unfamiliar with poetic writing in general.

Poetic and expressive writing assignments and exercises are unique in that experimentation is encouraged. So often students across the disciplines are required to follow strict grammar and punctuation rules in research papers and other academic writings, but this attention to correctness is not necessarily a focus of Studio Art programs. Melzer found that “often grammatical correctness was a baseline for acceptability” in writing assignments across the disciplines (2014, 112). Students approaching writing in Studio Art courses with the mindset that grammar=acceptability based on their other coursework may find it challenging to marry the expressive goals of Studio Art with the grammar and conventions of academic writing.

Anecdotally, this was certainly the case for me as a first-year student in a Contemporary Art Foundations course. Rather than discuss what good writing looked like the arts, the syllabus advised struggling writers to "contact the Writing Center for an appointment, or take a 1-credit writing center course". Instructors should keep students' writing skills and experiences in mind as they adopt writing in their curriculum. Brushing off grammatical skills as the writing center's responsibility reinforces the notion that language and composition are central to the English department and separate from the other disciplines—opposite of WAC/WID programs that encourage collaboration between the disciplines and writing scholars.

Outside of grammatical correctness, non-arts disciplines are concerned with finding some sort of truth (no matter how relative this truth may be), but the discovery of a singular truth is simply not possible in the arts, a field whose growth depends upon "interpretative pluralism" (Barnard, 2010). The open nature of poetic and expressive writing aligns with Studio Art goals of fostering creativity and expression. "The artwork is continuously remaking itself, shifting meaning from context to context, text to text" (Barnard, 2010). The uncertainty inherent in art criticism and ekphrasis should lessen the anxiety about writing in Studio Art contexts for amateur writers, but it might be useful for instructors to explicitly state their openness to expressive texts that defy traditional writing conventions.

Conclusion

This thesis attempts to open the door for further discussion and research regarding WAC/WID applications in Studio Art coursework. Based on current literature, innovation in the rhetorical situations in which students are asked to write could better prepare students for graduate or professional writing by exposing them to more true-to-life writing situations. For

Studio Art students, assignments like critical essays and public writing provide scaffolding for the situations students may encounter in post-secondary education like grant writing, thesis writing, and project proposals.

While essay writing may not be appropriate in every course, reflection and journaling can be adopted in nearly every Studio Art context because they are easily adaptable to the specific goals of the course. Beyond course goals, reflective writing is an important tool in students' self-discovery as learners and makers. Setting personal goals and individualized markers of achievement will be especially useful to students as the enter post-graduate situations where academic grades are no longer a symbol of success. Expressive and poetic writing are especially applicable to Studio Art programs whose goals include fostering critical thinking and self-expression. These kinds of assignments allow students to explore their thoughts and ideas without the rigid structure of other academic texts like research papers or persuasive essays.

The three assignments I propose as entry-points into writing within Studio Art coursework are by no means the only relevant writing exercise for Studio Art undergraduates. An in-depth study of the types of writing students encounter after graduating within arts careers or post-secondary programs is necessary to develop a more well-rounded survey of relevant writing exercises. A follow-up survey to the SNAPP project regarding specific writing career and academic writing demands could be one reliable sample, or researchers could investigate the long-term efficacy of writing-intensive courses offered within Studio Art courses to evaluate the most appropriate writing assignments.

To truly expose Studio Art students to the range of rhetorical situations and genres they may encounter in the future, writing instruction should be broadly incorporated to develop students' skills overtime instead of one writing-intensive course in their major. Further research

should be conducted to evaluate the efficacy of writing in Studio Art programs. WAC/WID initiatives have seen success in a number of other disciplines at universities around the country, and these institutions would make excellent hosts for a Studio Art writing curriculum pilot program. These programs would be at an advantage to cater existing assignments and coursework to meet the writing goals that shape students into critical makers and engaged citizens.

Appendix A

Public Writing: Wikipedia

(adapted from Christine Tardy's "Writing for the World: Wikipedia as an Introduction to Academic Writing" (2010))

Assignment

For this assignment, you will create a Wikipedia entry related to the concepts we have discussed in class. You may choose any person, place, object, or collective not currently represented on Wikipedia to research and construct a wiki entry about. If you are uncertain about where to look for a topic, keep in mind red links on Wikipedia pages are topics that do not have entries, so these may be a good place to start.

Audience

This is a public writing exercise, so your tone and references should be appropriate for a public audience who are trying to learn more about a specific topic. We will review Wikipedia entry guidelines and existing articles to examine tone, structure, and references.

Length

Your article should be from 400-700 words and include at least three sources to support your information.

Process

1. Review Wikipedia guidelines and the function of Wikipedia articles
2. Topic Proposal
3. Information gathering
4. Outlining (What information comes first and why?)
5. Draft (Incorporate citations and avoid plagiarism by paraphrasing)
6. Revise
7. Transfer text to Wikipedia article sandbox (consider incorporating images)
8. Publish to the Web

Appendix B

Reflective Writing

> When we reflect, we call upon the cognitive, the affective, the intuitive, putting these into play with each other: to help us understand how something completed looks later, how it compares with what has come before, how it meets stated or implicit criteria, our own, those of others.
>
> (Kathleen Blake Yancey, 1998)

Reflections will perform different functions for different learners, but good reflections allow students to review what they created how they created it as well as project their goals for the future by identifying areas for improvement, noting strategies that worked, and considering their work in context of the assignment goals (Yancey, 1998, 11). John Power lists three sections to guide his students in reflective writing:

1. What I did;
2. What I learned from what I did; and
3. Has this changed the way I think/What does this mean to me? (2016).

Reflections are best measured against some kind of goal—a grade, a concept, a prompt. When students have an idea of what they wish to achieve (in a writing or a visual art assignment) they have a reference point for measuring the success of their work, be it criteria set by an instructor or individual growth based on previous work. Goal-setting can be recorded formally in a journal or other document prior to the assignment or remembered informally after the assignment is complete. I suggest the following questions to evaluate progress from the initial goal to final product and differences across assignments:

1. Does the final product differ from the original concept? How?
2. How does the product compare to my [the learner's] expectations?
3. Will I use this process again, and why/why not?
4. How did my process differ from previous assignments?

(**Reflective Writing cont.**)

As previously stated in this paper, reflections invite students to develop their own criteria for success. Personal markers for achievement break from the good/bad, pass/fail dichotomy presented by some academic assignments. Rubrics attempt to highlight different areas of achievement *within* an assignment (e.g. a concept can be good, but execution may be poor), but rubric scales don't provide enough distinction *between* assignments. Allowing students to reflect on a previous goal, evaluate progress across a semester, and outline strategies for the future gives students more agency to control their learning outcomes based on their own personal expectations and markers of achievement out of a pass/fail mindset.

Another kind of reflection may be conducted post-critique. Yancey describes this "Talk-Back" process as a student response to instructor feedback on a writing assignment, but I find this technique can adopted after a class critique in the Studio Art classroom (1998). The following questions, adapted from Yancey (1998, 38), invite students to consider how their work is received by an audience and to verbalize their goals/intentions:

1. What was valued in the work (by the audience)?
2. Do you agree with their interpretation?
3. Did your intentions or perceptions differ from your classmates' interpretation?

Recording reflections:

As in Fowler's and Power's examples, students recorded their reflections in a journal/sketchbook to be reviewed by the instructor (2015; 2016). The journal format keeps all the reflections in one place, thus allowing students to reflect on their reflections, so to speak. In a Studio Art course, housing the written reflection alongside visual sketches helps to bridge the gap between visual and written work.

Appendix C

Ekphrastic Writing

Sample ekphrastic poems:

- “Ode on a Grecian Urn” John Keats
- “The Shield of Achilles” W. H. Auden
- “To Paint a Water Lily” Ted Hughes
- “Still Life” Marianne Boruch
- “Dutch Interiors” Jane Kenyon

Assignment:

Read through the sample poems and look up the original artwork. Note how the author uses the art to inform their poem. Do they narrate the image? Describe the creation process? Include biographical information about the artist?

Visit the campus museum or other local art museum and select one artwork on which to base your ekphrastic poem. Take notes in front the work about the imagery, themes, and any narrative that emerges. You may want to take a picture of the work to refer to with your notes as you write your poem. Research the artist and artwork and record any relevant biographical or other details that you can include in the poem. Decide whether you want to use a formal structure like a sonnet or lyric poem, or a more abstract form like a cut-up.

You will bring your draft to class to receive comments and suggestions from you classmates, and the final version should be between 10 and 30 lines.

Further guidance for instructors can be found in Honor Moorman’s “Backing into Ekphrasis: Reading and Writing Poetry about Visual Art” and Christine Cynthia Childress’ “Art from Art: Making a Picture’s Thousand Words into Poetry”.

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