

Book Reviews

Paul E. Bolin and Ami Kantawala, eds. *Revitalizing History: Recognizing the Struggles, Lives, and Achievements of African American and Women Art Educators* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2017), 210 pp.

In the introduction of their edited book, *Revitalizing History: Recognizing the Struggles, Lives, and Achievements of African American and Women Art Educators*, Paul Bolin and Ami Kantawala recognize the advancements in the history of art education in the past few decades, but assert that “many histories of women and especially African Americans remain in the shadows, depriving the field of a richer understanding of larger social, cultural, political, and historical contexts on a global scale” (p. 18). Their edited volume grew out of the *Brushes with History: Imagination and Innovation in Art Education History* conference at Teachers College, Columbia University in November 2015. The conference provided a forum for presenting and discussing ideas, issues, information, and research used in the historical investigation of art education within local and global contexts (p. 19). The chapters are written by conference presenters and, generally speaking, the book moves from theoretical perspectives to institutional case studies of individual art educators or institutions where they worked.

The first chapter, by Heidi C. Powell, examines the intersections between memory and historical research. Powell asserts that recognizing and (re)collecting memories are forms of historical research, and that inquiry about what is remembered might help us as scholars understand where we have come from, who we are today, and who we will become in the future. The second chapter, by Christina Hanawalt and Sue Uhlig, tells the story of Mabel Spofford, an early twentieth-century art educator from Massachusetts, and relies on the extensive archival sources that Spofford kept during her life.

The next few chapters build on the biographical studies of female and African American art educators, including Nancy Renfro by Christina Blain; Dorothy Dunn and the Studio at Santa Fe Indian School by Elise Chevalier; Margaret McAdory Siceloff and the McAdory Art Test by Mary Hafeli; and Helen Gardner by Kirstie Parkinson. In each of these chapters, the authors illustrate the contributions that these women made to the field of art education and the reasons that historians have either neglected or forgotten them. The authors point out the importance of these women to the development and history of art education and the critical role that their histories and stories might play in the education of art education students today.

From these biographical histories, the book moves into institutional histories and the part that female and African American art

educators played in building and sustaining art education programs in these places. The first chapter of this section, “Uncovering Hidden Histories: African American Art Education at the Hampton Institute (1868–1946),” by Jessica Baker Kee, examines the intersections of art education, African diaspora art, and African American folkloric history at the Hampton Institute in Virginia from the late nineteenth-century through Viktor Lowenfeld’s time at the institute as a professor and curator. The next chapter, “The Detrimental Effects of McCarthyism on African American Art Institutions,” by Debra Hardy, investigates the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) in Chicago. Founded in 1939, the SSCAC is generally regarded as one of the first African American cultural centers in the United States and one of the last remaining Works Progress Administration–founded community art centers still in its original form and location.

The final two chapters in this section take the reader to New York City, where Rebecca Dearlove examines the Museum of Modern Art’s Department of Film and the impact it had on educational film programs in the United States. In the second chapter in this group, Allison M. Clark explores the role that Anna Curtis Chandler played at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a storyteller and art educator. The final chapter in the book, “The Highwaymen’s Story: Landscape Painting in the Shadow Jim Crow,” by Kristin Congdon, presents the story of twenty-six African American landscape painters (twenty-five men and one woman) in and around Fort Pierce, Florida, between the 1950s, when they began painting as young adults, until the early 1970s.

While it is clear that the chapters in this book uncover lost or forgotten histories of female and African American art educators, it is not always clear what the significance of these stories is to the larger historiography of the history of education or even of the history of art education. As I read, I often wanted to know how the stories of the women and African American art educators shifted or refined what we, as historians of education or as historians of art education, know now. Recovering these histories is an important intervention, but telling us more about what they tell us about the larger field is an essential part of this work. That said, this volume illuminates stories that historians have overlooked for far too long and, thus, is an important addition to the field.

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