Many thanks to my teacher and mentor Professor Elizabeth Manley Delacruz’s nomination, and recommendations from Professor Michael Day, Professor Christine M. Thompson, Professor Anna Kindler, Professor Kerry Freedman, and Professor Holger Hoge. It is my great honor to receive this meaningful award, and this wouldn’t have happened without the great guidance of my teachers and colleagues in the field. I would like to thank Professor Ann Kuo especially, as her recommendation 20 years ago gave me the chance to leave Taiwan and go to University of Illinois at Champaign Urbana for rigorous academic training and cultivation of a broader horizon. My academic foundation there was crucial to my later investigation and achievements in art education. At the same time, I am in debt to Taiwan’s educational environment and system. Because of Taiwan government’s great attention to art education, I was able to participate in many national policy planning and execution. Through my participation, I’ve gained many valuable experiences and learned the true meaning of intersubjectivity of theory and practice. As I often have the opportunity to work with experts from many different disciplines, I realized that the teaching and learning of art lies at the heart of art education. Because of the agency and autonomy of art, we can often breakthrough deadlocks with our more creative and constructive imaginations. We often have more empathy and are able to place ourselves in other’s situation. This ability to understand conflict from another perspective gives us the room to diminish exclusion and decrease societal dispute. Art education creates possibilities, and is the key agent in igniting social transformation. Just like Maxine Greene (1995) said in *Releasing the Imagination*, “for me, as for many others, the
arts provide new perspectives on the lived world....I find myself moving from
discovery to discovery; I find myself revising, and now and then renewing, the terms
of my life” (p. 4).

Facing the technological advances of the 21st century, we bear challenges that
are ever more complex and difficult as art educators. The emphasis on humanities,
sustainability, and respect of differences has become global concerns. With smart
phones’ and other mobile devices’ reverse search abilities, questions and confusions
from Taiwan to the other side of the globe could be solved in the blink of an eye.
With the development and release of many sharing mechanism and open online
curriculum, knowledge is no longer exclusive and are easily obtained, which hints at
further possibilities and imaginations. Digital equipment replaces the traditional
blackboard and notebooks; the future of education provides many more options to
choose from. At the same time, the ecology of schools and the interaction between
students and teachers are vastly changing. Teacher doesn’t necessarily have to be in
classrooms, with the utilization of online classrooms; schools include many more
forms of engagements, such as video games to stimulate students’ learning
motivations. Teachers’ professional development are ever more mobile, through
social media’s creation of professional communities online to exchange information,
express personal identity, and reach audiences outside of schools. In the world of new
information technologies, “education” is ever more “at home.” Participating in social
discussions while making choices on behalf of the individual are become more
important in current educational development. It is apparent to acknowledge that we
are always “learning,” while we are never short of “resources” in this generation. The
role of teacher and student is constantly reversing. In school systems, learning by
oneself is necessary; outside of school systems, learning by oneself is inevitable. The
mode of learning has become open and liberal.

As contemporary technologies given human endless possibilities and agency
in the pursuit of knowledge, art education must radically alter the way we have
conceptualized education and traditionalized practice, just like artist M. Duchamp
revolutionized the idea of art with found objects. From the child-center approach of
creative expressionist that emphasized personal development, to the inclusion of
disciplined-based understanding of art and educational theory, and then to the focus
on multicultural understanding of the lived experiences and visual culture’s education
value, we have come a long way to get at the heart of art education. In the face of
contemporary needs and demands, I propose that we march towards an education discourse that places individual and community at the center of consideration, while emphasizing agency as the key that ties the two together through art education.

Agency as an art education concept emphasizes art as publicly owned and collectively created. The praxis of art education is not limited by field, but engages interdisciplinary human experiences through the learning and making of art. Art education is a subject that allows free access and deposit, with the learner and subject-to-learn-from collectively construct the core of the subject. This enables a rhizomatic understanding and possibility of education through art. The embodiment of education is altered situation by situation according to the agency of the teacher and student. Through collective negotiation and construction, the field of art education is boundless and creates a learner society that is closer to the ideal democracy. Here, art education wishes to cultivate ideal liberal subjects, with full agency to express and shape subjectivity. An ideal liberal subject is able to freely access and deposit what is needed, what is wanted, what is desired, and what is felt. (S)he is able to practice the subjectivity of inter-subjectivities and demonstrate care for humanities, life, and environment. (S)he is crucial to making all position in the division of labor “at home,” with the ability to breakthrough personal oppression, social discrimination of work, and achieve what Abraham Maslow conceptualized as self-actualization.

Since 1960, Taiwan’s art education has been heavily influenced by Western discourses. Taiwanese government published the Chinese translation of Herbert Read’s *Education Through Art* in 1973. Later, nongovernmental agency published Viktor Lowenfeld’s *Creative and Mental Growth*’s Chinese translation. In 1989, Ann Kuo introduced DBAE to Taiwan through her paper “A grand experiment in DBAE: The Getty Center for education in the arts.” She also translated and published E.W. Eisner’s *Education Artistic Vision* in 1991, and invited professor E.W. Eisner to Taiwan for keynote lectures and other academic exchanges. Through the many international conferences held in Taiwan, and young scholars returning to Taiwan from the West, we were introduced to many innovative trends in global discussions. Taiwan’s art education gradually accumulated enough energy to engage in the global discussions of art education through collective effort.

In terms of Taiwan’s art education policy construction and implementation, the Republic of China government has put in much effort. Other than mandating art
curriculum throughout elementary to high school education, the Ministry of Education published the first national “Art Education Policy White Book” from 2005-2009. The policy proposed the vision of “aesthetically powered citizen” and “creative arting Taiwan,” and budgeted approximately 230 million USD to execute this plan. The Ministry of education even founded the Department of Teacher and Art Education in its administration in 2013. The department has published the “2014-2018 Aesthetic Education Five Years Project” since then, and budgeted 1.4 billion USD to promote the vision of “aesthetically powered citizen,” “aestheticize homeland,” and “aesthetics society.” As of now, “Arts Competency and Aesthetic Attainment” has been at the core of the national 12-year Compulsory Education implementation, in hopes to achieve the educational goal of “To Achieve Talent Development.” Taiwan’s art educators have been contributing to this development from different fields and positions.

Today, as I receive this great honor, I’d like to reflect back on Sr. Herbert Read and Professor Edwin Ziegfeld’s intention in constructing a community of art educators. This community is the best vehicle and platform to initiate the agency of art education. It is the place that enables teachers to create the educational ideal of Professor Herbert Read in 1966, “Art leads the child out of itself” (p. 56)

Let us all work hard together, and thank you again for acknowledging Taiwan art educators’ work.

Note: regarding the concept of “Liberal Access,” please see my publication in 2013: Toward a “Liberal Access” Art Education. Teacher Education, 184, 11-16.

References