On July 11, 2023, the MSW program’s 10th Anniversary Virtual Speaker Series held the “Art Activism in Three Reflections” event. Cara Eastcott, Shawn Hewitt, and Ruth Wilson critically reflected on their community practices and collaborative initiatives for social change.

Ruth offered her reflections on *Art Activism in Social Work: Seeking love and liberation with Artists* as a social worker and researcher. She thinks about the intersections of social work and art activism and works collaboratively with artists particularly when interests and purposes of social workers facilitating art and artists facilitating community engagement overlap within the neoliberal colonial context. Ruth adopts a Freirean approach and uses tools from popular education to collect and share people’s stories to generate collective action. Ruth believes that art has the power to move us emotionally toward action and social justice. Art activists or ‘artivists’ intend to change political power structures, create art not for art’s sake but for social change and conduct socially engaged art practice, well aligned with social work ethics. She talked about socially engaged art as an integrated & interprofessional practice with the power to mitigate power gaps, stimulate tacit and subconscious knowledge, evoke emotion, bring joy and healing, build resilience, raise one’s critical consciousness and inspire collective action and change.

Cara offered her *Leaning into Dreaming* reflections as an art activist centering disability justice and disability art. Her work is a demonstration of art as a political act and her journey is one of an artist seeking liberation and healing through art-making. Cara shared the complexities of doing this work within a neoliberal ableist non-profit context and the toll it takes on the artists’ spirit and creativity. She expressed that importance of the social model of disability, where we focus on the ways in which the world has been built to exclude disabled people, rather than a medical model of disability where the focus is on the individual and their impairment. She also pointed that arts allow marginalized experiences to be represented and create Disability culture. Cara shared the desire to travel out of this space in search of meaningful collaborations and dedicating space to growing her personal artistic practices by exploring the dream world of self and collective autonomy giving the example of her radio show Algorithm Pyjamas that discusses ways in which dreaming and collective power can help us confront opposing forces and oppression.

Shawn offered his reflections – “*Crucible to Catalyst: A brief exploration of generative AI’s possible impact on systems of social work and art activism*” - as an artist, experienced designer and educator who walks both the social service sector and art worlds. He highlighted the importance of having the ability to incorporate technology within social work practice, addressing social justice issues and furthering art activism. Shawn identified some risks for social work such as bias and discrimination; privacy and data security; depersonalization of care; accountability and responsibility and job displacement. On the other hand, some risks for Art activism include authenticity and creativity; misinformation; digital divide; skill gap; depersonalization; and closed models vs. open-source considerations.

Shawn poses some critical questions for social workers and artists to consider particularly building more authentic human connections within the growing plethora of technological advances. His talk helps us to think optimistically - and more importantly to think critically - about the future and ethical use of socially engaged art practice in this emerging era of generative AI.