

## Barbara Westfall, M.F.A.

### Biography

Barbara Westfall is an artist, curator and assistant former professor of art at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville specializing in creating and examining works of art that weave the connections between people, art and natural environment. Trained in installation and sculpture, she earned a BFA and MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Barbara makes her artwork from transforming natural fiber, plants, vine, trees and entire ecosystems into contemporary art forms. She has organized symposiums on Ecological Art for the Society of Ecological Restoration. In 1993, Barbara was recognized by preeminent philosopher of Ecological Restoration, William Jordan III, as the first artist to develop artwork with University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum staff to [...] "explicitly interlace the routine acts of restoration ecology into a visual and performance art, a project resulting in a ritual and an occasion for beauty." (Jordan, 172) Barbara's work is often described as Ecological Art because she frequently points out and/or offers solutions to ecological problems, such as loss of species habitat or global warming. Emeritus professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Donald E. Thompson, who is a specialist in ethno-history, art and iconography, writes about Barbara's groundbreaking collaboration at the UW Arboretum as giving [...] "dignity to trees" and describes the unifying theme [...] "being the relationship between people and nature. This project carries the concepts of ecology and art to the coming generation, an essential undertaking if the message of ecological art is to have a lasting effect." (Thompson, 34).



Her interdisciplinary approach to integrating art, education and ecology have provided her with the opportunity to work with a diverse population of professionally active faculty, scholars, artists, city, county and government organizations including the U.S. Parks Departments, the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Arboretum, Art Department and Department of Forest Ecology, University of California-Irvine, University of Washington-Seattle, University of Waterloo-Ontario Canada, Dane County Parks, Overture Center for the Arts, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison College, Edgewood College, and the Madison Metropolitan School District. At the invitation of The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art in 1993, Barbara was a guest artist for the exhibition, *Fragile Ecologies: Artists' Interpretations and Solutions*, organized by the Queens Museum of Art in New York, developed by the Smithsonian Institute, curator Dr. Barbara C. Matilsky.

William Jordan III, *The Sunflower Forest Ecological Restoration & the New Communion With Nature* (Univ. of Calif. Press, 2003) Donald E. Thompson, Wisconsin Academy Review, Journal of Wisconsin Culture, Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters (University Wisconsin Madison Publications, Summer 1994, Vol 40, Number 3)



*"I believe in the rightness of the belonging anywhere – and the wrongness of the false assumptions that curtail these belongings, on whatever stage they might occur."*

Nancy Marie Mithlo, PhD Professor of Art History,  
Native American Studies, University of WI - Madison

## **BARBARAWESTFALL:** **DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

My experiences as a woman artist, growing up in a low socio-economic group and being raised by a single parent provided me with an understanding of how gender, poverty and family circumstances can become barriers to achieving equity in education and financial success. Losing my father to cancer when I was seven years old placed financial limitations on my family and I found it necessary to work while attending high school and college to support my goals in education. As a woman attending college in the 1980's and being the first member of my family to attend college I had to overcome the challenges of poverty and sexism. These first-hand experiences affirms my belief that it is essential to address and solve problems of inequity in education in all of the forms it takes, in order to make higher education an opportunity for all populations of learners. I was born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago and attended Elgin public schools—a district known for its socio-economic, racial and ethnic diversity.

Growing up in the 1960's during the Civil Rights movement I witnessed the negative effects of inequity in education. I grew up in a family who worked towards ending racial segregation of our neighborhood schools. I believed as a child in racial and educational equality and during my own elementary and middle school experience I willingly took longer bus rides to schools outside of my neighborhood in order to help alleviate the disproportionate enrollment of minorities and close achievement gaps as the state of Illinois public schools implemented desegregation. After graduating from high school I moved to Los Angeles, an urban area with diverse populations of race, social status, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Living in LA reaffirmed my commitment to finding ways to help all people achieve their goals in education. While I worked in the financial industry to fund my advanced degree in art and I served on the board of the Pasadena Arts Council to help build art programming for disadvantaged youth in my neighborhood. These early experiences helped instill in me a passion for the work of creating equity and diversity in education.

**Equity and Diversity in Education:** *Below are some of my guiding principles and educational goals that I have identified as important to my teaching practice as ways to address and achieve equity and diversity in art education.*

### **1. Create a learning climate where students feel safe, listened to, valued, treated fairly, and with respect.**

Learning environments need to be places where student *stress is low*. When concern about language differences, disabilities and cultural perceptions is present fear and anxiety occurs and students are unable to participate and learn. Creating *optimal learning environments* where all students can speak, listen and be heard is essential to students feeling safe. I work diligently to create a learning climate where *all students are valued and treated fairly* by using inclusive, people-first language. I am an educator that does not tolerate racism, sexism, anti-LGBT violence or other forms of diversity harassment and I accomplish that by *modeling behavior* that is respectful to all. I will take action in accord with the policy of my employer to enforce equity in the classroom. I have an *open door policy* where students know they can come in and talk freely at any time. I have posted the safe-space triangle in my classrooms. I make it a priority to attend professional development opportunities on creating inclusive and socially just classrooms, and have served on a diversity committee for a school.

### **2. Diversity Training:** Continuing education in diversity training is essential to keep me active in understanding the best practices for diversity leadership. I have received diversity training by attended the following conferences:

- 2011-2012 Diversity sessions at University of Wisconsin- Platteville Midwest Culturally Inclusive Conference
- 2009-2011 Served on the Diversity Committee for Wingra School, Madison, WI
- 2009 Progressive Education Network Conference, Sessions on Diversity Training, Washington, D.C.
- 2009 ISAC Diversity Summit, Independent Schools Association of Central States, Chicago, IL
- 2007 National Association of Multicultural Education Conference, Baltimore, MD
- 2005 National Association of Multicultural Education Conference, Kansas City, MO

### **3. Academic accommodations for students with disabilities.** To ensure student success, I provide written and verbal notification to students asking they contact me if they have a documented or undocumented disability. I work closely with the Office for Students with Disabilities to obtain academic accommodations and auxiliary aids. This year I provided accommodations and/or auxiliary aids to four students with visual and hearing impairments, and test taking difficulties. In

art education courses, the content in my courses documents how learning is different for everyone, and assignments are geared for creating lesson plans, assessments, and accommodations that will serve a diverse population of learners.

**4. Inclusive Art Curriculum.** Teaching students about the diverse ways in which art is produced, perceived and constructed is something I am passionate about. I have worked persistently as an art educator, to creating diverse art education curriculum for the K-12 classroom, and it is a critical component to my undergraduate Art Education Methods courses. It is important to impart knowledge that artists from around the globe have contributed skillfully and in different ways and at different times. It is necessary therefore, for art education to have at its center the goal of preserving cultural diversity in art, and in as many ways and forms as it takes place. Presenting art through the study of gender, region, language, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and ability builds inclusive art surveys which sheds light upon cultural production both inside and outside the margins of standardized texts. When teaching concepts about art aesthetics and art criticism, I use open inquiry methods and Socratic seminars that help deconstruct how and why some artists and artwork have become marginalized or devalued. I have developed lectures and assignments in my Art Methods courses that include researching the contributions of women and minority artists, artists with physical disabilities and Wisconsin Native American artists.

**5. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.** When I speak about culture and ethnicity I acknowledge that students are not mere representatives of their cultural or ethnic group. First and foremost, students are individuals with different interests and needs. Students that belong to an ethnic group have attachments and bonds that vary; for example, social class, and their own experiences in the community, how long they have been in the neighborhood or country. Individualizing learning plans that incorporate the strengths and interests of the students in a culturally validating ways, means building on what the students already know. I take time to learn about my student's life experiences and make the appropriate linkages, comparisons, and contrasts. By getting to know my students I become a cultural translator, building on their knowledge by making connections between what is known, what is to be taught and understood. By merging student's diverse interests and passions in an evolving, responsive, and socially relevant way, I am better able to meet the demands of a diverse student body. Based on the work of UW Madison Professor of Education, Gloria Ladson-Billings and Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, I use some of the following methods in my classroom:

- **Cultural referents:** Empower students from diverse backgrounds by bringing in their world views, art, music, dance, beliefs, language, values, etc. and developing connections to the curriculum and teaching in a way that is intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically relevant.
- **Bridging gaps between school and home:** Listening and making personal connections is two of the greatest ways to bridge gaps between students' home and school lives.
- **Emergent curriculum:** Utilize the backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge of the diverse populations by inviting students to partner in developing curriculum that draws from the strength of the group.

**6. Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication.** Teaching is about communication, so addressing both verbal and non-verbal communication is essential. Recognizing and accommodating the variety of verbal language differences are all essential components that are integral to teaching diverse populations. Using a variety of discussion and communication modes, group and individual work is critical to providing opportunities for student success.

**7. Access to information.** Providing access to information in numerous ways is integral to student success. Helping students simplify steps, understanding procedures are all a part of the role of advising diverse populations of learners. Providing access to information on things such as "How to File a Complaint of Discrimination" or disclosing important deadlines for Financial Aid applications are roles instructors can play to helping students navigate their way through a large and complex university organization.

**8. Identifying solutions to barriers.** Financial Aid: Students needing financial aid are encouraged to see me for assistance with help identifying solutions to funding college. I have located financial aid resources for art education majors needing financial assistance to offset fees for taking Praxis tests. Tutoring: many students need tutoring support for Praxis testing. I help them find the sources to help them through the School of Education office. Accommodations: My experience helping students and their families locate resources for educational assessments have resulted in students discovering in help taking Praxis tests.

**9. Learning Communities.** LC's can provide a forum for active participation and dialogue about creating climates where everyone is included, valued and heard. Faculty and staff from across campus can provide leadership for students in Learning Communities that promote inclusive environments.

## BARBARA WESTFALL, M.F.A.

*"Teaching is a performative act... that offers the space for change, invention, and spontaneous shift." Bell Hooks.*

### PHILOSOPHY OF ART EDUCATION

I believe in the education of art.

Art affects human understanding and interpretation of the world. Art positively helps people make further application of the content learned inside and outside of academia. Art stresses the importance of developing creative problem solving skills that are critical for success in our rapidly changing economy and also fosters the development of learning about ourselves and those around us. Developing skills in art are necessary because creativity and design are utilized in every aspect of the professional world. Artistic education begins with a basic understanding of child development and how each student learns things a little differently.

My interest in children, art and art education began nearly twenty five years ago when I enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I completed a BFA in 1990 and a MFA in 1993. In art theory courses, I began reading the writings of John Dewey and Paulo Freire about Progressive Education. Their ideas that suggest art and aesthetics can develop beyond the experience of the individual intrigue me. My fascination with this idea made me want to help find ways for art to serve community. I took courses that led me to research and develop K-12 art curriculum that bridged artistic expression with community service. I developed and taught numerous successful art and community lesson plans to youth through public and private arts organizations in the Midwest.

In the 1990's I was hired by the Madison Art Center to develop and teach ecological art curriculum for disadvantaged middle school youth from Centro Hispano, a non-profit organization that provides cultural, educational and social service for Latino youth. This project linked a youth prairie restoration effort at the UW Madison Arboretum with a major art exhibition that was organized as part of a larger ecological art exhibition titled *"Fragile Ecologies: Artists Interpretations and Solutions"*, Dec. 1993 held at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (curator, Dr. Barbara Matilsky, Queens Museum of Art, New York). In 2001, I was hired as art faculty at Wingra School, an independent school with a 35 year history of progressive education, and followed my passion for developing art curriculum that merged culturally responsive child-centered learning, with emergent curriculum and progressive education. My dedication to the development of art curriculum that serves both the creative self and the artistic needs of the community has led me to the creation of many joyous, interdisciplinary art and community outreach experiences nationally and internationally.

I believe that art educators have opportunities develop partnerships in the community through service learning and outreach which helps students strengthen the links between art and life. In a rapidly changing technological world with diverse human and ecological problems, art education can play an important role in developing creative thinkers and innovators who will help develop solutions for many of the problems we face today. For this reason I believe art learning is essential in public school education and must be taught as a regular time for instruction and with full access for all students.

### THE ROLE OF THE ART TEACHER

My role as an art educator is to create a learning environment that addresses needs of a diverse population of learners and provide for them an atmosphere in which creative thinking is encouraged and developed. People are different; students learn differently and have different personal experiences and abilities. My goal is to ensure a classroom that addresses the needs of its learners which is tolerant of their identity as human beings and is best achieved by my effort as a teacher and the effort of the student. It is my responsibility to manage my classroom and facilitate the development of an inclusive environment. I have developed teaching strategies, receptive curriculum, authentic assessment for students to feel a connection between themselves and the content matter. Finding these connections is something I strive for and am constantly developing through collaboration with other teachers, feedback from student assessments and my own personal reflection and professional development.



## THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN K-12 ART TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Art education methods courses guides' teacher candidates through the development of skills, knowledge and disposition to understand child development and become effective K-12 art teachers who will deliver quality art lesson plans that meet Wisconsin standards for art and design. My role as an art educator for undergraduate students is to develop future art teachers who will be fully equipped to build vibrant arts programming in the public schools and become advocates for the arts in the communities they plan to serve. In an era of financial cutbacks to education and arts, public schools are at risk of losing mandates to public art education. Part of my job is to help undergraduate art major's builds skills to develop rationales for public art education.

## OBJECTIVES FOR K-12 ART METHODS COURSES

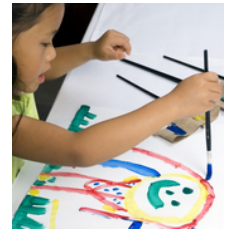
I believe art education methods course curriculum needs to begin with an understanding of the important role of the artist in the community, the role of the art world and how the two come together with society. Curriculum for K-12 art education methods courses I currently teach helps students develop:

- A knowledge the history of public art education, discipline based art education and visual culture studies.
- An understanding of new technologies for art education, such as e-portfolios and software programs.
- Age and ability appropriate artistic skills in a variety of 2-D and 3-D art making media for K-12 classroom.
- Tools for researching, writing, developing and sequencing art lesson plans and units that are challenging, age-appropriate, and that allow students to think critically and imaginatively.
- Communication, leadership and classroom management skills that can foster positive learning environments.
- Dispositions of preparedness, reflective thinking, responsive listening, continuous learning, and collaboration.
- Specific techniques for working with diverse populations of people, and teaching art in K-12 public school settings with diverse learners.
- A strong working knowledge of Wisconsin Academic Standards for Art & Design and understanding of accurate alignment of Wisconsin and SOE standards for teacher certification.

## LEARNING THEORIES

I believe early childhood development provides a base for children to form who they are as individuals and art curriculum should be based on principles *of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery in a supportive and enriching environment that follows the interests of the child.*

- Educational opportunities must provide students control over the direction of their learning.
- Learning must include methods that allow touching, moving, listening, seeing, and hearing.
- Learning has a relationship with others and with material items in the world.
- In order for learning to take place, students must be allowed to explore.
- Children and adult learners must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves.



Teaching K-8 art for nine years for a school dedicated to progressive education, I am an advocate for democracy in learning. I believe education involves active participation by all citizens in social, political and economic decisions. Respect for diversity is essential to learning, meaning that each individual should be recognized for his or her own abilities, interests, ideas, needs, race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, region, sexual orientation and other forms of identity. I believe development of critical, socially engaged intelligence is imperative to education. There is no such thing as a neutral education process and I describe education as a method for social change. I align my teaching practice to current Emergent/Constructivist theories that merges student's interests and passions in art in an evolving, responsive, and socially relevant way. I am an advocate of the work of UW Madison Professor of Education, Gloria Ladson-Billings who has developed Culturally Responsive pedagogy, because it empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. I have developed curriculum in my practice for students to participate in culturally relevant teaching that bridges gaps between home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements. I utilize the backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge of the students to inform my curriculum, lessons and methodologies.

Barbara Westfall, M.F.A.



## Barbara Westfall, M.F.A. - ARTS EDUCATION Vitae

### K-12 Highlights from Art in Community Projects

#### ***How Do I Help? Art on the Fence: 2011.***

More than 1,100 Madison-area children and adults have answered that question as part of a year-long Wingra School community art project by writing with markers on colored plastic squares. The squares were then tied on to a 40 x 5 foot mesh framework fence. The project traveled to libraries and public schools.



**Madison College Art & Culture Events: 2008-2011.** Partnering with Susanna Valtierra, Student Services coordinator from Madison College and students from the Black Student Union we developed four art and culture events with K-8 students from Wingra School and Aldo Leopold Elementary. English speaking and ESL students wrote letters to each other in Spanish and were brought together in a culminating event on the campus at Madison College. Themes included: African Diaspora; Day of the Dead; Earth Day and Fair Trade Art to help promote awareness of the cultural contributions of minorities in art and music.



**Artist Trading Cards: Oakwood Retirement Center & Wingra School 2010-2011.** Working with residents of Oakwood Retirement Center in Madison, WI I developed an Artists Trading Card year-long after school event for student's grades 3-5 from Wingra School. In a project called Artist Trading Cards (ATC), students' designed and made ATC's with senior citizens from diverse ages, abilities and ethnicities traded cards while sharing food and stories. Artist trading cards are miniature works of art, produced in various media. The ATC movement developed out of the mail art idea with origins in Switzerland. The cards are usually traded or exchanged rather than sold.



**African Diaspora: Malcolm Shabazz High School 2005.** Diversity of thought, cultures, life experiences and perspectives is at the core of this grades 9-12 art and social studies unit on West Africa diaspora. Master drum maker Djam Vivie, a musician and drum carver from Senegal living in Madison, was invited to Shabazz High School by teacher Gene Delcourt to teach drumming and drum making as part of a cultural studies unit. I assisted students in carving djembe drums from basswood, while we all learned about West African culture. The culminating event was a memorable drum playing session at the Madison School Forest, where students played music "for the trees".



#### ***The Teaching Lodge: 2003***

Students' grades 3-8, collaborated with restoration ecologists from Governor Nelson State Park to cut willow branches which were encroaching on a restored tall grass prairie. I developed this project with Robert White Wolf Lujan a Native American who practices Ojibwa spiritual traditions, as an opportunity to teach students about ecological art, native plant communities and Native American land ethics. The trees were used to build a 10x30' bent willow lodge at Wingra School.








#### ***Our Selves, Our Land, Our Community, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. 1993.***

Organized in conjunction with the Queens Museum of Art, New York exhibition "*Fragile Ecologies: Artists Interpretations and Solutions*", Dec. 1993 at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. Students' grades 6-8 traveled to the UW Madison Arboretum to learn about native plant communities, gather plant fiber, and write what they learned about journal. They returned to the museum to build an installation, the unifying theme was the relationship between people & nature.



**Barbara Westfall, M.F.A. – Art Education Vitae**

**EDUCATIONAL ART OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS**

	<p><b>1. Curating Student Art Exhibitions.</b> Established art exhibition opportunities for student art. 2012-2002. Curated art exhibits at University of WI Platteville, Playhouse Gallery at Overture Center for the Arts, McKay Center at UW Madison Arboretum, Madison College, Monona Terrace Convention Center's Celebrating Youth, Children's Expo at Alliant Center and the Madison Public Libraries.</p>
	<p><b>2. Inter-school, Intercultural, Teaching Events in K-12 Art Education.</b> Developed interschool, intercultural art events in partnership with educators from Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, Madison College, University of WI, Leopold Elementary School.</p> <p>Themes: Art &amp; Science of Leaves, 2012, The African Diaspora 2010, Earth Day 2009 and the Day of the Dead 2008.</p>
	<p><b>3. Art in Community Projects.</b> Art installations for display in the community. <i>How Do I Help?</i> Art on the Fence, Dudgeon Park, Madison, WI <i>Artists Trading Cards.</i> Oakwood Retirement Center, Madison, WI <i>Habitat for Humanity Souper Bowl</i>, West High School <i>The Teaching Lodge</i>, Governor Nelson State Park &amp; Wingra School, Madison, WI</p>
	<p><b>4. Art Service Learning Projects.</b> 19 years' experience organizing and developing youth art service learning activities and projects for K-12 and <i>undergraduate</i> students. <b>Centers:</b> Oakwood Retirement Center, Habitat for Humanity, Centro Hispano, Dane County Shelter Home, Mills St. Neighborhood House, Adamah Art Ventures</p>
	<p><b>5. Curriculum &amp; Assessment for students with Exceptional Educational Needs.</b> 10 years' experience working to develop art curriculum to support students with exceptional learning needs. Developed thoughtful accommodations for EEN students in art education. Worked with teams of professional public and private school educators to develop progressive tools and policies for authentic assessment in art reporting requirements in K-12 art education.</p>

**Barbara Westfall, M.F.A.**

**SELECT PROFESSIONAL HONORS / AWARDS**

- 2013 Research Education for Teachers (RET) Discovery Center, UW Madison, STEAM Curriculum  
Pioneer Academic Center for Community Engagement (PACCE).Grant. iPads for Education.  
Pioneer Academic Center for Community Engagement (PACCE) Grant, Opera/Art Education
- 2012 Pioneer Academic Center for Community Engagement (PACCE).Grant. Art Ed ACT 31
- 2010 Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission, Madison, Wisconsin  
Madison Arts Commission, City of Madison, Wisconsin
- 1995 Friends of Military Ridge, Stipend Guest Artist
- 1993 Madison CitiArts Grant, City of Madison, Wisconsin award for Fragile Ecologies  
Fellowship, Graduate School, University of Wisconsin - Madison Vilas Associates Award
- 1992 Madison Arts Grant, City of Madison, Wisconsin  
Fellowship, Graduate School, University of Wisconsin - Madison Vilas Associates Award
- 1991 Paulette Chandler Award for the Arts - Undergraduate School, University of WI, Madison
- 1990 Wisconsin Arts & Antiques Scholarship

**CURRENT PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

National Art Education Association  
Wisconsin Art Education Association  
Wisconsin Regional Art Association  
Arts Build  
Arts Wisconsin  
National Endowment of the Arts  
Madison Museum of Contemporary Art  
Overture Center for the Arts