

Beyond the Pandemic: Art-making lessons for SOTL in an unequal South African context

Kim Berman

Department of Visual Art, University of
Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

kimb@uj.ac.za

ABSTRACT

This article aims to present an arts-based campaign as a strategy to glimpse into 'the fault lines of inequality of access' through the voices of art students and considers hope and imagination as strategies to engage with and move through the despair and trauma emerging out of the COVID-19 pandemic period. The Lockdown Collection (TLC), established at the start of the first hard lockdown in March 2020, is considered, a case study for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South (SOTL). It reveals greater understanding of ways that visual research pedagogies can develop collective strategies for the individual and community to flourish in the face of the pandemic. Such strategies include the capacities to listen to student voices and raise funds for vulnerable artists. Artists find resilience in their ability to make a difference through their own agency to remake and transform internal and external realities through their artwork and imagine different possibilities. The contention is that economic agency is and must be part of the strategy.

The world is experiencing economic, social, and psychological damage from two catastrophic events – the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the growing impact of climate change. There are many lessons to be drawn from catastrophes and trauma. This article focuses on the resilience of a new generation of young adults at a time of deep uncertainty in South Africa. Specifically, the focus is on how visual art students from Artist Proof Studio (APS) and the Department of Visual Art at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) used the pandemic period to imagine a better world and shape their social identity as visual activists of change in an unequal society.

This article presents aspects of The Lockdown Collection (TLC) established at the start of the first hard lockdown in March 2020. Considered as a case study for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South (SOTL), the case of the TLC reveals a greater understanding of ways that visual research pedagogies can develop collaborative strategies for the individual and community to flourish in the face of the pandemic, strategies that both listen to student voices as well as raise funds for vulnerable artists (Auslander, Allara & Berman, 2021).

The Lockdown Collection was co-founded by business entrepreneur Carl Bates, creative designer Lauren Woolf, and the author, an educator and community arts leader. Throughout 2020, the TLC was managed by a team of volunteers. The TLC presented a campaign by and for artists that raised over R2.5m and distributed over 520 small grants of R3000 each (many as repeat grants) to vulnerable artists and art students. Visual storytelling was widely promoted on social media platforms, inspiring thousands and empowering individuals to find their voices¹.

Art-making is particularly effective during times of crisis, especially in coping with isolation, change, trauma, and grief. There is a body of literature emerging out of the pandemic attests to the significant role of art and arts therapies in overcoming trauma (Potash, Kalmanowitz, Fung, Anand & Miller, 2020). As educators working with students, we witnessed the powerful expressions of the human spirit's ability to respond to trauma and devastation. Artists find resilience in their ability to make a difference through their own agency to remake and transform internal and external realities through their artwork and imagine different possibilities. I contend that economic agency is intrinsic to this strategy.

This article aims to present an arts-based campaign as a strategy to glimpse into the fault lines of inequality of access through the voices of art students. It firstly considers the challenges

¹ The Lockdown Collection (TLC): <https://www.thelockdowncollection.com/student-collection>

encountered by educators during the lockdown period and presents the TLC as an art-based awareness and fundraising campaign in two parts. This is followed by a discussion on visual storytelling and expression and considers how hope and imagination are strategies to engage with and move through the despair and trauma emerging out of the pandemic. Examples of artwork created by students are selected and paired with their textual responses to the work donated by William Kentridge, *Oh to Believe in Another World*. The argument presented is that the artists' methodology, through their visual and textual work, actualise hope into material expression, and this process enacts empathy and imagination.

Educators faced many significant challenges faced by educators during lockdown. The COVID-19 pandemic raised fundamental and urgent questions for educators in engaging inequalities, injustices, and the dire violence of poverty among art students. The challenge of this journal issue asks the critical question of how do educators address current important pedagogical and theoretical debates around social justice, online pedagogy, and scholarship of teaching and learning more broadly, as stated in the Call for Papers for the 2021 Biennial SOTL in the South Conference (SOTL in the South, 2021), from which this special issue emanates:

Has the pandemic laid bare the fault lines of inequality of access within and across the global south? Has the transition to online instruction helped or hindered the drive for a more socially just higher education institution?

The COVID-19 crisis impacted both education and the cultural and creative sectors in complementary ways. The sectors experienced accelerated digitalisation that initiated new development and exacerbated the inequalities² (Banks, 2020). The TLC project provides an example of a strategy to address these vast inequalities and challenges, including distributing grants, innovating pedagogical methodologies and finding technological and social media solutions for learning and promotion via digitally mediated access to cultural material, resources, and experiences. The following discussion considers some of these challenges faced by art educators in particular, and offers responses and learnings that managed to pivot spaces of despair into opportunities of hope and agency.

Much has been written on the pedagogies of possibility that foster hope rather than hopelessness, as well as relational agency in which the agent is part of a larger community and has an extended

² For more information on the inequalities exacerbated, please refer to the OECD (2020) report Culture shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors. In OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID 19): <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/culture-shock-covid-19-and-the-cultural-and-creative-sectors-08da9e0e/>

sense of self and an extended view of time (Macy & Johnstone, 2012). Harry Boyte's book, *Awakening Democracy through Public Work: Pedagogies of Empowerment* builds on the principles of public work and citizen politics to shape public achievement through "active citizenship and an understanding of agency as freedom" (Boyte, 2018). While citing only two of many examples of the varied responses to Freire's (1992) fundamental principle of 'pedagogies of hope', a common thread that links social justice pedagogies is that they are grounded in lived experiences and interconnectedness. This interconnected approach influences a critical pedagogy for a more human-centred, caring approach to online learning during the pandemic.

In Shashi Cullinan Cook's (2021) recently completed PhD thesis, she offers a set of principles for transformation and a model of practice for art and design theory educators to identify the prior knowledge that serves as the starting point for new knowledges that extends the capacity for agency in students. She presents this approach as a path to reshaping the pedagogical practice from the inside out. She envisages that educators adopt a teaching and learning approach to enable incoming students to recognise and appreciate their prior knowledges before students are absorbed and assimilated into academic ways of knowing. This approach complements the core principles of empathy and listening, activating students' knowledges (and I would add, their own voices) and generating their sense of agency, confidence, and direction.

The Lockdown Collection which was active for eighteen months (from March 2020 to September 2021), started as a responsive campaign to the COVID-19 crisis, and evolved into a pedagogical strategy that draws on art and artists to record the moment of the global catastrophe and to imagine a new and more socially and ecologically just world, one that visualises ways to build the future for the next generation.

During the height of the first hard lockdown from March 2020, art students from Artist Proof Studio (APS) (a community art centre co-founded by the author) and students from the UJ Department of Visual Art (where the author is an educator) were invited to create a series of visual conversations in response to the devastating impact of the lockdown and their hopes for a safe future. During the hard lockdown, communication took place via cell phone calls and WhatsApp. Very few APS students had Wi-Fi access and most needed data and smartphones to respond. For UJ students, the university made devices available to those who needed them, and a monthly quota of data was provided to enable students to pursue online learning. For APS students, many of whom live in situations of dire poverty, funds were raised by the organisation to purchase 30 smartphones for students who did

not have their own, and a set amount of data was loaded onto 60 students' phones to enable connectivity with their teachers.

Months after the first lockdown, some Gauteng-based APS students could travel to the inner-city to collect prepared kits that included phones, sanitising supplies, and art materials. In some instances, packages were collected to be delivered to rural communities in Limpopo, North-West, and the Eastern Cape. (Unfortunately, some students could not access resources. To cope, they sold their phones for food and dropped out of the grid, disconnecting them from their online learning.) Connected students were invited to make drawings at home on paper and improvise using materials they had available or could fashion from household materials such as dyes from tea and food colouring, and make collages using glue made from rice water. Some exciting work emerged and was shared with class groups over WhatsApp. A selection of these artworks was then photographed, curated into a portfolio, and sent for digital printing in editions of ten prints each. Three student portfolios were compiled in 2020, responding to three themes: the lockdown, green recovery and gender-based violence (GBV). These works were sequentially posted on social media platforms accompanied by their personal recorded or written statements. The works sold and the funds raised by the campaign benefited each participating artist.

Some remarkable images and stories emerged that build on resilience and imagination to conceive new ways of seeing. The stories by the student artists call on educators to be participatory and inclusive as a fundamental aspect of being human, evoking alternative visions in collaboration with others. Their prints and drawings express feelings of instability, despair, anger, and optimism. The artworks communicate the deep knowledge of the devastating physical effects of global warming, losses, and trauma from violence and illness to creative expressions of hope and resilience³.

During the winter of 2021 (officially the third wave and the second pandemic lockdown), William Kentridge gifted an artwork to the TLC. Kentridge chose an artwork from his *blue rebus* text series entitled *Oh to Believe in Another World*. In partnership with the Visual Art Network of South Africa (VANSA) and APS, the TLC used the artwork to spark an art bursary and awareness campaign across the country. Many art students and artists did not receive their much-needed funding in the wake of a spate of looting sprees that followed the devastating and shameful looting of state resources by corrupt government officials. COVID-19-relief funding of R300-million 'disappeared' from the

³ See the student Lockdown Portfolio, the Green Recovery Portfolio, and the GBV Portfolio (APS, 2020; TLC, 2021)

National Arts Council (NAC); yet only some of the officials were suspended. The loss of funds rendered the NAC ineffectual in disbursing much-needed grants.

The TLC used arts and arts education networks, as well as social media platforms, to encourage eligible students to apply for a bursary to support their continued studies in visual art, and in so doing, to respond to the challenge posed in the Kentridge artwork. Almost R720 000 was raised through the sales of Kentridge's *Oh to Believe in Another World* and his previously donated lockdown print titled *Weigh All Tears*. The money raised enabled 60 students to be awarded a R12 000 bursary each.

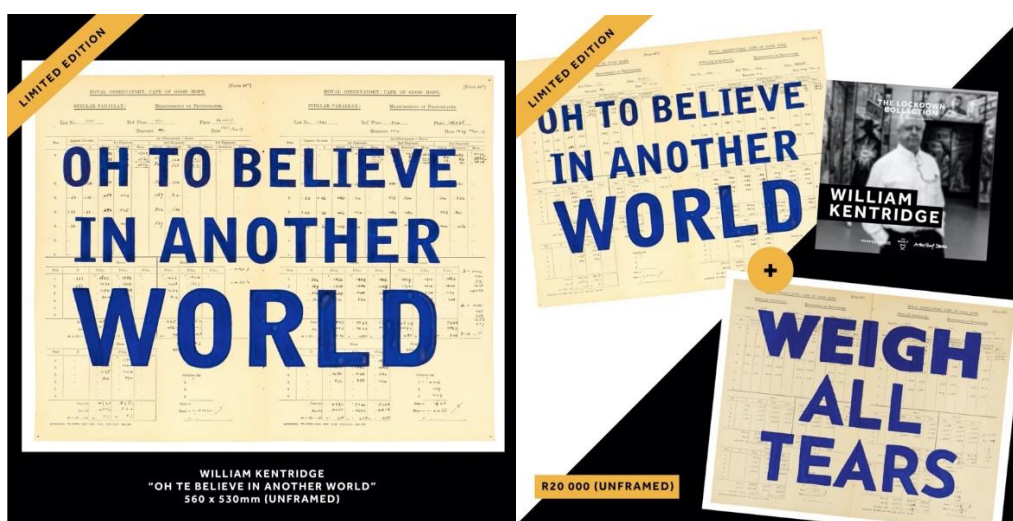


Figure 1: Digital prints donated by William Kentridge as presented on the social media fundraising campaign (TLC 2021)

The following discussion presents students' voices to foreground listening and visual conversations as a pedagogical strategy. A visual conversation using image-making provides a lens to engage with a world in change. The TLC project was initiated as an activist campaign to use art to raise funds to support vulnerable artists, and in so doing, activate the agency and imagination of students and members of the public. Engaging in the arts is empowering during perilous life circumstances. Art reminds us of the powerful will of the human spirit to remake and transform internal and external realities (McNiff, 1981: vi). Art empowers us to participate and have faith in our ability to make a difference; according to McNiff (1981: vi):

[T]hroughout time, art has shown that it can change, renew, and revalue the existing order. If art cannot physically eliminate the struggle of our lives, it can give significance and new meaning and a sense of active participation in the life process.

I agree with McNiff's (2019: 52) assertion that artists have the power to reveal the underlying meaning of any period precisely because the essence of art is the powerful and alive encounter between the

artist and their world. Visual stories provide powerful methods that contribute to the greater understanding of research problems and students' challenges. I contend that this project goes beyond an understanding of the healing capacities of art and that this arts-activist campaign demonstrates that art can materially address and intervene in the struggle to change lives.

There are meaningful lessons to be learned from artists' visual voices and statements. A more in-depth analysis of the motivations of the many participating artists in the campaign can be considered for future research, which would require particular and different methodologies of analysis.

William Kentridge is arguably one of the worlds most celebrated artists. He has collaborated with APS for many decades and is further known for his generous support of the South African art community. His gift of the textual work, *Oh to Believe in Another World* challenges viewers to think of a future beyond the pandemic. The artwork he gifted to APS is valuable, accessible, and considered a sound financial investment by collectors. Simultaneously, it is a challenge of imagination and agency. The challenge posed is that these words and the visual association of the textual image can be our collective dream for a post-COVID recovery to re-envision our futures. The artwork posits that imagination can transform despair into hope and agency. Art can offer critical and meaningful readings of the world and possible futures. It can also inspire activist coalitions to collaborate toward greater justice in society (Berman, 2017).

Visual storytelling and expression allow us to shape possibility through imagination and are part of the process Appadurai (2004) coined as 'futures'. Many students suffer extreme despair and anxiety, having lost their parents or family members to gender-based violence or the coronavirus, and in that process having lost their anchors to stability and security. Nonetheless, the students have retained the agency to imagine and visualise a different reality as a tool to shape hope for the future.

There is a rich literature of pedagogical and philosophical ideas expressed by academic thinkers on notions of hope, imagination, and futures (Appadurai, 2004, 2013; Lederach, 2005; Ganz, 2009; Gross, 2021; Long, 2021). A few selected ideas are presented in this article. These ideas are counterpointed or aligned with the students' visual and textual expressions in response to the challenge that Kentridge's work poses.

In my PhD study and life-work, I showed that art can save or change lives when used as collective action. Alongside art as learning and expression of hope, art must be accompanied by economic

agency. While writing this article, I encountered an Instagram post by a former student and staff member at APS (2003–2008), Nelson Makamo, who shaped his life through the combination of imagination and material agency. I described Makamo as an example of self-creation in my book *Finding Voice*, and wrote “With his talent, dreams, and vivid imagination he created an image of himself as a successful artist and then fulfilled it” (Berman, 2017: 43).



Nelson Makamo, whose art has appeared on the cover of Time magazine [2019], has dreamed of owning a Porsche 911 ever since he was a child in rural Limpopo in the 1980s. The artist recently took delivery of a Jet Black Metallic 911 Carrera Coupe. Makamo is hoping that his unique Porsche 911 sports car will spark the imagination of African children, helping them see that it is possible to find success through passion based on talent, as well as resilience, hard work, and the unwavering support of their family.

Figure 2: Nelson Makamo⁴

Jonathon Gross presents a summary of recent philosophical work on hope in his article ‘Hope against hope: COVID-19 and the space for political imagination’ (2021). He suggests hope has three components: the desire for an outcome, the belief in its possibility, and imagination to visualise the future. He argues that hope is central to political imagination and that competing hopes must be addressed within discussions of what cultural policy ultimately seeks to achieve. The article suggests a distinctive role that cultural policy can play in responding to a ‘populist moment’ (Gross, 2021: 2). Gross (2021: 7) further comments:

If amid the enormous suffering and injustice of the pandemic there is new hope for more caring, equitable, and democratic futures, many competing visions are being developed apace.

Gross (2021: 7) maintains that the challenge should not only be the occasional consideration of what the future could and should hold but the sustained posing of the question – What should the future be like? – and the development of new answers. He proposes that cultural studies have a specific role

⁴ <https://www.iol.co.za/motoring/custom-cars/sa-artist-nelson-makamo-creates-one-of-a-kind-porsche-911-5e778ecd-d346-4592-a228-0debd1c72244>

to play in addressing capacities to analyse the competing futures contained within the present. Gross (2021: 7) acknowledges that cultural studies' value would:

take on greater urgency and efficacy by forming new connections with the anticipatory methods employed in futures studies, and with practices in critical education and theatre research in which transformative processes of individual and collective self-narration are the modus operandi. In the months and years to come, as we hope against hope, we'll need conjunctural analysis and the sustained cultivation of caring, creative spaces for political imagination.

I would add that practical examples of new ways to mobilise a collective can be part of how political imagination expands and would contend that this artist-led campaign moves beyond the role of 'cultural studies' into a space of visualising and enacting hope through art and artists. Solidarity movements like these help us to be aware of the stories we are not being told.

The TLC awarded 520 small grants to vulnerable artists to assist them in making art under lockdown in 2020. Their ability to produce portfolios while engaging critical themes of poverty, climate change and gender-based violence required them to grapple with what Gross (2021) describes as "transformative processes of individual and collective self-narration" which is seen as "sustained cultivation of caring, creative spaces for political imagination".

The COVID-19 pandemic has been exceptionally devastating for young artists, who often live in deep poverty. Artists can offer poignant insights into the impacts of global warming, generating a visual conversation that focuses on decarbonisation and vastly increased food and water security as the way forward. These powerful images from the Green Recovery Portfolio have generated new conversations to visualise how this existential threat can be overcome (Berman & Sarra, 2021).

The following section presents a selection of artwork produced by art students from APS between 2020 and 2021. Each artwork is paired with their statements written as part of their application to the TLC for a bursary in response to *Oh to Believe in Another World*, and includes an extract of their own statement about the work they produced for one of the Lockdown portfolios.

In July 2020, the Green Recovery Portfolio was presented to the Canada Climate Law Initiative (CCLI) of the University of British Columbia (UBC), which held a conference examining the obligations of corporations, governments, and civil society to work collectively to create a sustainable future. Including the arts in policy discussions as an integral part of understanding climate change attests to how a visionary approach is needed to influence policymakers (Berman & Sarra, 2021).

Jason Langa, a second-year student at Artist Proof Studios created a work for the Green Recovery portfolio which was subsequently used by the Climate Law conference in Canada as an invitation to support the art students and promote the initiative.



Jason Langa's motivation and response to *Oh to Believe in Another World*: "Another world where war and sicknesses do not have absolute control over the world. Another world where we do not have to struggle and suffer to make ends meet, as artists and as human beings in general. Another world where the power of humanity decides the laws and regulations which we follow, where the word ubuntu and its meaning is completely embodied by every human being, wholeheartedly so. Another world which can become a reality, a reality that we yearn and hope for, which we can bring to life through our potential as humans".

Greener Pastures. In this work, my focus is on promoting habits that could help to slow down or even halt the effects of climate change, including activities that seek to reduce our carbon footprint and the detrimental effects that our everyday lives have had on the planet. Activities that could help with this reduction include driving less, using water sparingly, recycling waste materials, and switching to renewable energy. Reversing the effects of climate change is possible by working together as a planet (TLC, 2021).

Figure 3: Greener Pastures (Jason Langa)

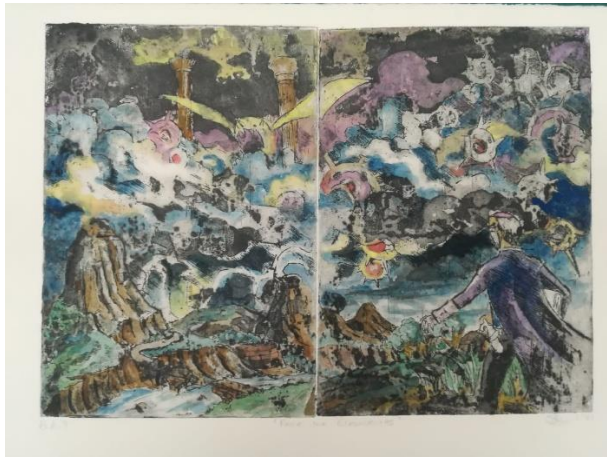
Langa dreams of another world where we do not have to "struggle and suffer to make ends meet" and sees the potential of promoting habits to reverse the effects of climate change. Arjun Appadurai (2013) refers to a situation in India of 'waiting for' government to deliver and the importance of hope:

We may say that hope in this context is the force that converts the passive condition of 'waiting for' to the active condition of 'waiting to': waiting to move, waiting to claim full rights, waiting to make the next move in the process that will assure that the queue keeps moving and that the end of the rainbow is not a broken promise.

I contend that art-making and an awareness and fundraising campaign have initiated methods for converting this passive condition of 'waiting for' into the agency of doing for oneself and others.

Appadurai (2013) stresses the value of futurity as a cultural capacity in his recognition that "by bringing the future back in ... we are surely in a better position to understand how people actually navigate

their social spaces”. Futurity in this context is the ability to grow and change continually and is thus essentially about sustainability as a practical outcome of aspiration. An example of this in practice is found in Thabo Skhosana’s work. Skhosana, a fourth year student intern at APS also develops graphic novels as a means to share his passion for promoting social change among youth.



Thabo Skhosana’s motivation and response to *Oh to Believe in Another World*: “Artists have wild imaginations. Though their works, they can draw their audience into an illusion that might have a positive impact on their lives or impact their perspective on global warming. Oh to believe in another world, a world that is much better than our reality. Imagining such a world drives us into working on making such a world a reality”.

Face the Elements. This image was inspired by a quote from the Book of Joy [Tutu and the Dalai Lama 2016] about standing steadfast in the face of a storm. Like all my work, it takes on a comic-book characteristic that tells a story. The clouds are replaced with floating bacteria and viruses. There are many obstacles between the figure and the landscape, including a broken bridge across a rocky path to the river. The pillars of an ideal world are visible beyond the clouds. This figure has become me. After my father passed away last month, our family inherited huge challenges to make ends meet. These pillars are a gateway to entering a better world.

Figure 4: Face the Elements (Thabo Skhosana)

The key to resilience and self-sustainability is the way that the arts can assist in generating hopefulness. Ganz (2009) talks about hope as “audacious and substantial”. Hope also allows us to deal with problems creatively and is a gift we can give each other to make change. In their statements, many artists speak about giving hope to others.

Throughout my book *Finding Voice: A Visual Approach to Engaging Social Change*, I hold and present the position that creative practice is a core component of self-actualisation and is one of the fundamental purposes and outcomes of freedom and democracy. *Finding Voice* values the notion of voice as key to agency and the responsibility to act. I hold that stories allow different voices to be heard, giving hope and agency (Berman, 2017).

Thulani Gankca lost his mother in 2009 and now lives with his aunt. Gankca is a first-year student at APS who supports himself by drawing and selling his portraits and screenprinting t-shirts. His work is

a tribute to the women in his life, past and present, and “waking up to a new dawn filled with hope and possibility”.



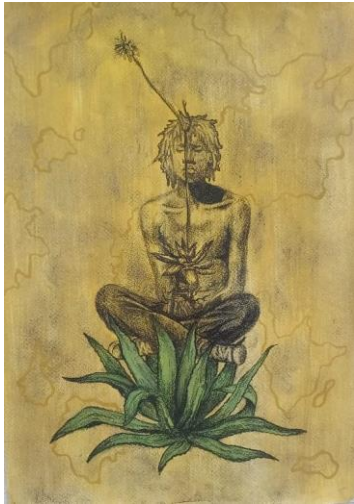
Thulani Gankca's motivation and response to *Oh to Believe in Another World*: “Oh to believe in another world, soil clutched in fists, our hearts like soles beneath the feet, on the Frontline we are fighting with pride for our people. Yet, even another day never come, instead our breaths are drenched with smells because back in another world masks used to frighten society but today, they are one of the hopes for humanity to be saved. The rising of a clouded moon eclipsing the Corona of the sun, children of the sun witness another perfect storm but, looking into the eyes of glory, still we are the vehicle for the transition to this other new world”.

Uprising. My work pays tribute to women and the memory of a better world. Uprising is about waking up to a new day revitalised and ready to face the world. The women are from portraits of women in my community as a way to honour my mother, a single parent, who passed away in 2009.

Figure 5: Uprising (Thulani Gankca)

Gankca's and other stories confirm the urgent need for gender-responsive economic and social policies that place women and other vulnerable groups at the heart of emergency measures and recovery plans. All economic recovery measures should include specific interventions targeting women and other vulnerable groups for both immediate responses and medium-term and long-term recovery. And, while calls for the government to address GBV come from many sectors in South Africa, unemployment and crime, despair and violence are at their highest crisis levels, amplifying a parallel pandemic of violence against women and children.

During the hard lockdown in 2020, Lungile Mbelle lost his mother, who suffered from domestic abuse. He used his artwork and his relationship with plants to express his struggle to heal himself. The question that Mbelle's work poses is how do we consider the role of art and artists in healing and repair? This challenge extends to what might be the role of schools and universities, and arts and cultural organisations. These are vital and vibrant spaces conducive to political imagination, and action can potentially spring up anywhere, inside and outside of institutional walls (Gross, 2021: 4). Our pedagogy must be responsive to the challenges faced by this generation of students and listen carefully to their voices.



Lungile Mbelle's motivation and response to *Oh to Believe in Another World*: "In conversing with myself about human creativity, I became alert to what the world is changing into. It is sad to think that our creativity will not be appreciated because a machine can do it. But what I truly believe is that now, we as visual artists will surely be more powerful than ever before.... and our creativity will have a mass impact on this changing world"

About this work: "Since the pandemic, I spend time in my garden, and the time has become part of a relationship with my plants. I spend time observing the wild aloe in my garden, and it started teaching me certain things about survival. I have become more connected to nature, conserving and cultivating medicinal plants. I believe this becomes my story of finding inner peace, and finding healing through nature. I am able to eliminate diseases through these plants, conserve them and teach others about them".

Figure 6: Conversation with myself (Lungile Mbelle)

Clement Mohale, a student at APS submitted this work with his application and received a bursary in the form of a monthly stipend to allow him to return to his classes. He remained stuck in Limpopo without the means to travel and support himself in Johannesburg.

Mohale's voice and understanding of the complexity of personal and environmental well-being is extended further by Wahbie Long, a clinical psychologist and author of *Nation on the Couch: Inside South Africa's Mind* (2021) who explores the relationship between social deprivation and psychological distress. Long challenges South Africans to rethink the way we see ourselves. He speaks about hope as residing in the individual and between people, which is shaped by the notion of ubuntu (human interdependence).

[I]n a country where one-third of the population lives on the equivalent of less than R30 per day, there can be no question of setting life's goals in keeping with an understanding of the good. This is because the unskilled worker sitting on the kerb has to deal with what can only be called the stuff of nightmares... He lives only for today: there is no point in thinking about the future, which as anyone with a dream will know, is where hope resides (Long 2021: 155).



Clement Mohale's motivation and response to *Oh to Believe in Another World*: "My deepest desire is to create a space for the young generation where they can be inspired and have access to creative art, and provide them with an opportunity find their purpose at an early stage of their lives. In essence, I want to create work that is educational and thought provoking to the status quo. Oh to believe into another world is to hope the human adrenaline does not incite hate and create a feeling that the world is merely on the brink of apocalypse. Retaliation is considered a real solution and moving forward to the future it is likely we become slaves of our own desires. I envision a world that is free of pain and suffering. It is up to us to reconcile and rebuild a global community that strives to create a conducive environment for everyone to flourish. The beauty of life is that every time someone dies a baby is born. I believe the universal language of love is a cure to world crises".

About this artwork, Mohale states, "The use of entangled lines in my work represents the impact of emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing based on the changes of normal routines disrupted by COVID-

Figure 7: Entangled 1 (Clement Mohale)

Long (2021: 155) presents another perspective: "hope does not complicate desire: it signifies instead a self that is searching for a fresh start". He points to the link between hope and self-actualisation in his statement that "showing up is not about fearlessness. It's about courage and pushing through despite the fear" (Long, 2021: 155). He identifies the treatment plan as the Golden Rule: "to do unto others as you would like them to do unto you". However, as he acknowledges, one cannot realise this principle without the capacity for empathy (Long, 2021: 162).

Makiziwe Radebe, a 20 year-old third-year printmaking student at APS lost her abusive father to suicide.



Makiziwe Radebe's motivation and response to *Oh to Believe in Another World*:

There awaits a wheelbarrow of the new world at the end of a road where you and i let go of all that pulls us back.

the road does not spiral or fall,
the new world is not above or below.
at the end of the road,
the woes of the past wash off and the hope carries us to that pilgrimage.
so when we look within, we see, all that we have been yearning for.
and here,
is another world in us...
a world we can believe in

The work submitted with her bursary application depicts a mother embracing and protecting her children from the ravages of the pressures around her. She balances the uncertainty with the safety of holding, communicating the impossible task women have in protecting their children from domestic violence and a destructive environment.

Figure 8: Comfort (Makiziwe Radebe)

The action of what Long calls the "Golden rule" is a call for reciprocity and empathy. Long's reference to the Golden Rule is illustrated by Radebe's artwork that expresses the ability of a mother to hold a safe space for her children. The unconditional love of a mother builds resilience. And as Long (2021: 163) states, the Golden Rule is a prerequisite for ethical living:

[The Golden Rule] principle is about action. It can't come alive in the mind only. Sure, you can hold it in mind, but it doesn't count for much if it doesn't find concrete expression in the way we live our lives.

Golden Rule thinking encourages us to recognise in others the humanity that we all unarguably share through empathetic acts of imagination (Long, 2021: 178).

This understanding calls on us to live in a very particular way. I contend that these students' voices ask that we "recognise that we're not just living for this generation, but for the generations to come" (Long, 2021). Thus, the students' responses to the catalyst, *Oh to Believe in Another World* show us how they actualise the rule in connection with the philosophy of ubuntu i.e., I am through you.

Each student applicant for the visual art bursary responded to what the text in the William Kentridge work means to them. Below is a selection from 100 responses that were also accompanied by

artworks. These student voices are included in this article as they are compelling and provide a relevant response to the challenge of this SOTL special issue calling for educators to address current important pedagogical and theoretical debates around social justice, online pedagogy, and scholarship of teaching and learning. All the students consented to use their names, artworks and texts for publication.

We live as though we have forgotten that we are all family and through art, I would love to remind people of where they actually come from. A world filled with genuine brotherly love and care for one another is a world I long for, "Oh to believe in another world" (Mohau Moholane, APS).

Believing in another world for me means opening myself up to the opportunities that are there when looking forward to something bigger than myself. The world is infinite, the way we can access the infinite possibilities is to believe that they are there. To believe in the power we have within ourselves to create these possibilities (Lesego Ditshego, APS).

Through believing in a new world where our leaders treat the civilians as they would their own families with much care and delight, breaking the habits of greed and corruption. To believe in a world promised with no more pain, sorrow, shame, and death. To imagine or believe in a world with peace could be far-fetched but not nearly impossible. For a day shall come when we are all in this world (Wilma Mutzize, UJ).

To achieve and live in a place we are destined to be in can only be reached if we have faith, drive, and passion. To be or live in another world is not only about dreaming: we as artists need to make that dream or vision come to life so other young artists can be motivated by our actions to actually live in the world we believe in (Dhelmon Draws, APS).

The world with hope, with more life. A world with no sicknesses and a world filled with love, courage and peace. A world filled with people who respect each other and help each other succeed and inspire one another through art created by our young generation with innovative ideas that can change the way we look at things. The world with no worries about what to eat tomorrow that focuses on new things to be created. New things to be (Gugulethu Tholakele Mnguni, APS).

Oh to believe in another world, these words are cracks of light in these COVID times we find ourselves in. I often find myself clinging onto things I still long to do. I put my dreams into my pocket like a set of keys, waiting for the time to come where I can unlock and open the door. The pandemic has put a lot of halt on the plans I have and the things I long to do, but the belief I have is that this period will pass and the time for me to pull out the dreams in my pocket will come keeps me going. Oh to believe in another world (Atsho Nodado, UJ).

Some expressions of despair are tinged with hope:

Oh to believe in the world...
 Something I desire to possess again
 A feeling which faded when I encountered its pain...

... Belief, are you here?
 Is that who you are?
 Or do you sit there silently and watch us scar?
 Oh, to believe in another world...

(Angelique Bougaard, UJ)

This article concludes with the urgency of art students' voices as they embody the fundamental notions discussed by the academics and thought leaders quoted in this article. Atsho Nodada's (UJ) statement "I put my dreams into my pocket like a set of keys, waiting for the time to come, where I can unlock and open the door" is a profound expression of hope and agency.

Gross (2021) asserts that hope is central to the political imagination for change and asserts that researching the future should have a more central place in respective disciplines, albeit for different reasons. Gross (2021) cites cultural and social researchers such as Mische (2009), who argue for a revival of the "future-oriented dimension of action" and the "notion of projects, or projectivity, as a tool for social analysis" to gain a deeper understanding of "the future images that inform social practices". Appadurai (2013) argues for an anthropology "that can assist in the victory of a politics of possibility over a politics of probability". These interests are not about predicting the future but understanding how imagining possible and preferred futures guide and motivate present thought and action. The methodological strategies of writers in cultural studies depend on evaluating how futures are imagined and how imagined futures might bring about personal, social, and societal change. The voices and images by art students can provide those possibilities. The methodology of the artist is to actualise hope into something material. The artist enacts and embodies empathy and visualises imagined (if absurd) heights like Skhosana's pillars in the sky as a gateway to his dreams; or Nelson Makamo's hand-fabricated Porsche with his own artwork enhancing the design, becoming an actualised dream.

In Anneke Sools' (2020) article 'Back from the Future: A narrative approach to studying the imagination of personal futures', she refers to her involvement in a COVID-19 project called Letters from the Future. The instruction to project participants is to imagine travelling to the future in a time machine and then to write a letter to an audience in the present about the depicted future and the path that led to this future (Sools, 2020: 453). Sools (2020: 461) notes that the navigation between agency and structure is necessary for understanding the "imagination as an intentional, creative, and socio-cultural process". She highlights this methodology as a way to address ethical concerns in descriptive research regarding how to deal with people's capacity (or lack thereof) to imagine futures, especially when faced with deprived circumstances and uncertainty about the future. She also warns that

teaching students to be more creative and imaginative may risk commodifying potentiality for material ventures and aspirations. Therefore, we need a critical pedagogy about what it means to move toward and be moved toward a flourishing and sustainable world in which humanity and the planet are intrinsically valued (Sools, 2020: 462).

Perhaps the example of Makamo's opulent dream of a customised one-of-a-kind Porsche can be criticised for that materialistic aspiration. Nevertheless, having grown up as a poor child in Limpopo, his quest puts the African child at the centre of his work and imagery, and his success inspires his thousands of Instagram followers to confirm that nothing is impossible. I agree with Long's argument that we need a critical pedagogy about what it means to move toward a flourishing and sustainable world in which the Golden Rule applies. I agree that empathy, kindness, and our humanity are valued and intrinsically linked to the environment and our interconnectedness.

Interconnectedness and empathy are fundamental lesson for educators in the South. We need to listen to our students. Educators can provide optimal conditions for empathetic connections with students and facilitate these expressions by creating safe spaces that enable dreams to be actualised. The anxiety and fear of not knowing are widespread due to the pandemic, and people experience consistent and shifting uncertainty. The arts have been extensively recognised as supporting mental well-being during this period.

Through this dialogical and reciprocal relationship, people feel empowered to act in ways that enhance society and are encouraged to contribute to a better world. The dialogical co-creative aspect of the TLC art campaign is a critical lesson in this strategy. Rather than charitable donations, the call required investment in artists paying it forward to support the vibrancy of a visual arts sector. Those artists who benefited from their educational and art market opportunities contributed to their work, auctioned with a minimum baseline guaranteed by businesses and private collectors. This new approach challenged the art-auction-market model and exceeded the baseline by building on creative possibilities that reached beyond the fear experienced throughout the lockdown. R2.5 million was raised and distributed to contributing artists and 520 vulnerable artists. The second campaign, built on the possibility generated by the text artwork by William Kentridge *Oh to Believe in Another World*, encouraged educators and collectors to invest in an art student's future and acquire a work of growing value that would help change a life. Over 100 students from seven provinces applied for the funding, and 62 bursaries of R12 000 each were awarded (exceeding the target of 50) and distributed within six weeks of the campaign.

As Gross (2021: 4) confirms:

[I]t is often when we experience care – within conditions of trust – that we are able to creatively narrate ourselves individually and collectively and to know that our actions matter. Care makes space for political imagination.

This article contends that the use of art is a vehicle for solidarity and collective action that leads to empowerment and agency in addressing the challenges faced in times of trauma. The lessons of the TLC art campaign and the students' voices can be shared as a hopeful vision for engaging greater social justice in our communities.

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