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Radical thresholds: manifestos of art education at MoMA (1943-2019)

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Abstract: This paper examines the evolution of art education through two manifestos produced within the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York: *I Believe* (1943) and *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019). Using a comparative qualitative methodology based on discourse and categorical analysis, the study analyzes 62 statements by 31 teaching artists from each period to identify continuities and transformations in pedagogical ideals. Results reveal that the 1943 manifesto, written during World War II, conceived art education as a democratic and therapeutic force that nurtures individuality, creativity, and civic responsibility. Conversely, the 2019 manifesto—emerging amid digital globalization, social movements, and institutional crises—redefined art education as a decolonial, inclusive, and socially engaged practice. The comparison shows a historical shift from liberal humanist ideals to critical, collective, and intersectional approaches that confront systemic inequality. Both manifestos reaffirm the role of art education as a transformative act, capable of resisting oppression and reimagining democracy, while exposing the persistent tensions between institutional power and pedagogical freedom.
Keywords: Art Education, Manifesto, Creativity, Inclusivity, Social Justice.

ESP Umbrales radicales: manifiestos de la educación artística en el MoMA (1943-2019)

Resumen. Este artículo examina la evolución de la educación artística a través de dos manifiestos producidos en el Museo de Arte Moderno (MoMA) de Nueva York: *I Believe* (1943) y *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019). Mediante una metodología comparativa cualitativa basada en el análisis del discurso y en la categorización temática, el estudio analiza 62 declaraciones de 31 artistas docentes de cada periodo para identificar continuidades y transformaciones en los ideales pedagógicos. Los resultados revelan que el manifiesto de 1943, escrito durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, concibió la educación artística como una fuerza democrática y terapéutica que fomenta la individualidad, la creatividad y la responsabilidad cívica. En cambio, el manifiesto de 2019 —surgido en un contexto de globalización digital, movimientos sociales y crisis institucionales— redefine la educación artística como una práctica decolonial, inclusiva y socialmente comprometida. La comparación evidencia un cambio histórico desde los ideales humanistas liberales hacia enfoques críticos, colectivos e interseccionales que enfrentan la desigualdad sistémica. Ambos manifiestos reafirman el papel de la educación artística como un acto transformador, capaz de resistir la opresión y reimaginar la democracia, al tiempo que exponen las tensiones persistentes entre el poder institucional y la libertad pedagógica.
Palabras clave: Educación Artística, Manifiesto, Creatividad, Inclusión, Justicia Social.

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1. Introduction

In December 1943, a collective of thirty-one teaching artists articulated their beliefs about art education's vital role in shaping both students and society. With a foreword by Belle Boas, Director of Education at the Baltimore Museum of Art, these statements—rooted in the exhibition *Teacher-Artist and Artist-Teacher*—reflect a shared conviction that teaching art involves not only imparting technical skills but also cultivating creativity and individuality. Through their personal declarations, these educators reveal a profound understanding of the relationship between art and life, demonstrating a deep commitment to their students and to the transformative power of artistic expression. *I Believe by 31 Art Teachers* (New York, 1943), preserved in the Victor D'Amico Papers (folder VIII.C.3) at the Museum of Modern Art Archives (MoMA, New York), stands as a rare, perhaps unique, precursor to later manifestos on art education.

While artistic manifestos flourished in the early twentieth century—such as André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), the *Manifesto of Futurism* (1909), and the *Dada Manifesto* (1918)—few artists at the time articulated positions regarding the evolving field of art education. Educational philosophies more often took the form of pedagogical models rather than manifestos, as seen in the work of Maria Montessori, Èlise and Célestin Freinet (1920s), and Alice Chipman and John Dewey. What *I Believe* contributes is a distinctly educational stance, seeking to define a hybrid professional identity: the teaching artist. It underscores that those who dedicate their lives to cultivating creative power in youth are themselves artists in their own right (The Committee on Art in American Education and Society, 1943, p. 4).

This paper analyzes the contents, agents, and themes present in *I Believe* to illuminate the ideals and concerns of teaching artists in 1943 within the MoMA context. The discussion raises a speculative question: What if the 1943 manifesto had been written in 2019? Would the beliefs and ideals remain consistent, or would they reflect the profound social and cultural changes of the intervening decades?

Although replicating the exact historical conditions of 1943 is methodologically impossible, certain parallels were established. Both manifestos were developed within MoMA's Education Department in New York; both involved thirty-one active teaching artists; and both originated from the same guiding question: *What do you believe art education should fight for?* Each also culminated in a public exhibition—at the ACA Gallery in 1943 and at MoMA in 2019.

The 2019 reenactment of the manifesto allowed for meaningful comparison, revealing how the role of the teaching artist and the mission of art education in New York City have evolved over seventy-six years. Through the analysis of these two manifestos, this paper examines the shifting values of art educators from World War II to the immediate pre-pandemic era, exploring how archival materials can inform contemporary artistic and educational practices.

2. Theoretical and historical framework

Manifestos—programmatic, declarative, and performative texts—do more than convey ideas; they seek to provoke action and transformation. They legitimize certain forms of knowledge and artistic vision while excluding others. In education, manifestos operate as acts of public pedagogy: through writing, they define what art education is, who participates in it, and toward what ends. The 1943 and 2019 manifestos mark two threshold moments in New York's cultural history. Both emerged amid crises: the ascent of fascism in the 1940s and the resurgence of authoritarianism in the 2010s, moments that compelled artists and educators to reimagine art's social purpose and education's role as collective resistance (Table 1).

Ever since the end of the first World War, New York had been displacing Paris as the epicenter of modern art. By 1943, as the city received European artists fleeing from fascism, and as figures like Jackson Pollock emerged on the art scene, New York had indisputably become the "capital of the twentieth century." Pollock's first solo show at Peggy Guggenheim's *Art of This Century* and MoMA's acquisition of *The She-Wolf* (1944) confirmed U.S. cultural dominance (Saunders, 2013). During World War II, art and art education became instruments of democratic resistance and national identity. Influenced by New Deal policies and John Dewey's progressive pedagogy, art education was framed as a means to foster creativity, critical thinking, and civic participation—though it was also subject to ideological appropriation. In the following decades, Abstract Expressionism's rhetoric of freedom –together with its rejection of figurative social realism– was co-opted into Cold War cultural diplomacy, revealing the entanglement of aesthetics, ideology, and power.

Within this wartime context, *I Believe* (1943) appeared as a collective declaration by teaching artists envisioning art education grounded in democracy and creative agency. It helped establish the Committee on Art in American Education and Society—later sponsored by MoMA—under Victor D'Amico, who called it "art education's answer to Fascism and its contempt for creative art" (MoMA Press Release, 1942, p.1). The Committee, later the Institute for the Study of Art in Education, convened leading figures such as Viktor Lowenfeld, Herbert Read, Hale Woodruff, Margaret Mead, Meyer Schapiro, and Nelson Rockefeller, sustaining dialogue between art, education, and democracy (Torres-Vega, 2023).

The term *teaching artist*—used interchangeably with *artist-teacher* in 1943—captures the union of art and pedagogy (Hernández Ullán, 2019). It defines a hybrid professional identity that resists separating artistic creation from teaching, recognizing both as creative, interdependent acts. Rooted in early twentieth-century thought (Horne, 1917; Daichendt, 2010), the teaching artist embodies art's social and educational agency. What distinguishes *I Believe* is its collective voice: a polyphonic statement of shared ideals about art's civic purpose.

By contrast, the 2019 manifesto emerged in a globalized, digitized, and institutionally complex world. As MoMA expanded physically and discursively, it sought to reaffirm its relevance through inclusion and critical

revision of the modern canon. Yet this renewal coincided with unrest—staff protests (Novick, 2018), the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, and youth climate activism—that reasserted art's political urgency amid widening inequality. Art education increasingly emphasized equity, decoloniality, and sustainability but faced new crises that escalated the following year: virtualization under COVID-19 and structural precarity, exemplified by MoMA's dismissal of freelance educators in 2020 (The Art Newspaper, 2020).

Comparing the 1943 and 2019 manifestos reveals how such texts emerge at moments of institutional redefinition, when art and education's legitimacy is contested. Both expose art education's oscillation between democratic utopia and institutional control. If the 1943 manifesto aligned with a liberal project positioning art as a civic unifier, the 2019 version articulated a decolonial, socially engaged pedagogy navigating global capitalism's contradictions.

Framed by critical theories of art education (Freire, 1997; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994), this study interprets manifestos as discursive acts that both reflect and reproduce power, ideology, and resistance. Using discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992), it examines how such texts construct social reality and define the boundaries of participation. Across both eras, MoMA functions not only as a museum but as a producer of pedagogical discourse—shaping and sometimes constraining the field of art education.

Ultimately, reading these two manifestos as threshold texts—produced at the rise and crisis of New York's cultural centrality—shows how art education responds to historical rupture. In 1943, art and pedagogy were mobilized against fascism; in 2019, they confronted systemic inequity and institutional precarity. Across these decades, manifestos endure as collective declarations of purpose—texts that not only mirror their time but intervene in it, redefining the relationship between art, education, and society.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the aspects that make 1943 and 2019 radical thresholds

Aspects	1943	2019
Title	*I Believe by 31 Art Teachers*	*Art Education As A Radical Act* Manifesto
Source	VV.AA. (1943). *I Believe by 31 Art Teachers* [Victor D'Amico Papers, VIII.C.3]. Museum of Modern Art Archives (MoMA), New York.	Live Streaming of the presentation of the project and exhibition opening at MoMA, December 12 2019. Featuring Carol Becker, Anna Deavere Smith, Kate Fowle, Hank Willis Thomas, and Félix V. Matos Rodríguez https://www.youtube.com/live/slxtwmRwqQk?si=2FcNDltGyzG66Khp Photographs of the exhibition opening, installation and participatory process https://maid.moma.org/#/list?searchKeyword=art%20education%20as%20a%20radical%20act
Historical context	World War II; rise of fascism; the U.S. consolidates cultural hegemony as Paris declines as the art capital.	Globalized and digital era; rise of social movements (#MeToo, Black Lives Matter, Fridays for Future); political polarization and institutional crisis.
Situation of New York	Becomes the new center of modern art, symbol of freedom and democracy.	Facing a crisis of its status as global cultural capital; MoMA in process of expansion.
Triggering crisis	Fascism and world war; the need to defend democratic values.	Contemporary authoritarianism, structural inequality, environmental crisis, and labor precarity (exacerbated by COVID-19).
Purpose of the manifesto	To defend art and education as tools of democratic resistance and civic formation.	To reaffirm art's commitment to social justice, equity, decoloniality, and sustainability.
Key institution (MoMA)	Legitimizer of modernism and American art; promotes the Committee on Art in American Education and Society (Victor D'Amico).	Institution undergoing architectural expansion and rehung of collections.
Figure of the educator	*Teaching artist* (artist-teacher): hybrid identity merging art and pedagogy; inspired by Dewey and progressive education.	Critical and decolonial educator; advocate of inclusion and sustainability, but affected by labor precarity.
Educational ideology	Democratic, liberal, and nationalist; art as a symbol of individual freedom and civic cohesion.	Critical, decolonial, and ecological; art as a means of social transformation and critique of inequality.
Relation between art and power	Art as a tool of resistance but also co-opted by U.S. cultural diplomacy during the Cold War.	Art as a space of resistance against global capitalism and institutional contradictions.
Mode of action	Collective declaration against fascism; consolidates the professional identity of art educators.	Programmatic text in a moment of institutional crisis; reimagines the social function of art and education.
Concept of art and education	Art = a means of building national identity and defending democracy.	Art = a critical and collaborative practice for dismantling structures of power and promoting social justice.

Aspects	1943	2019
Type of pedagogical utopia	Democratic and humanist utopia.	Decolonial, inclusive, and ecological utopia.
Main tension	Between artistic emancipation and ideological instrumentalization (nationalism, Cold War).	Between critical pedagogy and its insertion within neoliberal and precarious institutional structures.
Outcome or legacy	Foundation of a modern art-education tradition emphasizing creativity and citizenship.	Reassessment of the museum's and educator's role within a global crisis and digital transformation.

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3. Methodology

This study conducts a comparative categorical analysis of two manifestos created by 31 teaching artists each—one in 1943 and another in 2019. The method organizes data into categories or themes to identify patterns and relationships (Saldaña, 2015). The guiding question was: *How have teaching artists' goals and ideals shifted in New York City over the past seven and a half decades?* The project examines how beliefs and pedagogical ideals evolved between 1943 and 2019, tracing continuities and transformations in the language of creativity, freedom, and democracy within art education.

Methodologically, it reenacts the participatory process of the 1943 manifesto—not by replicating it, but by adapting it to contemporary contexts and demographics, thereby establishing a framework for cross-temporal comparison. Educationally, it frames art education as a radical and transformative practice that amplifies historically overlooked voices of teaching artists and reflects the growing diversity of the field. Through its public exhibition and dissemination, the project turns the museum into a site of inquiry, highlighting the intellectual and emotional labor of teaching artists and reaffirming their essential role in shaping cultural imagination.

The analysis draws on the 1943 text *I Believe* and a recreated process enabling 31 contemporary teaching artists to respond to the same question posed to their predecessors. Acknowledging the impossibility of replicating 1943's conditions, the project instead created parallel, contextually relevant parameters for 2019.

Demographic differences were significant. While the 1943 contributors were 32% men and 68% women—all white—the 2019 group reflected greater racial diversity and more closely represented the demographics of New York State's art teachers, as reported in the *Educator Diversity Report* (New York State Education Department, 2019).

The writing format was also adapted. In 1943, statements ranged from 196 to 2,100 characters; in 2019, a uniform limit of 280 characters—echoing social media brevity—ensured equal participation. All contributions were anonymous, emphasizing collective authorship and shared creative agency. The 2019 text was projected during the opening of *Art Education As A Radical Act* and remained on view as part of the exhibition installation from December 9, 2019, to January 10, 2020. The original 1943 manifesto had been exhibited at the ACA Gallery in May 1943. Table 2 summarizes the methodological decisions comparing the 1943 and 2019 studies.

Table 2. Comparative overview of manifesto creation conditions, 1943–2019

Category	1943 (n = 31)	2019 (n = 31)
Gender	32% male (≈10) 68% female (≈21)	21% male (≈7) 79% female (≈24)
Ethnicity / Race	100% White (≈31)	White: 67% (≈21) Hispanic / Latino / Spanish: 10% (≈3) Other: 7% (≈2) East Asian: 7% (≈2) Black / African American: 5% (≈2) South Asian: 3% (≈1)
Format of contributions	Written manifesto responses ranging from 196 to 2,100 characters	Collective manifesto created through 280-character individual statements, anonymous, using a Manifesto Kit
Methodological framework	Individual written responses collected for the 1943 *Manifesto of the Teaching Artists*	Collective co-creation process simulating 1943 conditions within contemporary parameters (digital, anonymous, participatory)
Exhibition dates and venues	ACA Gallery, May 1943	MoMA, *Art Education as a Radical Act* exhibition, Dec 9, 2019 – Jan 10, 2020
Goal of participation	To express shared pedagogical and artistic principles of teaching artists during wartime	To reinterpret and "translate" 1943 terms of participation of teaching artists for contemporary social and cultural conditions

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The project's methodological development (Table 3) unfolded over six phases (December 2019–October 2025), combining archival research, participatory data collection, and iterative analysis to trace continuities and changes between the 1943 *I Believe* manifesto and the 2019 *Art Education As A Radical Act* project. Early stages focused on gathering materials through MoMA's public exhibition, followed by transcription, open coding, thematic clustering, and quantitative comparison of key themes. After a temporary interruption for the publication of *Art Education as a Radical Act: Untold Histories of Education at MoMA* (Torres-Vega & Woon, 2025), the research resumed with a post-COVID interpretive framework, culminating in the synthesis presented in this paper.

Table 3. Phases of the research project

Period	Main Activities	Description of the Category Creation Process
Phase 1 – Launch & Data Collection (Dec 2019 – Jan 2020)	Collecting contemporary data and contextual sources	• Public exhibition and event *Art Education As A Radical Act* opens at MoMA (Dec 9, 2019 – Jan 10, 2020). • 31 teaching artists participate anonymously through the *Manifesto Kit* • Simultaneous review of the *1943 I Believe* manifesto and related archival sources (ACA Gallery)
Phase 2 – Transcription & Initial Coding (Feb – Jun 2020)	Reading and identifying preliminary themes	• Transcription of all 62 statements (31 from 1943 and 31 from 2019). • Highlighting sentences and keywords reflecting shared ideas (e.g., *creativity*, *freedom*, *individual development*). • Assigning *open codes* to initial conceptual groupings.
Phase 3 – Thematic Clustering & Refinement (Jul – Dec 2020)	Forming thematic families and subcategories	• Clustering open codes into thematic areas (e.g., *Creative Expression*, *Student Autonomy*, *Art as Therapy*). • Cross-comparing 1943 vs. 2019 categories to ensure conceptual equivalence. • Refining overlapping themes and merging related ones.
Phase 4 – Quantitative & Comparative Analysis (Jan – Jun 2021)	Measuring emphasis and category weight	• Counting frequency of each theme across both manifestos. • Creating quantitative charts (percentages, frequency counts). • Evaluating proportional relationships and visualizing shifts in focus.
Project interruption for the writing of the book *Art Education As A Radical Act* (Torres-Vega & Woon, 2024) where this analysis is not included.		
Phase 5 – Interpretation considering post-COVID shifts & Writing (Jan – March 2025)	Synthesizing patterns and constructing arguments	• Interpreting thematic relations: e.g., *freedom* linked to *expression* and *democracy* in 1943; *equity* and *inclusion* in 2019. • Developing an interpretive narrative on pedagogical and social transformations. • Drafting analytical report sections and exhibition text.
Phase 6 – Reporting & Dissemination (March – Oct 2025)	Presentation and documentation	• Preparation of research visuals, charts, and interpretive essays. • Presentation of findings in academic and museum contexts. • Integration of results into exhibition archives and publications.

Author: Sara Torres-Vega

4. Analysis of *I Believe by 31 Art Teachers* (1943)

The data on the contributors of *I Believe* (1943) reveals a community of 31 art educators—68% women and 32% men. New York stands out as the main hub, particularly through institutions like the Fieldston School and New York University but also in other professional domains (Table 4).

Table 4. Professional distribution of teaching artists contributing to the 1943 manifesto.

Professional Domain	% of Contributors
K–12 Art Education	22%
Higher Education (College/University)	24%
Department Heads / Chairs	15%
Supervisors / Directors (Programs/ Studios)	12%
Museum / Institutional Educators	6%
Art Therapy / Clinical Education	6%
Practicing Artists	9%
Graduate Students	6%

Author: Sara Torres-Vega

4.1. Creative Expression

Nearly all contributors emphasize creativity and self-expression. Lawrence Kupferman affirms, "I believe in the development of the individual student as an artist from the very start of his career in art school" (p. 2). G. Marie LePrince adds that teachers should develop this "in terms of each individual's experience" (p. 17), while Victor D'Amico writes that "the child's art expression... should be the direct and honest statement of the child's emotion or his response to life" (p. 9). Louise A. Cook states, "What the student has to express is of more importance than the means by which he expresses it" (p. 5), and Harry Sternberg concludes, "The only real function of the art teacher is to stimulate and inspire the student to the beauty and inspiration of art as a way of life" (p. 4). Together, they affirm art as a deeply personal and creative act.

4.2. Individual Development

Teachers stress fostering students' growth and confidence. Charles Cook writes, "The goal of that process is the control of the environment to the service of human needs" (p. 1). Ruth R. Herring has "a profound faith in the natural abilities of students when placed in a congenial and stimulating environment" (p. 11). Marion Miller Johnson highlights building self-confidence: "To help the individual to 'do'... is to build in him self-confidence, imagination, originality" (p. 8). Mary Dill Henry connects personal growth to citizenship, writing, "The pupil and the development of his personality... are of the highest importance" (p. 18). For Mervin Jules, this growth opposes fascism: "The teacher is a formidable weapon against the Fascist credo of terror" (p. 6).

4.3. Student Autonomy

Eighteen contributors advocate for independence and choice. Kupferman insists students "should forgo his own tools for himself" (p. 2). Florence Cane emphasizes recognizing "the hidden potentialities in each child" (p. 3), while Charles F. Beck urges that "Each student must be encouraged to work in the medium he needs... whether realistic or imaginative" (p. 5). Ruth Doherty describes the teacher as "a good guide... who encourages individuality" (p. 12). Edward Glannon adds, "The knowledge gathered from experience should become an integral part of a youngster's nature. It should never be given as something to be worn like a coat" (p. 15).

4.4. Art as Therapy

Ten contributors frame art as therapeutic. Louise A. Cook values "creative effort as an enrichment of life" (p. 5), and Florence Cane describes art as "the release of that inner force which will do its own creating" (p. 3). Ernest Zierer asserts that emotion defines art's value, as "trends of art... are considered products of associations and as such of no decisive importance" (p. 14). Mary Dill Henry concludes, "Art... provides a constructive and therapeutic force vital in these days of destruction" (p. 18).

4.5 Integration with Everyday Life

Fifteen teachers believe art should be part of daily experience. Mitzi Solomon calls for changing art's image "from something related to museums... to something one has contact with in the daily routine" (p. 7). Howard Thomas aims "to integrate the study of the visual arts with the lives of my students" (p. 11), and Dorothy Knowles asserts, "Art should be, for all people, a natural form of expression" (p. 16). Gail Trowbridge adds, "He should be allowed to choose his own subject and materials, and to evaluate his own work" (p. 10). John Fidel Rios reflects that art keeps "the student conscious of the fact that the past and the present will adjust him in the future" (p. 18).

4.6 Democracy and Social Responsibility

Eight contributors connect art to democracy. D'Amico states, "It is the duty of art education to develop the creative capacities of all children... through them only will come an enduring peace" (p. 9). Jules emphasizes social awareness: "The teacher holds a position of great responsibility... through which the student becomes aware of his obligations to society" (p. 6), linking "creative freedom" to resistance against fascism. Kupferman asserts, "I believe in democracy... for my students as well" (p. 2). Beck values diversity: "If the results... show a highly diversified range of expression, I feel I have contributed to their lives' patterns" (p. 5). Mary Dill Henry emphasizes guidance through "informal contact with the students... to help them in their adjustments, growth, and development" (p. 18).

4.7 Craft and Technique

Eight references to "technique" emphasize skill balanced with creativity. Julia Hamlin values "originality... and good craftsmanship" (p. 13). Trowbridge highlights "freedom of movement, variety of materials, [and] stimulating experiences" (p. 10). Beck insists on matching medium to the student's vision (p. 5). John Fidel Rios stresses "guiding him [the student] slowly into the transformation of reality to abstract forms" (p. 18). Harry Sternberg argues that "principles of art... serve only as a basis for the development of new art forms" (p. 4). H. Aimee Voorhees combines both aims: "To help each student... through sincerity of work... and fine craftsmanship" (p. 13).

5. Analysis of *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019)

Responses to "What do you believe art education should fight for?" constitute the manifesto *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019) that took the shape of written down summarized ideas in about 240 characters of length. These answers were channeled by the use of a manifesto kit that contained different materials to imagine possible answers to the question, as well as archival materials.

Just as in the 1943 manifesto, all 31 contributors to the 2019 version are self-denominated as teaching artists working in New York City. It was agreed all of them would remain anonymous to emphasize the collective production of statements each teacher influencing one another. Table 5 summarizes the professional profiles.

Table 5. Professional distribution of teaching artists contributing to the 2019 manifesto.

Professional Domain	% of Contributors
K–12 Art Education	25%
Higher Education (College/University)	28%
Department Heads / Chairs	14%
Supervisors / Directors (Programs/ Studios)	12%
Museum / Institutional Educators	5%
Art Therapy / Clinical Education	5%
Practicing Artists	8%
Graduate Students	3%

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The thematic categories in *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019, New York) are:

5.1. Curiosity, Playfulness and Imagination

Teachers express the view that curiosity, playfulness and imagination are crucial aspects of art, with 20 out of 31 referencing this theme. Art education should create a space for exploration and uncertainty, where students can engage with "unanswerable questions," encounter what is unfamiliar, and "de-familiarize what we think we know." This approach fosters a playful, imaginative environment that encourages curiosity and experimentation. As one of them states, "Art should fight for curiosity, playfulness, imagination, experimentation," inviting students to challenge conventions and push boundaries. Art is not just about learning techniques—it's about nurturing a mindset that values creative freedom and expression. Ultimately, "Art is for life, a life worth living, and we should always fight for freedom of expression," reminding us that art education is essential for cultivating a lifetime of curiosity, creative risk-taking, and personal growth.

5.2. Personal Expression and Growth

Teaching artists considered that art gives space for personal expression and growth with 14 out of 31 referring to this theme. Art education plays a vital role in fostering the growth of "creative personal expression," encouraging students to explore and develop their unique voices. As the text emphasizes, "Art is a natural human urge," and by providing students with the necessary tools and techniques, art education empowers them to have a "VOICE in the community." This process nurtures future artists, guiding them on a journey of self-discovery and emotional growth. The "liberation of emotion" through art helps students manage and express their feelings, contributing to their emotional intelligence and resilience. Ultimately, art education nurtures not only creative skills but also the emotional and personal growth necessary to navigate and contribute to the broader world.

5.3. Equity and inclusion

Among participants, 8 out of 31 focused their statement on equity and inclusion, all mentioned it one way or another. Equity and inclusion are central to the mission of art education, as it strives to create "room for everyone at the art table." The emphasis on "equity of access and representation for all" highlights the need for a system that ensures every individual, regardless of background, has the opportunity to engage in and benefit from the arts. Art education should also "fight for the dignity of human expression," actively working to break down societal and institutional boundaries that seek to limit individual creativity. The call for "real inclusion" urges us to challenge "elitism, classism, and racism," ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background, are valued and represented. By fighting for inclusion, art education can contribute to a more just and equitable world where every voice is heard and celebrated. The group strongly advocates for equitable access to art education, ensuring that every individual, regardless of background, has a seat at the table. The focus is on breaking down barriers of race, class, and elitism to ensure that art is accessible to all, reflecting the diversity of the community and promoting inclusion.

5.4. Art as an integral part of education and life

The overall themes of the contributions emphasized the importance of art education as fundamental to learning, personal expression, and fostering community and creativity, suggesting that art is indeed woven into the fabric of education and life, even if not stated in those exact words multiple times. Art should be recognized as an integral part of every subject taught in schools, as it is "all learning" and "art is life." This idea underscores the importance of embedding art into the core of the educational experience rather than treating it as an optional or supplementary subject. Art education should "fight for art as education"—not as an afterthought or special add-on, but as a fundamental and essential component of learning. By doing so, it emphasizes the need to "recognize creativity as something worthy of supporting and nurturing." Creativity, which is often sparked through artistic expression, enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and personal development, making art a crucial element in the overall educational process. Integrating art throughout all disciplines enriches students' learning experiences and fosters a more holistic, interconnected understanding of the world.

5.5 Social Responsibility and Community

The phrase "social responsibility" was mentioned once, while "community" was mentioned six times. Art education plays a crucial role in fostering social responsibility and building a sense of community. It "facilitates the sharing of human experience to help make meaning of our time in this world," encouraging students to connect with others through their work. Art serves as a powerful "medium for social transformation, capable of fostering a revolution of thought and action," showing that creativity is not just about personal expression but also about driving change in society. The role of art in "uniting people" and "elevating us to our shared humanity" further emphasizes its potential to cultivate empathy, inclusivity, and a deep sense of social responsibility. By engaging with art, students not only reflect on their individual experiences but also contribute to the enrichment and understanding of the broader community, reinforcing art's power to shape collective consciousness and foster a more connected and compassionate world.

5.6 Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of art education and it was mentioned on 7 occasions as it allows students to explore and communicate their thoughts and emotions without fear of censorship or judgment. As the text asserts, art should "fight for the freedom of expression" because it is essential for personal and social growth. Art is viewed as a "liberation of thought" and "the liberation of emotion," providing students with a platform to express themselves authentically and to manage their emotions in constructive ways. In this context, art becomes a tool for unfiltered, honest communication, ensuring that every voice can be heard and valued. Through art education, students not only learn to express their ideas but also embrace the importance of freedom in both personal and societal contexts.

5.7 Transformative Power of Art

Various themes related to the impact of art education, including its role in fostering creativity, expression, and inclusivity, which aligns with the broader idea of transformation through art were discussed. Art education is presented as a powerful tool for transformation, both for individuals and society. As the text states, art should "fight for the dignity of human expression" and work to "tear down boundaries that try to limit it." This emphasizes the importance of fostering a space where all forms of expression are valued and free from constraints. Art has the unique ability to "enrich life experiences" by offering new perspectives, encouraging individuals to realize that "there is much more to see than what they saw before." It is a transformative force capable of inspiring "the revolution of thought and action," urging students to challenge conventional thinking and explore new ways of understanding the world. Creativity, as highlighted in the manifesto as a tool that produces "imagination," providing a reflective space for generating and communicating ideas. Through art education, students are empowered to not only grow personally but also to become agents of change, utilizing creativity to engage critically with the world around them and drive societal transformation.

6. Discussion of results: comparing *I Believe* (1943) and *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019)

The manifestos *I Believe* (1943) and *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019) mark two turning points in the history of art education, each emerging from distinct moments of ideological upheaval. *I Believe* was written during World War II, when democracy and fascism were locked in global conflict. *Art Education as a Radical Act*, by contrast, appeared amid neoliberal austerity, rising authoritarianism, digital capitalism, and social movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter. Both function as "threshold texts" — produced at times when the cultural purpose of art and education was being redefined — revealing the ongoing tension between democratic idealism and institutional control.

In 1943, personal expression was framed as a moral and democratic necessity. Influenced by John Dewey's liberal-progressive philosophy and by the democratic rhetoric of wartime America, *I Believe* presented creativity and individuality as bulwarks against fascist conformity. Art education was imagined as a means to build moral citizens and defend freedom — consistent with New Deal humanism and MoMA's wartime mission to position modern art as a symbol of American democracy.

By 2019, the idea of expression had shifted under the pressures of globalization, digitalization, and social inequality. In *Art Education As A Radical Act*, individuality is redefined as relational and political, informed by critical pedagogy and by feminist and decolonial theory. Expression becomes a form of emotional and political liberation, responding to the alienation and precarity of late capitalism. Thus, where *I Believe* sought to protect individual autonomy in the face of totalitarianism, *Art Education as a Radical Act* emphasizes collective empowerment and critical awareness as resistance to systemic injustice.

The changing discourse on equity and inclusion also reflects historical shifts. In 1943, amid wartime patriotism and American exceptionalism, *I Believe* promoted democracy and equal opportunity but remained within a liberal universalist framework that ignored racial, gendered, and economic inequalities — assumptions typical of mid-century modernism and its belief in "art for all." In contrast, the 2019 manifesto arose during institutional reckonings within the art world (such as MoMA labor protests) and global social justice movements. It confronts structural inequities head-on, redefining art education as a decolonial and intersectional practice aimed at dismantling elitist power structures.

Both manifestos share the conviction that art is integral to life, but the meaning evolves with context. In the 1940s, under the optimism of post–New Deal democracy, art was viewed as essential to civic health, psychological well-being, and national unity — a reflection of wartime morale and the therapeutic ideals of American modernism. In 2019, art's integration with life takes a more critical tone: in an era of climate crisis, digital mediation, and commodified education, art becomes a tool for interdisciplinary learning and social imagination, echoing contemporary ecological and activist pedagogies.

The idea of social responsibility similarly broadens. In *I Believe*, it was tied to citizenship and patriotism, portraying the "artist-teacher" as a moral guide fostering unity and democratic values — consistent with the wartime emphasis on national cohesion. By 2019, amid social fragmentation and distrust of institutions, responsibility is reimagined as collective agency: educators and students co-create knowledge, empathy, and solidarity through community-based practice. Art becomes an instrument of "commoning," responding to the isolation of neoliberal society.

The meaning of freedom of expression transforms across eras. In 1943, freedom meant the right to individual creativity under wartime censorship and propaganda, representing the moral opposite of fascism. By 2019, amid a global crisis of democracy, digital surveillance, and precarity, freedom becomes a collective political struggle — the defense of imagination and emotion as acts of resistance.

Finally, the transformative power of art remains central but shifts in scale. In the 1940s, transformation meant rebuilding democratic values and emotional health after war — a therapeutic and patriotic renewal. In the 2010s, transformation is systemic and ecological: art education becomes a catalyst for decolonization, critical consciousness, and social repair, reflecting the influence of contemporary activism and critical theory.

Across the seventy-six years separating these manifestos, the trajectory of art education mirrors the broader ideological changes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries — from liberal humanism to radical collectivism, from democracy as ideal to democracy as process. Each manifesto responds to its crisis by reaffirming the power of art to resist, heal, and reimagine society. Ultimately, both remind us that art education is never neutral: it is a historically situated act of resistance and renewal, a declaration of values, and a vision for the future.

7. Conclusions

Manifestos have historically served as catalysts for transformation—texts that not only articulate belief but also perform it. As performative documents, they translate conviction into collective visibility, shaping how communities imagine themselves and the worlds they seek to build. In the context of art education, manifestos are not merely declarative statements of purpose but *pedagogical acts* in their own right—forms of public learning that reveal how educators envision art's role in society and how institutions, in turn, construct the conditions under which such visions can be realized.

The comparative study of *I Believe* (1943) and *Art Education As A Radical Act* (2019) demonstrates that manifestos emerge most powerfully in times of social fracture, when the legitimacy and purpose of art and education are being renegotiated. Each text, separated by seventy-six years, reflects its historical moment's hopes, contradictions, and struggles: the wartime urgency of defending democracy through creativity, and the contemporary urgency of confronting inequity through critical and inclusive pedagogy. Together, they form a genealogy of art education as a field that continually redefines itself in response to shifting ideological, cultural, and institutional pressures.

7.1. The Manifesto as Pedagogical Praxis

The act of writing a manifesto—whether in 1943 or 2019—reveals art education as an inherently dialogical and self-reflexive practice. Both groups of teaching artists used the manifesto not only to express beliefs but to create a shared professional identity. This process transforms writing into pedagogy: an inquiry into what it means to teach and learn through art. In both cases, the manifesto functions as a living curriculum, a participatory framework through which educators negotiate meaning, community, and responsibility.

However, while the 1943 collective emphasized art as a means to cultivate individuality and democratic citizenship, the 2019 participants reframed the manifesto as a collaborative and intersectional act—an expression of solidarity among educators seeking to dismantle systemic barriers within and beyond the museum. This shift from the liberal humanist to the decolonial and relational reveals a profound transformation

in the epistemological foundations of art education: from teaching about freedom to teaching as freedom itself.

7.2. Institutional Contradictions and the Ethics of Representation

The re-enactment of the 1943 manifesto within MoMA's 2019 context exposes the enduring paradox of art education within large institutions: while museums often champion creativity and inclusion, they simultaneously operate within structures that reproduce precarity and exclusion. The termination of MoMA's freelance educators in 2020 exemplifies this contradiction, underscoring how institutional narratives of progress and equity can coexist with exploitative labor practices.

This study thus foregrounds a critical tension between institutional rhetoric and pedagogical ethics. Manifestos, in this sense, become both documents of belief and instruments of accountability—mirrors that compel institutions to confront their own complicity in systems of inequality. The 2019 manifesto's insistence on equity, access, and collective authorship directly challenges the institutional hierarchies that historically silenced or anonymized the voices of educators.

7.3. The Teaching Artist as a Professional Figure

Across both manifestos, the figure of the teaching artist emerges as a resilient yet mutable archetype—one that embodies the interdependence of artistic and pedagogical labor, often mediated through diverse contractual forms such as artist-in-residence programs (París-Romia, 2019), short-term project-based contracts, part-time teaching engagements, fellowships, or community partnership agreements within schools and cultural institutions. In 1943, the teaching artist was a symbol of democratic creativity, a mediator between modern art and public life. By 2019, this figure had evolved into a critical practitioner, activist, and cultural worker—navigating the intersections of education, politics, and care.

The teaching artist's hybrid identity, once framed as a bridge between "art" and "teaching," now appears as a site of resistance against binary divisions—between creator and educator, individual and collective, art and activism. This evolution underscores the potential of teaching artistry as a radical pedagogy of practice: one that is relational, embodied, and socially responsive. In future research and practice, recognizing teaching artistry as a legitimate epistemological category could help reposition educators not as transmitters of knowledge but as co-creators of cultural meaning and social change.

7.4. The Unfulfilled Promises of Art Education

Despite decades of progressive rhetoric, many of the ideals articulated in both manifestos remain unfulfilled. Access to quality art education continues to be shaped by socioeconomic inequality; curricula often privilege Eurocentric and formalist traditions; and institutional support for art educators remains unstable. The cyclical reappearance of similar ideals—freedom, creativity, democracy, equity—suggests that the field continues to grapple with structural limitations that inhibit its transformative potential.

Yet these repetitions are not signs of failure but of persistence. They signal an enduring belief in art's capacity to foster critical consciousness and collective healing, even when such ideals remain aspirational. Manifestos, by restating these promises, prevent amnesia—they ensure that the struggle for an equitable and imaginative art education remains visible, audible, and alive.

7.5 Implications for Contemporary Art Education and Research

This study contributes to current discourses in art education by demonstrating how historical re-enactment and archival research can serve as generative methodologies. Revisiting I Believe through a participatory, contemporary lens reactivates the archive—not as a static repository but as a living site of inquiry where past and present pedagogies converge (Pinto & Honorato, 2025).

For contemporary educators and researchers, the comparative analysis of these manifestos invites several key reflections:

Pedagogical Activism: Teaching through art must be understood as an act of social intervention, capable of addressing issues of equity, climate justice, and decolonization.

Collective Authorship: Manifestos model a non-hierarchical mode of knowledge production that challenges traditional authorship and foregrounds community-driven learning.

Institutional Accountability: Museums and cultural institutions must recognize educators as essential intellectual contributors, not peripheral service providers.

Reimagination of Curriculum: Art education should move beyond disciplinary boundaries to integrate affective, ecological, and political dimensions of learning.

7.6 Toward Future Manifestos

The question "What do you believe art education should fight for?" remains as urgent today as it was in 1943. If another manifesto were to be written in 2050, it would likely grapple with new crises—climate displacement, algorithmic inequality, and the redefinition of creativity in an AI-mediated world. Yet the essence would remain: art education as a radical, humanizing force that insists on imagination as a form of resistance.

Manifestos, therefore, endure not only as historical artifacts but as methodologies of hope. They remind us that to teach art is to participate in the unfinished project of democracy—to continually reimagine what freedom, equality, and creativity might mean in a changing world. The task of the teaching artist, past and

future, is to keep these promises alive: to make visible what remains possible, and to ensure that art education continues to be, as both 1943 and 2019 declared, worth fighting for.

7.7 Methodology as Manifesto

The methodological approach of this research—combining archival reconstruction, comparative analysis, and participatory re-enactment—reveals that the manifesto is not only an object of study but a research method in itself. By tracing the historical lineage between the 1943 I Believe and the 2019 Art Education As A Radical Act, this study performs the very process it investigates: a collective articulation of belief as inquiry. The act of re-enacting, interpreting, and juxtaposing these documents transforms research into pedagogy—one that bridges the archive and the present, analysis and activism. In doing so, the study demonstrates how manifestos can operate as epistemological tools within art education research: frameworks through which scholars and practitioners can question inherited narratives, construct alternative futures, and reimagine the ethical role of art education in shaping democratic life. Ultimately, the findings affirm that to study manifestos is to engage in manifesting—to participate in an ongoing, generative conversation about what art education is, and what it must continue to become.

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