

## Narrative Statement

Laura Keeney

As an educator and artist living abroad, I'm constantly redefining, refining, and reevaluating myself in relation to my surroundings. After growing up with little to no art education background, I finally began taking photography and art courses my senior year in high school. This led me to Virginia Commonwealth University, where I pursued a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art Education. After graduating with honors, I decided to push my boundaries and volunteer teach in Chile. While teaching and living in my first country abroad, I realized the vast array of knowledge, culture, and cultural wealth that lay beyond the U.S. border. Since then, I have devoted my time, artwork, and professional development to reinventing myself over and over again abroad. Currently, I am the K-12 Art Educator at American Academy Casablanca, in Casablanca, Morocco.

As a teacher entering foreign classrooms, I often see my students as a blank slate with so many layers of the unknown. Students are often names and numbers on a computer, and their cultural identity is but a mere shadow hidden underneath paperwork. Once I begin working with these students, their layers come forth, they begin to wash away, and the students and young artists begin to emerge. As a teacher, I try to always be conscious of my students' history. Each of my students has a different story to tell, and because their history is so unique from others, I try to help them embrace it, and see how it can change their future.

As a professional living abroad, the opposite is true. I am the unknown, I am the blank cultural shadow amidst paperwork, and I learn to adapt a new layer of cultural identity. Through photography, I try to reveal the layers and this gives me a chance to identify with myself as an artist, and a re-inventor. Because of this dynamic flux of teacher vs. professional vs. artist, I am interested in researching the curriculum dynamics of art classrooms for schools located internationally and how the different experiences of my educational background as a foreign teacher and my local students' culture and customs effect the multicultural basis of art education. I am also curious to research the history of art education in foreign countries versus the United States, and how this impacts the curriculum design of schools located internationally.