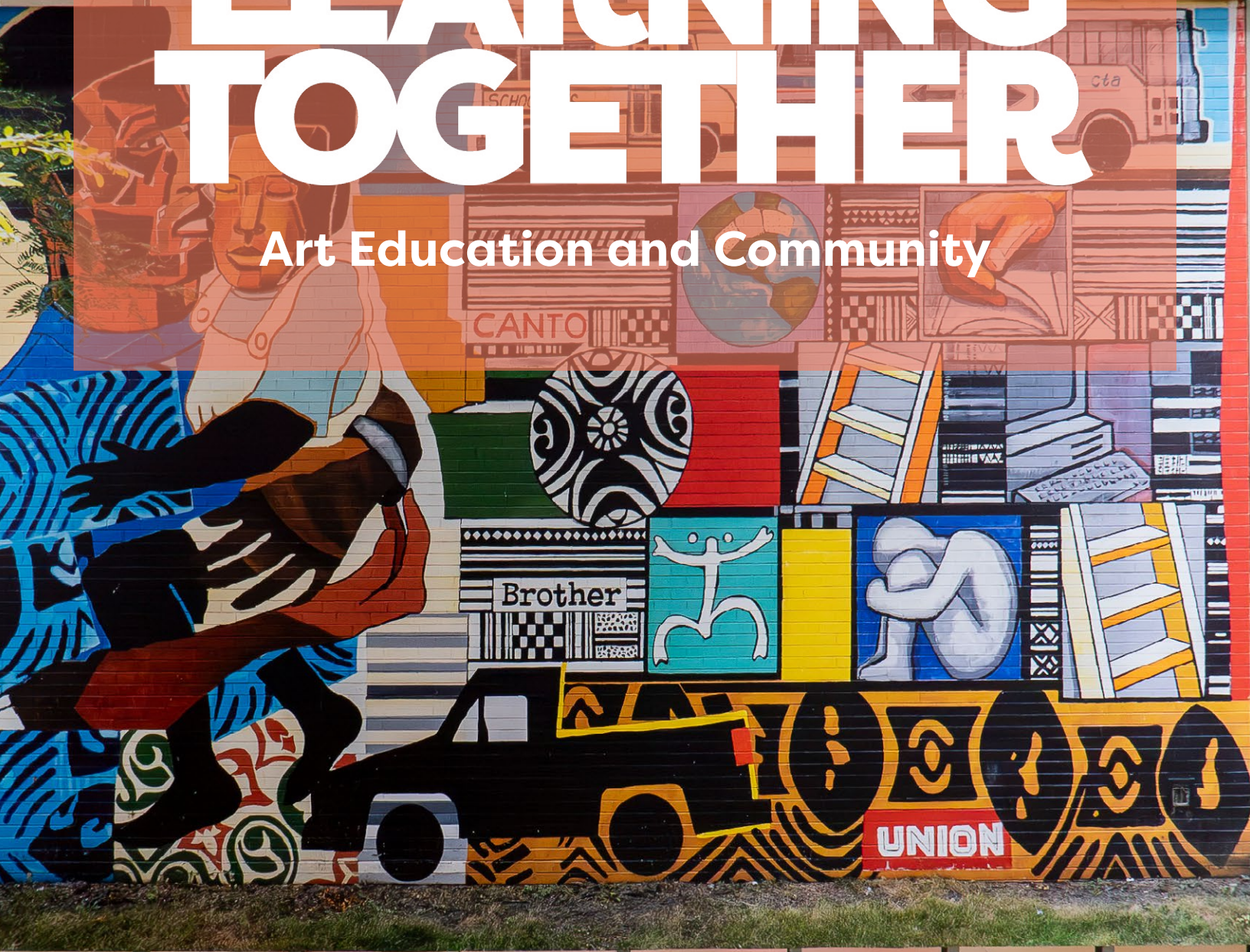


LEARNING TOGETHER

Art Education and Community



Curated by
Inés Arango-Guingue, Denny Mwaura and Lorelei Stewart.

September 5, 2024 – March 15, 2025



GALLERY 400

Learning Together : Art Education and Community is rooted in research conducted over 40 oral histories with Chicago K-12 art educators, teaching artists, and contemporary artists. Below, and excerpted from those histories, are answers to key questions in the exhibition.

The exhibition celebrates art education. Why do you value it?

Irving Zucker - The arts are important in humanizing a society and making us more sensitive. It's vital to our existence as a nation and humanhood. I would estimate that almost all the kids who were involved in [the 1989 CPS Keith Haring Mural project] went on to do some good things in their lives. It was a very motivational and inspiring project for the kids. If you want kids to do better, introduce some art components, whether music or visual arts.

Monica Haslip - Becoming a school led [Little Black Pearl] to deepen our work and intentions around education as a practice of liberation. Education as a practice invites our children to recognize that it's a pathway for them to have the life they dream about and that life is possible.

Margaret Koreman - For me...art education is an exploration through materials. To express one's ideas. When you can dive in, take risks, wonder, and question who you are, you're developing yourself. That, to me, is so exciting. It saved my life...Art education never fits in [a] box, ever. You can't. It's messy, it's dirty. It's unconventional and exciting. Kids need that in their day. They need to wonder, and they need to not always have the answers.

Maséqua Myers - I use art to help individuals feel good about themselves, to teach self-esteem. Because a lot of times, especially for people of African descent, they don't see enough images of themselves. When I was coming through, you didn't. So, I would let them know that it's okay to be different. And you can write that, you can act that, you can sing that, you can dance that.

Malika Jackson - Technical expertise does not determine creativity. So many of my students were not technically gifted, but they were creative, and that's where real creation comes from. Real artistic practice comes from that creativity. That's what freedom means to me.

How do you define art education as a practice?

Cynthia Weiss - The curriculum I created for and with students informed my studio practice... There was always a rich dialogue back and forth. I taught what I knew, and I learned from what I taught...Everything informs you as an artist, and you inform everything that you do. It's an interconnected and dialectical experience.

Jim Duignan - My practice has always been about using objects to create enough time to build relationships with the people I'm working with. Not that the objects were secondary. They were set up for insight, the conversation, or the collision that we'd have. How are agency, trust, and co-creation important?

Jorge Lucero - [When I was at Northside College Prep], we trusted the students. That link, that passing down of trust, like a trickle-down trust, went a long way because the students had a lot of autonomy. It was a co-construction of not just the curriculum but of the teaching moment. Even though I was the 'authority figure' in the room, there was a lot of feedback from the students.

Elvia Rodriguez Ochoa - [At Pros Arts Studio] we were very open about sharing... We were also adamant about using the same quality materials we artists used. We set up a studio and a computer lab with a Mac because that's what we used as artists. Same with video cameras. It laid a good groundwork for...ways that were collaborative in sharing the spotlight while encouraging each other.

Jean Parisi - From the beginning in 1976, when Ruth Bauman brought together Pilsen neighborhood artists, we were 'co-creating' with fellow artists, our neighbors of all ages, and other educators. Because we lived in the neighborhood and weren't just coming to do a project, we were able to build trust, which in turn promoted the creative spirit of our community. The kids saw us in their classrooms, the streets, and corner stores and introduced us to their parents. A school principal invited "Uncle Toad and Aunt Phibian" to lunch, the youth saw their images on murals and in videos and organized festivals. Creating an environment conducive to the exchange of ideas gave everyone agency that their creative action was important to finding fulfilling ways of living together.

Scott Sikkema - [Art educators and frequent collaborators] Phil Cotton and Margy Stover were the ones who first asked their students, "What is a classroom?"...[T]hat's the inquiry we need, and that's the direction we need to go in. There are always students challenging the construct, whatever the construct is, the construct of the classroom, the construct of school, the construct of what a neighborhood is. [We wanted to] show students that they have the power to question an entire construct itself and then reinvent it.

What is art education's role in creating and holding together a community?

Vanessa Sanchez - The more that we remember how good and beautiful [Yollocalli Arts Reach's Little Village] neighborhood is, the more we want to maintain it, keep that culture alive, and keep that history alive, and continue to inspire others to keep making the arts happen in the neighborhood.



Above and front: *Learning Together* installation view. Photo by Ji Yang.

Related Programs

***Learning Together* Opening Reception**

Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024 | 6-8:00 p.m.
Gallery 400

Threads and Legacies: Chicago's Artist Educators and Their Networks

Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024 | 5-8:30 p.m.
Gallery 400 Lecture Room

The Classroom as Community and the Community as Classroom

Thursday, Oct. 9, 2024 | 5:30-7 p.m.
Gallery 400 Lecture Room

***Learning Together* Virtual Tour with the UIC Disability Cultural Center**

Thursday, Nov. 19, 2024 | 12-1:00 p.m. CT
Virtual via Zoom

Co-Authoring the Story of Art Education: A Chicago Bookwork

Saturday, Dec. 14, 2024 | 12-3:00 p.m.
Gallery 400 Lecture Room

In Conversation: Nicole Marroquin and Malika Jackson

Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025 | 5-6:30 p.m.
Virtual via Zoom

Tonika Jackson and Maria Krysan

Thursday, Feb. 27, 2025 | 5-6:30 p.m.
Gallery 400 Lecture Room

Hours

Tuesday-Friday : 10:00a.m.-5:00p.m.

Saturday : 12:00-5:00p.m.

FREE and open to all

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UIC Gallery 400 is wheelchair accessible. Audio descriptions are available in the exhibition. If you have specific access questions or needs, please call 312-996-6114 or email gallery400@uic.edu.

A companion exhibition to *Learning Together* is presented at UIC's Jane Addams Hull-House Museum. *Radical Craft: Arts Education at Hull-House, 1889-1935* highlights craft's centrality to the settlement house's groundbreaking work in art education in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Learning Together is part of Art Design Chicago, a citywide collaboration initiated by the Terra Foundation for American Art that highlights the city's artistic heritage and creative communities.

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