

On Art Clubs and Classrooms:

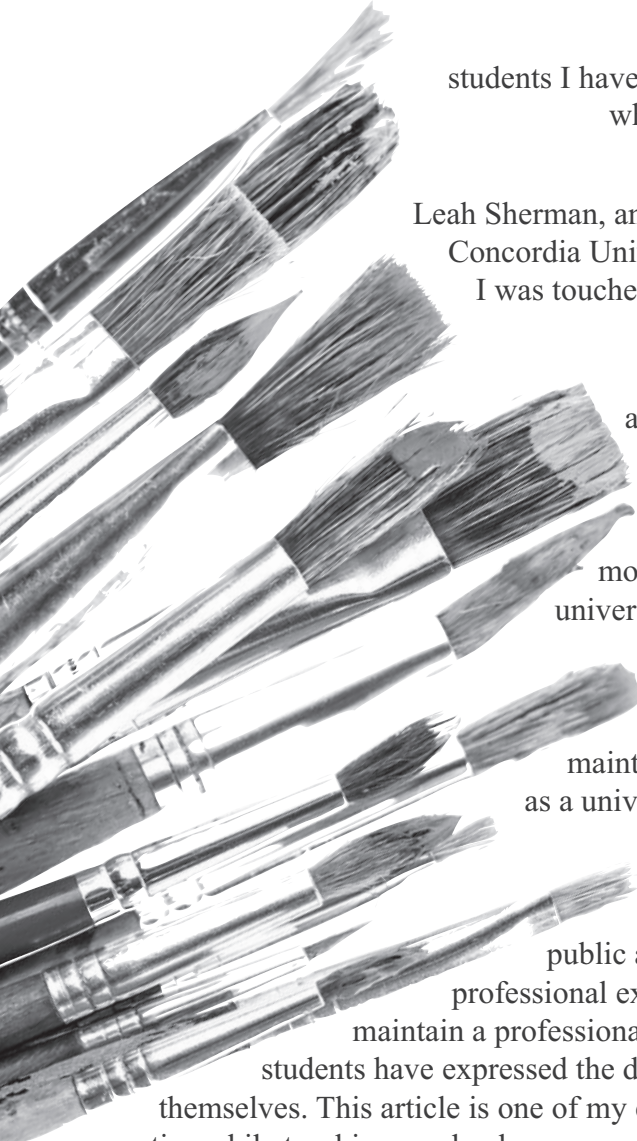
Navigating Artist/Teacher Identities by Looking at Anne Savage and Arthur Lismer

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This article is dedicated to:
students I have taught who are on the brink of pursuing careers in art education
while desiring to foster their professional art practice,

and

Leah Sherman, and her part in the enriched experiences I had in the 1980s at
Concordia University and the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal. Through her,
I was touched by the legacies of both Anne Savage and Arthur Lismer.



“Do you think I can still ‘make’ my art when I teach?” ask many soon to be teachers on the cusp of graduating from Bachelor of Education programs. They are uncertain about their ability to maintain their emerging artistic practice while teaching, and it is fitting to ask this key question given the two key role models seen by today’s graduates. On the one hand, their own university studio teachers are a dominant model representing the leading edge of art practice through the few tenure track positions at Schools of Art within higher education at the university. These young professional artists simultaneously maintain their ongoing artwork and exhibitions while having a career as a university art instructor/professor and it is expected and indeed vital that they continue art production. The second model, and the most immediate career path for most graduates in Art Education is within the kindergarten to grade twelve (K-12) public and alternative teaching profession, where there are few, if any professional expectations, pressures (or support) for K-12 art teachers to maintain a professional art practice. Despite the many apparent challenges, many of students have expressed the desire and intent to continue making art professionally and/or for themselves. This article is one of my efforts to tell newly certified art educators that maintaining an art practice while teaching can be done.

The term ‘artist/teacher’ itself has emerged in recent years. A simple definition of this dual role provided by Thornton (2005) states that an artist teacher is an individual “who both makes and teaches art ... [and has] a commitment to, or belief in, this dual practice” (p. 167). Meanwhile there has been an expansion in the current art world. Contemporary artists - now often referred to as ‘cultural producers’ –are adopting pedagogical strategies to communicate their meaning. By embracing social engagement and performance strategies the art world is beginning to recognize key elements of classroom practice as potentially creative forms. Reed (n.d.) talks about artists’ use of dialogic processes such as ‘action research’ and ‘learning that is experiential’ as keys to some contemporary artists’ art-making. In my own community of Winnipeg the *Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art’s* Summer Institute (Kirton, 2015), or the long-running mentorship

program at the unique organization, *Mentoring Artists for Women's Art* (Kinloch, 2010) are examples of an expanded notion of art that develop the field of practice for artist/teachers. The shifting transition from the solo artist as maker of objects to the more performative, dual role of artist/teacher, however, is not without difficulty. The identity, practices, and roles of artist and educator are indeed often viewed as conflicting (Moore, 2015; Reiss, 2015; Thornton, 2005).

Shreeve (2009) states that, “The worlds of art and schooling are different cultural configurations and this requires identity work as novice teachers move into teaching practice” (p. 152). Describing identity construction as an issue that is intricate, malleable, and constantly shifting as demands and expectations are navigated, Shreeve suggests that artist/educators’ identities constantly range from alienating to complementary. She delineates five categories of identity including: the (1) artist who teaches but this educational role is insignificant; (2) the teacher able to make art; (3) artist/teacher whose roles are given equal prominence, but are separate; (4) artist/teacher in which the roles work together; and (5) artist/teacher in which the roles meld together into one unit (Shreeve, 2009).

Students attending faculties of education bring experiences that are very diverse. Some attend after completing a Master of Fine Arts, others attend after completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts, many go through art education programmes with an educators’ orientation to art, and still a few return to education after a career as an artist. For some art graduates the transition between their former role as an artist and the new one of art teacher (or artist/teacher) is problematic (Adams, 2007). A cause of this difficult transition is the inherent contradictions between what is expected within the art world regarding contemporary artistic practice and the art expectations within K-12 schools (Thornton, 2005, 2011).



It has been found that some art educators, who in the past, while in art school, were once abreast of contemporary art practices — seamlessly incorporating current techniques and concepts within their own work — gradually transform into more conservative artists who are so busy with teaching they become disengaged with the present-day art world (Adams, 2007). In considering the difficulties of art educators regarding role expectations and identity, Thornton (2011) discusses some art teachers who feel distress for not engaging in an art practice; others who engage so much in art making that they feel neglectful as teachers; some who enjoy creating art for their own pleasure, and yet others who feel that they should not impose their art making concepts upon young students. Additionally, some artists resist teaching, as they fear that their artistic identity will be erased (p.35). Further adding to this conflict is a critical attitude I have encountered by some visual art students within Schools of Art, evidenced in this quote by Jillian Tamaki, a noted cartoonist who has won many awards. Interviewed about sustaining her artistic practice, Tamaki stated:

Would you do the thing [art] if you had to get a quote-unquote regular job? It’s a good question. And I fully think there’s a possibility I might need to teach in high school some time in my future. Life is really long, and success today doesn’t meant [sic] success for the rest of your life. (Medley, 2015, L2)

Tamaki's response indicates the viewpoint that teaching younger K-12 students art is considered an art career failure and often used as a safety net (Thornton, 2005, 2014). This assumption undercuts the aspirations of many teacher candidates who are negotiating their own way through art making and teaching.

Thornton (2011) does not look to the art world, but to the artist/teachers' interior life to suggest strategies to counter and disable conflicts around artist/teacher identity by suggesting contemplative, productively critical reflectivity that embraces differences in identity and dialogic processes. Thornton (2011) suggests:

...a strong emphasis on participation and dialogue; a respect for individual narratives and creativity; encouragement to engage with new and difficult ideas with sensitive support; indeed the kind of environment conducive to all learning. It is the engagement with the pleasure of making and learning and acknowledgment by others of the individual's creative needs which seems to generate a sense of freedom for the artist and teacher. (pp. 35-36)

Along with better internal dialogues, it helps to have role models. Which artists have this dual identity of artist/teacher that has served them well? Who has taken pride in, and made a successful career in Canada as a notable professional artist and as a prominent art educator teaching younger students? The word, 'younger' is emphasized here, as there are models for those artist/teachers in higher education, but are scarce for those teaching children under nineteen years of age. Moreover, it is useful to query, 'What can we learn from the practice of these successful artists/teachers?' I looked into the past and found a few extraordinary and prominent examples.

Two Canadian artists who maintained remarkable dual careers as both artist and teacher stand out: Arthur Lismer (1885-1969) the famous member of the *Group of Seven*, and Anne Savage (1896-1971) a prominent artist connected to the *Group of Seven* and a key member of Montreal's *Beaver Hall Group*. Both taught children for decades: for Savage in a high school and for Lismer in museum education. What can the lived experiences of these two artists/teachers, Lismer and Savage, show current art educators who are shaping their own artist/teacher identities? By using an historical research approach, outlining brief biographical descriptions, and discussing their lives as artists and educators, I will relate their stories and choices to the contemporary artist/teacher identity dichotomy.

Discussion of Lismer and Savage

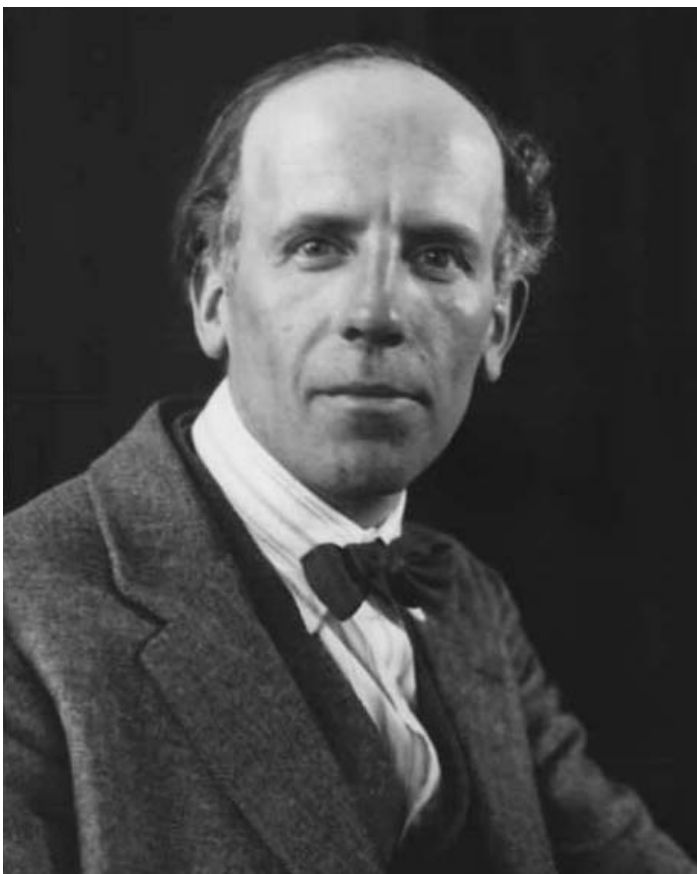
Arthur Lismer and Anne Savage are both well-known Canadian painters of the Modern era who shared their patriotism, an ongoing passion and dedication to the craft of painting, and an ardour and enthusiasm for teaching. The climate of the art world in Canada during their early careers was Modern — but not overly avant-garde; that would come later with the Automatistes (Parsons, 2016). It was also nationalistic, and politically and economically dominated by the Canadian English population, which was particularly notable in Quebec, where Lismer spent the latter part of his years and Savage her entire life.

Arthur Lismer (1885-1969). His Life — The Artist

Lismer, born in Sheffield, England in 1885 to a humble middle class family, studied at the Sheffield School of Art and apprenticed to a photoengraver while also working as an illustrator for a local newspaper, the *Sheffield Independent* (Grigor, 2002). After continued studies at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp (the same school which Vincent Van Gogh briefly attended a few years earlier) in 1911 Lismer set his sights elsewhere: when he built a wooden trunk out of his desk and moved to Toronto with five dollars to

support himself (Darroch, 1981). Fortunately, he quickly obtained a job at a commercial art firm called *The Rapid Grip and Batten Company*, working with talented but also unusually supportive colleagues such as other soon to be famous *Group of Seven* artists Tom Thomson, J.E.H. MacDonald, Frederick Varley and Frank Carmichael. Even though Lismer soon left *The Rapid Grip and Batten Company*, many of the friends he made were long lasting and instrumental to his art career. This job as a graphic artist enabled Lismer at that time to be immersed in the art world scene of Toronto. Traditional fine artists and commercial artists had no demarcations and mingled freely together unlike in Montreal where boundaries between the two careers were very much in place (Darroch, 1981, p.11).

Networking was crucial for Lismer's career. By joining the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto and being invited to exhibit with Society of Artists, Darroch explains that it enabled these artists to meet and establish friendships with other key artists and crucial players in the Toronto art world, who initiated and enabled on-going exhibitions, and links with advocates. Darroch wrote that, "In less than a year of arriving in Canada the youthful Lismer had been accepted into Toronto's most prestigious group of creative men (1981, p. 13).



The story of the emergence of the Group of Seven is well-known. Lismer and his friends acquired studios in the *Studio Building* near Toronto's Rosedale ravine, spent formative time painting *en plein air* in key locations such as Algonquin Park in Central Ontario and together developed a style that was both an inventive expression of the Canadian landscape, and a much criticized deviation from the norm. In 1920 these friends decided to unite in order to fight together the stinging criticism they encountered (Grigor, 2002). An example of this is in the *Toronto Star* description of MacDonald's painting, *The Tangled Garden*, as "rough, splashy, meaningless, blatant, plastering and massing of unpleasant colours which seem to be a necessary evil in all Canadian art exhibitions now-a-days..." (Darroch, 1981, p. 34). Thus, the *Group of Seven* was formed and Lismer modestly and unceremoniously claimed he was one of its 'dumbfounders' (Darroch, 1981, p. 57). Along with fellow members, Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, Lawren Harris, Frank Johnston, Franklin Carmichael, Frederick Varley and A.Y. Jackson, the *Group of Seven* had their first

exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario (then called the Art Gallery of Toronto), stating together that "they will welcome and support any form of Art expression that sincerely interprets the spirit of a nation's growth" (Darroch, 1981, p. 57).

Lismer remained a part of the Group for the rest of his life, and through his continual dedication, obvious talent, and diligence established a renowned, remarkable career from 1920 to 1969 as a visual artist spanning almost half a century. As was evidenced by Lismer's strong network of people in the art and education world, one essential strategy for sustaining the artist/teacher duality is the commitment to a community of practice (perhaps more important than a massive production of art objects).

The Teacher

Four years after Lismer settled in Canada, he entered the teaching profession, accepting the opportunity to teach a summer course at the Ontario College of Art (OCAD and now known as the Ontario College of Art and Design University) which was founded by the Ontario Society of Artists (in which Lismer was a key member)(Darroch, 1981) He said: “I found I had the gift of the gab... [and] some scraping of intellect that prompted me to teach” (as cited by Darroch, 1981, p. 34). After two years teaching at OCAD he was offered a position as principal at the Victoria School of Art and Design (which later became the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design - NSCAD) and moved to Halifax to teach full-time from 1916-1919: he needed money as he had a young family to support, which was instrumental in his decision to accept the teaching position (Darroch, 1981, p. 57). Darroch comments that, “Lismer’s acceptance of the position was in part an acknowledgement that the life of a free-lancer was difficult, even though it gave him ample time to paint [and] that he enjoyed teaching and was confident that he could succeed as an administrator as well (1981, p. 35).

Whether he saw his career shift from artist to teacher as a sacrifice remains unknown. What we do know is that he soon began to make “an art of teaching art” (Darroch, 1981, p. 89). He accepted the teaching position and committed himself to doing well and believed that he would become a ‘*summer painter*’ (Darroch, 1981, p. 75).

When Lismer became a full-time art educator it was an unusual career. There was not a chair in this field at any Canadian university (Darroch, 1981, 75). He moved from a successful three year stint in Halifax, to become the vice principal at the Ontario College of Art and principal of the summer school teachers’ course. A series of other teaching opportunities eventually lead him, in 1941 to the Children’s Art Centre, affiliated to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA)¹, where he single-handedly taught 50 children of all ages from age three years upwards. He viewed this centre as a child centered, progressive, Modernistic ‘experimental lab’ (Pearse, 2006). The program grew. Twenty-three years later he claimed that 630 students annually attended the MMFA educational program and that 4,500 children had taken classes there under his art educational leadership (Darroch, 1981, p.137). Lismer had an extraordinary art educational career which ended two years before his death in 1969. Overall, there appeared to be no conflict with his dual role of artist/educator. Darroch writes,

[Lismer said,] ‘As a painter, I’m a good educator. As an educator, I’m a good painter...having to make a decision between the life of a painter and that of a teacher, I managed to do both...’ (Darroch, 1981, p. 75 & 87)

Lismer’s educational and aesthetic philosophies share an appreciation of experience in the world and individual expressiveness of form. His teaching reflected the progressivist insights of Arthur Wesley Dow, and John Dewey (Darroch, 1981; Grigor, 1983; McLeish, 1955). The Saturday morning children’s art classes Lismer established at the National Gallery and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts became his best-known educational legacy. His work with children was also strongly influenced by the pioneering Viennese educator, Franz Cižek (Darroch, 1981, p. 86).

In an era in which art was often taught traditionally by using the older, adult-designed techniques using a teacher centered, copy based, pragmatic approach (McDougall, 1977, pp. 66-67), Lismer’s techniques in art education were markedly different. He respected his student’s individuality, looked at the teacher’s role as one of a guide, and taught using a child-centered, problem solving, theme-based approach (Darroch, 1981, 135). Value was placed on children’s art in its own right, with its own inherent truthfulness and individuality

(Pearse, 2006). To Lismer, art was relevant to the lives of all people (McLeish, 1955). In time, he was recognized for the far-reaching effects of his work as an art educator (Darroch, 1981).

Early on, Lismer was set apart from the other members of the *Group of Seven* because of his teaching practice. A.Y. Jackson recollected: “And just when the colour started to liven up [Lismer] would have to pack up and go back to teaching, and so we miss in his canvases the seasonal changes which are depicted in the work of most Canadian painters” (as cited in McLeish, 1955, p. 181). It was true that teaching made it difficult to sustain an ongoing art practice; Lismer referred to “the dead years” in his painting practice (as cited in McLeish, 1955, p. 177). However, Grigor looks at these dead years positively, stating that the years in which he was less prodigious, working less as a painter and more as an educator, were still beneficial to his art, giving him time to plan new art (Grigor, 2002). During his life, recognition Lismer received for his teaching, interestingly enough, often overshadowed his painting practice. McLeish states that a legend came about that Arthur Lismer was an educator rather than an artist, and that for him creating art was subsidiary to teaching (1955). If this assumption bothered Lismer, he gave no indication that it did. McLeish writes that, “It became gradually a stereotype among many people to picture Lismer as an artist too harassed by teaching and administrative duties to take a premier place among the unfettered painters of the *Group of Seven*” (1955, p. 181). Later, this image was dismantled as Lismer’s reputation grew as one of the key members of the *Group of Seven* and as an accomplished innovative painter in his own right.

All of this speaks to the role of identity. Lismer broke through the stereotype of being a ‘Sunday painter’ by actively remaining a part of a network of people in the art world, maintaining a consistent art practice, and exhibiting his art regularly. In 1950, when Lismer was 65, the Lismer Retrospective Exhibition, comprised of 314 artworks at the Art Gallery of Ontario was as McLeish argues, “a revelation and reproof ... [because] of the massive statement of the artist’s stature, his mastery of colour and design, the scope and poetry of his themes, and the glowing spirituality of his nationalism” (1955, p. 181).

Legacy

Just two years before his death in 1969, Lismer was made a Companion to the Order of Canada, honouring his major contribution to his country through his lifelong endeavor in the field of art as a member of the *Group of Seven* and as an influential international art educator. Lismer’s legacy is undeniable. He is acknowledged for his dual role as an extremely accomplished and influential artist and as a talented, prominent art educator affecting many students who proceeded to have successful careers in art in their own right. Lismer balanced his careers as teacher and artist doing well in both (Darroch, 1981, p. 74), and indeed he is an example of having an unusually cohesive life (McLeish, 1955) wherein his teaching informed his art practice and his art practice informed his teaching in a beneficial dialectical discourse. Through his pursuit of the best in both teaching and painting, Lismer as the artist A.Y. Jackson stated, “influenced the entire art education of our country” (as cited in Darroch, 1981, p. 90).

Anne Savage (1896-1971)

Similar to today, during the 1920s when Savage began her career, during the first wave of feminism when women were fighting for the vote and the suffrage movement was gaining momentum (Rampton, 2015), women in the visual arts confronted unequal opportunities such as lack of equal pay, fewer chances for exhibitions, scarcer sales, and less job prospects in the art world in comparison to male artists² (Des Rochers & Foss, 2015). It is interesting that many women artists within Anne Savage's circles chose not to marry (Des Rochers, & Foss, 2015). As a single woman in the early 20th century, teaching gave Savage

... a career she embraced enthusiastically. It gave her the financial freedom to do what she liked: she painted, travelled, built her own studio near the family's cottage in the Laurentians, and chose not to marry her long-time mentor, A. Y. Jackson. (Walters, 2005, p. 102)

In her day, Savage's teaching career and unmarried position were key to a more unrestrictive lifestyle. Consequently, I will begin with the discussion of Savage's life as an art educator and proceed with her life as an artist.

Her Life—The Teacher

Anne Savage's relatives were prominent people³: she lived in a large, close-knit, initially well-off large family (of ten brothers and sisters) which was politically and culturally well connected to the Quebec elite. As a young girl she lived in the country and developed a keen appreciation of rural areas particularly their beloved cottage in Lake Wonish located in the Laurentian Mountains (Millar, 1992). World War One was a turning point for Savage as it took its toll on her family. In 1916 Anne's twin brother, Donaldson, was killed in the war and her family fell into financial hardship when her father's business, *Albert Soaps*, failed due to the high cost of materials. The family was forced to move from a cherished, large house in Dorval to more modest Montreal apartments (Meadowcroft, 2016). Eventually her father purchased a small house in the heart of Montreal where Anne stayed for the remainder of her life (McDougall, 1977). During the war years she took art courses at the Art Association of Montreal (1914-1919), learning under such notable artists as William Brymner and Maurice Cullen and from 1920-1921 at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Savage desired to be a full-time painter; however, when her father died in 1922, she was forced to support her mother (McDougall, 1977; Meadowcroft, 2016). Like Lismer, she sought financial security, eking out a livelihood through undertaking a short-lived career in commercial design, which she found uninteresting, and, to use her term, 'soulless' (Meadowcroft, 2016, p.1). Soon afterward, Savage turned to the field of education (Walters, 2005). Millar states, "her life was shaped by what she regarded as her responsibilities to her family" (1992, p. 4).



Anne Savage began teaching at Montreal's Commercial and Technical High School in 1922 without educational training, as it was not required at the time (Pearse, 2006, p. 124). Within the year she took a

position at Baron Byng High School in Montreal and remained there until 1948. Also, like Lismer, the demands of teaching caused Savage to be less productive than other full-time artists: she devoted the school year to teaching and her summers to art making (McDougall, 1977; Millar, 1992, p. 4). Yet, for her, excitement and enthusiasm about her art making infused her teaching (Meadowcroft, 2016). Moreover, she said she found teaching to be an “unparalleled creative incentive” (as cited in Meadowcroft, 2016, p. 1). Lismer initially mentored Savage. Over the years they inspired each other and shared concepts about education, their art, and their artistic practice (McDougall, 1977; Pearse, 2006). Early on in their correspondence, in 1922, Lismer wrote to Savage that:

There is no doubt that your [teaching] methods are proving successful. I think the [students'] work admirable. Any class that can produce such work proves the ability and enthusiasm of the instructress, for one can only get out of a class that which one puts into it...I enjoy so much receiving your letters and seeing you work. It's a great incentive to effort. (McDougall, 1977, p. 63-64)

Savage extended her teachings outside of the public secondary education system. In 1937 she also began teaching Saturday morning art classes for children at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. This was a direct result of her visit to Ontario, during which she viewed Lismer teaching, and was inspired by his educational methods with young children at the Art Gallery of Toronto (Darroch, 1981). Two years later, she created eight radio talks about Canadian developments in the visual arts for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation⁴ (CBC). She was a nationalist and thus her views not only aligned with the National Gallery of Canada but also with the CBC (Buis, 2012) which, around this time had a national agenda to teach students about Canada and its way of life. For many students, their parents and communities, particularly those in the prairies, CBC radio was an important form of art education (Hlynka, 2012; Pearse, 2006). She used these lectures not only to advance students' knowledge and to train visual artists but very significantly to train future art appreciators who not only could influence the art market but also the lives of artists through their support.

Anne's approach at Baron Byng High School followed a progressive, freethinking, open-minded approach to teaching, based on the supportive relationships she developed with her students (Millar, 1992). Savage's teaching style was influenced by Lismer and also by the progressive education movement in the United States (McDougall, 1977; Pearse, 2006).

The idea was to get the students drawing and painting freely and stop the old methods of tracing and copying other people's work. She had no 'new method' but worked instinctively, basing her teaching on her own discoveries as a painter and remembering her own search ... (1977, p. 59)

Savage's educational philosophy was resolutely student-centered. Leah Sherman, a former student, Savage's successor at Baron Byng, and later a professor of art education at Sir George Williams University⁵, describes how she:

... value[d] the child as a creative person. She never put one down. She always found something to like and encourage in a child's drawing. In all the years I knew her, and she had hundreds, thousands, of students going through her classes, she never lost this attitude... The kids felt this. She never deviated from them... (as cited in McDougall, 1977, pp. 68-69)

During her early retirement from Art Education at McGill University, from 1959-1965 most of her time was spent taking care of Margaret English, a sick childhood nanny (Walters, 2005, p. 110). Even though

Savage created little art during these 6 years, she exhibited in four art shows in Toronto, Fredericton and Montreal (McDougall, 1977). Upon English's death in 1965, Savage began to paint again, devoting herself during the last decade of her life to making art until her own death in 1974, nine years later (McDougall, 1977).

The Artist

Arthur Lismer once said of Anne Savage: “Give that girl a chance and she would be one of the finest painters in Canada” (as cited in Walters, 2005, p. 101). Stylistically influenced by the *Group of Seven*, Savage painted primarily Canadian landscapes near her cottage in Lake Wonish, Quebec. As a member of the Art Association of Montreal, she met many colleagues who joined together and shared studio space. On a visit to his hometown, A.Y. Jackson, a former Montrealer, met his old friends and new artists including Savage (Meadowcroft, 2016). It was during this visit he related the exciting news about the new art movement, the *Group of Seven*, that he was a part of in Toronto. Inspired, Savage and her colleagues formed their own unique alliance a year after the Toronto group was formed. In 1921 the *Beaver Hall Group* was founded with A. Y. Jackson as President⁶ (McDougall, 1977). Meadowcroft writes that according to Savage, “there was a selfless spirit among the artists, who were inspired by Jackson’s call to “create a Canadian art for Canada” (2016, p.1). According to Des Rochers and Foss (2015), current researchers interested in the social dynamic of the *Beaver Hall Group*, the membership of specifically fourteen men and fifteen women artists was far more diverse a group than the *Group of Seven* though like the group in Toronto the Montreal artists were extremely supportive of each other.

The Beaver Hall male artists networked with the Montreal Arts Club, which was located in the same neighbourhood as the Beaver Hall artists and this club was instrumental in these artists’ careers. Overall, the men, claim Des Rochers and Foss (2015), had far more opportunities than the women because the Arts Club enabled the *Beaver Hall Group* males opportunities to network and sell their works to the Montreal elite who were members of the Montreal Arts Club. Women were excluded from being members (only having the opportunity at times to be invited guests). Nevertheless, what the *Beaver Hall Group* as an organization provided to its members was key for both sexes: camaraderie and friendships flourished, the sharing of studios and a teaming up of artists for group exhibitions occurred. Savage shared a two-room studio



... on Beaver Hall Hill overlooking St. Patrick’s Church [with artists, Lilia Torrance Newton, Mabel May, and Nora Collyer]...and many a day we enjoyed looking into the hidden garden and green fountain –Ex[hibitions] were held here and there was ‘great talk in little nooks’. (Des Rochers & Foss, 2015, pp. 64-66)

These Montreal artists, that Des Rochers & Foss (2015) claim were the counterpart to the *Group of Seven*, were noted for their range of subject matter

and diversity of style, painting in a modernist manner depictions of both urban life and rural landscapes. Like the *Group of Seven*, the Montreal group was supportive, nurturing, maintaining lasting friendships: they shared a unified vision of the ‘modern’ art of their time (McDougall, 1977; Meadowcroft, 2016).

In an era when proper young ladies were expected to pick up an embroidery needle before a paint brush, and neither on Sundays, [The Beaver Hall women painters] were never amateurish. Over the years they built up a substantial body of work now recognized as representative of the best of that period. (McDougall 1977, p. 48)

Meadowcroft (2016) states that as a young woman, Savage learned from her teacher Brymner the importance of being connected to the art world and forming relations with other artists, and she did this well. As a founding member of the *Beaver Hall Group* Savage took part in their exhibitions from its inception as well as exhibiting her work with the *Group of Seven* in 1926 and 1933. Seeking to be a part of a group of artists, in 1933, when the *Beaver Hall Group* was waning, she was a founding member of the *Canadian Group of Painters*. Six years later, she again took part as a founding member of the *Contemporary Art Society of Montreal*. During her long, formidable, fruitful years as a landscape painter, she painted many scenes of the Quebec countryside to try to evoke spiritual concepts using a subtle colour approach (Meadowcroft 2016). Savage possessed what McDougall calls a lyrical intimate painting style (1977, p. 80). Since her death, there have been four retrospective exhibitions of Anne Savage’s art.

Legacy

Savage, as McDougall writes, never chose between being an artist or a teacher — rather she balanced both roles (1977, p. 184). As an artist she was a founding member of key Quebec artist groups and an important artist in her own right, gradually gaining recognition since her death. Recognized for her child-centred approach to teaching, Savage was instrumental in the development of art education within Quebec and Canada (Pearse, 2006). She brought together modernist artistic values using an approach based on her own art making practice, “inspiring her students to think like artists” (Pearse, 2006, p.124) and, in doing this, she was well ahead of her time (Pearse, 2006). Significantly, she was an inspiration to her many students. A few years before she died, her former pupils at Baron Byng High School created Savage’s first one woman retrospective at Concordia University, an indication of her impact on the many she taught (Meadowcroft, 2016). McDougall writes that many attendees of that show were surprised at the quantity and diversity of her work (1977, p. 208-209). Her lasting legacy is the development of the Canadian Faculty of Fine Arts and Visual Art Education Department at Concordia University, cofounded by Savage’s former Baron Byng High School students, Leah Sherman and Alfred Pinsky who stated “I am starting the graduate program in art at Sir George Williams today directly because of Anne Savage” (as cited in McDougall, 1977, p. 66).

Discussion

Key similarities between Savage and Lismer are evident in the way they handled their dual identities as artist/teacher. This includes, firstly, seeking out the support of the art world, the art education community, other artists, and educators. Savage and Lismer’s approach to art making was the antithesis of the old romantic myth of the isolated artist working in a garret. As has been discussed, these two artists had many influences, joined key groups of artists, either cofounded or joined well established art groups, formed many friendships with other artists, embraced art and educational communities, networked within both, and adopted innovative and progressive art educators’ ideas of their times. They were active in their fields and sought to end what they perceived to be negative seclusion in which some artists found themselves. For instance, in 1941, Lismer helped to establish the Federation of Canadian Artists at Kingston: “an organization that was designed to help end the isolation of artists and to keep them abreast of new media and

methods” (Darroch, 1981, p. 121). In particular, with regard to their art making, Lismer and Savage were greatly influenced by their colleagues. Particular to Savage was a remarkable friendship with A.Y Jackson whom she found to be extremely influential. He provided her with a “critical eye through which to assess her art, and he greatly influenced her work” (Millar, 1992, p. 5).

A second commonality between the two artist/educators is that Lismer and Savage both had to deal with denigrating comments about their teaching and its negative affect upon their art making. They confronted the stigma of the artist as teacher and overcame it. Even close associates like A.Y. Jackson criticized Savage for the time teaching took away from her painting (McDougall, 1977). McDougall states: “No one knows whether she might have painted more or better if she had gone at it full time” (1977, p. 56). Similarly, Lismer’s artist friends questioned the impact of his teaching. It was stated that Lismer was often ‘stealing’ moments to do his art and that his artistic friends felt sorry for him when he had to leave the other artists engaged in their art-making in order to return to his teaching career (Grigor, 2002; McLeish, 1955). Arguably both Lismer and Savage expressed and developed the nationalism and individualism so central to the early 20th century Canadian creative community through both their art and their teaching. Unfortunately, many of the full-time artists did not recognize the significant impact Lismer and Savage had on students as being part of a common project with their artwork. However this old school stereotype is giving way in our contemporary times to the great impact of education within professional artists’ practice (Reed, n.d.).

As we move into the second decade of the 21st century, our sense of what constitutes artwork has changed with much of contemporary art focused on layering, and quantum notions of connectedness that impact the form that art takes, but also suggests very different notions of community than the emerging nationalism that was so important a century ago. Whether through digital distribution, social media or community-based projects, art today involves collaborating with a diversity of people in a wide range of settings. Like both Savage and Lismer who had to interrupt their art making process for significant amounts of time, the challenge, as contemporary artist Tammy Rae Carland, explains, is that you have to learn to stop ‘the roll’ or what Csikszentmihalyi terms, ‘*the flow*’ of art making and then get “up to speed” when returning to art making (Thornton, 2014, p. 73). Artist/educators’ creative work, which can include personally made studio objects, but also the creative spaces, collective projects and learning community relationships of the classroom) are as meaningful and complex. Micah Lexier's recent work, ‘*1334 Words for 1334 Students*’ held in Toronto at the Power Plant in which he worked with students at Mississauga’s Cawthra Park Secondary School (Verna, 2014) is just one example of a professional Canadian artist who recognizes art education as a dimension of their creative practice.

From a 21st century perspective, much of the criticism which claimed Lismer’s and Savage’s teaching careers also weakened the artworks they created, and is based on narrow, some might argue neoliberal, assumptions (Adams, 2013) that link creativity to its value in marketplaces (like the artworld). For instance, in discussing Savage’s art, Prakash argues that in “... her later work, when she was absorbed in her position as a full-time teacher, she became somewhat repetitive, if not derivative of the *Group of Seven*” (2008, p. 158). More contemporary analysis recognized her unique colour (relative to the *Group of Seven*) and movement toward abstraction as reflecting a more complex Canada, that paralleled the complexities of her life. A broader view, informed by the notion of relational aesthetics can recognize that Savage’s full accomplishment combined her gifts as an artist and her gifts as a teacher and that these two dimensions were wholly “interdependent” (Meadowcroft, 2016).

These links between artist/teacher are intricate, complex, varied and challenging to express and put into effect (Hall, 2010). In his current study of the artist/teacher, Hall recognizes the importance of a reflective practice. He recommends that artist/teachers “need to develop skills of negotiation through which they can articulate and continuously reappraise their art practice and, at an appropriate stage, use that practice to

inform their teaching” (2010, p. 109). He states, further, that the artist teacher should allow their creation and teaching to feed “off each other as essential and inevitable, even synonymous...”(Hall, 2010, p. 107). Hall is, in essence, proposing what Savage and Lismer did: creating a continuous dialectical interrelationship between the artist/teacher roles. The teaching practice influences the artistic one and vice-versa, creating an ongoing, responsive, feedback loop. Lismer and Savage actively sought out, fostered, and celebrated these connections. Rather than feeling that having two careers impeded them, they celebrated these dialectical interconnections between their dual lives as teachers/artists. It could be argued that Savage and Lismer did not have dual careers but rather a singular one’s with a constellation of expressions. Hence, referring to Shreeve’s fifth category (2009) of identity construction pertaining to the artist/teacher, Savage and Lismer’s dual roles melded together into one. They were ‘*cultural bricoleurs*’ merging together skills and knowledge and embracing artist and teacher experiences in a seamless positive relationship as artist/teacher.

Conclusion

Many art institutions are now focusing on socially engaged art. Specifically they are engaging community as a way of merging traditional studio education with the relational and social justice impulses that are part of contemporary, expanded notions of art (Reed, n.d). In Montreal, Concordia University’s Department of Art Education has built a community art education program that requires undergraduates to engage in learning, creating and contributing in museums and a variety of community centres across the city. In Toronto The Women in Action/ Projects (WIA) <http://wiaprojects.blogspot.ca> began as a university-based arts-informed research group that is dedicated to women artists and educators concerning a wide range of art forms and social issues. In Winnipeg, alternative art settings like, Plug-In Institute of Contemporary Art (Plug-In, 2016) <https://www.plugin.org>, and Art City (2016) <http://www.artcityinc.com> are both strong community art and education hubs dedicated to contemporary art, artists, teachers, and strong contemporary educational programs. All across the country artist/educators and their students are part of a new, inclusive creativity, where, as one art education student stated, our “...city is an art city and wants artists and wants people who know about art...”, with another art student claiming that the “city is our laboratory” (Concordia University, 2016). These examples within Canada reveal the formation of vital communities of art practice. While Savage and Lismer both embraced modernist art and practiced it at a high level, they also ignored some of the assumptions about isolated individualism that was part of that same era, by seeking out and excelling as teachers. It could be argued that, because they took the bold step to combine art-making and teaching, they more than other members of the *Group of Seven* and the *Beaver Hall group*, are the authentic forebearers to the Canadian art emerging across Canada today.

The future is one to carefully navigate for art graduates who want to pursue their art making practices. I recommend that students becoming art educators, whether teaching in the public school system like Savage or alternative school systems as did Lismer, look at the examples of these two accomplished artist/teachers and their successful approaches. What worked for Lismer and Savage was to maintain a continual, ongoing engagement in both careers as artist/teacher, actively networking in the communities of both artists and educators with whom they developed lasting relationships. Significantly neither of them ‘bought’ into the negative and rigidly confining stigma of the art teacher; nor did they confine themselves to what was expected of artists in their milieu. They sought out what worked for them and forged their own identities. Hall recommends that, artist/teachers give themselves

... scope to exploit and capitalize on the inherent creative tensions between rationalist and creative epistemologies: this may mean rehabilitating intuitive approaches to enquiry and reconciling them with rational enquiry as important complementary means of living with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty as they explore the intersections between art and education. (Hall, 2010, p. 109)

Though researchers such as Fusaro (2016) still ask the question of “how the distinct ‘worlds’ of artists, educators and communities can better work together” (2016, p. 54). I endorse a different view. Whether described as interconnectivity or relationality, whether you imagine art and education as separate worlds or just one very complex one, being an artist/teacher is about finding connections, supports and creative outlets in the manner of Savage and Lismer. At a time when the roles and identities of being a Canadian artist and educator were emerging, Savage and Lismer instinctively adopted the role of the *cultural bricoleur*, a model of artist/teacher identity that recognizes that in every classroom, drop-in centre or community gathering, there are creative opportunities, and every material, process and creative collective is also part of a community of practice, an opportunity to teach and learn.

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Footnotes

¹ This is a key move as Anne Savage and Arthur Lismer—for the latter part of both their lives—lived in the same city helping to build a vital, strong and impactful visual art education community within Quebec.

² In terms of gender disparity and pay the situation has not changed much today. The average 2010 income in Canada was \$21,180 for male visual artists, and \$13,681 for female visual artists. Men earn more than earn one-third more than women on average (Hill Strategies Research Inc., 2014). Artists, such as MAWA Co-Executive Director, Shawna Dempsey (also a recognized Canadian performance artist) and the Guerrilla Girls, (a famous women artists group in New York City) eloquently discuss—in their artworks and in interviews—that contemporary women’s artworks have been selected into fewer curated solo exhibitions and been curated into fewer group shows than men’s art. Moreover, female art is indeed found in fewer art collections. Additionally, females fill fewer key positions within the American and Canadian art worlds (Darricades, 2011; Guerrilla Girls, 1995, 1998, 2016).

³ Relatives such as John Galt, a Scottish novelist who founded Guelph, Ontario and Sir Alexander Galt who was active and influential in Canada’s Confederation were from Savage’s mother’s side of the family (Buis, 2012; Walters, 2005).

⁴ She was told by A.Y Jackson that her coverage of her CBC Radio Talks concerning Arthur Lismer had far too much information about his art educational work and not enough about him as an artist (McDougall, 1977 p. 155). I think this indicates Lismer’s tremendous educational impact upon her and the value she placed on his teaching methods, and highlighted the stigma embedded in the artist/teacher duality in the eyes of at least one other full-time artist.

⁵ Sir George Williams University later became Concordia University.

⁶ A.Y. Jackson and Anne Savage developed a very close relationship that has been discussed by many. He was a key person in her life, and at one time offered her a marriage proposal which she rejected. Most women in the *Beaver Hall Group* chose to remain unmarried. Eventually Savage and Jackson became life-long friends (Klinkhoff, 2015; Meadowcroft, 2016; McDougall, 1977; Rochers & Foss, 2015).

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