

## ENACTING CHANGE SURVEY RESPONSE

For information on the Enacting Change Survey Project, facilitated by Joanna Rees, see the NAEA Women's Caucus website at <http://naeawc.net/activism.html>

**Laurel Lampela**

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1. *What is your educational background and where did you complete your Ph.D.? If you have not completed your Ph.D. please provide information on your highest level of education.*

B.S. Art Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975  
MEd, Art Education, Wright State University, 1988  
PhD, Art Education, The Ohio State University, 1990

2. *What are your current research interests and contributions to art education?*

Since the early 1990s, I have worked to compile information on historical and contemporary lesbian and gay artists and their works in order to make the information available to art teachers who chose to include it in their curricula.

This was a difficult research agenda to pursue at the time since very little had been written about lesbian and gay artists up to 1990 and I was aware that other scholars had been discouraged to undertake such studies since it could be a real threat to tenure, promotion, reputation, and personal safety (Harbeck, 1992).

Although, it was professionally risky for me to undertake my research agenda I had no other choice since I am a lesbian and did not want to be silenced. It has proved to be the right decision and I was not denied tenure or promotion each time I went up for each.

During the early 1990s it became quite apparent to me that the lack of information on lesbian and gay artists in the curriculum was having a debilitating effect on not only lesbian and gay youth but on lesbian and gay teachers. I read about the plight of lesbian and gay youth and teachers from several sources including three anthologies: Karen Harbeck's (1992) *Coming Out of Classroom Closet*, Sue McConnell-Celi's (1993) *Twenty-first Century Challenge: Lesbians and Gays in Education*, and Kevin Jennings' (1994) *One Teacher in 10: Gay and Lesbian Educators Tell Their Stories*.

As one of the co-founders of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer Issues Caucus (LGBTQIC) of the NAEA I joined several art educators in the NAEA in the formation of a group to make visible lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues within the field of art education and to actively work against misrepresentation and bias of lesbians and gays in our culture and teaching institutions.

I crafted the mission statement and constitution for our group using the mission statements and by-laws of other similar groups within the fields of art and education as models. The first draft of our constitution was completed by April 1995.

The next year an article I wrote about the need to establish a lesbian and gay caucus within the NAEA was published in *Art Education* under the journal subtitle, "Exploding the Canon." In that article, I wrote of common concerns of lesbian and gay caucuses within the fields of art, education and art education. (Lampela, 1996, *Art Education*, 49(2), 20-24).

I stressed the need for such a caucus and urged the field of art education to join other educational organizations and art organizations in the establishment of an affiliate devoted to lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues. The caucus was granted affiliate status in 1996 at the annual NAEA conference in San Francisco.

I also wanted to provide role models for youth by providing information about both historical and contemporary lesbian and gay artists. During the 1990s while I was teaching at Cleveland State University a 15-year old girl and a 14-year old boy from two different suburbs of Cleveland committed suicide because of the difficulties they faced being lesbian and gay teens. During that same decade Matthew Shepard, a 21-year old gay university student from Wyoming was beaten and murdered.

It became obviously apparent to me that lesbian and gay youth would benefit from access to information and to positive role models and art teachers could address artists who were or are lesbian or gay in their curricula.

I published an article that stressed how art teachers could become more aware of homosexual artists, provide accurate information to students about various artists, and provide gay and lesbian adolescents with positive role models. I included information about Harmony Hammond, Janet Cooling, Gilbert and George, and Deborah Bright, who all openly identify as lesbian or gay (Lampela, 1996b, *Gay and lesbian artists: Toward curricular inclusiveness. Taboo: A Journal of Culture and Education*, 2(2).)

In the late 1990s, I was interested to learn if art teachers throughout the country were aware of artists who are lesbian or gay, whether they included the work of lesbian and gay artists in their curricula, and if they were willing to disclose the sexual identity of gay and lesbian artists in their classrooms. I conducted a national survey of art teachers in the NAEA and found that the average art teacher was aware of some lesbian, gay, and bisexual artists that they included in the curriculum but neglected to mention to students that the artists were either lesbian or gay. I also discovered that some art teachers wanted more information about the lives and works of gay and lesbian artists, were ready to bring up

issues of sexual identity in the classroom, but lacked the curricular and resource materials necessary. This research was the first of its kind in the field of art education and the results were published in *Studies in Art Education* (Lampela, 2001a).

In 1999, Ed Check and I (Check & Lampela, 1999) provided NAEA members with resources to address lesbian and gay issues in the classroom through the *NAEA Advisory*, a publication of the NAEA sent to each of its membership. The advisory provided readers with names of several contemporary and historical lesbian and gay artists, as well as provided teachers with examples of art lessons that addressed the issue of homosexuality.

In 2000, I contributed to the anthology *Realworld Readings in Art Education: Things Your Professors Never Told* (Fehr, Fehr, & Keifer-Boyd, 2000) with a chapter that focused on contextual approaches to understanding the work of some lesbian artists including Sadie Lee, Romaine Brooks, and Gluck (Lampela, 2000).

That was followed by an article in *Art Education* (Lampela, 2001b) that provided readers with information about the lives and art of three historical lesbian artists who each lived her life as an out lesbian – Rosa Bonheur, Romaine Brook, and Gluck.

With Ed Check I co-edited the anthology, *From Our Voices: Art Educators and Artists Speak Out About Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Issues* (Lampela & Check, 2003). Published by Kendall Hunt it includes first-person narratives from art educators, art teachers, visual artists and an art historian who each explore how sexual identity affected their teaching, learning, and art. The anthology has been adopted as a course text in several universities throughout the United States and Canada.

I am also doing creative research and have exhibited my work in several group exhibitions and will have a solo exhibition at an ABQ gallery in December. My work concerns the construction of hybrid realities through digital collages and hand-pulled intaglio solar gravure prints. Since I have spent much of my life living in the Great Lakes region I often see the illusion of an expansive body of water when I look to the west since moving to the southwest. My work often depicts the contrasting areas of the country that converge to create an illusion of what could exist. Both areas of the country are my realities and I create a simulacrum (sim a lay crumb) from the two. Living in New Mexico affords me the opportunity to be continually reminded of the old Western movies with vast landscapes of deserts and mountains and mesas. This has had a significant influence on my work.

### 3. *Could you describe your leadership style?*

I was recently told, by the Dean of our college, that I have a quiet leadership style. I would guess that means I try to make change without trying to call too much attention to myself. I prefer to write, rather than speak, and help others make the changes needed in the schools. If what I write helps them show their administration the attention that lesbian and gay issues deserve I feel I've affected change on some level.

4. *Could you describe your teaching pedagogy?*

I have emphasized learning through experience and practical application. Teaching through experience is the cornerstone of my pedagogical methodology. I teach my students by modeling the teaching techniques that I believe work best; class discussions, small group work and individual inquiry. My teaching involves a hands-on approach rather than a lecture format.

Depending on the particular course I teach I use several different methods of experiential teaching. In some classes I pose questions to facilitate discussion. I also have students purchase a course reader where I have chosen a variety of readings from several Art Education journals, rather than rely on one textbook with one perspective. I update the course readers each semester.

In the past I have had students pose questions based on the readings and we use those questions to facilitate weekly discussions. Currently, I have students write abstracts on the readings and share those with the class because I believe that each person can get something different from a reading and each perspective is valid to some degree. Students begin to see that their thoughts and opinions are as important as anyone else's.

I love to share the stage so to speak, so I have each graduate student facilitate one discussion from a list of topics on the syllabus. This provides students with the opportunity to bring in additional readings that they find relevant to the discussion and have the opportunity to add their unique teaching style to the class. I enjoy how this format generates a lot of excitement and enthusiasm from students when they have the opportunity to lead the discussion in a way they see fit.

I continually tweak and change my course syllabi and course readers so that the material reflects not only the current trends and issues in art education but also in the socio-political issues of the day. I realize that to be an effective teacher I must be flexible, open to change, and willing to change.

I also have been incorporating a lot of technology in the classes I teach. These include the creation of several PowerPoint presentations; the use of email as a method of accepting class work; use of various websites that we visit during class; and most recently the use of Facebook where I can share articles I have read with students outside of the class contact hours.

I also try to model the qualities of organization and accuracy that, to me, are two of most important characteristics necessary to being an effective teacher.

5. *What are your contributions to Women's Caucus and women's issues in art education?*

I have presented conference papers through the Women's Caucus and work to highlight the lives and artwork of historical and contemporary lesbian artists.

6. *Could you describe your current identity as a woman and art educator?*

I see myself as a proud lesbian feminist art educator, in a wonderful relationship with a lesbian artist, as a very amateur golfer, and as an art maker. I am very interested in reading more about the emergence of a spirituality that has no dogmatic religion but is concerned with recognizing the essence of every living creature, including the earth. I am working to become more enlightened through my spiritual quest, my teaching, my artwork, and although the path is an arduous one, it is an exciting one.

7. *How has this identity changed and grown over time?*

I started out as a very closeted lesbian art teacher for a few years and then joined the Air Force as a Public Affairs Officer. Strangely enough, while I was in the Air Force I became an ardent lesbian separatist, torn between two worlds – the heterosexual military (or so it seemed to me) where I worked and the lesbian separatist community in which I lived. I thought that anger was necessary to get what I thought I deserved as a lesbian. It was then I began to seek out a more real existence, perhaps spiritual. My path led me back to being an art teacher and then to graduate school. I realized I loved teaching, accepted my sexual identity as a lesbian, and met my life partner. I found teaching at the college level exciting and challenging and that hasn't changed. Since moving to New Mexico I have again found my art making self.

8. *Have you ever felt held back or discriminated against because of your gender?*

Absolutely. I literally was held back while in Officer Training School because I believed that women should be able to wear pants just as the men were able to wear pants. I had to march alone behind my flight if I wore pants and that's exactly what I did. I also have felt that I have had to work much harder because I am a woman at every job I've had. Now, I am trying to see how everyone, women and men, are conditioned to believe certain things about their selves because of their biological sex and because of their gender. I'm hopeful that women and men will be able to be both their masculine and feminine selves without encountering any discrimination.

9. *Have you seen other professionals in the field discriminated against in educational workplaces?*

Yes and it is so unfortunate. I've personally witnessed how two wonderful lesbian colleagues suffered "psychic gynocide in diabolical ways" at the university level – one stayed on at a particular university and the other was fired from the same. Both were put through a living hell because, as I saw it, they were proud lesbian feminists not afraid to speak up when injustice occurred.

10. *What changes would you like to enact in art education?*

That's an interesting question because although there are changes I would like to see, I know the only constant is change so change will happen. I would like to see all LGBT art teachers throughout the US and the world able to be open about who they are without fearing harassment or discrimination. I would like to see the spiritual brought into our field but I have no idea of how or in what ways that might occur.