

# ART NEWSLETTER

JULY 2023



The Occasional Newsletter of the Art, Research, and Teaching Special Interest Group of the Japan Association of Language Teaching

# ART FOR TEACHERS

## FOCUSING ON THE T IN ART

This summer (and always and forever) ART SIG is highlighting the importance of art for teachers. Our online event on July 30 is **ART for All Teachers** with the tagline **Yes, all teachers, including you!**

Please consider answering our Call for Presentations

In this issue, we discuss how we (the ART SIG officers) use artworks in our classrooms, and what art means to us.

We also introduce ourselves and talk about our aspirations for ART SIG. One of our hopes is that you (yes, you!) will join us and become an ARTist.



Rob Olson  
Spike  
2022

front cover:  
William Hall  
Diploiascope v.2  
2013

**Brennan:**

**We have some of our own artworks in this newsletter, and we'll talk about art-as-art later, but let's start with the question: How do you use art in your classroom?**

**Rob:**

Art is a vital part of my teaching. It brings to life the English words we use to express ideas and emotions, fears and wishes.

**Will T:**

I love incorporating famous artworks into lessons because they provide such a rich basis for discussion.

Art is controversial and subjective, making it a fantastic way to develop students' higher-level discussion skills and critical thinking. It also provides students with a blank slate—there are no 'wrong' answers—disliking or struggling to understand a work of art is just as valid as easily appreciating and understand that artwork. All interpretations are valid. The challenge is justifying those interpretations.

**Rob:**

My comic strips are sources of new vocabulary and different points of view for my college students. Spike, a character who's simply drawn and nothing fancy, is often the perfect 'person' to explore social and political topics in a non-threatening manner. He seems to encourage both laughter and discussion!

**Martin:**

As a preschool teacher, art is a big part of my lessons. Many of my students are very young, so they don't have the words, either in English or Japanese, to express their thoughts and feelings.



**Brennan:**

Not just preschool students. Many university students don't have the English words to express themselves fully.

**Martin:**

Giving them the chance to create images with crayons, paint, paper, and other materials is a powerful way for them to communicate, and language connects with every stage of an art project.

I use language to explain the project I'm going to do with students, give directions, and talk about the materials. When they're working on their art, I use language to ask questions and give feedback. After the project's done, I ask students to share their artwork and I use supportive language to help them talk about what they've made.

**Brennan:**

My university students do art projects as well, and I try to make assignments that encourage, or even require, students to be creative.

**William H:**

I use art in my EFL classes to engage students with visual information. This could be through warmup drawing activities or extended projects such as describing artworks or writing an artist statement in English.

My students have practical purposes for describing their own artworks in English, as they apply for study abroad programs, overseas artist residencies, or exhibitions.

**Namiko:**

Learning to communicate in foreign languages is a superpower!

It gives you the facility to engage in meaningful discourse to gain knowledge and skills. I encourage learners who are interested in the arts to study English, not as a subject but as a means to realize their dreams.

I often use artists' biographies to show my students that artists are just people. My students have the same capabilities to be anything they want to be, to understand what they're passionate about, and to pursue their dreams despite life's demands.

**Brennan:**

An artist's biography is sometimes within the artwork itself, waiting to be discovered and discussed.



Martin Sedaghat  
*My Nightmare, My Friend*  
2014



Rob Olson  
*In*  
2022

**Will T:**

Art also reflects the context it was created in, which makes it a fantastic classroom tool for understanding different communities and societies throughout history, adding a rich cultural element to language classes.

**Namiko:**

Musicians read foreign languages in their music all the time. In choir, we learn to sing in multiple languages and no one complains. We learn by practice and creating a beautiful experience together. I'd like to think that our language classroom is like a blank palette or a rehearsal room.

**Brennan:**

**Art is important for us as teachers, but what does art mean to you on a more personal level?**

**Martin:**

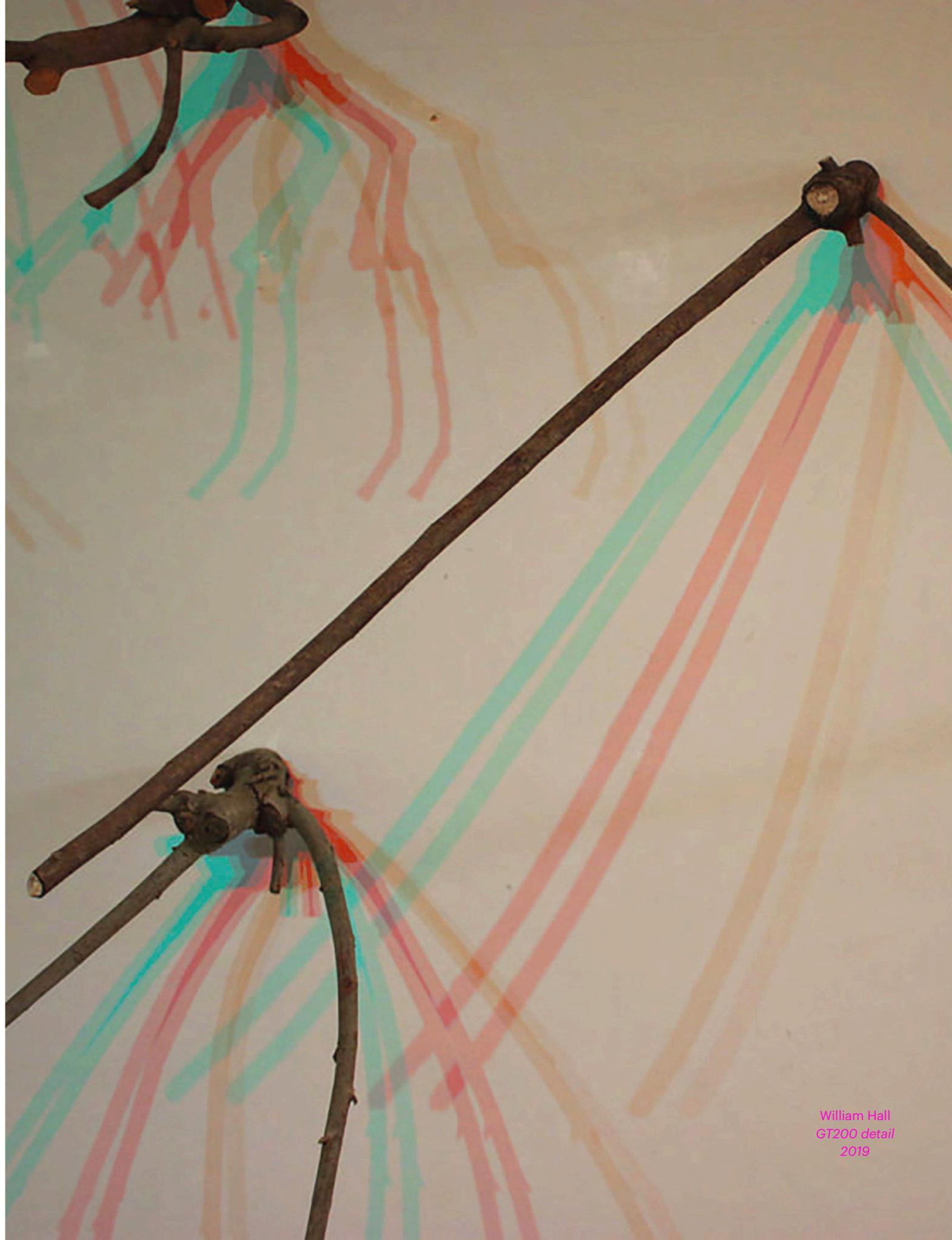
Art is in almost everything. The comic books I grew up with, the video games I enjoy playing, the photographs I take when I travel with my family, the picture books I read for my students; art is anything that was made to evoke feelings and thought.

**Namiko:**

I think art is all-encompassing. Art is all around us. Where there is no art, there is no life. Art is diverse. Art is inclusive.

**Will T:**

The punk approach to art is something that resonates with me. Art is something that anyone can do and is available to all, regardless of experience, inspiration, or talent. It's not something that's mysterious and higher-level, cooped up in museums with expensive entry fees.



**Brennan:**

I also have a DIY approach to art-making and presenting my art. I was a punk in high school and maybe I still am...

**Will T:**

Art is the opportunity for people to express themselves with complete freedom, allowing them to understand themselves and each other in a much deeper and more meaningful way.

**Namiko:**

People who have studied art, or who have an appreciation for the arts, have a broader perspective, because they live in a multilingual world. There are many neurodivergent people among us in the art world, and perhaps it's because we find solace communicating through the process, creation, and performance of art.

**William H:**

Art is a way to express what can't be said through words.

**Rob:**

Art is also often the spark that gives people a reason to talk.

Many years ago I was teaching about sea animals and used an illustration of a Chesapeake blue crab which is, as you might guess, blue. Well, in Hokkaido crabs are red! The ensuing discussion was quite spirited and ensured that those children will never, ever forget the word crab.

**Will T:**

Art is for everyone!

**Brennan:**

Art really is for everyone. It's not a thing or an object. It's a way of observation. It's a method, process, and mindset.

**Martin:**

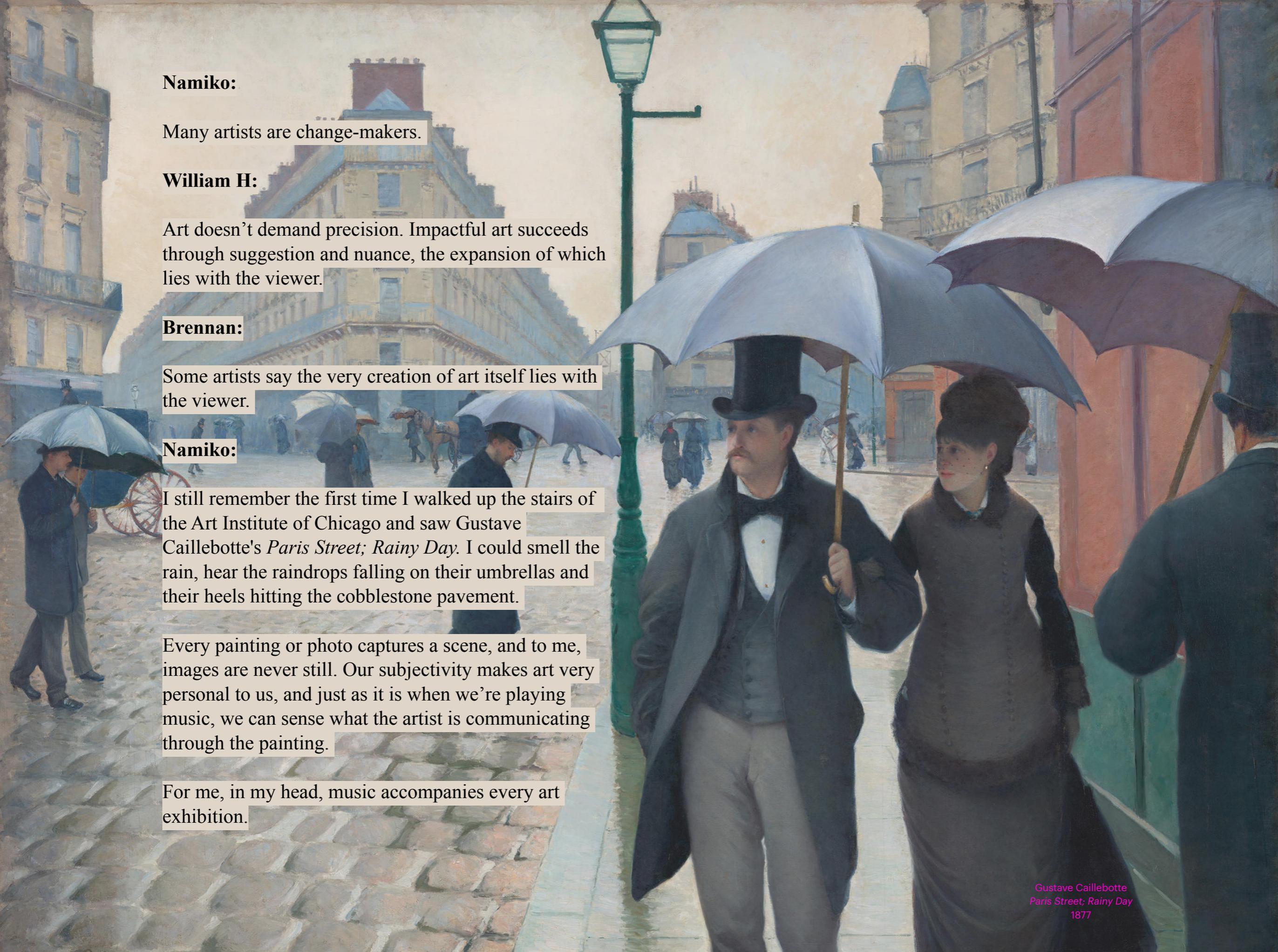
I think art is also deeply connected with time, both behind us and ahead of us. When we look at art from past civilizations, we can learn a lot about the kind of people they were. When we use art in picture books to share stories with children, we are helping to create the future with the lessons and values from these stories.



Will Tiley  
performing in Sudden Deaf  
2021



Brennan Conaway  
Shot Full of Holes  
2008

A detailed painting of a rainy Parisian street scene. In the foreground, a man in a dark suit and top hat walks towards the left, holding a large, light-colored umbrella. Beside him, a woman in a dark, high-collared dress and hat walks towards the right, also holding a large umbrella. The street is wet and reflects the light. In the background, other figures with umbrellas are visible, along with a horse-drawn carriage and a street lamp. The buildings are multi-story with many windows, and the overall atmosphere is one of a busy, rainy day in 19th-century Paris.

**Namiko:**

Many artists are change-makers.

**William H:**

Art doesn't demand precision. Impactful art succeeds through suggestion and nuance, the expansion of which lies with the viewer.

**Brennan:**

Some artists say the very creation of art itself lies with the viewer.

**Namiko:**

I still remember the first time I walked up the stairs of the Art Institute of Chicago and saw Gustave Caillebotte's *Paris Street; Rainy Day*. I could smell the rain, hear the raindrops falling on their umbrellas and their heels hitting the cobblestone pavement.

Every painting or photo captures a scene, and to me, images are never still. Our subjectivity makes art very personal to us, and just as it is when we're playing music, we can sense what the artist is communicating through the painting.

For me, in my head, music accompanies every art exhibition.

# NOWHERE

**Brennan:**

**Looking to the future, what do you want ART SIG to do for JALT teachers?**

**Rob:**

I recently joined ART SIG, and I have a quick reminder:

You don't have to be Michelangelo to join ART!

If you want to bring some of your creative teaching ideas to life, we have a place for you.

**Brennan:**

ART is for teachers. Some of us are Artists, some of us are Researchers, but we are all Teachers!

**Martin:**

I would like ART SIG to help teachers use art in their own classrooms. We already use many materials, both digital and otherwise, to help our students, and visual artworks can be a wonderful source for teaching materials.

**Will T:**

I want to promote the use of art in language education and show teachers what a versatile and interesting resource it can be.

**Namiko:**

I would like ART SIG to invite artists to make presentations, and highlight EFL teachers who are using art to empower their learners to express themselves authentically, and not simply regurgitate what they have memorized from a textbook or what AI spews out.

**Rob:**

I wish that ART SIG can become a source for visual-art resources for other sigs and JALT teachers...

**William H:**

...and create a community of likeminded educators who are interested in sharing those resources and ideas.

Brennan Conaway, Charissa  
Niles, Matt MacCalmont,  
Mary Blankenburg

Nowhere mobile gallery  
2005

# ART

Art  
Research  
Teaching

# ART for All Teachers

Call for Presentations

(yes, all teachers, including you!)

## The T in A.R.T.

July 30, 2023  
Sunday morning  
9 – 11am

Online: Zoom

[art@jalt.org](mailto:art@jalt.org)

## CALL for PRESENTATIONS:

ART SIG is happy to announce our second event for 2023:

*ART for All Teachers*

We want to hear from teachers (all teachers!) who use art in their classroom.

This event will focus on teachers' practical experiences and creative innovations with artworks in language learning.

We're looking for 15- to 20-minute presentations which are knowledgeable, colorful, and unusual.

Please contact us before July 16. Thanks!



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# ART SIG Officers

## 1 Will Tiley Treasurer

I'm an English lecturer at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Beppu, Oita. I came to Japan in 2015 as an Elementary/Junior High ALT based in Nagasaki Prefecture, before moving to university teaching in 2019.

I have many childhood memories of my parents dragging me around the Tate Modern, but I found that music was my preferred method of self-expression, rather than drawing or painting. Throughout high school, I played the trombone in chamber orchestras, jazz bands, and funk bands, and at 16 I started playing the bass guitar, which I've kept up to this day.

I've played in many different bands, from speed metal and improv noise music to Latin jazz and art rock.



## 2 Martin Sedaghat Publicity

I'm a preschool and university teacher in Niigata prefecture. Since 2018 I've been teaching at a private preschool and finishing a Master's in TESOL, focused on young learner language acquisition and game design for language learning.

I majored in ancient Greek art and archaeology at UC Berkeley and was an illustrator for an excavation site in Nemea, Greece, where the ancient Olympic games were often held. I drew artifacts like pottery, coins, and sports equipment and also showed how painted images and inscriptions would have appeared over 2500 years ago.

I also illustrated and self-published a children's book in 2014, and would like to create art for more books if I ever find the time!



## 3 Namiko Tsuruta Membership

Since the age of 5, I've studied music, played classical piano, and sang in the choir. At the University of Michigan, I was majoring in piano performance, but switched to psychology to pursue a career in early childhood education as a preschool teacher.

I returned to my native Japan in 1998. With my experience as an ESL student when in primary school and, years later, as a preschool teacher in the United States, I continue to emphasize teacher identity and learner autonomy. As Program Director of GLI and Creative Director of thetokyolife.jp, I promote sustainable education and engage teachers and learners with CLIL and other transdisciplinary approaches to language learning.

Growing up in Fukuoka and Nara, I often visited the temples that I later studied in my Japanese Art History class at Michigan. As a child in the US, I visited art museums with my family, where I added postcards of famous paintings to my collection. My favorite painters from my childhood were from the Impressionist era, the same era as the wonderful composers whose works I often studied on the piano.



## 4 Rob Olson Publications

I'm an elementary and junior high school teacher by trade, but since coming to Japan in 1991, I've been teaching English to students of all ages. I currently teach at the Hokkaido University of Science in Teine.

I've been writing, drawing, and doodling for as long as I can remember. I love teaching, and I aspire to be a children's book author and animation creator. I've self-published comic books on American and Japanese culture and the illustrated children's book *In*, about a worm that's taken from his underground home and used for bait. Don't worry, he escapes being eaten by the fishes!

One of the cartoon characters I developed is Spike, and he's become my teaching assistant.



## 5 William Hall Programs

I teach EFL and art theory classes at Kyoto Saga University of Arts. I came to Japan on the JET Program and spent 3 years in rural Kagoshima before starting post-graduate studies in art education at Kagoshima University, then completing an MFA and PhD in Media Art at Kyoto City University of Arts.

I come from a fine-art painting and drawing background, although I haven't picked up a paintbrush for a long time. During my undergraduate studies at the Glasgow School of Art I learned traditional painting techniques, but quickly became interested in three-dimensional installation work.

While earning post-graduate degrees in Kyoto, I began experimenting with eye tracking devices and other open-source technology as a way of exploring our perceptual experiences.



## 6 Brennan Conaway Coordinator

I lived in Japan for most of the 1990s, returned to the US to pursue a career in the arts, and then returned to Japan in 2019. I now teach EFL classes at Tama Art University and Meiji Gakuin University and work on art projects during summer and winter breaks.

In Portland, Oregon, I made large sculptures, designed and built small houses, and was part of the Nowhere art group, which created a mobile gallery to bring art into the streets. During an artist residency at the Center for Land Use Interpretation, I made the film *Trajectory* about searching for a bullet in the Utah salt flats.

Using some of the skills I learned in the Master's program at Temple University Japan, I'm currently working on a metalinguistic translation of a classic sci-fi book.



art@jalt.org

Pieter Bruegel the Elder  
The (Great) Tower of Babel  
1563

webpage: [jalt.org/groups/sigs/art-research-and-teaching](http://jalt.org/groups/sigs/art-research-and-teaching)

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