

Editorial: Growth, Learning, Assessment, and Assessment

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In thinking about “Growth, Learning, Assessment, and Assessment,” this year’s theme for Volume 34 of *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education (JSTAE)*, I am compelled to reflect on the past academic year. While undergoing the initial stages of my extensive tenure application process, I found myself writing narrative after narrative in an effort to encapsulate the seemingly unquantifiable service requirements of my faculty position. Needless to say, most institutions recognize and acknowledge publications, presentations, and exhibitions as ‘legitimate’ scholarly production for art education faculty. However, I found making the case for all of the “other” important things that take up so much of my time each week more difficult. In the meantime, Syracuse University adapts to changes as our former Chancellor, Nancy Cantor, leaves behind an unprecedented legacy of supporting and promoting community engaged scholarship while the new Chancellor ushers in his vision. Cantor gained notoriety through her widely recognized and critiqued mission, *Scholarship in Action* when she emphasized the role of the university as a public good. However, Cantor is not alone in redefining and assessing unconventional forms of scholarship. *Imagining America*, a consortium of universities and organizations dedicated to advancing the public and civil purposes of humanities, arts and design, formed a Tenure Team Initiative (TTI) some time ago, to change policies, procedures, and criteria for assessing faculty candidates for tenure and promotion in order to free faculty “from the impediments of undertaking publicly engaged art and scholarship, and to ensure such work is formally recognized as a legitimate scholarly and creative activity” (Ellison & Eatman, 2008). *Imagining America* remains on the forefront, posing questions regarding the assessment of faculty who deviate from conventional definitions of scholarship. While I try to make sense of the tenure process, and as the university faces its transition, edTPA, a new multiple-measure assessment system for evaluating student teachers, is piloted and implemented throughout the United States and Common Core Standard debates continue across the country. For better or for worse, assessment seems to continually impact many of us on the personal, local, state, and national levels.

Assessment is not just a hot topic, it is gaining momentum, and is arguably dictating the culture of many of our institutions. Therefore, it was no great surprise when the benefits and detriments of assessment in art education emerged as one of the top journal theme options during The Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education’s annual meeting at the National Art Education Association’s convention last spring. Certainly our chosen theme is timely, and the voices in this volume provide a diversity of perspectives and lenses for examining and deconstructing assessment on multiple fronts.

My lingering thoughts on Cantor’s tenure and the work of *Imagining America* bring to mind Civic Design, a practice of connecting multiple institutions and resources to focus on the common good outcomes of our communities. The practice of Civic Design recognizes the ever-changing nature of our society and the downfalls of affixing ourselves to single modes or approaches. This approach contrasts with the conventions of

management where societal challenges are viewed as problems for individual entities to repair or fix (Garvis, 2012). In his 1994 book, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscapes*, social critic James Kunstler stresses the lack of Civic Design and social responsibility as he critiques the historical evolution of America's suburbs. Kunstler notes that the misallocation of resources, exclusion of voices, and general neglect of human needs results in places no one cares about. I find parallels between Kunstler's observation and Charles M. Payne's (2008) description of urban school reform history, in which schools are filled with apathetic teachers and students. Passion and commitment can be restored when voices are included and responsibilities are shared. Payne (2008) dissuades us from mandating full participation but suggests that we cultivate the efforts of those who are open to change with hopes of making incremental progress and eventually winning over the culture. The essential premise behind Civic Design is that it requires openness to possibilities while forward movement is achieved collaboratively by weaving tools together. I am of the mindset that our approach to assessment should stem from the same convictions.

Unsuspecting discoveries are often made when we move beyond the one-size fits all mentality and examine challenges and assets through multiple lenses and perspectives. For years I was ashamed to admit that my S.A.T scores did not to meet the minimum admission requirements for any of the small colleges and state universities to which I applied. However, there were a few divergent thinkers who were convinced that my visual arts portfolio evidenced that I possessed attributes that I had yet to fully cultivate. My advocates (mentors and art teachers) saw my potential for leadership and academic success long before I did. They witnessed my consistent pursuit of ideas as my curiosities expanded in the art room; a place where my achievements or abilities could not be measured through a Scantron. Without my teachers' keen insights, I could have easily fallen through the cracks as many surely have. JSTAE Volume 34 speaks directly to the aforementioned cracks and blind spots within conventional assessment measures, but also suggests alternatives.

I am excited to include the mixed media works of **Bob Sweeny** in this volume. In his "Scanscapes I-V" series, Sweeny draws inspiration from the relationship between utopian architectural forms and standardized testing. The intersections and overlaps created through Sweeny's layering of materials extend 'the space between' metaphor. What have we missed? Who do we leave behind? Sweeny's works present questions resulting from colliding worlds of the quantitative and the qualitative. In his artist statement, he suggests that art can be found in the margins, spaces or cracks within the systems, tools or machines of assessment.

Clayton Funk describes efforts two men made to will the machines of intelligence. He offers a historical parallel between Chicago's early 20th century educational bureaucracy and a 19th century science fiction short story. Funk tracks and critiques the development of "mental testing" in the Chicago Public Schools as instituted by Superintendent, Edwin G. Cooley (1857-1923) in the first decades on the 20th century. By sharing this narrative as a "science fiction of intelligence", Funk analyzes Cooley's bureaucracy of testing and tracking, through the lens of Bierce's tale, "Moxon's Master" which describes a robot designed to play chess that ultimately murders its creator. Bierce's short story provides Funk with an epistemological lens through which

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he examines Cooley’s bureaucratic ‘machine’ in relation to Moxon’s destructive robot, with a focus on their respective efforts to define and will intelligence for their own gains.

Two of the articles, offer teacher’s perspectives and attitudes on assessment and teacher evaluation stemming from private schools and secondary art classrooms. **David Rufo**, a 4th grade classroom teacher at a private school in central New York, discusses the hurdles associated with cultivating a classroom culture centered on self-initiated learning and student governance. In “An Arts-Based Classroom Confronts Educational Metanarratives: Grand Narratives, Local Stories and a Classroom Teacher’s Story” he shares how conflicting ideologies and dominant narratives can silence teachers who are interested in engaging in the kinds of constructive dialogues they hope to foster in their own classrooms. Rufo examines the ways in which two conflicting teaching paradigms can be used to perceive of and evaluate the management style of his unconventional classroom.

Jill Palumbo discusses the culture of assessment and evaluation at the state and national levels. Her research, which is primarily based in Virginia State high schools, describes the difficulties with employing subjective and inflexible assessment measures when evaluating art teachers. In addition to sharing her own vulnerabilities regarding assessment as an art teacher in a private school, Palumbo reports the opinions of Virginia art teachers regarding the validity and purposes of art teacher assessments along with teachers’ attitudes toward their evaluators who lack content knowledge in the arts. By closely examining how teachers in non-tested subjects and grades are evaluated, she suggests how we might develop more authentic assessments for art teachers. Palumbo notes the need and desire for a more collaborative role in the development of assessments.

Like Palumbo, **Matthew Sutherlin** advocates for engaging assessment as a process. He employs Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) metaphors, deterritorialization and reterritorialization while he transcends and expands the perceived boundaries of student assessment. By promoting the use of networked (student and teacher) avatars, performance, and video Sutherlin’s students devise their own methods for reflecting on their experiences by building and interacting with “learning fragments”. Through this process the subjectivity of the reflections are pushed and bring forth connections that would not otherwise be apparent.

Nadine Kalin and **Daniel Barney** recognize the need to re-conceptualize art education in order to make new discoveries as well. As a point of departure for envisioning and considering other possibilities, they deem “predetermined usages of art education inoperable.” They suggest withdrawing “from measuring, accounting, standardizing, and carrying on within art education today, in order to enter a space of indecision and inaction where we risk uselessness...” Kalin and Barney fiercely reject the machine of art education and its inherent paradigms and demands in order to reclaim it.

While the seemingly constant hurdles stemming from the culture of assessment daunt many educators, there are those who have emerged as strong teachers and scholars within this ever-changing landscape. Despite these troubling times, some are conditioned for change and eager to face the challenges brought forth by issues like high stakes testing, Common Core State Standards, and edTPA. They are not deterred by the current vulnerability and nebulous future of art education. They remain resilient, watchful, hopeful, passionate and continue to inspire me and countless others. The scholars

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Journal of Social Theory in Art Education CALL FOR PAPERS

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We welcome multiple interpretations of the theme for JSTAE Volume 34:

Growth, Learning, Assessment, and *Assassination*

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**DEADLINE:
NOVEMBER 15,
2013**

Please direct any questions or concerns to Sharif Bey, JSTAE Editor 2013-2015 at shbey@syr.edu <http://jstae.org>

Growth, Learning, Assessment, and *Assassination*

Many art educators continually readjust their attitudes, approaches and teaching strategies in this era of increasing teacher accountability and high stakes tests. While some teachers are up to the challenge, others are seemingly exhausted by the constantly changing landscape of policies, acronyms, and assessment measures of teachers and students. But what is the utility of assessment in the art room, museum, university, community setting or grant writing? Can we effectively quantify the boundless teaching and learning experiences that we engage in through the visual arts? What are the advantages of the imminent changes assessment in the visual arts might bring? Or, will these measures result in the further dismantlement – assassination- of the unique learning that only the visual arts can facilitate?

We hope that this call for JSTAE Volume 34 will encourage submissions from any possible author, poet, artist, writer, researcher, teacher, whether in higher education, K-12, administration, policy, museum education, community-based art education, or general education. We hope that contributors will address this call from a broad range of perspectives. For this reason the editors of JSTAE and membership of the CSTAE hope to inspire individual or collaborative responses related to the theme: *Growth, Learning, Assessment, and Assassination*

Reviewers: If you would like to serve as a JSTAE reviewer please send to the editor a list of your publications in the area(s) of emphasis that you offer to review. JSTAE reviewers are selected based on the following criteria: (a) CSTAE member, (b) has published work in the field, (c) has published in an area related to the article asked to review, (d) has not submitted an article for review for the particular volume.

The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education (JSTAE) is the official journal of The Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education (CSTAE). JSTAE serves as an alternative voice for the field of art education through the promotion of scholarly research that addresses social theory, social issues, action, and transformation as well as creative methods of research and writing.

The JSTAE submission deadline is **November 15, 2013** for Volume 34. To be considered for publication, original manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the 6th edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Manuscripts should range between 2500-5000 words in length with an abstract of 100-150 words. Images are encouraged with manuscripts and should be sent in digital format (jpg, gif, or png) with accompanying copyright permission. Double space all manuscripts, including abstract, quotations, tables, references, and notes. Include a brief biographical statement along with a cover letter designating that the manuscript is original, has not been previously published, and is not under consideration elsewhere. To facilitate the anonymous review process, please place your name only in the accompanying cover letter and not in the manuscript, following guidelines for ensuring a blind review at the JSTAE website. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically, preferably in Microsoft Word with .doc extension to <http://jstae.org>

*The Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education (CSTAE). <http://cstae.org> is an affiliate of the National Art Education Association (NAEA). <http://arteducators.org>

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