

**2019 International Ziegfeld Award**  
**United States Society for Education through Art,**  
**Walking with others in art education**  
**Teresa Torres de Eça**

When Angela LaPorte wrote to tell me that I was to be the recipient of the United States Society for Education through Art, 2019 "International Ziegfeld Award" I felt extremely honored to be acknowledged in this way by my peers – by the many people within the United States Society for Education through Art for whom I have a very deep respect, specially my colleagues and art education companions of many sandy roads, Steve Willis and Allan Richards who put my name forward in the award application. It is a particular honor for me, because the award is made in the name of Edwin Ziegfeld; the first president of the International Society for Education Through Art, where I served as World Councilor; Vice-President during 2011-2014 and President during the last six years . Edwin Ziegfeld, strongly advocated for the arts in the schools, and he forged directions in art education including innovations in pedagogy, international collaborations, and research methods which continue to be relevant. Edwin Ziegfeld is a great example for all art educators, and I am deeply thankful for having the chance to follow his directions.

I ended up in art education, as many others, coming from a visual arts background, trained as painter, ceramist and engraver with no clues about education. I had to learn about pedagogy; art education and the places in between arts, education, and communities. And this is what I have been doing for the last thirty years.

I felt in love with the profession of educator and art teacher since the first year, in the late eighties, when I experimented to facilitate art making with children in a very difficult school from Porto (Portugal). Since then, I have experienced many different maps of the possibilities in art education. I believe that art educators can develop their work with others' ways of seeing; ways of thinking, and ways of acting in everyday life through artistic processes. And, therefore, the learning experiences we facilitate or provoke through the arts within a community are capable of creating aesthetic situations to foster understanding of the self and the other.

In my teaching career I have taught subjects such as Drawing; Studio Art; History of Art and Theory of Art and Design to high school students in Portugal by discovering and questioning societal issues through art knowledge and art practice with the students. Together we learnt a lot about ourselves and ways of acting upon our everyday life experiences. As a teacher trainer in workshops and master courses, I also learnt important aspects of art education through dialogue and collaborative art projects. Inspired in contemporary artistic practices, we walked together reflecting on ways in which the arts can bring critical thinking and ways to connect with others. With doctoral and post-doctoral students, as supervisor, I learnt how making art with communities can be the vehicle for research that matters for real life using participatory, artistic and arts based research methods.

As a networker, I always believed in connecting people, facilitating encounters, and proving platforms for dialogue and participation not to achieve great accomplishments but, rather, to obtain small affective transformations. I truly believe each person has a special contribution to bring to the group. I understand artistic work in its privacy, it has a solitaire dimension of introspection and individual quest we cannot avoid. But I also understand the artistic work in its collaborative dimension, in the search for a 'group subjectivity' as Félix Guattari defined (Guattari, 1996, p. 199). All my life I had run away from the egos and super-egos that were so dominant in the modernist preconceptions of the artist. Taking into account Guattari's example in which subjectivity is made up from a multiplicity of refrains. We are, all contributing to the holistic composition to produce an affective response (Guattari, 1996, p. 199). For me, the arts, even the visual arts, have a groupal

aspect such in the rituals and practices of archaic societies or the refrains of Greek Tragedy (Guattari, 1996, p 201). Like in the cyber world where nodes are connected in a rhizomatic way to produce new data, the group can act as ‘mutant centres of subjectivation’; they are a rupture that throws us off onto another path, allowing us to break with old habits and form new ones (Guattari, 1996, 200). In other words, collective art practices defies egocentrism and transforms the individual contribution in a bigger picture, work constructed during shared journeys in the complicity of the walk.

I was blessed to have met incredible researchers who helped me to understand and to conceptualize my work. During my journey I learned important lessons with Rachel Mason about multiculturalism; with John Steers, my mentor, about the stories of art education; with Fernando Hernandez about visual culture; with Ricardo Marin about arts based research methods; with Jo Chen; Sunah Kim, and Li-Yan Wang about the subtle aspect of art in education; with Rita Irwin about a/r/tography; with Glen Coutts and Timo Jokela about applied arts; with Angela Saldanha and Christiana Matsuis about travelling- arts and education; with Cristina Trigo and Maria Jesus Agra Pardiñas about collaborative art in education.

With the collective C3, I understood the full potential of contemporary art in education. Maria Jesus Agra Pardiñas invited me to the activist collective C3 where I found several inquietudes moving me to think and act in a more socially engaged form. The goal of this collective is to bring to light new methods of teaching and exploring them further. It is also a way of stimulating ideas enlarging the spaces where art and education may act inside the public system of formal and non-formal education. Through negotiation and dialogue among art, artists, mediators, teachers and education stakeholders, we look for an interweaving of differences as transformational forces. The educational result of these projects is the unavoidable art process (Agra-Pardiñas & Trigo, 2018, p.91). C3 members participate not only from their specific professional field but also from a perspective of others, that is to say, that a museum educator could also act as a visual artist and a researcher. Teaching and researching are always related. Identity, context and environment are the fields that become pieces of our lives, jigsawed together like a puzzle. Everything we experience can turn into an idea, a discussion, a text, a project, a process, or an action. Contemporary artistic and cultural practices, realities and everyday stories are like our own *raison d’être* (Agra-Pardiñas & Trigo, 2018, p.92).

In the last years I was involved in several collaborative projects in contexts of informal education through collective art with communities such as the Collaborative books (Eça & Saldanha, 2018); Battered Project (Eça & Saldanha, 2014); and, Jewels and Circle Projects. Social inclusion is the path I am taking now, as a researcher, and activist artist educator. Several contemporary concepts highlight the ways that art and culture contribute to social inclusion and well-being of communities. I understand social inclusion as an active process to enhance personal development, improved social cohesion, and reduced social isolation and active citizenship (Stern & Seifert, 2010). I believe that through arts education activities, artist/teachers can contribute to social emancipation and social inclusion for disadvantaged individuals, groups, and communities (Torres de Eça; Saldanha; Barbero, 2016). Furthermore, small community projects, when shared through the social networks on the Internet obtain a global repercussion and may influence others to be community art workers.

People with an active cultural life also enjoy a variety of “spill over effects,” which include a stronger community and civic engagement, improvements in public health and social stability, and economic revitalization (Stern & Seifert, 2008). As an artist, artist teacher, and researcher I have been interested in working closer with communities, making neighborhood based art projects such as BATTERED’. The project BATTERED’ was initiated by artists and art teachers in October, 2013 from the C3 group by launching a call for a visual story in patchwork about women who are victim of violence. The group received about 120 responses in two weeks and together with the respondents they started a chain of action using art process to talk about the problem of violence against women in their communities. In 2014, teachers from Namibia joined the project. A huge patchwork was produced with squares of cloth created by many people from different ages, genders,

and social ranks about the issue of violence against women. The squares in the patchwork were life stories in visual forms about violence against women. The participants of this action learned from each other in terms of emancipation. As far as they were involved in the project, they became part of a bigger community that is interested in exposing a social justice situation using an art/ craft technique. The several exhibitions of the final product in the cities of Portugal and Namibia showed empowered hidden voices through actions of arts learning that had interconnected small communities in a global scale. In Namibia, the coordinator of the Project Christiana Matsius was at the time working for the government doing workshops about Gender-based violence for communities, schools and prisons in the regions of Walvis Bay, Windhoek and Khomas. She integrated the collaborative patchwork idea in the existing campaign for the awareness of women rights called 'Orange Day.' Some of the participants in the project, in both countries, were victims; they told their stories to others using texts, embroideries, and collages. They had learned they were not alone; they had rights. They could talk about their problems to broader communities using arts and crafts. Other participants in the project were art students and art teachers, and they learned that collaborative arts could serve social justice. During the project they confessed they had acquired a completely new dimension of understanding arts and aesthetics in education, including the issues of politics and ethics. The quilt, by visualizing individual stories in the squares, participants reflected upon a problem and brought their memories or the memories of others together in the form of an embroidery or a textile collage. The collective quilt unified all the stories and produced alternative narratives in dealing with issues of social justice through respect, understanding and sharing the values of education through art followers and will be at most a present challenge to current cultural and political orthodoxies. Individuals and groups engaged in arts education can work together to create local networks: structures developed from local action oriented towards global impacts (Torres de Eça, 2014).

Community artists, socially engaged artists, and outreach artists have been working closely with people breaking the borders of conventional art-making and appreciation (Sansi, 2015). From this approach, art and culture are not accepted in materialistic models. Art and cultural projects made with the participation of the communities are not a commodity produced for an elite, rather it is a social action, an artistic collaborative process. In the Jewels Project conducted during 2016, I felt we, art educators/art researchers/activist artist have an important role to play. The challenge of the project was to foster inclusion processes by providing a joint space where special needs and non-special needs persons could develop skills through the arts. For that, the art teacher organization APECV, I have been leading since 2012; non profit associations working with disable people; 2 teachers from 2 high schools; a goldsmith company; a collective of young goldsmiths and young artists and designers worked in a volunteer basis with participants from the schools and the non-profit associations to experiment the way the arts can contribute to special needs persons' well-being in participatory ways. To manage all this network was not a easy task, and in the beginning the project mission was not clear for everyone. Little by little, the educative and inclusive aspect of the project was accepted by the participants, artists, young people, and young adults with special needs who had to learn to work in participatory ways. For the educators, it was very important that all the participants should have a sense of authorship as this was the empowerment quality. It was also important and there was many conversations about how to create positive and collaborative relationships during the sessions using ice-breaking strategies; story telling; drawing; origami making; and movement games, etc. On the side of the principal sponsor- the goldsmith shop, it was not clear the inclusive part of the project. For them, having special needs working with the goldsmiths was only an added value to a product and marketing strategy, they didn't understand at once that the valuable part was the process of engagement, of inclusion and learning in the heterogeneous groups. But for the young goldsmiths this was an incredible experience where they discovered the power of community engaged arts. They had to learn to respect the different abilities of each participant and cooperate to make the collaborative design including the ideas of all in one piece. For the students it was also a matter of learning about caring and sustainable communities. For the special needs participants, the entire experience was very rich and helped to improve group

relationships, self-esteem, and acquire a sense of belonging. For the educators, of course, the project was complicate to manage but they were able to explore with the artists alternative strategies based on arts.

Activist art education strategies, such the ones described above, in their humbleness, explore complexity and can reveal alternative ways to deepen appreciation and participation in everyday life, enabling spaces for debate and dialogue about the 'humanity fate' (Morin, 1999). As Schiller (1982) pointed out in his letters, aesthetic communication unites society, because it applies to what is common to all its members. Many contemporary artists focus their works on awareness for environmental issues, acceptance of others' cultures, violence, and conflicts in both local and global levels, recognizing that those issues are common in a global context.

I would like to finish this brief overview of the forces who are inspiring me with Schiller's thoughts; for him (1982), aesthetic judgement can teach people to be free, not simply by teaching them what is beautiful, but by teaching them how to judge for themselves and simultaneously be tolerant and recognize other people's views.

I have been walking with others, experimenting with theories; making things happen to make new theories, trying to understand the beauty of my profession as an art teacher, an activist art educator, and a community art worker, Maybe this is what can define more clearly my research interests . I hope my humble journey will serve you, my dear colleagues to go forward and dare to be more than a teacher, more than an artist, more than a researcher ...

Teresa Torres de Eça: Viseu, Portugal. 02-03- 2019

### References

- Agra Pardiñas. MJ & Trigo, C. ( 2018). "Where Should We Begin to "Rethink" Ourselves? ArtEducation: A Tale that Emerges from a Collective" . In : Sinner, A.; Irwin, R.; Jokela, T. (Eds.) (2018). Visually Provoking. Dissertations in Art Education. Rovaniemi, Finland: Lapland University Press( p.91-92) .
- Guattari, F. 'Subjectivities: for Better and for Worse'. The Guattari Reader, ed. G. Genosko (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), pp. 193-203.
- Morin, E. (1999), Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l' éducation du futur. Retrieved July 28,2016 from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001177/117740fo.pdf>.
- Sansi, R. (2015), Art, anthropology and the gift . London: Bloomsbury.
- Schiller, F. (1982 [1794]). On the aesthetic education of man in a series of letters. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stern, M & Seifert, S. (2009). Civic engagement and the arts: Issues of conceptualization and measurement, animating democracy. A Program of Americans for the Arts. Retrieved March 03,2019 from [https://animatingdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/CE\\_Arts\\_SternSeifert.pdf](https://animatingdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/CE_Arts_SternSeifert.pdf)
- Stern, M. & Seifert, S. (2010), Arts-based social inclusion: An investigation of existing assets and innovative strategies to engage immigrant communities in Philadelphia. Retrieved March, 03,2019 from [https://www.creativenz.govt.nz/assets/ckeditor/attachments/1037/willian\\_penn\\_foundation\\_arts\\_based\\_social\\_inclusion.pdf?1410305525](https://www.creativenz.govt.nz/assets/ckeditor/attachments/1037/willian_penn_foundation_arts_based_social_inclusion.pdf?1410305525)

- Torres de Eça, T. (2014), 'Making things happen through networks: Connecting arts educators to enhance collective knowledge in the field. *International Journal of Education through Art* 10: 2, pp. 235–245
- Torres de Eça, TT. & Saldanha, A. (2014). Mantas colaborativas: silêncios ruidosos. *TERCIOCRECIENTE* Nº 5, JULIO 2014 pp. 27-40 . Retrieved from <http://www.terciocreciente.com/index.php/revista-n-5>, Accessed 02-03-2019
- Torres de Eça; T.; Saldanha, Ângela; Barbero, Ana; (2016). 'insurgence' – Activism in art education Research and Praxis. In: *Convergence of Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Global Civic Engagement*, ed. IGI, 210 – 223. ISBN: 9781522516651. Universidade de Arizona: IGI. Doi: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1665-1
- Torres de Eça; & e Saldanha, A. (2018). cadernos ARTIVISTAS/Livroscolaborativos. DOI: 10.24981/978-989-20-5401-9-PT-TE.AS. Retrieved from <https://sharingsketchbooks.wordpress.com/2018/01/16/cadernos-artistas-livros-colaborativos/>. Accessed 02-03-2019