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Richard Mayhew: Lessons in Interdisciplinarity

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Abstract

Notable Afro-Indigenous artist and interdisciplinary educator, Richard Mayhew (1924–2024), is known for his landscape paintings (which he refers to as "mindscapes"), and his involvement in the 1960s artist collective Spiral. His extensive teaching record includes fourteen years at the Pennsylvania State University from 1977 to 1991. Mayhew's interdisciplinary teaching approach is deeply aligned with his Afro-Indigenous sensibilities resisting Eurocentrism and its oppressive, categorical structures; it aligns with agency and processes of creative continuation. This study, provoked by questioning the archive, draws from the archives and conversations with Mayhew about how his lived experiences and background influenced and informed his perspectives on interdisciplinary knowledge, art making, teaching and pedagogy. It concludes by theorizing interdisciplinarity and its possibilities for art education.

Richard Mayhew: Lessons in Interdisciplinarity as an Afro-Indigenous Concept

Richard Mayhew (1924–2024) was an Afro-Indigenous artist and educator of notable record, known for his vibrant landscape paintings (referred to as mindscapes), and for his involvement in Spiral (Godfrey & Biswas, 2021; Bearden & Henderson, 1993). While much has been published about Mayhew as an artist who studied in the US and Europe, less focuses on his philosophy and pedagogy as interdisciplinary artist educator. Interdisciplinary studies inspired Mayhew's long teaching career of engaging students in immersive modes of thinking and artmaking across ideas and disciplines. He brought interdisciplinarity to his various places of employment including Pratt Institute, Art Students League of New York, Smith College, Hunter College, California State University at Hayward, San Jose State University, Sonoma State University, and eventually Penn State University, where he served on the faculty in the School of Visual Arts from 1977 until retiring in 1991. His contributions as a pioneering interdisciplinary artist and educator, are uniquely valuable for contemporary art education.

During its inception in the late 1960s and 70s, interdisciplinary studies in the academe disrupted traditional campus boundaries (Newell & Klein, 1996; Christensen & Eyring, 2011), critically expanding what knowledge is, where/who it comes from, how it is constructed, and why it is necessary. Today, even though interdisciplinary endeavors still sometimes raise skepticism about rigor (Creso, 2008), the current move towards interdisciplinarity in higher education, particularly in the arts and humanities (Condee, 2016), is embraced (Irani, 2018) and also expected as it expands avenues for research funding (Brint et. al, 2009).

Mayhew said that he first encountered the term "interdisciplinary studies" while studying in Europe in the early 60s by way of a pamphlet given to him; he was instantly intrigued. However, this research posits that interdisciplinarity had long been a part of Mayhew's life. It had been ingrained in his way of knowing and being in the world because of teachings handed down from his ancestors, grandmother, parents, and community. Interdisciplinarity was essentially the way he came to understand the world. Mayhew's Eurocentric educational experiences had only skewed this fact and tried to erase his knowing by way of the connections between, and extensions beyond, "disciplinary" concepts.

Mayhew described interdisciplinary studies in varying ways—as an extension of one's development; an invitation to go beyond the limitations of one's functional existence beyond the basics of a learned concept; and an exercise in thinking and functioning beyond the self, to activate what he believed was a natural sensitivity towards creative consciousness. Rather than seeing knowledge outside of the self and the environment as bits of information to acquire, interdisciplinarity emphasizes the natural processes and sensitivities of the learning self that looks for, and acknowledges, the relationships between things. Interdisciplinarity, part of the survival and nature of human beings, is, as Mayhew said,

> a continuation of and extension of sensitivity and sensibility, which the body has—but mentally it doesn't … It's an internalized function of survival … you can't deny this natural phenomena of survival and extension and growth… It's natural and you can't subdue it. Interdisciplinary study is involved with a natural sensitivity of consciousness. [It is] not unusual; We are just forgetting to become aware of it. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022)

In this article, I discuss Mayhew's pioneering example of interdisciplinary studies through conversations with him about his life, teaching, and art, which cultivated knowledge terrains around the creative consciousness as an interdisciplinary Afro-Indigenous concept (Enright, 2020), Black-indigeneity (Mayes, 2021; 2021a), and indigenous epistemologies (Cajete, 2000; Four Arrows, 2013; Kimmerer, 2015; Kumar and Pattanayak, 2018). My research began with a grounded theoretical process of questions countering and resisting the idea of *archive* as hegemonic knowledge repositories for retrieving facts; and instead, as a site for critical knowledge production (Stoler, 2018). Critical race theory (Dunbar, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002;) and anti-colonial values (Rallis et. al, 2023; Liboiron, 2021) guided the inquiry to amplify the silences there—What is missing? Who is missing? and Why? (Stoler, 2018; Trouillot, 1995). This qualitative study led me to agree with Hankard (1998) that "indigenous knowledge is an inherently interdisciplinary way of understanding" (p.66) and moreover, that interdisciplinary studies within academia essentially co-opts/appropriates Afro-Indigenous knowledge. While this last point may surface discomfort, it is meant to open more equitable, diverse, and inclusive ways to think about minds, bodies, emotions, and spirit–essentially, what constitutes knowledge within education systems (Cajete, 2000).

Mayhew's interdisciplinary approach punctured the knowledge silos within educational structures (Nissani, 1997) of othering that are designed to discipline (and I use that term pejoratively here) knowledge and legitimize white knowing (Trouillot, 2003). His interdisciplinary use of the arts as ways of knowing disrupts mainstream, Eurocentric academic structures that fragment and compartmentalize knowledge into silos, and instead, honors the importance of learning the relationships between phenomena, "to make spaces of discomfort and pain, become spaces of creativity and transformation" (Kumar & Pattanayak, 2018, p. 5). Mayhew resisted Eurocentrism and its oppressive, categorical structures, and instead aligned with agency and, as he stated, processes of creative continuation that extend "beyond the norm—you don't accept the oppression and elimination, isolation, or disassociation … there's that consciousness of knowing, the fact that you can't accept that because it is abnormal" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022).

This research situates Mayhew's notion of interdisciplinarity within Afro-Indigenous knowledges, acknowledging and critically reflecting on the underpinnings of racism and anti-

indigeneity embedded in formal education. The lessons I learned from him about his theory and practice of interdisciplinarity offer possibilities for contemporary art education and pedagogy, because of their potential in fostering internalized creative consciousness and sensibilities; creative survival instincts; and capacities towards inventiveness, personal growth, and transformation.

Research Ethics Considerations: Positioning the Research/(er)/(ed)

I approach my research as a co-conspirator in racial justice coalitions (Love, 2023) located within the complexities of settler-colonialism (Nakano-Glenn, 2015), but with decolonial (Bastien, 2006) and anti-colonial sensibility (Tuck & Wayne Yang, 2012). My research methodology and methods align with the social justice component of my sustained efforts as a social justice feminist art educator. I have long focused on Art Education archives (Holt, 2012; 2017) with a feminist archival sensibility (Holt, 2015), specifically the problem of erasure—the "issues around the making of art education histories and the archival representation of contributions to the field by and about marginalized groups" (2017, p. 234). Social justice principles serve as a lens in the archive as well as in my research, teaching, and life through respect, honesty, transparency, kindness, care, and a decentering of self. I try to enact these principles as an upstander action against injustices which guide my teaching and research practices towards investigating systemic oppression; striving to inspire decolonial actions, decentering white patriarchal norms; dismantling oppressive power differentials; and including difference, which attends to the margins of society, contributing to the richness of diversity (Keifer-Boyd et. al., 2022).

Methodological Entanglements in the Archive: Positionality and Answerability

The above principles are integral, especially as a non-Indigenous researcher in art education in this space, who is following my data across real and imagined borders. Sally Grande (2008) describes the colonial tax on Native scholars, arguing that research by non-Indigenous scholars "requires a renegotiation of personal identity but also an analysis of how whole nations get trans- or (dis)figured when articulated through Western frames of knowing" (p. 233). A critical aspect therefore includes reckoning with the answerability and entanglements of my research endeavor—particularly my positionality (Bennett, Fitzpatrick-Harnish & Talbot, 2022), as who I am impacts my work and the writing of what I find (Knight & Keifer-Boyd, 2019).

An entangled dimension of this position is my affiliation with a land-grant institution (Nash, 2019; Lee & Ahtone, 2020), which amplifies my complex participation in settler colonialism and land stealing. Through the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, my institution received from the federal government approximately 776,354 acres of Indigenous land across the US (either

stolen or underpaid) and sold it to raise endowments to fund higher education.[1] I benefit from white supremist oppression (Nakano-Glenn, 2015) because these gains were, and still are, mainly for white European descendants.[2]

The Research Story: Relationality and Transparency

This exploration of Mayhew's life, art practice, and pedagogy through conversational interviews stems back to archival understandings I gleaned in the Pennsylvania State University Archives as a graduate assistant, where I found documentation about him sprinkled amongst the art faculty records.[3] I encountered Mayhew's archive again serendipitously over 15 years later in spring of 2022, when I was living and working in the areas of Long Island and New York City (the original lands of the Munsee Lenape and Merrick peoples, and later on the Unkechaug lands). I had visited the Southampton Art Center (Shinnecock Nation), to see the exhibition *Outcroppings, Indigenous Art Now*.[4] Walking through the exhibit, I encountered a small black and white landscape print with the artist's signature in the lower right corner: "Mayhew." Curious by its familiarity, I wondered if it was the same Mayhew from the archive. My curiosity compelled me to contact the exhibition curator, Jeremy Dennis, an Indigenous artist who I had met a few months prior through his mother, Denise Silva-Dennis, an artist and retired art teacher. He confirmed my guess and gave me Mayhew's contact information. I later left an introductory voicemail message at the Mayhew residence, and shortly thereafter, received a call back from Mayhew (age 98 at the time) and his wife Rosemary. I shared how I encountered his artwork at the exhibition and the story of the archive. I explained the purpose of my research in wanting to add a fuller representation of him in the archive for future inquiry centering his work.

This first phone call was the beginning of other impromptu conversations but I conducted two recorded interviews with Mayhew that summer and fall. The first interview centered his perspectives of art and teaching around questions about his lived experiences, art practice, and perspectives on knowledge, teaching, and pedagogy informing his philosophy as an

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[1] See also: https://www.landgrabu.org/universities/pennsylvania-state-university

[2] As recently as Fall 2023, there were only 123 Native American students (full and part time combined) enrolled at my institution out of almost 88,000 (https://datadigest.psu.edu/student-enrollment/).

[3] Mayhew is also included in the Harry Henderson Papers, a collection consisting of, among other things, materials for the book *A History of African American Artists: From 1792 to Present* (Bearden & Henderson, 1993) (https://catalog.libraries.psu.edu/catalog/5299936)

[4] Outcroppings are rock formations (the result of a gradual accumulation of sediment compacted, transformed, and exposed to various pressures over millions of years). These rocks lay underneath the earth's surface but parts of them jut out and are visible on the surface. "The title 'Outcropping,' metaphorically, refers to Shinnecock people and its translation into English as 'People of the Stony Shore' and Shinnecock's long connection to this land" (https://www.southamptonartscenter.org/outcropping).

interdisciplinary educator. I transcribed this conversation and shared the transcript with Mayhew to check my understanding. Preparing for the second interview at Mayhew's home, I created a visual mapping (see Figure 1) of the data as an interim analysis and shared it with him during our second conversation. Specifically, I delved deeper into Mayhew's concept of interdisciplinarity as it came through his upbringing, art practice, and teaching. I transcribed and shared that second interview transcript with Mayhew as well. Before submitting my manuscript for potential publication I sent it to him for review and any edits.

Figure 1. Illustration of the visual mapping exercise as an interim data analysis.

In what follows, I share Mayhew's early interdisciplinary influences in his upbringing and how his philosophy infused his art and teaching practice. I conclude with lessons in interdisciplinarity for the field of art education. In the writing, I intentionally decenter my voice to center his and the voices of other Afro-Indigenous (Mayes, 2021; 2021a) and Indigenous scholars (Kimmerer, 2015; Four Arrows, 2013; Cajete, 2000).

Early Interdisciplinary Artist Educator Roots: Outcroppings of Interdisciplinary Studies

Mayhew's interdisciplinary approach as a form of knowing, resistance, survival, and growth was deeply aligned with his values about life, art, education, and the creative consciousness—essentially, what it means to be alive, as a human being connected to self, others, and the world. As an educator, he was interested in exploring interdisciplinary studies as a pedagogy

for fostering sensibilities of "internalized creative consciousness" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022). Designing curricula that activates simultaneous ways of knowing of mind, body, emotion, and spirit (Cajete, 2000), he invited a commingling of multiple perspectives into his classroom, bringing together cohorts of artists, scholars, scientists, and students. Mayhew shared the following story, which illustrates what his classroom might look like at any given day:

> I inflated a balloon the size of this whole space here [pointing to the large living room of his home]… which was part of the concept in terms of having engineers and designers to study the acoustical effects of this instead of a hard surface for music to be played in there, because I had musicians. So, they were measuring the reverberations on the skin … Also, they were involved with the sensitivity of how sound hits this kind of surface and … the acoustical effect of it …, recording that, as opposed to a hard surface. So, this was the beginning of the interdisciplinary extension of it … in terms of acoustics, in terms of the skin, instead of a hard surface wall … I had dancers in there too in terms of the feeling of the space, emotional involvement with air space, which created another kind of sensibility of feeling of movement. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022)

Although hired at Penn State as an interdisciplinary artist educator, he only taught for one semester before being relegated to the mainstream hegemonic curriculum that isolates the arts from other disciplines and ways of knowing. Consequently, he felt a sense of being misunderstood, under-supported, excluded, and of not belonging. He described his coming to Penn State as "an alien invasion to the faculty" stating, "When I came to Penn State, I was an alien. I was an interdisciplinarian and my faculty had no idea what that was … they didn't understand what I wanted to teach" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022).

The struggle for Mayhew at that time to teach in a way that was authentic to himself reflects the racist traditions embedded in the system of education (Pewewardy, Lees & Clark-Shim, 2018) stemming from Eurocentric efforts to eradicate Indigenous knowledges and "discipline" knowledge of the Other (Trouillot, 2003). Starting in the 1970s, efforts were made at Penn State to actively recruit minority students through an educational opportunity program. Black students only made up 3% of the student population and even less representation was in the faculty ranks (Bezilla, 1985). When Mayhew arrived at Penn State, he was one of few African American faculty, and his Native American identity was barely considered. Mayhew's words are as follows:

> When I came to Penn State, they thought of me as an African American, not Native American; and that was a problem … This is another extreme sensibility of communication and ideology among the two groups. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022)

Mayhew believed that fixed notions of what a Native American or an African American is supposed to be and look like, made navigating his dual African and Indigenous identity complex throughout his life. Mayhew's recollections demonstrate how his dual identities were not necessarily congruous to one another. He stated the following:

> I identified with both cultures because … of being supported. The African American one … supported me [as an artist] because I was part African American … the Native American never had the idea that they were able to support me as a Native American. So, there's a problem here in terms of where the support was coming from … There's a problem in terms of what's coming [in terms of support] other than Anglo Saxon you know … How much Native Americans are respected and their contribution, and how much African American is involved with this—the development of the system… (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022)

The complications of navigating the dual identities of African American and Native American is echoed by Afro-Indigenous historian Kyle T. Mayes (2021a), who outlines the long established intersection of Black and Indigenous peoples throughout the history of the United States, including leading up to recent issues around citizenship and speculations on Afro-Indigenous futures. Mayes shares his own personal experiences:

> For people like me, there is little representation with respect to Black and Indigenous peoples. We often have to choose between one identity or the other, depending on the circumstances. That is unfair, even tragic. Our histories are important and deserve to be told, in a parallel and systematic way. (p.xvi)

Disentangling Eurocentrism, Identity, and Interdisciplinarity: Mayhew's Early Years

After the divorce of Mayhew's Afro-Indigenous parents—Shinnecock and Unkechaug (father) and Cherokee-Lumbee (mother), Mayhew divided time between the urban and rural settings where his parents lived. Mayhew spent most of his childhood with his paternal grandmother, who encouraged his love of art as well as inspired his connection to nature. His grandmother also taught him to know his Indigenous roots and dual heritage. He recalled his grandmother's teachings:

> … This ancient ability, I was always made aware of that—because my grandmother was a Shinnecock, and she constantly explained how much there is an African American mixture in me … but she always told me that "you're Native American" … constantly made me aware that there is a mindset. Right? To explain that in terms of how one thinks and how one communicates and how one progresses is based on the mindset of African American as opposed to Native American … and they both involve the similarity of survival instinct. (R. Mayhew, personal

> communication, July 26, 2022)

Mayhew's paternal grandmother lived on the original homelands of the Massapequas, North Amityville, on the south shore of Long Island, New York. Mayhew described its unique demographics as "a settlement of the ancestors of the African American underground … [and] the Native Americans who left the reservations" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022) He also described his early school years as providing a unique and diverse experience, in spite of the broader discrimination of Natives and Blacks at the time. He recalled,

> The school was not segregated like all the other schools were and the public places were not segregated. That was unusual about Amityville. I still can't figure how it ever got to that point. At the time, there was nothing but discrimination everywhere else … the sensibility [there] was a strange survival instinctive functioning. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022)

His teen years were spent with Hudson River painters who summered in his seascape community and influenced his interest in the visual arts—especially James Willson Peale, with whom he apprenticed over three consecutive seasons. Mayhew served in the Marine Corps during World War II, and later studied visual art at the Brooklyn Museum of Art School before continuing studies in art history and art education at Columbia University (Maloney, 1992).[5] In the 50s, he became active in the New York art scene, and worked as an illustrator and commercial ceramics designer. Grants, fellowships, and awards also funded his art practice, including two years studying art in Europe (1960 and 1961) at the Accademia Firenze in Florence and Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Lessons in Interdisciplinarity: How Mayhew (Un)Disciplined a Eurocentric Art Education

Mayhew recalled the value of his grandmother's lessons: "My grandmother was involved with Native American sensibility, which was outside of the natural function of the society, in the sense; because it's an inventive survival of self, and how one is involved in that" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022). Aside from learning from his grandmother, family, and community, Mayhew's education had always been Eurocentric—an ideology bent

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[5] This reference comes from a magazine in the Penn State University Archives Biographical Files. On the first page, there is an inscription written by Mayhew to Charles Blockson, of the Charles Blockson Collection (https://libraries.psu.edu/about/collections/charles-l-blockson-collection-african-americana-and-african-diaspora).

on crushing, erasing, stealing, and appropriating Indigenous knowledge systems (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). This enculturation was essentially the reason why Mayhew said that he learned about interdisciplinary studies in Europe. The term resonated with him instantly. He stated,

> It supported my thinking, and the feeling that I couldn't go beyond that area because it wasn't part of the educational structure … how much one went beyond the state of creative consciousness, beyond whatever discipline you are in. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022)

Interdisciplinarity affirmed Mayhew's holistic view of knowledge and living—one that encompasses the mind, body, emotion, and spirit (Cajete, 2000) as well as the "social features, cultural traits, economic character and political frame… on learning in its totality or a whole human being" (Mwinzi, 2015, p. 681). This understanding encompassed Mayhew's practice as an artist and educator and carried with it the criticality of his complex dual identity and sense of belonging to the land. Mayhew elaborated:

> They have not really understood and respected that this was the land of Native Americans and how much African Americans were introduced to the culture. But the Native American is the culture … Very difficult to accept and understand. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022)

Figure 2. Richard Mayhew. (2008). De Mar. [oil on canvas]. ©2023 Richard Mayhew, Courtesy ACA Galleries, NY

Mayhew's mindscapes are creative manifestations of interdisciplinary consciousness that speak of growth, maturity, and transformation, emanating from the land. "It is about watching the grass grow after a fire … six weeks it's all back again, it's how nature regenerates itself … It's a regeneration of the human existence" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022). Drawing from memory, embodied knowing of place, reciprocity, as well as spiritual and emotional reverence, his paintings vibrate with the liveness of the natural world they represent, bringing the land into "being," balancing human and nonhuman. Much like he saw interdisciplinarity as tapping into "internalized creative consciousness," he painted nature from that same sensibility. It was "a feeling of knowing," a connectedness to an essence and energy that all human and nonhuman beings come from (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022).

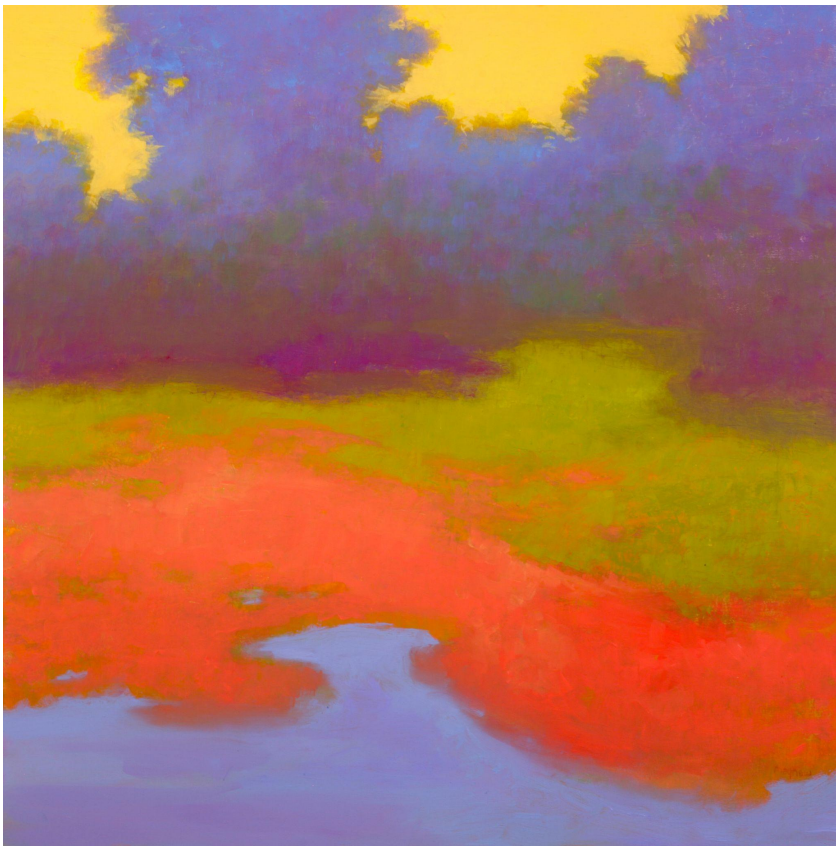

Figure 3. Richard Mayhew. (2009). *Jigsaw.* [oil on canvas]. ©2023 Richard Mayhew, Courtesy ACA Galleries, NY

Mayhew's response to the land was an interdisciplinary approach of multiple knowings and feelings which literally colored his art making. He stated,

> It's like the creative inventiveness of what you're doing and use of color to expand the sensitivity of the form, by optic reaction to the color. So, there's an optical association here beyond the color itself, and how to understand how the eye sees, and how the mind registers, [or] understands what the eye sees. So, you could go between an emotional response in terms of an optical response. So, there's this interplay back and forth in terms of how you see, and how you feel about what you see. It has to do with the feeling now of blue, you feel something cool—with red, you feel something hot. Now, optically, how you see it, and the fact that it's advancing on the eye optically, and blue is receding from the eye—so how much [is] involved with that association, the physical association with blue, or physical association with red. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022)

Mayhew's explanation of the use of color includes the body as part of one's way of knowing and it also captures the emotional reciprocity. He echoes what Indigenous botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer (2015) describes in relation to asters and goldenrod—plants that co-radiate color to attract pollinators for their continuous survival. Kimmerer's path to a degree in botany was sparked by wanting to know why asters and goldenrod look so beautiful together; but at the start of college, she was told that this question was more about art than science. Insidious as it operates, Eurocentric education attempted to make Kimmerer doubt herself and disregard her relational, experiential, and reciprocal knowings, to instead, adopt a worldview of "Science" that is reductionist, objective, and mechanistic (Kimmerer, 2015).

However, from an educator's perspective, one can argue that there is a profound legitimacy and value in asking why asters and goldenrod look so beautiful together because it is a question that looks to a variety of ways of knowing. Like Mayhew, Kimmerer is also highly capable of breaking down the optics of color into a singular way of knowing, She writes:

> Perception in humans relies on banks of specialized receptor cells, the rods and cones in the retina. The job of the cone cells is to absorb light of different wavelengths and pass it on to the brain's visual cortex, where it can be interpreted. The visible light spectrum, the rainbow of colors, is broad, so the most effective means of discerning color is not one generalized jack-of-all-trades cone cell, but rather an array of specialists, each perfectly tuned to absorb certain wavelengths. The human eye has three kinds. One type excels at detecting red and associated wavelengths. One is tuned to blue. The other optimally perceives light of two colors: purple and yellow. (2015, p. 45)

However, Kimmerer criticizes why her disciplinary knowledge must repress her emotional knowledge—limiting the deep connection and higher order thinking about why asters and goldenrod look beautiful together and her acknowledgment of how seeing them makes her feel. She writes,

> The question of goldenrod and asters was of course just emblematic of what I really wanted to know. It was an architecture of relationships, of connections that I yearned to understand. I wanted to see the shimmering threads that hold it all together. And I wanted to know why we love the world, why the most ordinary scrap of meadow can rock us back on our heels in awe. (p. 46)

Figure 4. Richard Mayhew. (2010-13). *Unkechaug.* [oil on canvas].

I can say from my own experience that this sensation of awe is what it feels like to encounter Mayhew's art, which attunes the viewer to a shared energy and sensory awareness of feeling, sights, scents, sounds, and textures of the land. One almost feels the warm softness of the breezes on the skin, smells the sweet grasses, flora, and fauna, and hears the sounds within the surroundings. One feels something greater than the "I"; it is a connection to the land, the "We" of past, present, and future.

I, however, am limited by my hegemonic Eurocentric language which attempts to dictate my knowledge of the world and squelch my grammar of animacy as Kimmerer explains

(Kimmerer, 2015). My language tries to disrupt my creative sensitivity and relative harmony with nature, demanding me to compartmentalize my simultaneous knowings of mind, body, emotion, and spirit, and sever any notion of reciprocity. Mayhew argued that "creative unique sensitivity is a natural phenomenon of the mind and body; and it can be easily retarded because of educational structures" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022). The Cartesian dichotomy of mind over body knowledge challenges interdisciplinarians (Benson, 1982; Daniel et al., 2022), as do mentalistic notions that interdisciplinarity somehow shallows the waters of rigorous and deep understanding of phenomena.

Interdisciplinary Art Education as Connection and Reciprocity: Teaching Truly

The tension between the knowing mind *and* knowing body to be acknowledged in art education has long been critiqued (Madenfort, 1965; Springgay & Freedman, 2007; Springgay, 2008), and the disconnect still shows up in mainstream art classrooms. One example relative to both Mayhew's and Kimmerer's account of color is how the color wheel is used to teach color theory—a staple lesson in K-12 and higher education art classrooms. Separated from how it is *felt* in bodies, emotions, and spirit, color is usually reduced to one of eight principle design elements to memorize regardless of its connection to the student's motivation for expression and/or deep meaning making (Gude, 2007). The typical lesson requires students to learn the primary, secondary, and tertiary colors and then represent that knowledge by putting the correct color in the outlines of a color wheel. This adherence to color as a "skill" to be housed somewhere in the mind—and not felt, sensed, and awed undermines the reciprocity and relationality of color, and the deeply complex human and nonhuman connections—in mind, body, emotion, and spirit—something which art education is well situated to tap into. What if, instead, color is explored through interdisciplinary ways of knowing—one that incorporates reciprocity, interplay, relationships, and fluidity, to explore and respond to complex and living questions about the world through multimodal ways? Kimmerer's question about asters and goldenrod involved an interdisciplinary exploration, but her initiation into the botany degree ("education") failed in its response until she claimed her Indigenous ways of knowing the many relationships within asters and goldenrod. Mayhew's interdisciplinary approach to pedagogy involves fostering for students, "a state of mind of creative inventiveness," to create the conditions for "an extension of the feeling and [an] examination of an analysis" of phenomena (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022). Kimmerer writes,

> That September pairing of purple and gold is lived reciprocity; its wisdom is that the beauty of one is illuminated by the radiance of the other. Science and art, matter and spirit, indigenous knowledge and Western science—can they be goldenrod and asters for each other? When I am in their presence, their beauty asks me for reciprocity, to be the complementary color, to make something beautiful in response. (2015, p. 47)

Mayhew taught in a way that fostered his students' capacities for inner connection, saying that "each student has this. It's about tapping that sensitivity of awareness of self in relationship to going beyond who they are" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022). His pedagogy and creative practice involved the student extending beyond a singular disciplinary focus of art as merely technical skills to achieve, to include art as a way of exploring and knowing—a rigorous and deep investigation that synthesizes both the parts as well as their relationships to the whole. His approach resonates with Four Arrows (2013) who calls for educators to engage in "teaching truly." Four Arrows states,

> We can wait no longer for educators to challenge the hegemony that cuts children off from their natural roots and keeps them away from the sights, sound, aromas, colors, sensations, and the sacred sense of space that ultimately give us the multidimensional capability for harmonious relationships. (p.12)

Four Arrows gives guidelines for non-Native educators to first educate themselves and their students about the history of Anti-Indianism and then, through a body of shared lesson plans, how to integrate the synthesis of relationships that come from Native philosophies into various subject areas. Although Four Arrows does not include the visual arts in his lesson plans (music is included), we have a wealth of knowledge to inform art education research and curriculum design towards higher, creative levels of thinking (Ballengee-Morris, 2011; Ballengee-Morris & Taylor, 2005; Ballengee-Morris & Staikidis, 2017; Ballengee Morris & Eldridge, 2020; Eldridge, 2008; 2016; 2018; Santos, 2016; Rallis et. al., 2023). The foundation has been laid for "teaching truly" in a way that addresses histories of oppression, raises awareness (Ballengee-Morris, 2002; 2008; 2010; Lentis, 2017; Slivka, 2011; 2015), and integrates Native American contributions to art education (Bequette, 2007; Smith, 1999; Stokrocki, 2000; Eldridge, 2001; 2009; 2017; 2018; Ballengee-Morris & Staikidis, 2017; Slivka, 2016; 2019; Smith, 1999; Stockroki, 2000; Zastrow, 1982). Indigenous art educator Laurie Eldridge (2009) outlines ways for art educators to (a) connect to Native philosophies and emphasize their importance, (b) respect and reflect traditional ways of being in knowledge creation, (c) acknowledge the value of experiential learning as legitimate knowledge-making, (d) strive towards transformative research, (e) lead with the heart, and (f) focus the control to those implicated by its outcome. These are all capacities towards collective well-being and a "higher level of thinking … a requirement for living a good life" (Four Arrows, p.13). According to Cajete,

> Thinking the highest thought means thinking of one's self, one's community, and one's environment 'richly'—essentially, it is a spiritual mindset in which one thinks in the highest, most respectful, and most compassionate way, thus systematically influencing the actions of both individuals and the community. (Cajete, 2000, p. 276)

Pointing to Indigenous research methodologies rooted in ancient knowledge systems and practice, Kumar and Pattanayak (2018) argue for an institutional paradigm shift that facilitates interconnectedness rather than competition. Interconnectedness is essential to a co-conspirator justice movement. Bettina Love (2023) declares, "We need co-conspirators actively working toward collective healing, reflection, and joy, attempting to love as many humans as they can along their journey" (p. 247). Love's words are perhaps most critical because we can assume that most art educators reading this article are not Indigenous, because representation of Indigenous teachers in US K-12 schools is .05% (NCES, 2020; Elpus, 2016) and mirrors the representation of Native peoples in higher education (Bryant, 2021). This statistic was created by design and is a result of a long history of oppressive and inequitable educational systems (England-Aytes, 2013). My effort with this writing does not rectify this, nor does it rectify my white settler existence; it is only one upstander attempt at countering the archive and acknowledging my own participation (willfully or not) in the archive. I might fumble, as Love puts it (2023), but I believe that we need to try to create and/or connect with coalitions of co-conspirators in justice in every aspect of our lives.

Mayhew's ideas, though still radical today, require a countermeasure in art education to push away from a singular optic, namely a democracy rooted in a "divide and conquer" ethic of whiteness. Interdisciplinarity in art education can be an "internal creative sensitivity of awareness. It's an internalized knowing … and it has nothing to do with White or Black or whatever. It's a feeling of knowing. It has no boundaries" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, October 22, 2022). Native peoples and peoples of African descent, in America and elsewhere, have long demonstrated creative modes of survival, resilience, resistance, and growth in the face of violence including, but not limited to, slavery, torture, land-stealing, genocide, and cultural erasure. Juxtaposed to this fact is the disenfranchisement and an unwillingness to educate about the truths of these experiences, their impact on the present, and the underlying resistance of "progressive creative continuation" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022). These practices of erasure are only ramping up and continue to impact Black and Indigenous people through mis-narratives, disenfranchisement, racist policing and incarceration rates, and the erasure or misrepresentation of their histories (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2021).

Although Mayhew passed away in September 2024 at the age of 100 years old, he left behind a legacy of interdisciplinarity that art educators can model to foster a "progressive creative continuation" (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022) towards balancing the crises due to Eurocentrism and its presumed superiority over "other creatures, races, cultures, spiritual beliefs, and Nature" (Four Arrows, 2013, p. 2). His lessons in interdisciplinarity offer a respectful and compassionate way to think about art education that acknowledges the deeper

connections between peoples and the land. Although I have been trained as an academic in the unwritten rule to "never end with a quote," I purposefully counter this constructed notion of academic writing and give Mayhew the last word here about the land and what we might learn from educating towards resilience and the creative continuation.

> The landscape is the survival of the blood in the soil of Native Americans and African Americans—and it is in nature. Nature is all part of it. And so, the natural phenomena of nature is in constantly replenishing itself. After a fire, the leaves come back, and the grass grows again. And it is part of the natural phenomena of nature and the natural phenomenon of the survival of African Americans and Native Americans. You know? … to survive in an alien situation, after fire. (R. Mayhew, personal communication, July 26, 2022)

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As an integral part of this study (and article), I acknowledge and honor the lessons I learned from Richard Mayhew. His ideas resonate even more today, given the many fires burning (geo-political and environmental, literally and metaphorically). As I started writing this article during the summer of 2023, my windows were often sealed shut because of forest fires blazing in Ontario and Quebec, Canada (roughly 15 times the 10-year average according to the federal Minister of Emergency Preparedness). The fires sent smoke across the entire Northeastern US, forcing millions of people to stay indoors because of dangerous air quality. I am indebted to Mayhew for the knowledge and care I received and share here. I only wish he could have seen this manuscript published. Mayhew passed away on September 26, 2024 at 100 years old.

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