

Teaching Tallahassee: An Interdisciplinary Civics and Art Curriculum Project

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Introduction

- This research investigates two goals.
 1. Developing a model for higher education institutions, like FSU, to provide opportunities for K-12 teachers to understand how civic engagement can be nurtured locally.
 2. Fostering the collaborations of art, history, and civics educators and faculty to develop an effective and evidence-based curriculum focused on civic engagement and participation in Leon County K-12 school students.
- It is necessary to investigate these goals because there is a gap in the curriculum for combining civic education with art education that needs to be addressed.
- The project has spanned two years, the first to write the curriculum and the second to implement it.
- This case study looked at one participating school in this project, focusing on the unit In the Shadows developed by art educator Egda Claudio, at FSUS Elementary.
- This unit asks students to use storytelling and shadow puppets to explore and actively engage with the history of the civil rights movement in Tallahassee.

A Case Study of an Elementary Classroom

- The subject of this study were fourth and fifth grade art students, and the art teacher at FSUS elementary school.
- Student and their teacher were involved in a unit that connected art education and civics, which ran from February – April 2025.
- The methods of this project include classroom observations, student interviews, and background research. The teacher was interviewed mid-way and at the completion of the unit. The interview was a semi-structured interview that asked questions about:
 - The relationship between curriculum, art, civics, and communities.
 - The relationship between interdisciplinary curricular collaborations and civics education.
 - The relationship between curricular strategies and civic engagement.
- Students will be interviewed at the completion of the unit in small focus groups. The questions focus on how students learned about their community, how art supported their learning, and how the unit challenged them to think differently about history.
- In addition, the classroom observations and student artwork will be considered as data.
- This qualitative data was coded and themed to provide insight on the role of interdisciplinary curriculum (art and civics) and the role of art making on teaching the skills and values of civic engagement.
- Alongside this case study, the project also entailed background research. This was the creation of a teacher resource for lesson planning that brought together a selection of contemporary artists that have used civic engagement in their artwork.
- This background research consists of creating a teacher resource of art projects that will serve as a guide in art and civic curriculum development for future teachers.

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Figure 1

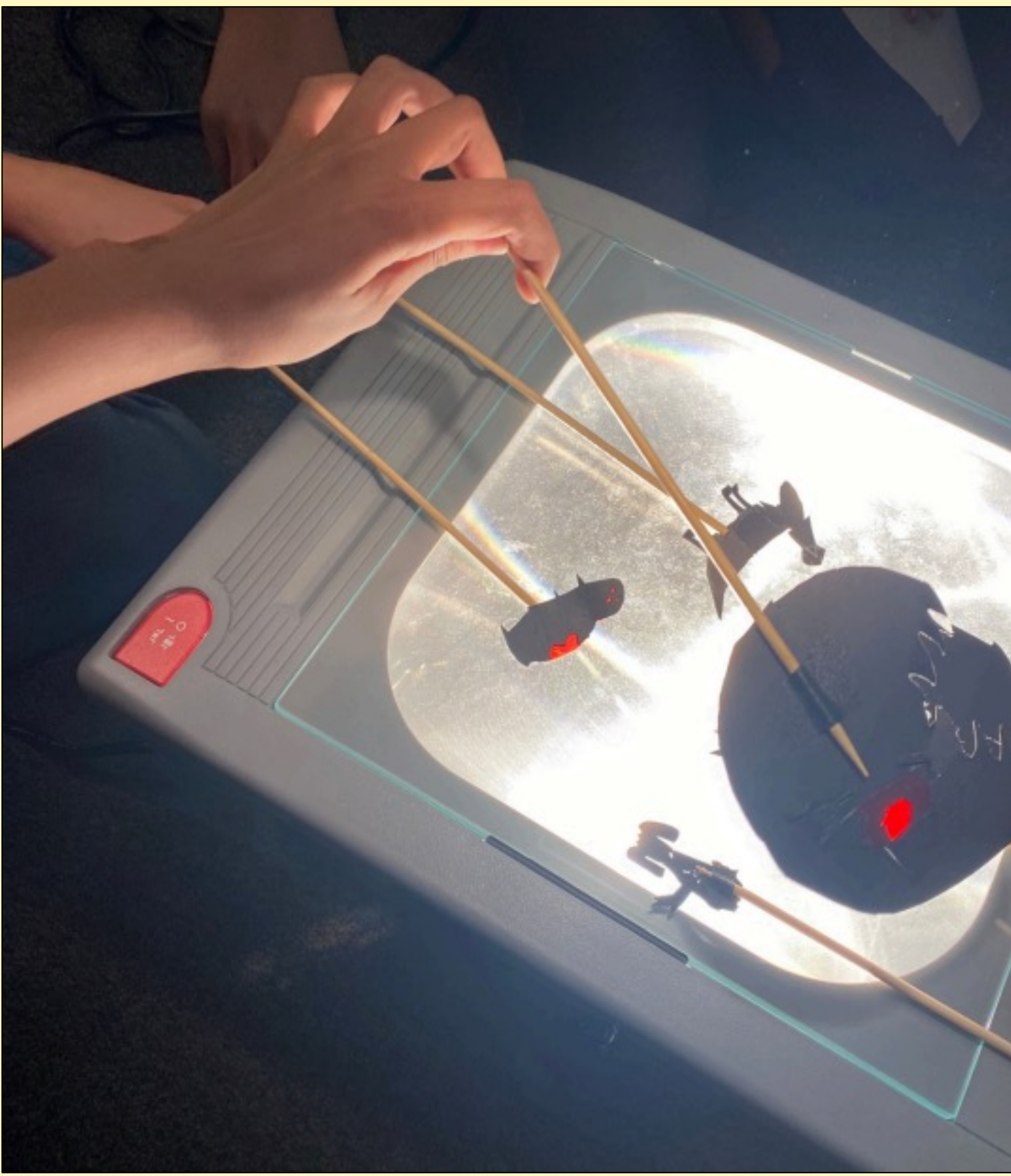


Figure 2



Figure 1- 3: Students using puppet theater

Figure 4



Figure 4: “Black Out: Silhouettes Then and Now” Kara Walker

Learning outcomes from an art+civics curriculum project

- This research is ongoing.
- Teaching Tallahassee has found the following results:
 - Storytelling and art-making engage students in historical events.
 - Asking students to create their own narratives helped them feel like part of history.
 - Students felt more connected to their community and its history as a result of this unit.
 - How students are asked to participate in classroom activities is itself a form of civic education.
 - Using local histories is a technique for increasing student engagement, and this type of curriculum project requires an interdisciplinary approach to cover, for example, the history, the physical space, etc.
 - The place-based focus in this project mimics an important trend in contemporary art which effectively blends art and civics.

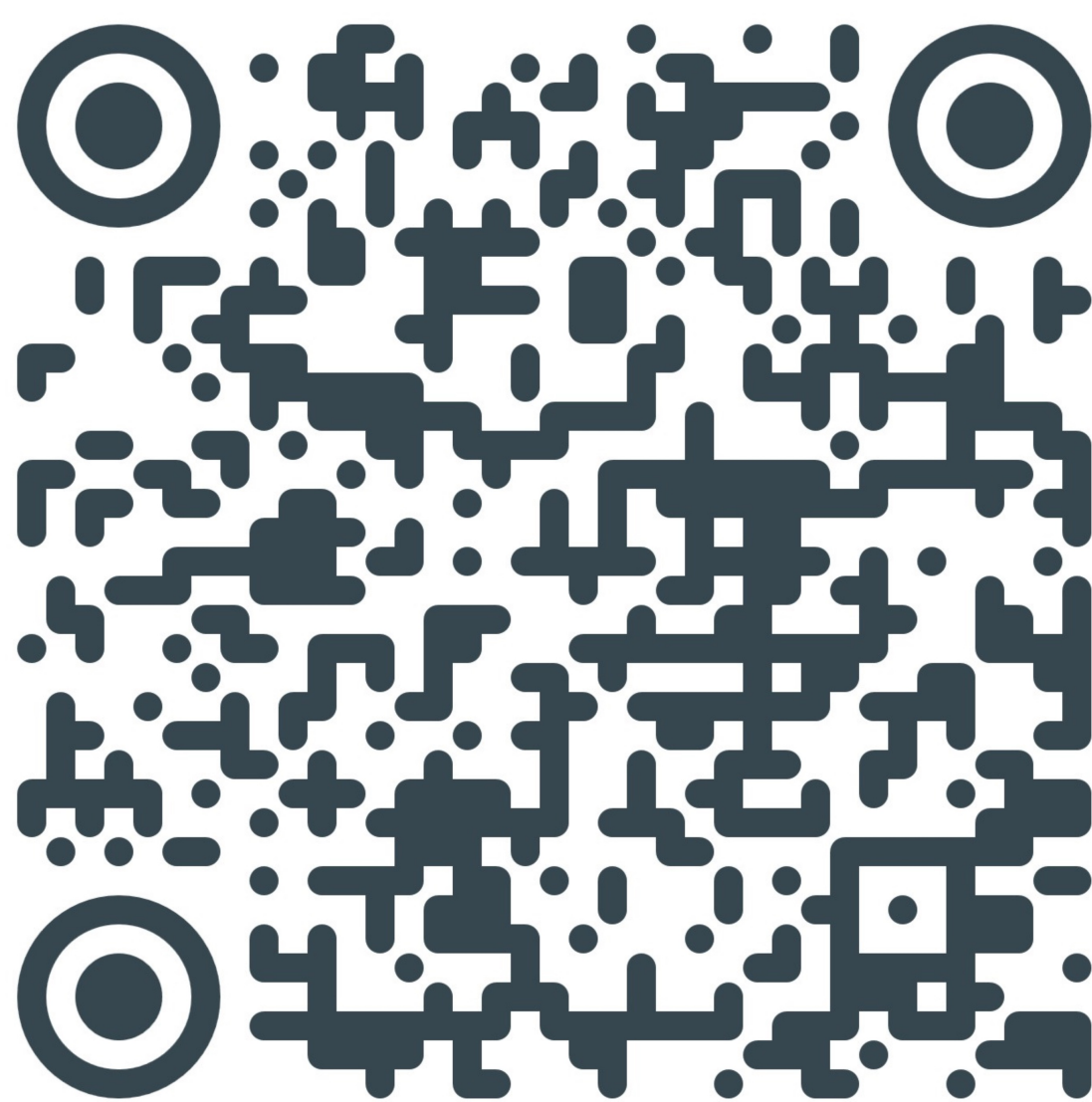
Conclusions & future directions

- Civic education is supported by artistic processes.
- Art education can make a significant contribution to civic education, by engaging students with community stories and histories.
- Interdisciplinary curriculum should be further explored as a way to develop a holistic approach to civic education in schools.



Figure 3

Project Website



Sources

