

Remarks: What's In A Name?

Elleda Katan: Caucus Co-ordinator

Remarks on Re(Mark)! : or a response to Jan's arguments.

First, a strong word for Don Soucy's suggestion for shortening the title to the Journal on Social Theory & Art Education. It's easier to say and to print; it says all that needs saying; it's more importantly accurate — our Journal *is* THE Journal on Social Theory and Art Education. There is no other. A smaller print subtitle at cover bottom could say:

A publication of the Caucus on Social Theory & Art Education: An affiliate of the National Art Education Association

Second, a strong vote for some word, symbol, logo, image which is either linked to the title by a colon or by proximity or is integral to the title through typographical design, that

(1) marries the visual to the verbal. That is after all what we are about. Not simply that our subject matter is the visual arts, but that as progressives we would replace the notion of the visual arts as remote, transcendent, and closed off with the notion of the visual arts as infiltrating all dimensions of daily life — and, in particular, the cover page of our Journal.

(2) is playful, irreverent, provocative. We are about the **art's** and about alternatives to conventional academic solutions. We even speak longingly of being about humor. How could the name/cover of the Journal reflect this dimension? What images from popular, folk, commercial arts could be given the terminal degree? What of Tom Anderson's Work-of-Art jigsaw puzzle? His was a daring try. One person garumphed that it was not sufficiently dignified. Well garumph, design something that is both sophisticated and yet pokes a cunningly playful finger in the eye of convention.

(3) is equally meaningful to the full spectrum of the constituency we serve — teachers in the higher *and* the lower education. The great danger of a group like the Caucus, so predominantly drawn from the higher education, is that we lapse into a language which is remote, closed off, esoteric instead of dense with the well-grounded meanings of common sense and the everyday.

(4) speaks to democratic values. As progressives, we speak out against those who would reduce art education to the service of 'cultural literacy' and 'civilization,' to self expression and formal decor. We speak for citizenry and democracy within a multicultural society on a very finite spaceship earth. Our first page should respect the smell and noise of kids and of schoolrooms, of cultural variety and of social conflict.

Third, a vote against Re(Mark)! — in all its variations. That it is proposed is wonderfully productive. It stimulates consideration of just what we are about and of how we want to be known. Certainly, it's jostled me into a restlessness with our purely academic title and a search for something more.

However . . . while it is visual and playful, it is hardly accessible or vigorous. If the title of our Journal needs to be 'unfolded' by an expert in order to be appreciated (and I do appreciate it so much more now that Jon has explained it) then, no matter how clever the meanings revealed, I question its appropriateness to a Caucus publication. And the cleverness, it is all in the play of intellect. Where is muscle, sweat, strain, anger, love, and belly laugh humor?

And then there are the arguments given:

(1) Jon identifies the spirit of this title with deconstructive thought, and says: "postmodernist issues (and deconstructive thought) have infiltrated every department that i (*sic*) know [in science] ...the art ed journals have only one essay on the issue.....The time is write/rite/right and ripe." Because a particular theory has caught the imagination of a [scientific] public is hardly reason to assume it necessary or appropriate to Caucus or to educational agenda. Some of the most deformed projects of so-called educational "research" are products of applying the latest scientific methods to educational matters.

(2) Jan tells us: "New rhetoric is needed to match the rhetoric of strong conservative forces," [as] "Canada and the United States [have] recently elected governments write/rite/right of center." Is it rhetoric that we need or better praxis? Just what is deconstructive

praxis? I find that very unclear. I know that they fancy themselves rebels. They deconstruct all claims to absolute knowledge and pooh pooh university niceties — all while collecting their university salaries and benefits. But what alternative do they offer to the practices they critique? A doctrine of textural indeterminacy. How does that open up the meanings of social groups and the possibilities of political opposition? What does it accomplish except to leave a cultural vacuum into which power-hungry authoritarians can impose their way? And Jan, with those gratuitous Dewey- and Feldman-bashing comments, you begin to sound like one of the authoritarian crew!

(3) And the arguments for "re." No. It is not our texts that reveal us importantly, not our "frozen dialogical exchanges". That's a purely academic conceit. Texts are the medium of academics, and in a most human way, they would wish to believe their medium the pivotal force within human life. That is exactly what we would, as progressives, transcend. Texts are important only in their relationship to purposive actions and as partners to gesture, dress, intonation, thought, movement, work, play, etc. It is not our backs that we need to see; it is ourselves within the social whole, using and giving back to the earth and to each other. It is not freezing. It's breathing. It's dialogue.

Enough. What do I have to offer that's positive? I think we should open up the discussion and consider a wide range of possibilities — especially some which are not verbal at all. I do have to confess to a love for MARKS, plural. Both writing and art-making are MARK-making. . . .and MARK-making by the rich multiplicity of people that make up the planet's population. Go plural and all three are there—visual, verbal, cultural variety of people. Perhaps design it as Amy has suggested, as a scatter pattern of the word, MARKS, repeated and written in dozens of languages and handwritings, printed and word processed.

And I'm simply wild about the explanation mark !!!!!!!!!!!
!!! (There is no way that I can improve upon Jon's arguments in its favor.) So consider

MARKS !

The Journal of Social Theory & Art Education

I know. There is the problem for some because this brings one to think: Karl Marx. That doesn't bother me. He is, after all, the author of praxis.

That makes you unhappy? Then how about

!

(just an explanation mark
all alone)

The Journal of Social Theory & Art Education

We'd decide upon one design for the ! and hold constant to it over the years. However, each year could see variety of images drawn within its outline, images drawn from that year's events.

Well. That's my best shot. Elleda Katan

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From Tom Anderson: Former Editor of the Bulletin/ Journal:

"I think, overall, I like : "Remarks" better than "Marks", because it does more for my ear. I don't like the notion of "re" as in research or refer or re-examine or re-enter. It seems derivative and secondary rather than exploratory and elemental. I like the density which surrounds the concept of "Marks" or "Remarks" however. So how about "Art Marks"? That also rings nicely to my ear, sort of like "Ardvarks" or "Jack of Hearts", and also has the capacity to carry many layers of meaning while distinguishing the journal with a punchy-succinct title. ("Studies" is the biggy in the field because the title is the briefest?) In addition, with a name like "Art Marks" no one will confuse the title as referring to THE MARX, since everyone knows Art was only Karl's distant cousin. In spite of my flippancy, here, I'm seriously proposing "Art Marks" as a compromise choice. I really like Jan's and Elleda's contextualist notions and semantic twists and Elleda's concerns about forceful imagery and name recognition and I think this covers both."

From Don Soucy: Present Editor of the Canadian Review of Art Education:

"I am glad to hear you (referring to Elleda and her comments) too agree with a shortened straightforward name for the Caucus Journal. Perhaps I am too conservative in these matters, but I agree wholeheartedly with many of your (again Elleda's) comments about Jag's (sic) defense of Re(Marks). Jag enlightened me about the many inferences in the name, and I appreciate his abilities to read into such things, but I guess I'm just not into cleverness when it comes to journal names. Furthermore, although I am now tenured and can afford to snub my nose at the politics of promotion, I think a clever name is unfair to our non-tenured colleagues whose promotion often hinges on impressing engineers with little interest in unfolding texts."

From Mary Stokrocki: Coordinator of the Seminar for Research:

"I am glad that the Social Caucus changed its publication name from the Bulletin to the Journal. My university . . . questioned the seriousness of such a publication called "a bulletin." I am not thrilled about the (re-mark) (*sic*) statement, which is playful and clever, but unintelligible to someone outside of the caucus. . . I am quite familiar with deconstructionist writing, but it does not entail poetic flights of fancy, although I do agree with Jon that deconstructionist writing exposes our myths and forgotten origins. Sorry Jon. Rather than the word "Remark," I suggest the word "Reinterpretations," or no leading word at all. All writing is an interpretation since it entails an explanation and an understanding of meaning (Ricoeur and Heidegger). Reinterpretations suggests a second or even a third dimension of understanding, all of which can be valid. Interpretation theory is dominant in socialist writing, and the philosophical form of phenomenology."

From Kristrin Congdon: "The idea of renaming it (the Journal) "Marks" and association to Karl Marx does not bother me, but it may make tenure promotion difficult for some people. I have seen many an art department become quite nervous with Marx (Marks too?). I tend to like Jan's (*sic*) suggestion of "Re(mark)!" because it is associated (in my mind) with feminist works and activities, "re-member" and "re-vision." Also, my work is moving in the direction of postmodernism. Still, I must admit that is a personal, perhaps even a bit selfish, preference. We may, indeed, lose members/readers/interested parties in all the postmodernist jargon. I hate to complicate matters more, but how about this: The title could be: Journal of Social Theory and Art Education, and we could have one or two special focal issues called: "Re(mark)!"

From Bob Berrson: Former Caucus Co-ordinator of the CSTAE:

What's in a name? A new name for the Journal of the Social Theory Caucus? In one sense, not a whole lot. It's not a "live or die" issue. Our Journal has established itself as an important, vital organ for the profession. It attracts increasing numbers of readers and writers. Substantively, it is alive and well.

I would also argue that the visual appearance of the Journal is as important as the title, and in this area both the Journal and the Caucus Newsletter have made great strides. The covers of these two publications qualify as the most visually dynamic of our profession's print productions; our visual presentation says a lot about our organization, at least as much as the name change would. Tom Anderson, past editor of the Journal, and Arthur Guagliumi, editor of the Newsletter, deserve much praise for their creative and artistic contributions in this regard.

All this is not to say that a name change could not make a significant contribution. We have been concerned with effective names—for our publications, for our officers, for the Caucus itself—from the inception of the organization ten years ago. The better we can communicate who we are and what we are about, the better. In this regard, two conditions seem essential for any new name worth its salt: 1) that it emphasize our concern with the relationship between art/education and society; and 2) that it emphasize our critical and activist orientation.

To this end, I very much like the suggestion offered by Amy Brook Snider. Amy argues that "remaking art education" is what we are all about. Such a phrase, "remaking art education," energetically asserts our critical stance and our commitment to activism and change, and when the name of our organization is added as subtitle, our substantive concern with art and society is also encompassed.

For me then, Remaking Art Education: The Journal of the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education is a new name well worth considering. I think our diverse present and potential membership—frontline classroom and community activists, progressive curriculum developers, engaged critical theorists, administrators, and professors—would find such a title embracing and inclusive. The more I consider it, the more I like the title "Remaking Art Education." It has an ambitious and passionate ring to it, inspiration for old and new members alike.

Karen Hamblen: Former Associate Editor of the Bulletin/Journal:

What's in a Name? What's in a Journal Title? A Title does not a Journal Make. Although I appreciated and enjoyed Jan's discussion of the Re(mark)! title change for the Bulletin, I do have various problems with such a change. I wish that I did not, but I believe that we need to consider the Bulletin (ergo newly named Journal) not just in terms of us as members of the Caucus, but also in terms of the interests of nonmembers, of classroom teachers, and, yes, even in terms of the value systems of administrators. I concur with Don Soucy and Elleda that the title should be The Journal on Social Theory and Art Education. I would include The because, as Elleda points out, there is no other art education publication with our focus. Such a title is admittedly conservative, traditional, and a bit staid. It legitimates, and I do have problems with doing something for the sake of legitimation. That can be a double bind. But, I think that we need to consider not just our interests now, nor what we might think a social perspective should be, but rather have a journal that can adjust beyond the now or any one person's viewpoint. It needs to be elastic for the present and for the future. Unless we are going to consider a title change every ten or twenty years or more often, it seems that the title should be something that subsumes many possibilities and can still be applicable as changes develop. Our title also needs to provide a forum for articles that will not be questioned by the administrative powers that be. For those art educators not fortunate enough to have unquestioning support of their academic hierarchy, a publication needs to present an air of confidence—and a similarity to the general format of other research journals. Designating our publication as a Bulletin has caused problems for a number of people. At Louisiana State University, Dr. Nancy Johnson was told that a fair percentage of her publications would not "count." At another university, I was asked if the Bulletin was some kind of newsletter. Other individuals (usually women, it seems) have found their publications questioned if,

for example, their references do not conform to the APA style. These are maddening nit-picking administrative strictures. But that does not make them any less real, and until we, individually and collectively, come to the aid of the people who get caught in such inanities, we need to be sensitive to others' less-than-optimum professional life-world demands.

I think that it is possible to overload the meanings of a title to the point where hardly anyone else knows what we mean. Our title is not the substance of our journal. It is just a catalyst for possibilities that are given life by the editor, authors, reviewers, and readers. Our title should not bear the full-load of meaning that we wish to be explored in our journal. The title of our journal itself should simply state the general focus of our content and then allow for a range of possibilities. The title of the newly named *Bulletin* should allow for postmodernist, modernist, and, yes even premodernist thinking. Social theorists are of many persuasions. Our publication has been inclusive; it has provided a forum of publication that might not, because of controversial content, be published elsewhere. This must be maintained.

I hope that jan's open letter on *Re(mark)!* is published as an article or an editorial in the next issue. It is provocative and insightful and presents an exploration rarely found in art education literature. This is what the Caucus allows for and fosters among its membership and on the pages of its publication.

Amy Brook-Snider and Herb Perr in Dialogue:

Amy: Herb, I think this will be so much fun having a conversation on the computer about the Social Theory Caucus. Arthur said that he needs something for the Newsletter and this beats having to write an article. First, about the debate on the proposed change in title for the Journal, what do you think about "Marks and Remarks."?

Herb: Before I get to that, jan's statement in defense of *RE(Mark)!* was excellent. He almost convinced me to support that title. Elleda's response to jan was equally strong and she almost convinced me. Here are some of my thoughts on the debate. jan makes a significant point about a title that is activist orientated. A title that confronts potential readers and inspires them to think about its meaning further illuminates the content of the journal. I have a problem with Elleda's desire to have a more accessible title. Fortunately, we are not a popular consumer journal. A title that soothes and evokes fond memories from the reader is contrary to the philosophy of the Caucus. Oh, yes...on the other hand, as impressive as the title *Re(Mark)!* is, it is the other side of accessibility. *Re(mark)!* immediately conjures up Semiotics, Deconstruction, and other theoretical constructions. Rather than liberating readers from their "chains," it entangles them in Other's theories, leaving some of us humbled, insecure (Amy says, ignorant), but most important it may not give them the power to question and act.

I have an idea about a potential title but Amy told me I already wrote a whole article, so I'd like to pass the keyboard over to her. Wait, she says, no, she wants to hear my title. OK! Do you know the progressive educational journal called *Re-making Education*? Well, why not call our publication *RE-MAKING: Journal of Social Theory & Art Education*. The word "make" suggests that we welcome the participation of rank and file art teachers writing about field-based experiences.

I'm not sure about your *Marks and Remarks*. On the positive side, it promises a discourse, however, it sounds like a literary magazine. The title implies that discourse is primary. The content seems to be "ways of saying it." Actually, ways of saying could include doing, making, and acting, and really does speak about what the Caucus is doing. But I still think that the title isn't provocative enough. What about *Marks and Re-Marks*? Amy is beginning to wonder if this approach is really a dialogue? So herrrrre's Amy...

Amy: Well, with all that time to think and "sing along with Herb" I've changed my mind about my title since as you point out it is not as inclusive as it could be. I also don't think we have to repeat the entire title of the Caucus in the Journal title; perhaps that could be at the bottom of the title page so it wouldn't be so cumbersome. Your title Herb, is nice sounding but it suggests that we have to totally throw out all of what is past of art education and remake it anew. As I was rewording over your shoulder (a very different slowed-down experience from being in conversation—probably similar to the experience of hearing impaired using the TV), with much more time to consider your thoughts in progress as well as my own, I got a completely new idea for the title, sort of reminiscent of the journal *Daedalus*. It's *Deus Ex Machine*. Don't you love it? In the dictionary, it's "the God in the machine," a god introduced by means of a crane in ancient Greek and Roman drama to decide the final outcome. That's the first dictionary definition, and I think it's a metaphor for the vehicle of spiritual qualities that is what we call art. Unfortunately, this doesn't cover the social stuff although I think that B. Brecht would have agreed that the nineteenth century convention of "Victoria's Messenger" served an important function, so maybe it is included. This is a difficult task. ...

Helen Muth: Past Editor:

The recent *Newsletter* debate seems merely to be an undirected exercise. Considering that **ART BULLETIN** is a rather prestigious journal, a change in name from *Bulletin* for the Caucus journal for reasons of prestige seems suspect. And represents a loss of continuity assuming we have built some in the last nine years.

My preference is not offered in your recent letter, but nonetheless I will state my preference since I was unaware that such a change was being contemplated within the Caucus, not that I have moved as your correspondence implies. Hopefully, I have not failed to receive material for review.

I would stay with *Bulletin* and state on the front of the issue that it is the *Journal for Social Theory in Art Education*.

THE BULLETIN: Journal for Social Theory in Art Education

On the credits page, I would state that it is published by the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education. I don't see this as a name change, per se. Others might. Otherwise I would be in favour of the shortened version *Journal for the Social Theory in Art Education* simply because it's shorter.

Tenure decisions will not be decided by what we call this publication. Those in "power" have the authority to decide which journals count. It's like "taste." I can say you don't have it and you can't prove that you do. And vice versa. Good faith in the quality of work or value of ideas is not a given. The politics of tenure is a many headed monster.

Robert Saunders: Art Consultant, Department of Education, State of Connecticut: And so/sow/sew dear/deer Jan/Jon/John that is my interest. Before finishing, I would like to remark on (Re)mark!. You missed a mark remark. To remark also means to mark again, and to mark means to mark one/won up, which is to score. To score means different things to a hustler, a composer, a teacher and a football player. In which case does rescore mean to score again in the same place? Ask the hustler?

You might add Taine (Hippolyte Adolphe-French philosopher and literary historian, 1828-1893) to the other side of your mirrored metaphor for whatever he is worth.

Some things I do not understand well enough yet. I could probably understand/standunder poststructuralism more if I had understood/stoodunder structuralism better. Postmodernism is easier because we lived through modernism which was everywhere therefore we thought we understood it because we were familiar with it which is not the same thing.

Anyway/anyweigh/anywhey you/ewe may or/oar maynot/MayKnot come/cum to/too/two my way/weigh/whey of thinking but/butt/butte/beut where does Deconstructionism end and Gertrude Stein begin (!)?

Book Reviews

Herb Perr, *Making Art Together Step-by-Step*
Illustrations by Seth Tobocman
San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, Inc., 1988.
Soft cover, 127 pages.

Do not bother with this book unless you are adventurous. Herb Perr expects you to travel on roads unmarked by the deepening ruts of today's heavy bandwagon traffic, often choosing paths that deviate from the four directions pointed to on the more trendy art education compasses. Follow Perr and you could find yourself in front of billboards, theatres, and window displays instead of museums and galleries. You're not likely to run into Ralph Smith.

But if you are ready for a little adventure, Perr and Tobocman may be just the people to act as guides. Their book contains 24 lessons, each with enough information to get you where you are going, but not so much that your total itinerary is a foregone conclusion. Although Perr has thoroughly scouted the trails that he is recommending, no two trips through this territory are likely to be the same.

The 24 lessons each require students to work together to arrive at an artistic statement that reflects their own social realities. As Perr describes them, "the projects range from the creation of socially concerned chalk symbols and a reinterpretation of advertising messages made by advertising agencies to the exploration of symbols representing an imaginary society" (p. 7). The resulting pieces may therefore be better categorized as applied rather than fine art, though projects such as "Performance Art: Multi-Media Presentation" (pp. 96-99) challenge those categories. The book also challenges categories such as Eisner's (1972) "essentialism" and "contextualism", since in Perr's mind the social context is part of the art's essence, so there is no dichotomy between the two. The degree to which you agree with Perr on this point may well determine your reaction to this book.

Perr also sees no dichotomy between individual and social goals. He thus takes a position in what Wygant (1988) describes as a long-standing but unresolved debate in art education, a debate illustrated by the contrasting views of Margaret Naumberg and John Dewey. Influenced by Freud, Naumberg believed the art teacher must stress individual values over social. Dewey, on the other hand, believed that it is through social experience that the individual becomes fulfilled. MacIver (1989) sees Dewey as the clear winner in this debate since "Virtually anything a teacher does will be socially determined and will encroach in some ways on the 'freedom of impulse' that Naumberg was so anxious to protect." Perr, too, is on the same side as Dewey, with a stated aim of his book being: