

theory. I found his philosophy and actions to be one in the same. I conclude with a thought that Freire expressed during our interview, "Education is a process that requires collaboration, democracy requires patience, and life requires both."

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## CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH ART: TWO RESEARCH PROJECT REVIEWS

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*Against a background of contemporary social problems and concerns, this article considers the role of the arts in creating community. It begins with a synopsis of Ellen Dissanayake's anthropological perspective on the importance of the arts in human evolution, human development, and premodern societies. It then considers current approaches to community-building through the arts based on two recent research projects done by Harvard Project Zero and its affiliates. One project, the Lincoln Center Institute Arts-in-Education Survey Study, reviewed twenty-two arts-in-education programs including community art centers, cultural centers, arts-infusion schools, and state and local arts councils. The other, Project Co-Arts, involved a survey and portraits of community art centers that focus on education in economically disadvantaged communities. In discussing this research, different forms of community-building are considered, including efforts to sustain ethnic communities as well as those intended to bring diverse populations together. Suggestions are made in conclusion of ways art programs can enhance connections within communities while maintaining autonomy and integrity.*

With all its technological and material benefits, contemporary society is often characterized in terms of its declining human conditions (Goleman, 1995; Kids Count, 1997; Kozol, 1988, 1991). The breakdown of the family, homelessness, alienation, amorality, abuses of various kinds all affect our lives, whether directly or indirectly, on a daily basis. In response to these circumstances, arts advocates have advanced a number of claims for the social and personal importance of the arts. Certain of these claims focus on the value of studying art to help us reflect upon the central themes and challenges of human

existence (Esterow, 1993; Fowler, 1996; Greene, 1995). Others recognize the role of making art in conflict resolution (Raphael, 1996) or in dealing with disturbing issues of various kinds (Henley, 1997). Still others address the significance of the arts in developing a sense of community, which then becomes a means to counter the difficulties of modern living (Grauer, 1995). In this last category, some of the most compelling arguments come from the anthropologist, Ellen Dissanayake (1995).

This article begins by reviewing Dissanayake's position. It then highlights contemporary examples of community-building through the arts as described in two recent research projects done by Harvard Project Zero and its affiliates. These arguments and examples, I believe, affirm the ongoing importance of the arts in fostering essential human values such as empathy, self-awareness, communication, and collaboration. They also demonstrate the diversity of approaches taken by arts organizations in meeting the needs of all types of people: privileged and under-privileged, young and old, those within ethnic communities and those in multi-ethnic environments.

Beyond its value in advocating for the arts, this material should provide arts educators with models that can be tried in other situations. It should further invite them to reflect on additional ways the arts can be applied to address enduring community concerns.

## BACKGROUND

As suggested above, this article hopes to demonstrate the potential role of community arts experience in the resolution of contemporary social problems. Similar concerns seem to be at the heart of Ellen Dissanayake's research into the importance of the arts in human life (1992). Dissanayake's position is summarized in an article for *American Craft* (1995). It rests upon three main points of reference: the centrality of the arts in the evolution of our species, the natural development of arts-related capacities in humans from infancy to maturity, and the socio-cultural role of the arts in contemporary premodern societies. She finds through these points of reference that art-making is a pre-determined part of being human, a fundamental means of learning, and an innate source of pleasure — what she calls *joie de faire*.

More than this, Dissanayake claims that art-making is necessary to human survival. For in the arts, individuals work together to construct objects or events of shared meaning and common purpose. These objects and events, in turn, help individuals and their communities safely cross life's treacherous thresholds, ward off enemies, overcome disasters, and endure what must be suffered. The arts, then, do more than reflect and reinforce community traditions; they foster the creation or re-creation of a community in response to changing times. Unfortunately, Dissanayake adds, little remains of this central role for the arts today, and the loss to modern humanity is both practical and spiritual (p. 45).

While agreeing in general with Dissanayake's thesis, I nonetheless see signs of hope based on two recent research projects undertaken by Harvard Project Zero and its affiliates. The first was a survey of twenty-two arts-in-education programs, commissioned by Lincoln Center Institute (LCI). Methodology included a review of program materials, a written questionnaire, and phone interviews. Survey questions addressed such topics as curricular offerings, educational philosophy, community relationships, and program evolution (Simmons, 1997).

Part of a large scale program evaluation (Lincoln Center Institute, 1997), the arts-in-education survey was not intended to compare programs with one another, but rather to situate LCI within the broad field of arts-in-education, nationwide. Programs selected therefore varied radically in size, scope, geographical location, offerings, and philosophy. In looking at these programs, the survey hoped to identify diversity as well as commonalities among programs and to determine important issues in the field of arts education. Based on survey results, these issues included: (a) the importance of arts advocacy which is grounded in evidence of educational effectiveness; (b) a trend toward the "intensification" of offerings such as the development of "arts infusion" schools and other long-term residencies for artists in schools; (c) a growing focus on cross-disciplinary connections; (d) the search for alternative models and settings for arts activities; and (e) the need to cultivate or enhance connections with communities (Simmons, 1997, p. 20). These issues will be discussed in greater detail below.

The second research project, Project Co-Arts, was a study of community arts centers that focus on education in economically disadvantaged communities (Davis et al., 1993a and b). Project Co-

Arts research began with a review of printed materials from 316 community arts programs. Questionnaires were then collected from 113 selected programs and interviews were done with 89 of these programs. From this last group, five programs were chosen for site visits and in-depth "portraits" (Lightfoot, 1983; Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). These were written up in the publication titled *Safe Havens* (Davis et al., 1993a).

Based on the study of these programs, Project Co-Arts researchers were able to identify "emergent themes" which were distinctive to each center. They also determined a set of common "criteria for educational effectiveness in the field" (Davis et al., 1993a, p. 182). Among these criteria, Co-Arts found that "educationally effective community art centers": (a) "espouse and engage the power of art to transform and/or articulate personal identities"; (b) "cultivate strong relationships among center constituents (teachers, students, parents, staff)"; (c) "know and carefully attend to the interests and needs of the communities they serve"; (d) "provide enduring oases for students and families"; and (e) "carefully attend to their own process of development and transformation" (pp. 182-184). To help programs document their accomplishment of these and other criteria, Project Co-Arts produced *The Co-Arts Assessment Handbook*, including a model and guidelines for "authentic assessment of educational effectiveness in community art centers..." (Davis et al., 1993b, p. 3).

Looked at even superficially, the LCI and Co-Arts research makes visible the remarkable number of art programs serving communities, large and small, across the country. A closer look reveals the variety of ways these programs use art to meet diverse community needs. It also suggests how programs are regularly re-configured in light of changing populations and changing times. Finally, the detailed study of these programs begins to demonstrate how community can be created in places like schools and cultural centers when people come together to make or respond to art. In the following sections, I will consider such topics as program diversity and program evolution in order to build a coherent case for the role of art in helping to create community today.

## VARIETIES OF COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Organizations referred to in this research include traditional community-based art centers, arts-in-the schools programs, cultural

centers, and even city and state arts councils. Citing such a range of venues, I intentionally challenge notions of community based solely on locality or ethnicity in favor of a more expansive view appropriate to the character of contemporary society. Moreover, as I will argue, the arts can unite a population in deeper and more lasting ways than proximity or ethnicity, in and of themselves, can promise.

Dissanayake (1995) illustrates the unifying role of the arts with the *mbari* ceremonial ritual, "practiced until recently by the Owerri, a southern Ibo group in Nigeria" (p. 42). She describes the ritual as follows:

Mbari...uses the labor of 30 to 40 people, who are secluded in a special enclosure and supported by their families for a two-year period. They construct a large two-story edifice of mud that they decorate with colored clay designs applied (like a gigantic piece of cloisonné) between outlining strips of raffia. In addition, anywhere from 35 to over 100 large painted images are modeled from claylike anthill mud that, like that for the walls, has been collected at night, then specially pounded and puddled. After the completion of the structure, the villagers incur additional expenses, with new clothes, a great feast and dance for visitors, and animal sacrifices.

What seems most extraordinary is that after this concluding feast, the *mbari* house and figures are left to crumble to dust or melt in the rain and ultimately fuse with the earth. (pp. 42-43)

Far from a unique and rather eccentric incident, Dissanayake explains that "throughout human history and prehistory societies have engaged in undertakings like this" (p. 43). But why? Dissanayake provides an evolutionary explanation. Such ceremonies persisted because:

they mobilized, coordinated and unified the members of the social group, ensuring that they worked together in a common cause, believing in the validity of their world view and the efficacy of their action. Groups who worked together in confidence and harmony would have prospered more than those whose members acted individually, selfishly, haphazardly, without reference to communal purpose. And, it should

be clear, the arts were vehicles for this kind of unification. They riveted joint attention, synchronized bodily rhythms and activities, conveyed messages with conviction and memorability, indoctrinated right attitudes and behavior. (p. 43)

Mbari unites in celebration and common consciousness an entire village, building upon centuries of relatively stable traditions and beliefs. By contrast, contemporary society is characterized by mobility and a heterogeneity of backgrounds and beliefs. Nonetheless (and perhaps because of these reasons), the need for common causes and collaboration are more strongly felt today than ever. In light of these concerns, the LCI survey study asked specifically how arts-in-education programs fostered community involvement (Simmons, 1997). Not surprisingly, the responses were diverse. These responses included: attracting a board of directors from the local business community, seeking funding from area industry, and bringing in volunteers for staff support and ushering at performances. Programs also mentioned getting parents involved in advocacy, in fund-raising, and as aids to artists.

More to the point, several programs also held events to engage the community as a whole. Of these, perhaps closest to mbari in practice is the Italian Street Painting Festival: *I Giovani dell'Arte*, held annually by *Youth in Arts*, a community arts center in San Raphael, California. The event "brings together hundreds of students and professional artists [from the Marin County area] who create paintings, using pastels as the medium, on the streets for 50,000 visitors to enjoy. Each image is sponsored by a business, corporation, foundation or individual (Youth in Arts, 1995)." Like mbari, the festival involves sponsors, creators, and visitors. In addition, it emphasizes process over product, for, in the end, all the carefully crafted images are washed away.

Closer to mbari in spirit, however, are the community-centered events provided by New York's *El Museo Del Barrio*. First, *El Museo* holds its own street festivals, family art days, and holiday events. These latter, in particular, unite the Hispanic community around important cultural traditions such as the "Day of the Dead", the traditional Mexican holiday to honor ancestors and departed loved ones. Art enters in through music as well as in the creation of a special altar, tissue-paper skeletons, candy skulls, and other constructions (Anonymous, 1995).

More contemporary concerns are addressed in "Day Without Art" involving, among other activities, twenty young people trained as peer educators within their school to combat the AIDS crisis among Latino youth. Along similar lines, *El Museo* has created "The Caring Program", a prevention-oriented art project for inner city children developed in conjunction with Columbia University's Child Psychiatry Department (Canino and El-Gabalawi, 1992). Its purpose is to help area youth address social issues affecting their lives — e.g., domestic and street violence or gender roles — through talking about works of art and creating personal images based on the study of these works. For example, a discussion of "personal illness and disabilities," as well as "parental difficulties" was sparked by an exploration of the lives and work of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera (pp. 110-111).

Exposed to [Kahlo's] work, the children were able to discuss their own personal accidents and the whole arena of fears of body damage. They discussed surgery as well as the meaning of suffering. The group addressed strategies of how to deal with parental difficulties and how to develop resiliency in spite of disability and suffering. (Canino and El-Gabalawi, 1992, p.111)

A similar spirit of cultural concern is reflected in the Co-Arts site, *Plaza de la Raza*, which serves the Mexican community of East Los Angeles. The motivation for forming this "educational and cultural oasis" in the late 1960's is explained by this quotation from some of the center's founders which was cited in the Co-Arts report (Davis et al., 1993, a, p. 118):

The most important contribution we could make to our community was to create a place which would represent the heritage, the culture, the pride and aspirations of Chicanos and Chicanas, a place where they would feel proud and comfortable....Above all, a place which would give them access to programs, both educational and artistic, which would tap the neglected and in many cases, destroyed abilities and talents of people in the area. (p. 118)

## MEETING A DIVERSITY OF NEEDS

Whereas *El Museo del Barrio* and *Plaza de la Raza* focus on the specific needs of the urban Hispanic and Chicano populations they

serve, other programs seek to create community across ethnic differences. One example portrayed in the Co-Arts report is *East Bay Center for the Performing Arts* in Richmond, California (Davis et al., 1993, a, p. 118). The student population at *East Bay* includes large percentages of African-Americans, Caucasians, and Latinos along with smaller numbers of Asians and Native-Americans. While the same mix in the schools can invite racial tension, the *Center* encourages positive interactions and mutual respect. Moreover, as the leader of the *East Bay* theater ensemble says, "diversity makes for 'grand and inspirational' theater: 'you get this aspect from here, that aspect from there, and you bring them all together, it makes it right'" (p. 162).

Another way to meet the needs of diverse populations within a community is through multi-cultural offerings and events. This approach, common to many of the larger programs surveyed in the LCI report, is exemplified by a sampling of touring performances from the Chicago-based *Urban Gateways' 1995-1996 Catalog of Programs* (Urban Gateways, 1995):

- DANCE: *Chinese Folk and Classical Dance; Dances of Many Lands; Flamenco!!!; Mathematics on the Move; Myths and Stories: East Indian Dance; A Taste of the Caribbean; The Rap Ballet.*
- MUSIC: *Bach to Bebop; La Bamba: Latin American Journey; Maxwell Street Klezmer Band; Spirituals.*
- THEATRE: *Edgar Allan Poe in Person; Greek Myths Through Story and Art; Mythical Adventures of the Orisa; Poems of the City and Suburbs; Roots: The Young Harriet.* (pp. 2-12)

Offerings such as these evidently serve at least two purposes: They cater to the interests of ethnic groups within a community, confirming their sense of identity and history. At the same time, they help unify a multi-ethnic population by fostering common understanding through shared experiences.

In many programs, cross-cultural experiences are facilitated by teaching-artists from the particular culture. To prepare these artists, the *Connecticut Commission on the Arts* offers an Artists Training Program specifically for "culturally diverse artists." The Artists Training Program includes "experiential activities that will provide participants with tools for adapting their artistic talents and expertise and cultural background into teaching in schools" (D. Marshall, personal communication, February 16, 1996).

Intergenerational learning programs offer a different take on linking diverse populations. Designed to engage the elderly and youth together in creative activities, these programs help break down barriers of mistrust that oftentimes divide people of different ages. At the same time, these programs educate young people about their own community and help them realize what it means to be responsible members of a community. One example is provided by New York City's *Arts Partners' "Intergenerational Program"*:

This program brings neighborhood youth and elderly people together to make art, and, in the process, to explore each others' lives. With kids resistant and seniors afraid of them, the process of collaboration and dialogue must be facilitated by artists trained in intergenerational techniques — strategies to bridge the gap between generations (and often, between races). These may include simple ice breakers to get older people to speak, or more intimate measures like ways of touching: touching hands; asking each other about their hand; writing a poem about the other's hands; asking about a ring, a scar, a wrinkle. Once communication is established, educational opportunities abound. First, kids discover local history with seniors telling stories about what the community used to be like. They then write how they would have lived in those times. Evidently, artistic and educational values are complemented by more personal and social results as friendships grow up in place of distrust on the one side, and fear on the other. (Simmons, 1997, p.13)

The links to community made here are personal and emotional with moral and ethical implications. But practical connections with the community can also be made through art encounters. One community art center profiled by Co-Arts particularly emphasizes such connections: Pittsburgh's *Manchester Craftsmen's Guild* (Davis et al., 1993a). Founded nearly thirty years ago by African-American ceramic artist, Bill Strickland, the *Manchester Craftsmen's Guild* offers "at-risk" students, often from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the chance for a "place in the sun" — preparation for college and a career along with encouragement "at-risk" students generally need to succeed. These goals are addressed through an intensive mentoring program in photography or ceramics, along with the *Guild's* Life Skills Training Program (p. 84).

Photography and ceramics, "both equipment-intensive and process-oriented media", were chosen because these media provide "something (students) could do as a trade and still make money" (Davis et al., 1993a, p. 89). Equally important, as Co-Arts researchers put it, these media involve both "creative expression and disciplined technique, arts education and career advancement" (p.89). But students who do not end up becoming professional photographers or ceramists also benefit from the experience, and from the *Guild's* Life Skills Training Program. As explained in the *Guild's* introductory handout,

Manchester Craftsmen's Guild uses [the Life Skills Training Program] concept to further advance the personal expression and cultural and personal insight of its at-risk culturally diverse students. This process then opens doors of educational opportunity and, ultimately, employment security, through attitude adjustment and heightened self-esteem using the successes achieved in the field of performing and visual arts. (Davis et al., 1993a, p. 84)

Educational opportunity is of particular concern to the *Guild*. Therefore, among their many other activities, staff members regularly help students navigate college catalogues and "negotiate financial aid and employment procedures in the higher education system" (Davis et al., 1993a, p. 103). As a result, the *Guild* reports that 75 to 90 percent of students regularly enrolled in its programs since 1992 graduated from high school and matriculated into post secondary educational programs. While the *Guild* does not have statistics concerning the number of its graduates who have become professional artists, approximately 20% go on to be art majors or art education majors in college (J. Green, personal communication, February 26, 1998).

Situated in a decaying, but once opulent, section of Pittsburgh, the *Manchester Craftsmen's Guild* is helping re-create the community it is in simply by providing a warm, art-filled, welcoming environment, and by setting an example of excellence: "excellence in the physical plant, the teaching materials and the instructors" (Davis et al., 1993a, p. 93). At the same time, the *Guild* also creates a community of support, direction, and hope for the students who chose to attend. Lastly, the program prepares students to return to their neighborhoods as successful, constructive citizens, ready to assist in community transformation at home.

Such contributions have not gone unnoticed. Besides the Co-Arts portrait, the *Manchester Craftsmen's Guild* received a visit in 1990 by then President Bush and was written up as a Case Study by the Harvard Business School (Hallowell, 1993). According to the Case Study, President Bush's visit "sparked discussions with government representatives and agencies about the possibility of 'franchising' the...model in other U.S. cities" (Davis et al., 1993a, p. 114).

## RESPONSE TO CHANGING TIMES

Even pre-modern communities change over time and their rituals and celebration evolve to honor and to facilitate such change. Postmodern society is virtually defined by change. Thus, in the five year period during which the LCI research took place, wide ranging changes in programs were to be expected. These changes were prompted by declining funds from government and private sources, as well as by changing population patterns, and evolving community needs. Severe cutbacks in state funding, for example, caused The *Cultural Education Collaborative* of Massachusetts to cease operations for an extended period of time in order not to compromise the quality of its programs (R. Orchard, personal communication, January 31, 1996). In similar cases, other programs reported holding retreats and focus groups in order to re-assess their priorities and narrow their offerings.

One of the most striking changes, reported by *Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga*, was ultimately a response to community needs, but was prompted by massive funding cuts and new priorities among funding sources (Simmons, 1997). As explained by *Allied Arts* Director, Dr. Douglas Day, funding in 1995 was reduced to one-third of what it had been at its peak in 1993-94 when support from the National Endowment for the Arts in particular dried up. At the same time, state legislators were turning their attention and moneys away from curricular issues like arts-in-education, and more toward social problems like drug abuse, violence, and teen-age pregnancy. As a result, *Allied Arts* had to rethink its own priorities, and eventually began to transform its offerings from those oriented toward "arts for arts' sake," towards those which demonstrated the role of the "arts as a social service" (D. Day, personal communication, January 22, 1996).

Working in conjunction with community agencies like the Housing Authority and the Department of Parks and Recreation, *Allied Arts* now offers "arts workshops especially designed for kids at risk (emotionally disturbed, wards of the state, unwed mothers) as well as involving artists in pregnancy prevention programs, anti-drug education, etc." (Simmons, 1997, p. 12). In light of such changes in venue and needs, programs like *Allied Arts* may also shift emphasis away from appreciation-oriented activities toward more active and expressive engagement.

Other organizations, including the *Lincoln Center Institute*, have similarly steered their programs toward addressing the social and emotional needs of children and young adults in their communities. LCI began over twenty years ago with a focus on the appreciation of works of art, music, dance, and drama through an understanding of the "elements and principles" which connect them. By contrast, current approaches focus on finding links between a specific work of art and the students' personal experiences (C. Goodheart, personal communication, January 2, 1996).

This change of direction has been made explicit by other large programs. For example, the *Ohio Arts Council*, in its state standards document, now puts an emphasis on "life-centered learning" (Ohio Arts Council, 1996), and the *Music Center of Los Angeles* focuses many of its educational offerings around five "universal themes": Transformation, Enduring Values, Freedom and Oppression, the Power of Nature, and the Human Family (Music Center of Los Angeles, 1995). Arts activities based on these themes have the potential to bring into focus commonalities of all human experience, bridging ethnic, generational, and geographical boundaries.

### COMMUNITY "SAFE HAVENS" IN ARTS CENTERS AND SCHOOLS

Project Co-Arts uses the phrase, "Safe Havens", as the title of their collection of community art center portraits. The phrase, according to the authors of the report, "seems especially salient because it addresses the relationship of these centers to the communities they serve" (Davis et al., 1993a, p. 13). The authors further explain the term:

Safe Havens speaks to the connection that is securely maintained between community and center and the ability of the center to be there constantly for its students in a world in which uncertainty abides. Safe Havens describes the oasis of alternatives the center offers: alternatives to failure; alternatives to the realization of low expectation; alternatives to street life; alternatives to alienation and disenfranchisement. Safe havens.

...Crafted by artists, these havens are works of art in progress in a world in which the arts, like many of the individuals these centers serve, are devalued. These are safe havens, then, for art and culture as well as for the communities served. (p. 13)

The many stories of children at Co-Arts centers illustrate the role of these centers as safe havens, places where, at least for a while, young people can find a community within a community, one which is free of drugs, violence, and other dangers. One vignette, buried in the portrait of *MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes* in Buffalo, is particularly telling of life inside and outside the centers:

"Even a 4 year old can register without a parent," [Molly and Olga] point out, adding that it is not at all uncommon for them never to have met the parent of a child who has been coming for years. Several years ago, one preschooler who lived down the street came almost every day to painting classes. "Her mother never knew where she would go with the other kids around 3:00." Olga explains. This little girl died in a house fire, and for that year's art show, an entire wall of art in the exhibit was dedicated to her memory and displayed her work. "Somebody told her mother, and her mother came...[She] had never known." (Davis et al., 1993a, pp. 73-74)

In addition to community art centers mentioned earlier in this article, the LCI survey found "safe havens" in certain schools devoted to the arts. Longest standing among these schools was the *Fillmore Center for the Arts*, a program that serves a cluster of public schools in Washington DC. The *Fillmore* program provides students with regular and intensive instruction in dance, drama, music, visual art, and writing, taught by professional artists. Perhaps closest to a "safe haven" in Co-Arts terms, however, was the *St. Augustine School of the Arts*:

[*St. Augustine*] was established in a parochial school in the South Bronx to save the school which was about to close due to declining enrollment. Under the direction of Principal, Tom Pilecki, twelve teaching artists were hired and a curriculum was developed in which students spent 30% of their time doing arts. For example, every child learned to play two instruments. While the arts were taught as separate disciplines, they yet served to reinforce skills used in academic subjects, e.g., the essential learning skills of concentration, perseverance and cooperation. As a result of such "arts infusion," enrollment soared, retention increased, and test scores improved dramatically. Nonetheless, after eight years, the arts program was discontinued for financial (and perhaps political) reasons and the school has been returned to a largely academic institution. (Simmons, 1997, p. 7)

Despite this closure, places like *St. Augustine* have inspired arts-in-education programs in Florida, Connecticut, New York, and Ohio to develop arts-infusion schools in their states (Simmons, 1997). And, increasingly, the academic success of students as well as their personal and social growth, is being recognized and documented by research studies such as that undertaken by Lincoln Center Institute.

One noteworthy example of this documentation is *The Schooled Mind: Do the Arts make a Difference?* by Richard L. Luftig, an "empirical and parametric" evaluation of the Spectra + Program affiliated with the *Ohio Arts Council* (Luftig, 1993, 1994, see also Eisner, 1998). Findings noted by Luftig after the second year included very strong performance among students "on overall creativity, academic achievement (given the limitations of this analysis), self esteem, and appreciation of the arts..." (p. 44). Along with such large-scale program evaluations, community art centers are increasingly involved in smaller scale self-studies using, for example, guidelines from the *Co-Arts Assessment Handbook* (Davis et al., 1993b, p. 3). Beyond its public relations value, documentation of success is becoming increasingly necessary for funding, and thus, for program survival.

## CONCLUSION

Research such as the LCI and Co-Arts projects reinforces compelling theoretical positions like those of Dissanayake and affirms the importance she attributes to the human need, not only to make

(*Homo Faber*), but to "make special" (*Homo Aestheticus*). One might equally argue for the application of critical and reflective thinking skills to existing works of art as ways to understand these works, and to connect their meaning(s) to the life and needs of the viewer. As noted above, art programs pursue one or both these goals in serving their respective communities.

Along with these curricular considerations, additional elements are evidently necessary for the creation of community in its fullest sense. These elements, reviewed below, will help recall important points exemplified by one or another of the programs mentioned in this article. The review may also serve as a checklist for programs wishing to develop, expand, or integrate their community offerings.

- Art programs must continually extend and strengthen ties to the communities in which they dwell. This, in turn, requires ongoing dialogue with community members representing diverse constituencies. Strengthening community ties also requires that programs regularly review their offerings in light of these dialogues to insure a fit with community needs.
- Programs should continually seek ways to collaborate with other community institutions (e.g., schools, social services agencies). This may mean that, where possible, art programs should find ways to develop or adapt their offerings to complement the services of these institutions. Community art programs may also wish to provide more collaborative art-making opportunities for students in order to foster community-building attitudes and skills.
- At the same time, as Project Co-Arts puts it, programs must balance this pursuit of "seamlessness" with their community with efforts to sustain "individuation" or distinctiveness (Davis et al., 1993a, pp. 188-215). This includes remaining autonomous in organizational decision-making. Autonomy may also involve maintaining the integrity of the art form in terms of content, practices, standards, and values. Art has a unique place in meeting community needs and need not be subordinated to other activities. Similarly, art programs have unique roles to play and must not be subsumed by other community institutions.

- In light of the above, programs need clearly to identify their mission and the role of art in achieving that mission. This effort, in turn, may



result in curricular decisions, organizational changes, plans for program development, or new relationships to the community.

Such self-awareness and self-direction is typically the fruit of self-reflection by teachers and administrators within an art organization. Reflection is also obviously tied to self-assessment, for reflection often includes the determination of goals which can, in turn, be linked to procedures and finally compared with actual outcomes (Winner and Simmons, 1992). Admittedly, however, the day-to-day demands of operating a community art program may allow personnel little time for extensive and thorough self-examination. For this reason, programs with sufficient means have increasingly sought research organizations to facilitate the reflective process. In addition, reflection may be forced upon a program as a result of decreased support or changing funding patterns, a fact often reported by LCI survey participants when discussing changes over the five years of research (Simmons, 1997).

Despite these crises and the wide-spread loss of revenue during the period, all but two of the programs survived intact. Moreover, several programs reported that they grew in purpose and direction as a result of stepping back and taking stock. For organizations, just as individuals, often find that connections to others are best served by maintaining deep and abiding connections to the self.

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## TEAR DOWN THESE WALLS: NEW GENRE PUBLIC ART AND ART EDUCATION

GAYLE LEIGH GREEN

Public genre art education follows the lead established by the professional art world to engage the public with artforms that depart from traditional media usage and intentions to encourage collaboration, the demystification of art processes, and societal reconstruction. Termed new genre public art, Suzanne Lacy (1995) described in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* a new sensibility exhibited in the past three decades by artists who deal with the most profound issues of our time "in manners that resemble political and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility" (p. 19).

Addressing artistic reconceptualization of both form and content, the artists included in this movement "cross borders, invent new forms of representation, and at the same time interrogate the quality of social life by addressing the language of sexuality, social exclusion, identity, and power while avoiding a doctrinaire politics or narrow critique of the sites in which art is produced" (Giroux, 1996, p. x). Privileging public response rather than private authorship, public genre artists such as Guillermo Gomez-Pena redresses historical inequity through "pseudo-ethnographic dioramas" while muralist Judith Baca engages the public in large-scale projects that "portray the struggles and contributions of indigenous peoples, immigrant minorities, and women from prehistory to present" (Lacy, p. 202.) Ranging from ritual performance to installation and mixed media forms, the content of public genre art functions as social criticism with reconstruction as its primary objective.

The inclusion of public genre art concepts and methodology in art education encourages students to envision new art forms, engage the community in projects that are socially reconstructive, and to reconceptualize artmaking as intellectual, scholarly endeavor. Such rethinking of art education curricula requires the presentation and analysis of work by such artists, study and evaluation of societal issues, consideration of audience, installation or performance of work, and final evaluation. The process is summarized in the following chart.