Somi Lee EdD
Teaching Assistant Professor | University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
School of Art & Design, Art Education Program

EDUCATION

2022	EdD Learning Sciences. University of Calgary, Werklund School of Education. Dissertation: Aesthetic Experience in Teacher Education.
2016	MA Art Education. Concordia University. Thesis: Advantages and Limitations of Mentoring Students Online in Building Art University Entrance Portfolios.
2014	BEd Teacher Education. Nipissing University. Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT).
2007	BFA Drawing and Painting. OCAD University.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

2023-present	Teaching Assistant Professor, Art Education Program, School of Art & Design, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
2023	Summer Intensive Strategic Research Collaborator, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul, South Korea. Developed course outlines and video scripts and reviewed instructional materials for a Coursera program.
2023-2024	Postdoctoral Fellow, Learning Sciences, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, Canada. Fellowship paused during the nine-month Illinois appointment and resumed in 2024; administrative closeout in 2025.
2017, 2021	Visiting and Sessional Teaching, Graduate Visual Arts Education, University of Toronto, Canada.
2016-2019	Sessional Instructor, Teacher Education Program, Western University, Canada.
2016-2022	Course Director, Teacher Education Program, York University, Canada.
2016-2025	Online teaching appointments, Asian Studies Program, Faculty of Arts, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. Held appointments as Sessional Instructor, Lecturer, and Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professor (2024–2025). Developed seven online courses and supported incoming faculty in course development and instruction.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Artistic and cultural experiences; learning and interpretation; curatorial data formation; cultural records; museum learning; diaspora and public art; narrative inquiry; responsible use of AI in cultural and educational settings.

HONORS AND RECOGNITION

2026	School of Art & Design Specialized Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
2024	List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students (Outstanding), Fall 2024, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

BOOKS

Published Edited Volume

Lee, S. (Ed.). (2026). *Examining doctoral students' experiences in academia: A narrative inquiry*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Book Under Contract

Lee, S., Kim, B., & Ho, W. (under contract). *Curating urban places: Education, policy, and art in action*. Palgrave Macmillan.

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

Published

Lee, S. (2026). Curatorial data formation in exhibition practice: How archival selection shapes cultural records. *Archival Science, 26*, Article 40. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-026-09560-x

Lee, S. (2026). Peer-led museum tours as experiential learning: What happens when undergraduates teach each other to look at art. *Journal of Museum Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2026.2680364

Lee, S. (2026). Critical learning experiences of Korean women at the Toronto Outdoor Art Fair. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2026.2639579

Lee, S., & Maken Ali, A. (2026). Navigating intersectional perspectives in art education: Visualizing identities. *The Educational Forum, 90*(1), 43-57. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2025.2479821

Lee, S. (2025). Introduction to the inclusive Q&A learning environment design. *Visual Culture & Gender, 20*, 58–70.

Lee, S. (2025). LGBTQ+ themed public art: Promoting an expanded view on genders and advancing gender education. *World Art, 15*(2), 317-326. https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2024.2417424

Lee, S. (2024). Asian diaspora: Understanding Toronto public spaces through art and performances. *Studies in Art Education, 65*(3), 356-370. https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2024.2355058

Lee, S. (2016). Pilot study: Bloom's digital taxonomy application for an online art project. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 2268-2274.

Lee, S. (2015). The importance of art teacher awareness of students' internet use in Ontario school board classrooms. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education, 5*(Special Issue 4), 2617-2624.

In Press

Lee, S., & Liu, D. (in press). Zero-waste exhibition design: Applying multimodal anthropology to cross-cultural curation. *World Art*. https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2026.2753503

Under Review

Lee, S. *The desire to be remembered in an age of artificial intelligence: A ceramic artist's account and the desire-to-data pipeline*. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications. Minor revision submitted; returned to reviewers.

Lee, S. *Laughter, play, and emotional presence through puppetry in preservice teacher education*. Art Education. Revision and resubmission.

Lee, S. Manuscript on an AI-mediated tool for reflection and reflexivity in exhibition pedagogy [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Studies in Art Education.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Lee, S., Gu, R., & Maken Ali, A. (2026). Semi-formal learning groups as design interventions in doctoral education. In *International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Irvine, California*.

Lee, S. (2025). Connecting indoor digital space and outdoor garden for experiential learning through art curation and technology. In *International Society of the Learning Sciences*.

Lee, S., & Kim, B. (2025). Placemaking in dentistry: Enhancing dental patient engagement and learning through collaborative digital storyboard creation. In *International Society of the Learning Sciences*.

Lee, S., & Shulyakovskaya, L. (2025). Placemaking through artistic pedagogy: Advancing anti-oppression in public spaces. In *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference of the Learning Sciences (pp. 1644-1648)*.

Ho, W., Lee, S., & Kim, B. (2024). Democratic interventions on walls: Embracing plurality and differences through street arts. In *Proceedings of the 18th International Conference of the Learning Sciences (pp. 386-393)*.

Lee, S., & Kim, B. (2024). Embodied learning through art: Enhancing interdisciplinary approaches in STEM education. In *Proceedings of the 8th International STEM in Education Conference, University of Calgary*.

REFEREED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Lee, S., Travis, S. (2027, April 14-18). *Transcending identity borders and boundaries: How preservice art teachers turn personal experience into pedagogical strength* [Paper presentation]. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Accepted for presentation. Paper session: "Teacher Learning, Arts Integration, and Professional Practice."

Gu, R., & Lee, S. (2027, March 18-21). *Curating everyday China: University galleries as sites of cross-cultural knowledge production* [Poster presentation]. Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Hynes Convention Center, Boston, Massachusetts. Accepted for presentation.

Lee, S. (2027, March 4-6). *Navigating doctoral life: Stories from inside academia* [Panel session]. National Art Education Association National Convention, New York, New York. Accepted for presentation. Role: Panel organizer and moderator; 50-minute session.

Lee, S., & Gu, R. (2026, October 1-3). *A co-inquiry into emotional and academic resilience in art education research* [Conference presentation]. Art Education Research Institute Symposium, School of Art, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Travis, S., & Lee, S. (2026, October 1-3). *Cultivating critical reflective practice in art teacher education* [Conference presentation]. Art Education Research Institute Symposium, School of Art, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Lee, S., Gu, R., & Maken Ali, A. (2026, June 15-19). *Semi-formal learning groups as design interventions in doctoral education* [Poster presentation]. International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Irvine, California.

Lee, S. (2025, June 10-13). *Exploring digital citizenship and identity through esports* [Conference presentation]. International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Helsinki, Finland.

Lee, S. (2025, June 10-13). *Connecting indoor digital space and outdoor garden for experiential learning through art curation and technology* [Conference presentation]. International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Helsinki, Finland.

Lee, S., & Kim, B. (2025, June 10-13). *Placemaking in dentistry* [Conference presentation]. International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Helsinki, Finland.

Lee, S., & Shulyakovskaya, L. (2025, June 10-13). *Placemaking through artistic pedagogy: Advancing anti-oppression in public spaces* [Conference presentation]. International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Helsinki, Finland.

Lee, S., Gu, R., Smith, N. F., Hameed, U., & Maken Ali, A. (2025, March 22). *Resilience in art education: Embracing vulnerability for innovative artistic practices* [Conference presentation]. National Art Education Association National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky.

Hameed, U., & Lee, S. (2025, March 21). *Cultural dialogue within curatorial practices* [Conference presentation]. National Art Education Association National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky.

Bae, G., Hetrick, L., & Lee, S. (2025, March 20). *Cultural sensitivity through cultural engagement: K-drama as the site of the new global fandom* [Conference presentation]. National Art Education Association National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky.

Lee, S., & Kim, B. (2024, August 1-3). *Embodied learning through art: Enhancing interdisciplinary approaches in STEM education* [Conference presentation]. 8th International STEM in Education Conference, hosted by the University of Calgary, virtual.

Ho, W., Lee, S., & Kim, B. (2024, June 10-14). *Democratic interventions on walls: Embracing plurality and differences through street arts* [Conference presentation]. International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Buffalo, New York.

Lee, S. (2023, June 23). *Exploring self-learning in contemporary Korean pop culture: Shaping education in the Canadian context* [Conference presentation]. Asian Studies International Conference, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Lee, S., & Rostom, N. (2022, May 18). *City-approved street art vs. graffiti* [Conference presentation]. Canadian Sociological Association Annual Conference, virtual.

Lee, S. (2021, May 30-June 3). *Art-based portfolio as a meaning making activity in teacher education* [Conference presentation]. Canadian Society for the Study of Education Annual Conference, virtual.

Lee, S., & Rostom, N. (2021, May 4). *Re-thinking art education in K-12 through conceptual art* [Conference presentation]. 4th UPEI Teaching Community Conference, University of Prince Edward Island, virtual.

Lee, S. (2017, October). *The effective use of social application (app) to improve students' art making process* [Conference presentation]. National Social Science Association Professional Development Conference, San Antonio, Texas.

GRANTS AND FUNDED PROJECTS

USD = US dollars; CAD = Canadian dollars. Currency is indicated for each entry. Total project funding and allocations for individual roles are distinguished where available.

2026	Lee, S., Internationally Themed Event Grant, Office of the Vice Provost for Global Affairs, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. USD $500.
2026	Lee, S., Innovation in Gen Ed Courses Award. USD $7,500. Competitive award supporting the development and implementation of an innovative instructional approach in ART 140: Introduction to Art, with campus-wide dissemination of project outcomes required.
2025	Lee, S., Internationally Themed Event Grant, Office of the Vice Provost for Global Affairs, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. USD $500.
2025	Lee, S., PITA & Innovation Mini Grants. USD $4,000. Supported the hiring and mentorship of doctoral student Faizaan Ahab to develop a visual instructional tool for reflective faculty observation. A co-authored manuscript is in preparation.
2025	Lee, S., Gen Ed Professional Development Award. USD $5,000. Supported participation in ICLS 2025 at the University of Helsinki, where four peer-reviewed works were presented. Conference participation informed interdisciplinary, experiential, and AI-integrated approaches to General Education teaching.
2025	Yunes, N., and Lee, S. (Subcontracted/In-Kind Support), National Science Foundation, Supporting Independent Research on Celestial Cartography in Higher Education. USD $4,000 in-kind support (Spring).
2025-2026	Lee, S., Illinois Leadership Center Faculty Fellow. USD $2,500.

2024 Lee, S., Internationally Themed Event Grant, Office of the Vice Provost for Global Affairs, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. USD $500.

2024 Lee, S., Faculty Retreat Grant, Office of the Provost, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, AristAI for Absenteeism Management in Large Lecture Courses. USD $4,000. Implemented an AI teaching assistant in a large lecture course to support attendance monitoring, student questions, and course engagement.

2024-2025 Lee, S., Illinois Leadership Center Faculty Fellow. USD $2,500. Supported leadership-focused teaching and campus engagement, including developing and organizing the Faculty Fellow Symposium and advising undergraduate students.

2024-2025 Lee, S., Vision 2030 Global Strategy Implementation Grant, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. USD $5,900. Supported Celestial Cartography Project: Mapping Shared Skies, a cross-cultural teaching and research initiative connecting students and collaborators across the United States, South Korea, and Canada.

2023-2025 Lee, S., Mitacs Accelerate Program, Canada, Enhancing Dental Patient Education: A Digital Art Approach with AI. CAD $15,000. Supported the development and study of AI-assisted digital storyboards and participatory art practices to enhance patient learning, engagement, and emotional comfort in a dental care setting.

2022-2025 Chung, E. (Project Director), Lee, S. (Online Course Development and Teaching), Seed Program for Korean Studies, Korean Studies Promotion Service (KSPS), Academy of Korean Studies (AKS), funded by the Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea. Total project funding: CAD $310,000; annual allocation for Somi Lee's online course development and teaching: CAD $22,000. Continued online course development and teaching and supported incoming faculty in online course development and instructional practices.

2017-2020 Chung, E. (Project Director), Lee, S. (Online Course Development and Teaching), Seed Program for Korean Studies, Korean Studies Promotion Service (KSPS), Academy of Korean Studies (AKS), funded by the Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea. Total project funding: approximately CAD $330,000; annual allocation for Somi Lee's online course development and teaching: CAD $22,000. Developed and taught fully online Korean Studies courses and supported incoming faculty in online course development and instructional practices.

DIGITAL TOOLS

In development PRISM. AI tool designed to support real-time student participation in large lecture courses. Supported by the 2026 Innovation in Gen Ed Courses Award.

2026 Curatorial Judgment Recorder (CJR). Sole developer and maintainer. Open-source, AI-mediated application documenting curatorial decisions and reasoning; an audience-facing version collects written visitor responses and generates interpretations. GPL-3.0 license. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19979027. https://github.com/dr-somi/curatorial-judgment-recorder

EXHIBITIONS AND CREATIVE WORKS

2026-2027 KULTURE: Korean Intangible Cultural Heritage in Immersive Media. Illini Union Art Gallery, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (December 3, 2026-January 31, 2027; scheduled). Curator.

2026 The 10 Years of Solidarity. Spurlock Museum of World Cultures (April-May). Implemented the Curatorial Judgment Recorder alongside virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) experiences, enabling visitors to record interpretations at different stages of their visits. Contributed to exhibition organization and curation.

2026 Tracing Connections. Boynton House, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada (January 16-17). Curator.

2025 Âjagemô Collaborative Installation. Âjagemô Exhibition Space, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (October 8). Participating artist; juried selection.

2025 Art of Joy: Art Exhibition and Workshop Fundraiser. Small Arms Inspection Building, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada (August 2). Participating artist and workshop facilitator; group proposal selected.

TEACHING

University of Illinois Urbana Champaign

Art Education Program, 2023-present. Three courses per semester. Teaching includes undergraduate courses, courses serving undergraduate and graduate students, and graduate independent study.

ARTE 591 Graduate independent study. Individual research and publication mentoring in art education.

ARTE 475, Art Exhibition Practices. Exhibition planning, curation, design, and installation.

ARTE 480, Popular Visual Culture. Critical interpretation of visual culture, identity, and representation.

ARTE 202, Facilitating the Art Experience. Art teaching methods and facilitation of learning activities.

ARTE 260, Museums in Action. Museum education, interpretation, and public engagement.

ART 140, Introduction to Art. Introductory art-making and interpretation for non-majors.

FAA 202. Arts integration for future elementary teachers, co-taught across visual art, music, and dance.

University of Prince Edward Island

Asian Studies Program, online, 2016-2025. Developed seven courses.

AST/ML 1010 Introduction to Korean

AST/ML 2010 Advanced Korean.

AST/ML 2040 Digital Media and Pop Culture in South Korea

AST 2090 Korean Art

AST Korean Civilization

AST Korean and Canadian Education

AST Introduction to East Asia

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION MENTORING

The following activities describe research and publication mentoring.

2025-present Faizaan Ahab, PhD Candidate. Provide mentoring in literature review, data collection, and collaborative research development in art education. Mentored the chapter “Not Safe in a Safe Space” for Examining Doctoral Students’ Experiences in Academia: A Narrative Inquiry (Palgrave Macmillan, 2026). Through a project supported by the PITA & Innovation Mini Grants, mentor the development of a visual instructional tool for reflective faculty observation. Collaborate on the manuscript “Reimagining Faculty Observations: Visual Strategies for Reflective Practice” (in preparation).

2024-present Rachel Gu, PhD Candidate. Provide research and publication mentoring through the biweekly Narrative Inquiry research group. Mentored the chapter “From Me to You: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Art and Identity” for Examining Doctoral Students’ Experiences in Academia: A Narrative Inquiry (Palgrave Macmillan, 2026). Collaborated on “Semi-Formal Learning Groups as Design Interventions in Doctoral Education” with Ava Maken Ali for ICLS 2026 and co-presented “A Co-Inquiry Into Emotional and Academic Resilience in Art Education Research” at the AERI Symposium (2026). Supported collaborative research presented at the NAEA National Convention (2025).

2024-2026 Ava Maken Ali, PhD Candidate. Provided research and publication mentoring through the biweekly Narrative Inquiry research group. Mentored the chapter “MY Flower & The Boundaries” for Examining Doctoral Students’ Experiences in Academia: A Narrative Inquiry (Palgrave Macmillan, 2026) and a contribution to Visual Arts Research, “Radical Publications in Art + Design Education.” Co-authored “Navigating Intersectional Perspectives in Art Education: Visualizing Identities,” The Educational Forum, 90(1), 43-57 (2026; first published online in 2025). Collaborated on “Semi-Formal Learning Groups as Design Interventions in Doctoral Education” with Rachel Gu for ICLS 2026 and on research presented at the NAEA National Convention (2025).

2024-2026 Umar Hameed, PhD Candidate. Provided research mentoring through the biweekly Narrative Inquiry research group. Collaborated on “Cultural Dialogue within Curatorial Practices,” presented at the NAEA National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky (2025).

2024-2026 Grace Bae, PhD Candidate. Provide research and publication mentoring through the biweekly Narrative Inquiry research group, mentor on the manuscript “The Disappearance of Korean Art from the Mainstream and Women Artists Shifting Practices” (in preparation).

2024-2025 Natalie Francis Smith, PhD completed in 2026. Provided research mentoring through the biweekly Narrative Inquiry research group and supported collaborative research presented at the NAEA National Convention (2025).

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Disciplinary Leadership

2026-2028 Elected Program Chair, Arts and Learning Special Interest Group, American Educational Research Association. Responsible for coordinating the review and selection of SIG submissions for the AERA Annual Meeting and recruiting proposal reviewers.

2026-2029 Representative, Higher Education Division, ED&I Commission, National Art Education Association. Represents the division in commission initiatives and discussions advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the association.

Editorial Boards and Peer Review

2024-present Editorial Board Member, Visual Arts Research.

2026 Invited Reviewer, Journal of Homosexuality (August).

2026 Invited Reviewer, Cogent Arts & Humanities (August).

2026 Conference Proposal Reviewer, National Art Education Association (July).

2026 Invited to serve on the founding Editorial Board, Journal of Practice-as-Research in the Arts (JPARA). Inaugural publication scheduled for June 2027.

2026-2029 Editorial Review Board Member, Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education.

2025 Invited Reviewer, Art Education, special issue on “Reclaiming DEI in Art Education.”

2025 Ad Hoc Reviewer, Education Sciences.

2024 Peer Reviewer, Proceedings of the 8th International STEM in Education Conference.

Research Funding Review and Expert Registrations

2026-present Member, Expert Reviewer/Assessor Pool, Research Grants Council of Hong Kong.

2026-present Member, International Assessor/Expert Pool, Australian Research Council, Australia.

2026-present Registered Expert, European Commission.

2026 Invited Assessor, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada (February).

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2026-present Member, Recruitment Committee, School of Art & Design. Represented the school at a four-hour portfolio review event at the Herron School of Art and Design, Indianapolis, Indiana (September 12, 2026). Reviewed portfolios of prospective students and provided individualized feedback.

2026-present Schantz Memorial Garden, School of Art & Design. Manage the garden and develop a long-term maintenance plan.

2026-present Co-Chair, School of Art & Design Galleries, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Solicit and review proposals and coordinate the annual calendar of exhibitions, performances, and other creative activities. Collaborate with the Facilities Director to facilitate gallery access and maintain the spaces.

2026-present Arts Advisory Board Member, Red Oak Rain Garden.

2026 Exhibition Organizer, NTFC 10th Anniversary Specialized Faculty Art Exhibition (April-May). Secured the exhibition venue at the Spurlock Museum of World Cultures, handled venue contracting, and co-coordinated exhibition planning. Designed and curated the exhibition to showcase the creative work of specialized faculty in recognition of the tenth anniversary of NTFC.

2026 Student Food Pantry, School of Art & Design. Led a project for establishing a student food pantry in Spring 2026 through planning and installation of a dedicated cabinet.

2024-2026 Faculty Fellow, Illinois Leadership Center. Mentored Charlotte Shafer, who presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in 2025 and 2026. Developed the symposium theme “Leadership and Community Partnership” and coordinated faculty and graduate student presentations, interactive reflection activities, and networking focused on university-community partnerships.

2023-2025 Co-Chair, Committee to Promote Anti-Racism, Inclusion, and Equity (ARIE), School of Art & Design. Worked with committee members to formalize the committee within the school bylaws. The proposal was approved by the Bylaws Committee on March 27, 2025, and brought to a faculty vote on April 29, 2025. Collaborated on expanding membership to include three graduate students and one senior undergraduate, securing funding from Director Brooke White for two committee members to participate in 5 Days for Change training (May 2025), and distributing Know Your Rights posters throughout school buildings in support of undocumented students. Individually organized Play with Purpose at the Spurlock Museum of World Cultures (November 21, 2024), coordinating collaboration between Industrial Design and Art Exhibition Practices courses for an event attended by more than 100 visitors.

2023-2025 Member, Undergraduate Admissions and Scholarship Committee, School of Art & Design.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2024-present	Founder and Director, Diaspora Community Arts and Learning, Innisfil, Ontario. Informal work began in 2024; organization formally established December 2025.
2020-2023	Dental Office Manager, Innisfil Dental Arts, Innisfil, Ontario.
2015-2016	Teacher, Brooklyn College High School Toronto (day) and Toronto International High School (night), Toronto, Ontario.
2013-2014	Grade 6-8 Teacher, York Region Catholic School Board, Aurora, Ontario.
2008-2012	Founder, Instructor, and Operator, Yisom Art School and Gallery, North York and Etobicoke, Ontario.
2007-2010	Museum Educator for K-12 sector, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario.