



# Transnational tomorrows today:

Graduate student futures  
and imaginaries for art education

Guest Editors:

Anita Sinner, Kazuyo Nakamura  
and Elly Yazdanpanah

UNESCO OBSERVATORY  
MULTI-DISCIPLINARY eJOURNAL IN THE ARTS

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1, 2022



# UNESCO OBSERVATORY MULTI DISCIPLINARY eJOURNAL IN THE ARTS

TRANSNATIONAL TOMORROWS TODAY  
VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1, 2022

**GUEST EDITORS** Anita Sinner  
  
Kazuyo Nakamura  
  
Elly Yazdanpanah

**EDITORIAL  
TEAM**

**Editor in Chief**  
Lindy Joubert

**Associate Editor**  
Naomi Berman

**Designer**  
Anais Poussin

**Cover Image:** Photo: Akram Ahmadi Tavana. Artwork: Fazila Teymuri.

---

ISSN 1835 - 2776  
UNESCO E-Journal  
an Openly Published Journal affiliated with  
The UNESCO Observatory at  
The University of Melbourne

Edited and published by Lindy Joubert  
Founding Director of the UNESCO Observatory  
Email: [lindyaj@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lindyaj@unimelb.edu.au)  
Endorsed by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education



# UNESCO OBSERVATORY MULTI DISCIPLINARY eJOURNAL IN THE ARTS

TRANSNATIONAL TOMORROWS TODAY  
VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1, 2022

## ABOUT THE e-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

# INTERLUDES

## WHAT DOES MY ART EDUCATION LOOK LIKE?

### A VISUAL ESSAY

#### AUTHOR

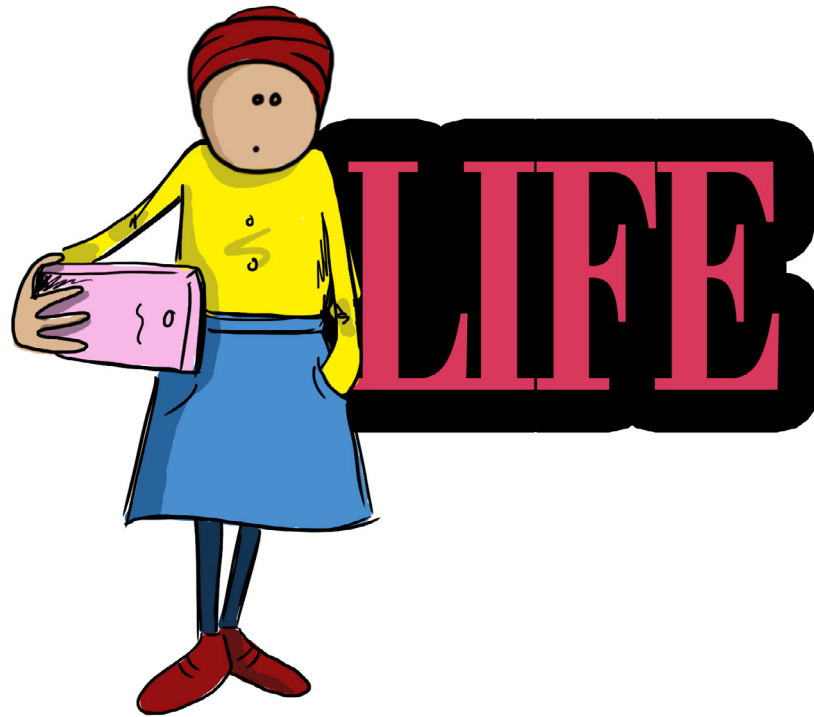
Fatemeh Abbasi  
Concordia University

#### ARTIST STATEMENT

As an art educator, what inspires me most is everyday life. As a source of information, daily routines have been the focus of my graduate studies since I emigrated to Canada, and I believe that what happens within our shared network of relations every day ultimately brings forward a greater understanding of global citizenship education. In this visual essay, I attend to my teaching goals as a woman and explore questions and issues, both visually and textually. Inherent in these everyday routines are pedagogic principles, rendered as a series of moments in which I bring the concept of feminism to bear on my everyday life to explore equality in an unequal world. These moments are informed by the Sustainability Development Goal #5, and specifically, my exhibition on the theme of #MeToo.

#### KEYWORDS

art educator; feminism; everyday life; SDG #5

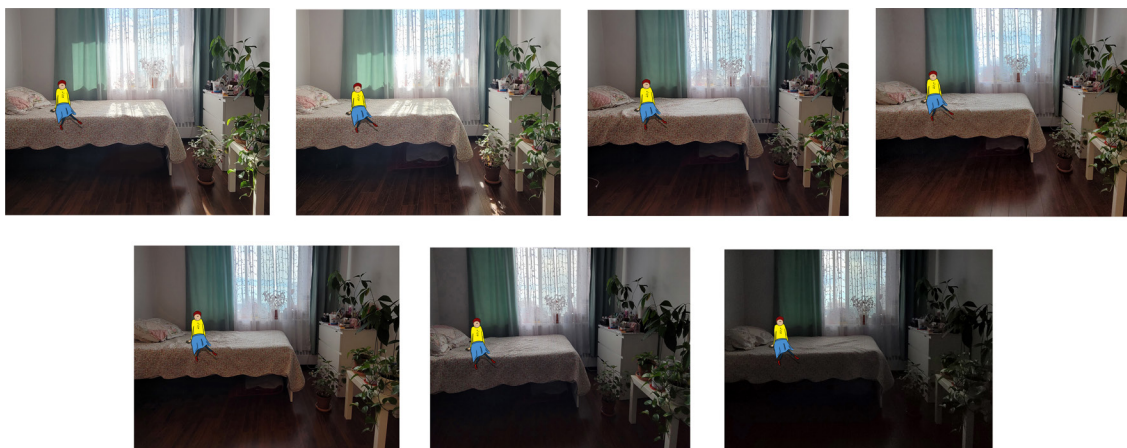


**Figure 1.**

Abbasi, F. 2021. My life and me (digital painting).

Every moment of my life locally, and my reactions to events globally, serve as a platform for teaching and learning in 'My life and me', and in turn, offer this expression of who I am, in relation. With a strong belief in fate guiding me, I embrace the entanglements of complex conversations about identity that continue to shift, contingent on my place in the world. I humbly try my best in response, always learning and becoming as a teacher. Ultimately, I know that the path I am meant to follow is waiting for me and I am open as it unfolds. There is a short, simple quote that comes to mind that articulates this daily mantra: 'I embrace life as a receiver of learning' (Winick 2005: 10).

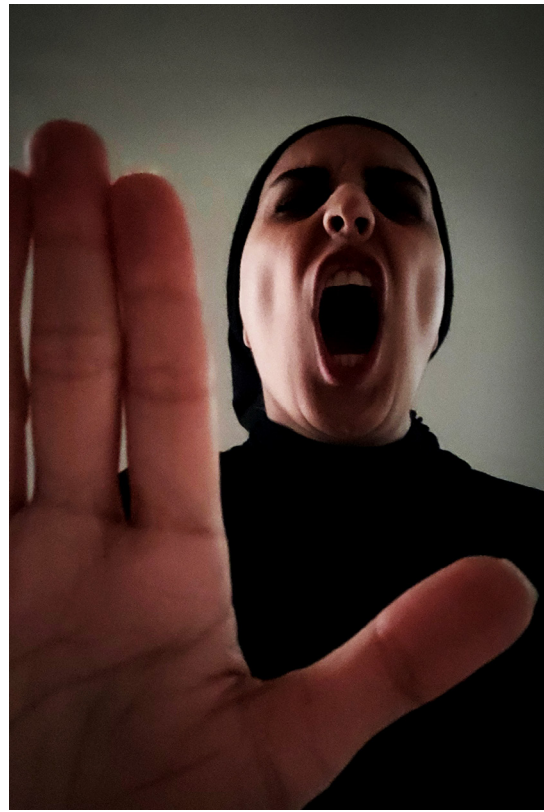
For me, to story our lives is to attend to what matters: Narrative is both phenomenon and method, and in naming the structural quality of the experience to be studied, we may find new possibilities (Connelly & Clandinin 1990: 2). I believe all art educators are writing, rendering and living their narratives as an ongoing life-long inquiry, or as Elaine Winick said, 'It is a process of understanding, of unearthing and deciphering the data' (p. 20). And so I turn to the visual to show and tell my story.



**Figure 2.**

Abbasi, F. 2021. Shadow and light (photography and digital painting).

'Shadow and light' is as a metaphor for teaching and learning in isolation. This series emerged during the pandemic, when the world became only my room, and I, a character within it, always waiting for tomorrow. I feel a kinship to this caricature, as I sat on the edge of the bed, static as the days turn to night, playfully injecting my virtual self into conversations, to symbolically remind that we need humor to sustain ourselves, no matter how challenging the moment. And, we must remember the importance of engaging the eyes to see things differently. Our shadows speak about the light, literally as a measure of time, but also for the quality of the atmosphere, that is, how we come to know through nuance (shadow) and texture (light).



**Figure 3a and 3b.**

Abbasi, F. 2021. #MeToo (photography).

What motivates me as a teacher is often deeply internalized, and in my life journey, what consistently stands out most is the desire to embrace feminism and equity. Keeping this concept at the forefront, in #MeToo I concentrate on how I have felt 'puppeted' in my role as a woman in western dress, performing expected societal roles, and how in traditional dress I must also perform. In both contexts, I resist, I protest, I demand "STOP!" Such tensionality of my private-public self in the world requires I find a new way to express my knowledge to others, teaching myself and my students what freedom means as a form of situated knowledge. When a woman is an artist and teacher, everything around – society, culture, environment and more – is part of us. Our breath is the lifeblood of society.



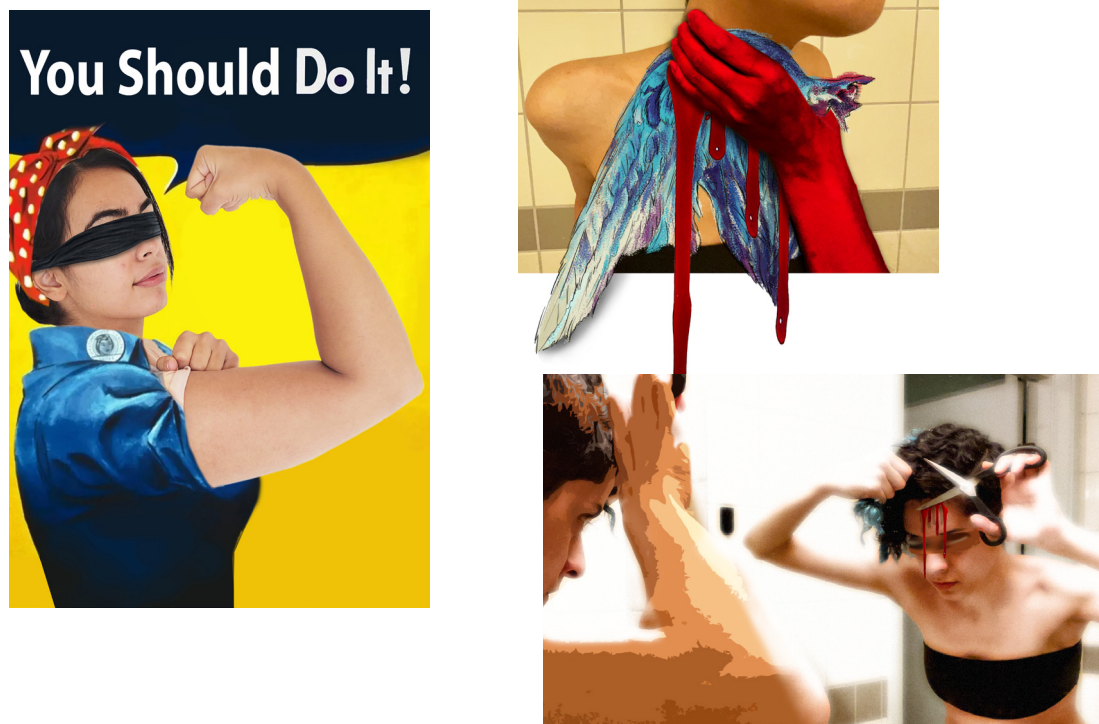
**Figure 4.**

Abbasi, F. 2021. Life is feminism (digital painting).

While I teach a host of art techniques that I know and love, my main goal is to convince students to look at their lives through the lens of their everyday moments, and to map their possibility spaces for the future. By doing so, 'life is feminism' are order-words. Feminism is a movement with many waves and many voices. It is political and it is social. It is pedagogic. It is an invitation to the unification of everyone regardless of gender, and when we achieve this equality, I believe sustainability follows.

As a female educator-artist, one of my persistent goals has been to inquire, study, and inform those around me about feminism today, and to express its importance for tomorrow. We are still witnessing anti-woman actions in the world, and I consider it my duty as an art teacher to open my students' views to the issue of equality. As an art teacher, my pedagogy is shaped by the conceptual approach in practice. Inspired by Sara Ahmed and in her book, *Living a feminist life* (2017), my purpose as a teacher is to build meaningful relationships that avoid stereotypes and instead open the way for equality to happen. This is my life's work.





**Figure 5a, b, c.**

Abbasi, F. 2021. Lifeblood (photography and digital painting).

In 'Lifeblood' I provoke a conversation about the conflicting societal messages in the lives of women that are so readily found in popular culture, and what it means to self-actualize as a feminist in my lived experiences. I am strong and can do any job, and yet I am masked and cannot see. When I speak, I risk being violently attacked when I use my voice as a tool to advocate for equity. And so I transform, challenging the visual constructs of feminine to release my feminist self, and so flows my lifeblood. Wounds on the body are a metaphor for every woman's mental and physical harm when an unjust world endures.

Through my art, I endeavor to address liberal feminism, remembering first wave ideals with a focus on achieving gender equality today. My goal is to visually express how living inquiry is a way into this vital conversation, for as an artist and teacher, I believe all peoples of the world must be afforded the same opportunity of support and solidarity to be empowered in their everyday lives, for all genders of human beings.

## WHAT DOES MY ART EDUCATION LOOK LIKE?

My series and this visual essay were inspired by the #MeToo movement. I have combined photography and painting in this case because photography shows reality, and painting can change parts of that reality, arbitrarily. The two media are dependent on one another in my series; the photo is created for the painting and the painting is created in relation to the photo. My media were carefully selected to embody emotions in learning, not unlike my students finding strategies to understand concepts differently. For me, emotions are critical sources for learning, and the sensorial stimulates body awareness, creativity, and attention, and generates unique pathways with memory and meaning-making in the process. I knew this to be true as an artist, and so in time this became an integral part of my teaching, and with more expansive reading on the subject, my advocacy for the vitality of everyday local moments began to take on a more worldly perspective.

When we see, hear, and feel real stories from people's lives, we begin to listen more closely, and in my experience, understand the concepts more. Hence, this is a method that I am keen to address in my teaching. Despite all the challenges that lay before me, I have taken life risks to arrive at this point and in this place, and that journey has been a test of endurance at time, not only during a pandemic. When I left my homeland, I travelled and explored many new horizons, to Georgia and then to lands in Europe. Paris I enjoyed as an artist. Paris enchanted me. Onto Norway, then traveling by ship to Denmark. I was alone and fear appeared. I wished to go back to Tehran and hug my mother, but the journey had just begun and there was no way back, so I continued. I came to Canada, so my new and lonely life began in earnest, for 'to develop a relationship with [my] wildish nature, I must go into the dark, but at the same time I must not be irreparably trapped, captured, or killed on my way there' (Estés 1992: 35).

Much like Estés, I continue to run with women, who run with the wolves.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. New York: Duke University Press

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 90(5), 2-14.

Estés, C. P. (1992). The women who run with the wolves. <https://nepantlerablog.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/women-who-run-with-the-wolves-clarissa-pinkola-estes.pdf>

Winick, E. (2005). *The storying of an educator: The power of living legacy*. Master's thesis, Brock University, Ontario, Canada. [https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/1468/Brock\\_Winick\\_Elaine\\_2005.pdf?sequence=1](https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/1468/Brock_Winick_Elaine_2005.pdf?sequence=1)